

*Introduction*

## MIGRATION, MEMORY, AND DIVERSITY IN GERMANY AFTER 1945



*Cornelia Wilhelm*

Ever since the founding of the modern German nation state, labeling immigrants as “other” and “foreign” to Germany’s cultural—and at times, even racial—identity has been a central element of German identity building. The challenge of defining the nation was inherent to the construction of the German nation state and has often been met by branding others as “alien” and as a “threat.”<sup>1</sup> As a result, Germans have long failed to understand diversity and cultural difference as positive features of their society, even though migration has been a central element of Germany’s social and economic reality.<sup>2</sup> Yet, Germany has managed to depart from older patterns of understanding immigration and diversity, and proudly demonstrated this change of attitude recently in displaying a formerly unknown “welcome culture” for Syrian refugees in the fall of 2015. In fact, since 2012, Germany has received the largest number of immigrants in the European Union and ranks second only to the United States as a “country of immigration” worldwide.<sup>3</sup> Such changes are due to a number of reasons, such as demographic and political challenges, but have also resulted from changing concepts of “history,” “memory,” and “the nation,” which have allowed the Germans to reinvent themselves in a postnational age—a topic that this volume seeks to explore.

The view of immigrants as alien and threatening persisted during and after World War II and the defeat of Nazism. In fact, many post-World War II migrations arose directly from the Nazi expansion across Europe, German atrocities in occupied territories, and the Holocaust, or else resulted from reactions of local populations to the Nazi presence. After 1945, West Germany embarked on a steady, though not perfect, process of democratization and developed an increasingly pluralistic society in an

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effort to depart from its Nazi past; however, encounters with large-scale migrations and their cultural memory in the postwar era continued to be difficult.<sup>4</sup> The Allies' reconstruction of the western zones, democratization, and westernization offered opportunities for radical change and a departure from older—and at times racist, exclusive, and ethnocultural—definitions of German citizenship and identity.<sup>5</sup> However, it was not only the persistence of racism from the Nazi period but also the emerging Cold War that limited the potential for exchanges about the Nazi past, changing memory, and the passing of legislation, which might have helped West Germans understand why so many expellees, displaced persons, and other migrants lived in their midst.<sup>6</sup>

In the ideologically charged climate of the Cold War, West Germany struggled to address its historic responsibilities with respect to the expulsion and dislocation of millions of German expellees, or the displacement of millions of so-called displaced persons; rather, as the only democratically legitimized Germany, it claimed sole lawful representation of all Germans, rejected East Germany's right to exist, and upheld the constitutional mandate for reunification. Moreover, it was preoccupied with its own national postwar legacies and the challenge of constructing West Germany as a "center of the German nation." Its Cold War political claims enforced the traditional ethnocultural definition of Germanness, as well as a commitment to a "single German nationhood," which facilitated the legal inclusion of expellees, ethnic Germans, and refugees from the GDR in the postwar era.<sup>7</sup> Such a self-image prevented Germany from confronting its social reality as a rising economic power that depended on foreign labor. While economic success played a large role in solidifying a West German identity, the growing labor force from southern and southeastern Europe, and later from Turkey, was largely marginalized. The possibility of the long-term presence of these migrants and their active integration into German society was openly rejected. From the 1970s to the 1990s, almost every democratic party failed to effectively address migration as a social reality and economic necessity. No political party provided leadership to initiate the active integration of migrants who for years had made West Germany their home. Even worse, at the peak of the debate, the Christian Democratic government under Chancellor Kohl developed a scheme to support a broad return migration of so-called "guest workers," promising financial rewards to those who were willing to relocate after long-term residence in Germany.<sup>8</sup> Rather than developing a political strategy for integration, this policy whipped up populism in debates about migration and political asylum, often described as the "abuse" of political asylum. This interpretation sanctioned a negative perception of immigration, pluralism, multiculturalism, and diversity. Such politics set the

tone for a broadly prevalent “cultural code”<sup>9</sup> for an otherwise democratic middle class, which justified xenophobic sentiment in German society and allowed candidates in leading democratic catch-all parties such as the CDU to campaign as recently as 2000 with slogans that employed discriminatory and exclusionary vocabulary such as “Kinder statt Inder.”<sup>10</sup> Even Germany’s special commitment to provide political asylum for victims of political and religious persecution under article 16 GG, originally based on its experience with Nazism, was compromised by Cold War-era political goals. The political asylum provision was finally curtailed, as it provided a loophole for immigrants who, in the absence of standard immigration legislation, saw the political asylum law as the sole opportunity to enter the country and gain permanent residence.<sup>11</sup>

