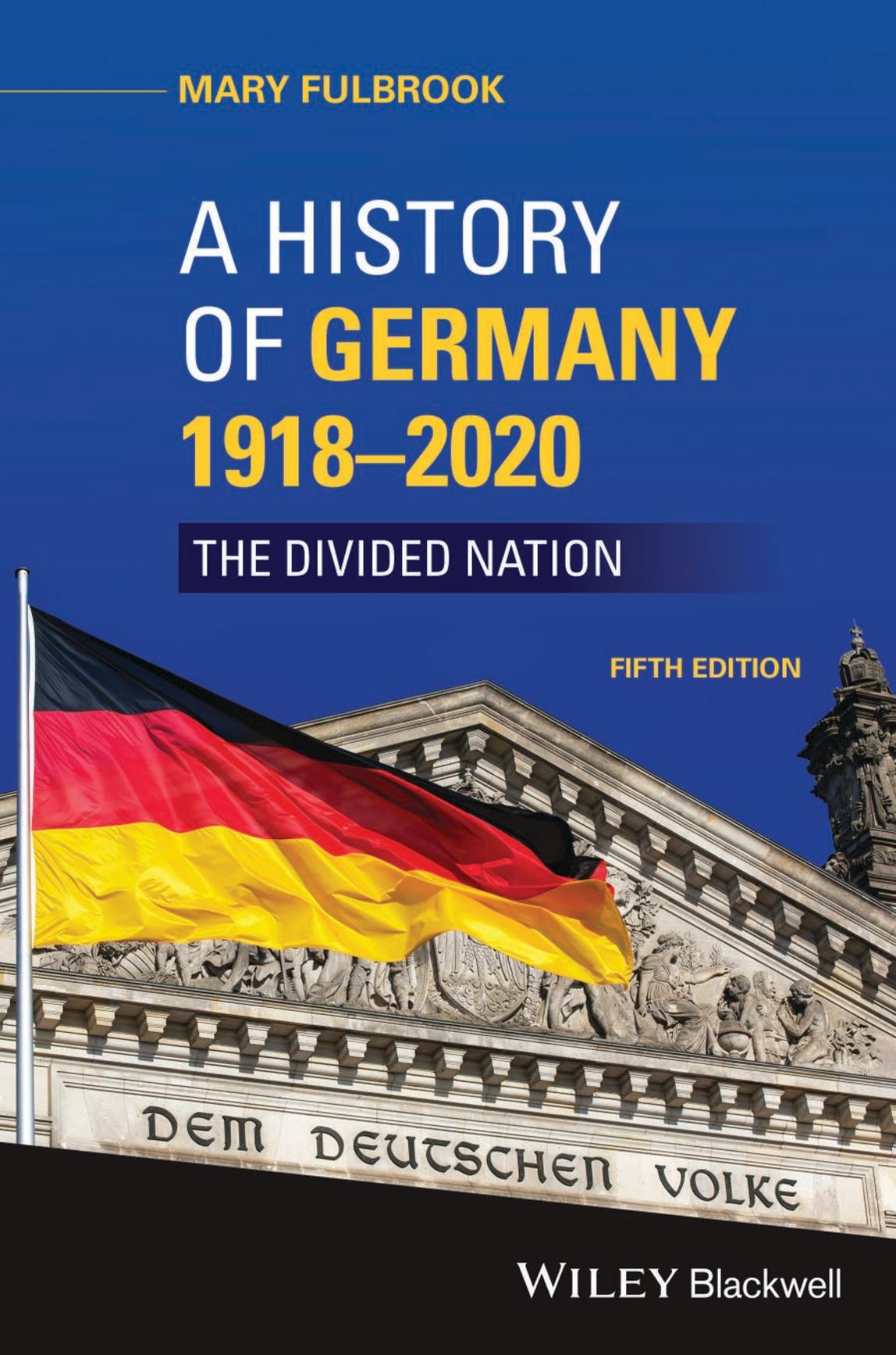


MARY FULBROOK

A HISTORY OF GERMANY 1918–2020

THE DIVIDED NATION

FIFTH EDITION



DEM DEUTSCHEN VOLKE

WILEY Blackwell

A History of Germany, 1918–2020

A History of Germany,
1918–2020

The Divided Nation

FIFTH EDITION

Mary Fulbrook

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2021
© 2021 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Edition History

Fontana Ltd. (1e, 1991), Blackwell Publishing Ltd. (2e, 2002), Mary Fulbrook (3e, 2009), John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. (4e, 2015)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by law. Advice on how to obtain permission to reuse material from this title is available at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

The right of Mary Fulbrook to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with law.