The German reunification in October 1990 and the end of Cold War Europe offered an unexpected opportunity to develop a different perspective on migration and diversity in Germany. Both events challenged Germany in many ways, but also allowed the nation to depart from its temporary postwar status that had lasted for forty-five years, to reunite, and to negotiate a permanent peace treaty with the Allies. This peace treaty, the Two-Plus-Four Treaty of 1990, settled the de facto territorial losses of Germany to Poland and allowed the two Germanys to reunite. The end of the Cold War in Europe also called for an effort to reconstruct relations with Germany’s eastern neighbors, who were deeply affected by Germany’s former occupation and atrocities.<sup>12</sup>

In short, the reunification of Germany in a newly united Europe not only raised major concerns about Germany’s future role as a nation among the former victims of Nazi atrocities, but also uniquely challenged the united Germany to live up to the ideals it had developed as a country that had learned the lessons of history. Unification provided a stepping stone for the reconsideration of what it meant to be German at the new millennium, more than fifty years after Nazism. The reality was that there were over seven million resident “foreigners” living in Germany at that time. Many of them had been part of West German society for decades, had been born and socialized there, and had little access to outdated Germanness, German citizenship, and civil society.<sup>13</sup> In addition, the seventeen million Germans who had spent forty-five years behind the Iron Curtain, and who had been considered ideological enemies, faced substantial difficulties adjusting to West German society. Such integration problems were also common among the more than 1.5 million ethnic Germans who had seized the unexpected opportunity to emigrate to West Germany after 1989/90. These “Germans” failed to blend in with West German society as easily as had been projected. In the midst of such integration problems, xenophobia and arson attacks against migrants in Hoyerswerda, Rostock,

Mölln, and Solingen brought back images of a racism that had been considered part of the Nazi past.<sup>14</sup> Such racism put unified Germany in the spotlight and shattered the high expectations that the international community had placed on it. Rather, it raised great skepticism as to whether the Germans had really found their place among democratic nations. These circumstances compelled Germans to demonstrate civic responsibility, for example by holding large public demonstrations and “chains of lights” against racism. These events also forced the political leadership to address the issues of *integration* and *diversity* in Germany and to pave the way toward a new understanding of Germanness, in addition to passing new citizenship and naturalization laws, as well as a formal immigration law. It was essential for Germany’s image to underscore the role that united Germany would take in a united Europe, and to start to address inclusion in German society in the context of migration.<sup>15</sup>

Germany’s central geographic position in Europe, the absence of limitations to free movement within Europe, and the demographic need for immigration indicated that migration would soon constitute a central challenge and potential conflict in this society. A long declining birthrate, fears that labor migration could lead to an imbalance in Germany’s social systems, as well as Germany’s diminished image as an internationally minded and open place for business and enterprise, all pointed to the need to deal with immigration. Besides these concrete reasons, unification and the end of the Cold War in Europe also offered a unique opportunity to embark on a new conversation about “self” and “other,” and allowed a readjustment of what immigration and diversity might mean in the cultural memory of the nation.<sup>16</sup> Although the transition has not been easy, Germany has managed to institute two significant legal changes. First, in January 2000 an amendment to the nationality act provided for the first time a departure from the use of *jus sanguinis* as the sole basis upon which German citizenship was granted, and introduced *jus soli* as a principle, which allowed those born in Germany, irrespective of their ethnic or family background, to claim German citizenship.<sup>17</sup> Second, early in 2005, Germany put into effect its first immigration law, creating a legal framework for future immigration and, more importantly, acknowledging that immigration was a central feature of German society and polity while underscoring the centrality of social and political integration among the goals of the immigration process.<sup>18</sup>

Although the concepts of *nation* and *integration* have constituted the focal points in this transition, the larger European perspective has played an essential role as a “reflective surface” in this process. Not only has Germany attracted large numbers of *European* immigrants, and continues to do so, but the social, legal, political, and economic realities of united

Germany must be understood within the larger context of Europe and its history. For example, while the growth of the European Union and European integration have provided for the assimilation of some post-World War II immigrants from EU countries, other migrants have been excluded from this process, such as the large group of immigrants from Turkey. Also, the emerging Eurozone, intended to provide access to a common currency and thus wealth, has in fact created economic inequalities and migrations as a result.<sup>19</sup> More importantly, the end of the Cold War and the reemergence of free movement in Europe has allowed—and sometimes even forced—reunified Germany to see how its Nazi past was and still is directly related to lingering racism, xenophobia, and difficulties in understanding the migrations and increasing diversity of the postwar period. After 1990, Germans were able, and almost forced, to enter a more expansive European communicative framework to deal with aspects of a past that had been sealed off by the ideological conflict of the postwar period—aspects that stood at the heart of patterns of social exclusion and racism. This new encounter with its European neighbors was sometimes painful and difficult, but it has opened up new ways of understanding “self” and “other,” which are in turn opening up opportunities for a new, more inclusive understanding of Germanness and of Germany’s role as a destination for immigrants.<sup>20</sup>

Since Germany has increasingly acted within a European and postnational framework, this book will likewise approach Germany’s postwar immigration history and its memory within a broader comparative framework. It will also examine how the German experience of immigration was, and continues to be, affected by larger European developments and will consider whether Germany faces similar, different, or competing challenges in relation to other European nations. Finally, this volume seeks to explore whether problems with diversity and memory are uniquely “German,” or if and where similar problems are reflected in the larger European context, how Germany’s experience corresponds with a larger European context and must be addressed in such a context, rather than by a national approach.

In the first section we will examine the history, demographics, status, perceptions, and memory of the major immigrant groups in West Germany from 1945 until 2010, starting with the German expellees from the territories occupied by the Red Army who found refuge mostly in the western zones of occupied Germany during the postwar years.

Martin Schulze Wessel addresses the difficulties Germans had in understanding expulsion as a result of Nazi expansion, and the atrocities committed by Germans in occupied Poland and former Czechoslovakia, and explores the tensions that developed around the politics of memory

after 1990 in united Europe, when Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic were encountering their past as EU partners.

The end of the Cold War also allowed a different understanding of displaced persons in West Germany. Anna Holian argues that while their presence generated strong xenophobia, with little recognition that their displacement was closely connected to the expansion of Nazism, and the inability to interpret their history as a result of the Nazi expansion into eastern Europe suppressed the notion that a number of these immigrants had permanently settled in West Germany, it was only the end of the Cold War that spurred new research on this immigration and consequently allowed a new understanding of this migrant group as an essential part of the German postwar experience.

Still today, the labeling of labor migrants shows massive discrepancies regarding their potential for inclusion and exclusion. Asiye Kaya explores this practice and compares the rejection of Turkish labor migrants with the attitude displayed toward the immigration of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe during the same period. She explains that although Germany embarked on a transformation of some of its exclusionary patterns from the 1960s to the 1980s, the policy of negatively labeling immigrant groups has continued and is reflected in the differentiation between those “young, well qualified Europeans” who embark on the “German dream” and those, such as the Sinti and Roma from new EU member Romania, who experience public rejection as a “social burden,” and whose migration is seen as “poverty migration.”

Patrice Poutrus evaluates the unique position Germany had as a place in which to seek political asylum, and examines whether or not Germany lived up to its high moral goals in its asylum practices. Did German society embrace refugees and asylum seekers as a group that deserved *special* solidarity? How did Germany differ from other European nations in the admission and integration of asylum seekers, and how did it react to their rising numbers in the past?

The second section will mainly focus on the institutionalized memory of immigration and diversity in Germany, its commemoration in museums, the accessibility of archival materials for research, the place that immigration has found in school curricula and textbooks, and the language used in the discussion of “race” in Germany, which is committed to a political correctness that separates the past from the present.

Simone Lässig highlights curricula and school textbooks as central vehicles for raising the historical consciousness of immigration. She explores how and if immigration and immigrants were and are part of the curriculum, and how immigration and diversity were explained in a framework that connects to the Nazi past. Lastly, she asks how Germany’s efforts

compare to the approaches of other European nations to make immigration and diversity a central topic in their education systems.