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

Editorial Office

111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

For details of our global editorial offices, customer services, and more information about Wiley products visit us at www.wiley.com.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some content that appears in standard print versions of this book may not be available in other formats.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty

While the publisher and authors have used their best efforts in preparing this work, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives, written sales materials or promotional statements for this work. The fact that an organization, website, or product is referred to in this work as a citation and/or potential source of further information does not mean that the publisher and authors endorse the information or services the organization, website, or product may provide or recommendations it may make. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a specialist where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Fulbrook, Mary, 1951- author.

Title: A history of Germany 1918-2020 : the divided nation / Mary Fulbrook.

Description: Fifth edition. | Hoboken : John Wiley & Sons, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index. | Contents: Part I. A divided society: the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich -- Part II. The divided nation: the two Germanies, 1945-1990 -- Part III. The divided century.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020047584 (print) | LCCN 2020047585 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781119574170 (paperback) | ISBN 9781119574231 (pdf) |

ISBN 9781119574248 (epub) | ISBN 9781119574255 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Germany--Politics and government--20th century. |

Germany--Politics and government--21st century.

Classification: LCC DD240 .F85 2021 (print) | LCC DD240 (ebook) | DDC 943.087--dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020047584>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020047585>

Cover image: © fhm/Moment/Getty Images

Cover design by Wiley

Set in 10/12pt PlantinStd by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd, Pondicherry, India

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

List of Plates	vii
List of Maps	ix
Preface to the Fifth Edition	x
Preface to the Fourth Edition	xi
Preface to the Third Edition	xii
Preface to the Second Edition	xiii
Acknowledgments	xv
1 The Course of German History	1
Part I A Divided Society: The Weimar Republic and the Third Reich	13
2 The Weimar Republic: Origins and Orientations	15
3 The Collapse of Democracy and the Rise of Hitler	42
4 A 'National Community'? State, Economy and Society, 1933–1939	60
5 War, Extermination and Defeat	85
Part II The Divided Nation: The Two Germanies, 1945–1990	119
6 Occupation and Division, 1945–49	121
7 Crystallization and Consolidation, 1949–61	152
8 Transformation and the 'Established Phase', 1961–88	175
9 Diverging Societies	195

10	Politics and the State	214
11	Dissent and Opposition	231
12	Diverging Cultures and National Identities?	252
13	The East German Revolution and the End of the Postwar Era	274
	Part III The Divided Century	297
14	The Berlin Republic	299
15	Tension and Transformation in Twentieth-Century Germany	325
	Notes	344
	Select Bibliography of English-Language Works	362
	Index	371

Plates

1	Unemployed dock workers in January 1931	50
2	Members of the Nazi League of German Girls (BDM) walk proudly down the street of a German town	69
3	Hitler's triumphal arrival to popular acclaim in his former home town of Linz during the 1938 Anschluss of Austria (which subsequently represented itself as 'Hitler's first victim')	82
4	German soldiers execute 'partisans', Lithuania, 1944	94
5	Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto, who, if they survived the misery, hunger and sickness of ghetto life, would ultimately be transported and murdered in an extermination camp	100
6	The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, in a landscape of rubble at the end of the Second World War	130
7	West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer looks uncomfortable on a visit to Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, in August 1961, a week after the Berlin Wall was erected	173
8	Schoolchildren on their weekly 'day in industry' in the 'people's own factory', with which their school is twinned, admire the progress board in the 'competition for fulfilment of the plan'	182
9	Erich Honecker handing over the one millionth new apartment built in the GDR, surrounded by workers in hard hats, and children from a local creche	202
10	Couple watching television, <i>Er</i> magazine cover, 1952	259
11	East Berliners hack out mementoes from the now defunct Berlin Wall, in spring 1990	286
12	Demonstration against rising rents and gentrification, Kreuzberg, Berlin, June 2013	303

- 13 'Stolpersteine' – pavement 'cobblestones to stumble over', commemorating former Jewish inhabitants who were deported and murdered by the Nazis 311
- 14 The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, in the heart of Berlin, spreading over several acres between the Brandenburg Gate and the site of Hitler's bunker and providing an inescapable and controversial reminder of the Jewish victims of Nazism 312
- 15 CDU poster 'Wir haben mehr zu bieten' ('We have more to offer') showing CDU candidates Vera Lengsfeld (formerly Vera Wollenberger) and Angela Merkel 319

Maps

2.1	The Versailles settlement, 1919	30
3.1	The electoral performance of the NSDAP, 1924–1932	53
4.1	The Reichstag elections, 5 March 1933	62
4.2	Territorial annexation, 1935–1939	83
5.1	The partition of Poland, 1939	86
5.2	Hitler's empire by autumn 1942	90
5.3	Major concentration camps, including extermination centres	102
5.4	Proportions of Europe's Jewish population murdered in the Final Solution	104
6.1	The division of Germany after 1945	124
13.1	United Germany, 1990	294

Preface to the Fifth Edition

I have amended and added to the text for this expanded fifth edition in a number of ways. In particular, the analysis of the Berlin Republic has been extended to the end of August 2020; the section on the Holocaust has been amended in light of an ever-expanding historiography that has significantly enhanced knowledge and understanding; and there have been minor revisions to content and analysis throughout the text, more in some chapters than others. As before, I have resisted the temptation to engage in radical alterations of style and argument that would have turned it into a substantially different book. However, aware that in some areas debates and approaches have moved on considerably, I have updated by light rewriting where relevant. A few additions and alterations have also been made to what remains a highly select bibliography at the end; this is not intended to be comprehensive but merely to provide some starting points and suggestions for readers wishing to explore particular periods and topics in greater depth.

Preface to the Fourth Edition

The fourth edition includes substantially updated material for Chapter 14 on the Berlin Republic, as well as a number of amendments throughout the text, reflecting the changing emphases of the historiography over recent years. I have again decided against major restructuring and rewriting, although in many areas, if I were to start afresh, it would be a substantially different book. I would like in particular to thank the following for their helpful written comments on the previous edition, particularly relating to references to Poland throughout the work: Professor Daria Nałęcz of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Lazarski University; Professor Marek Wierzbicki of the Catholic University of Lublin; and Marcin Wodziński of the University of Wrocław; as well as other participants in a meeting on 'Recovering Forgotten History' which took place in Warsaw in 2011. I would also like to thank the anonymous readers for Blackwell for their various suggestions regarding the whole text, and Carl for his characteristically perceptive and intelligent comments on aspects of Weimar culture.

Preface to the Third Edition

In making revisions for the third edition, I have added a separate chapter on Germany since unification, and have substantially updated the bibliography. In some sections of the book, I have also amended the text where I felt that there were significant omissions, or where the historiography has moved on so much that my previous remarks could not be left untouched. In making revisions, however, I have again had to resist the temptation to write a substantially new book, and have left the original lines of argument and organization intact.

Preface to the Second Edition

Revising this work for a second edition, ten years after its first appearance, has proved an interesting experience. I first completed the original manuscript as the GDR was in the process of implosion and collapse; I hung onto the manuscript, writing the chapter on the revolution and unification as events actually unfolded in the course of 1989–90. Not only was there no secondary literature at this time on the immediate events of 1989–90; there was also remarkably little of any depth on the longer course of GDR history, polarized as this field was between state-sanctioned Marxist–Leninist accounts in the East and a predominance of rather narrowly institutional, occasionally speculative political science analyses in the West, alongside dissident critiques and ambiguous literary interpretations. With the opening of the East German archives in the early 1990s this situation has now radically changed. There is a flourishing field of GDR historical research, with the emergence of whole new areas of inquiry, lively debates and conflicting interpretations. Meanwhile, research on the Third Reich has also moved on significantly, although perhaps – given the scale of what was already happening in this most controversial field before 1990 – proportionately less dramatically. While there have also been shifts of emphasis in the fields of the Weimar Republic and pre-1990 West German history, particularly in areas of social history and in studies seeking to cross the 1945 divide, these have perhaps not produced such a radically new intellectual landscape on the scale of that for the GDR.