In like fashion, museums educate the public on the place of immigration in German history and society. Katharzyna Nogueira and Dietmar Osses trace the discussion concerning the need for a national immigration museum in Germany, a conversation that has gained momentum within a larger European context as other European nations, for example France, have moved forward and created such a national memorial. Based on their observations of the French Musée Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, the authors put forward the advantages of the absence of such a memorial, which include maintaining the polyphonic diversity of the representation of migration in Germany, whose individuality and connection with grassroots movements might suffer from the "streamlining" and "homogenizing" effects of one singular national museum. Rather, they argue, competing regional perspectives on migration might enhance the understanding of mobility, as well as the transnational and even global connections and their consequences within the public sphere, in which migrants and non-migrants meet.

Institutional archives and archival collections have long neglected to identify and make accessible the immigrant experience for research in Germany. Klaus Lankheit discusses where and why records central to tracking the immigrant experience might be found in national and supranational European archival repositories today, and in particular develops a roadmap for a larger transnational European perspective on the study of immigration.

German postwar political correctness and the fear of using "race" as an analytic category in public discourse on immigration and diversity have made it difficult to understand contemporary "racism" and how it affects German society today, as racism has persisted, but it is sometimes difficult to address, as Rita Chin is demonstrating in her chapter on the epistemological use of the term "race".

The third part of the volume focuses on the changes and new challenges occurring in the years since 1989/90, after the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany in the midst of a united and steadily growing Europe. Growing diversity and a changing framework not only placed Germany at the center of an increasingly mobile Europe, but also spurred a redefinition of Germany's relationship with its immigrants and its history. The new place that Germany found in Europe challenged and still challenges it to integrate the memory of its past with its future in a united Europe, and also demonstrates the *painful* lessons of what it means to be German to its immigrant groups.<sup>21</sup>

Dietmar Schirmer sets the stage for this section with a systematic analysis of nationalism, citizenship, integration, and exclusion that defines

reunification as a turning point in how Germany dealt with immigration. He stresses the contributory impact of the growing European Union, which put pressure on Germany to comply with EU laws and directives in an effort to craft its own legislation redefining citizenship, to pass a new citizenship and naturalization law in 1999 and an immigration law in 2004.

Kathrin Bower discusses what it meant to be “German,” or “foreign” in the postunification period with an analysis of *Wende* migrants such as German *Ausländer*; she highlights the arbitrariness of such terminology and calls for a reconsideration of existing hierarchies of belonging.

Karen Körber explains how the unexpected migration of roughly 200,000 Russian Jews played a major role in the discourse of migration in Germany. Its symbolism could not be misunderstood: Germany was again a country of Jewish immigration, a fact that not only secured the survival of the relatively small and demographically declining postwar Jewish community, but also involved them in a larger public debate on inclusion and exclusion in Germany. This in turn challenged Germany’s Jews to take on a significant role in translating the lessons of the past in a pluralistic future.<sup>22</sup>

How important it is to prevent the erosion of meaningful memory of the Holocaust as part of a “German” identity is explained by Annette Seidl-Arpaci. She warns of an ethnicization of memory in an increasingly pluralistic society that prevents the inclusion of immigrants’ own memories of German occupation, atrocities, and family stories about their past in German Nazi-occupied Europe or North Africa. She also highlights how pointing to “imported” anti-Semitism among immigrants bears the danger of forgetting to reflect on Germany’s own anti-Semitism and racism. More than ever, it is the task of German society to highlight that “Germanness” today must be deeply linked with embracing the lessons of Germany’s past in order to build a future.

## Notes

1. The fear of *Überfremdung* (foreign infiltration) originated in the Prussian territories annexed from Poland, such as Posen, which kept attracting Polish agricultural workers from Russia while the native population of these areas, including the German Poles, increasingly migrated to the Ruhr area to take industrial jobs there. Although based on false assumptions, it was believed that the influx of Russian Poles would drive the native population westward into the industrialized areas of Prussia and thereby undermine the Prussian effort to tie the region in the long term to Prussia. Ulrich Herbert, *A History*



- of *Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 24–25. See also Jeffrey Peck, Mitchell Ash, and Christiane Lemke, “Natives, Strangers and Foreigners,” *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 61–102.
2. Cornelia Wilhelm, “Diversity in Germany: A Historical Perspective,” *German Politics and Society* 31 (2013): 13–29.
  3. “OECD-Migrationsstudie: Jeder Dritte Einwanderer kommt nach Deutschland,” *Spiegel Online*, 1 December 2014, accessed 29 April 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/migration-deutschland-laut-oecd-fast-so-wichtig-wie-usa-a-1005912.html>.
  4. Rita Chin, Heide Fehrenbach, and Geoff Ely, eds., *After the Nazi Racial State: Difference and Democracy in Germany and Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009).
  5. Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, “Dimensionen von Amerikanisierung in der deutschen Gesellschaft,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 35 (1995): 1–34; and Dieter Gosewinkel, “Reflections: Dominance of Nationality? Nation and Citizenship from the Late Nineteenth Century Onwards,” *German History* 26 (2008): 92–108.
  6. Constantin Goschler, “The Attitude Towards Jews in Bavaria after the Second World War,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 36 (1991): 443–58.
  7. Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 183–85.
  8. Matthias Bartsch, Andrea Brandt, and Daniel Steinvorth, “Turkish Immigration to Germany: A Sorry History of Self-Deception and Wasted Opportunities,” *Spiegel Online*, 7 September 2010, accessed 7 April 2015, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/turkish-immigration-to-germany-a-sorry-history-of-self-deception-and-wasted-opportunities-a-716067.html>.
  9. This term is “borrowed” from Shulamit Volkov, who explained how anti-Semitic attitudes found broad acceptance and “respectability” among imperial Germany’s middle class. Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 23 (1978): 25–46. See also Benedikt Erenz, “Lehrer Rühle,” *Die Zeit*, 4 June 1993, accessed 28 April 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/1993/23/lehrer-ruehe>.
  10. “Children Instead of [Asian] Indians” (translated by the author); “Kinder statt Inder – die Parolen eines gescheiterten Zukunftsministers,” *Das Erste – Panorama*, accessed 23 April 2015, <https://daserste.ndr.de/panorama/archiv/2000/erste7444.html>.
  11. Patrice Poutrus, “Asylum in Postwar Germany,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 49 (2014): 115–33.
  12. Volker A. Berghahn, Gregory Flynn, and Paul Michael Lützel, “Germany and Europe: Finding an International Role,” in *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 173–200.
  13. Helga Welsch, Andreas Pickel, and Dorothy Rosenberg, “East and West German Identities: United and Divided?” in *After Unity: Reconfiguring German Identities*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997), 103–36.
  14. “20 Jahre Brandanschlag in Solingen,” Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, accessed 1 May 2015, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/hintergrund-aktuell/161980/brandanschlag-in-solingen>.
  15. Douglas B. Klusmeyer and Demetrios G. Papademetriou, *Immigration Policy in the Federal Republic of Germany* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 144–156.
  16. Jan Assmann, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125–33.

17. "German Nationality Act, last amended 13 Nov. 2014," Bundesministerium des Inneren, accessed 25 April 2015, [http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Gesetzestexte/EN/Staatsangehoerigkeitsgesetz\\_englisch.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Gesetzestexte/EN/Staatsangehoerigkeitsgesetz_englisch.pdf?__blob=publicationFile).
18. "Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory Residence Act, last amended 6 Sept. 2013," Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, accessed 25 April 2015, [http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch\\_aufenthg/](http://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_aufenthg/).
19. Klusmeyer and Papademetriou, *Immigration Policy*, 159–67, 216–25.
20. On the persisting difficulties of what it means to "be German" see also for example Zafer Senocak, *Deutschsein: Eine Aufklärungsschrift* (Hamburg: Körber-Stiftung, 2011); or see "Deutschland als Einwanderungsland, Wir sind besser als wir glauben," tagesschau.de, 28 April 2015, accessed 28 April 2015, <http://www.tagesschau.de/inland/einwanderungsgutachten-deutschland-101.html>.
21. "German Chancellor Receives Abraham Geiger Prize," World Union for Progressive Judaism, accessed 9 January 2016, <http://wupj.org/News/NewsItem.asp?ContentID=1040>.
22. Ibid.

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**Cornelia Wilhelm** is currently professor of modern history at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich. From 2010 to 2016 she has been DAAD Visiting Professor in the Department of History and the Jewish Studies Program at Emory University in Atlanta and had also held visiting positions at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, and Leopold-Franzens-Universität of Innsbruck, Austria. She is author of *Bewegung oder Verein? Nationalsozialistische Volkstumspolitik in den USA* (1998); and *Deutsche Juden in America: Bürgerliches Selbstbewusstsein und Jüdische Identität in den Orden B’nai B’rith und True Sisters* (2007), also published in English translation (2011). She is currently working on an in-depth study on German refugee rabbis in the United States after 1933.