I have therefore made willfully lopsided corrections to the original edition of this work. I have made amendments to those parts of the text which deal with areas where debates have moved on significantly in ways which cannot be ignored. I have added a brief epilogue to Chapter 13 on Germany since unification. I have substantially updated what remains a stringently selective bibliography, in order to guide readers towards further reading in English on areas which could not be discussed more extensively in the text.

But I have resisted the temptation to add too many minor amendments throughout the text which, by seeking to recognize recent research findings and accommodate all the current concerns of academia, would have effectively unbalanced the general lines of the original narrative. I have also resisted the temptation to embark on major rewriting in areas where I now would approach questions rather differently, which could in effect have turned this into a whole new book (and I am mindful of the question of whether a bicycle which, after having a total overhaul, from brakes, chain, pedals, gears and saddle to new forks and frame, is still the 'same' bicycle as the original). It also seems important to ensure that the historiographical as well as historical watershed of 1990 does not result in obscuring some of the major issues and perspectives which remain important. I am thus acutely conscious of the fact that I have not been able to do full justice, within the constraints of a volume of this length, to all the research that has appeared since the first edition. I can only hope that readers will be stimulated to follow some of the suggestions in the notes and bibliography to explore in greater depth topics which I have not been able to cover more fully in this particular compass.

Mary Fulbrook
London

Acknowledgments

The story of Germany in the twentieth century is a compelling one, which has profoundly affected European and world history. It has dramatically shaped – and drastically truncated – the lives of millions of people, Germans and non-Germans, and continues to be of central importance in European and world affairs.

At a very personal level, my own interest in German history was stimulated by my mother, a refugee from Nazi Germany. Born during the First World War, growing up in the Berlin of the 1920s and early 1930s, her whole life was radically affected by being the child of a ‘mixed marriage’, ensuring that as a ‘non-Aryan’ she would have no future in Hitler’s ‘national community’. In many ways, this book is for her.

Friends and acquaintances in both Germanies (pre-1990!) provided many insights. It would be invidious to name selected individuals. I am grateful particularly for the willingness of many East Germans to enter into very open and wide-ranging discussions. On a number of visits to the GDR, I spoke with people from a wide variety of backgrounds, including members of the SED, dissenters, committed Protestants of a range of political persuasions, and others. Both arranged interviews and more informal talks turned out, in retrospect, to have taken place in a historic moment before a whole sociopolitical system was about to pass away, and have informed my understanding of the dynamics of pre-revolutionary East Germany. Some of the views and comments made by people to whom I spoke before 1989 could not be captured again except as refracted and distorted with the ‘benefit’ of hindsight.

While actually engaged in writing this book, the East German revolution unfolded. The wonders of word processing made it relatively easy to change the present to the past tense with respect to discussions of Honecker’s Germany; more problematic was the realization that what is of interest to both author and readers changes rather fundamentally when a revolution is known to be on the political agenda. It then becomes apparent which

elements of the historical kaleidoscope will prove to be of central importance and which can be consigned to the sidelines, as, perhaps, of only antiquarian interest. As the focus of current discussion changes, so too do the points of historical interest. The contemporary relevance that lies behind the construction of historical accounts becomes all too clear when the parameters that constitute the 'present' are rapidly changing.

I would like to thank Fontana for bearing with me while I sat on, and periodically altered, the text (sometimes it seemed I would have to update and revise Chapter 13 in particular at weekly or even daily intervals). Over a somewhat longer period, I am grateful to colleagues and students at University College London for their stimulation and support. Students of my intercollegiate history seminar on the two Germanies will recognize many of our discussions in the chapters that form Part II. Participation in conferences organized by, among others, the German History Society, also helped to inform my views and approach. More particularly, I am extremely grateful to Professor William Carr, Dr Jill Stephenson and the reader for Fontana for their very valuable comments on the manuscript. While I have not been able to act on all their suggestions, they have certainly saved me from a number of errors and helped me to clarify aspects of the account. The responsibility for the inaccuracies and infelicities that remain is, of course, entirely mine.

The maps were produced by the UCL Geography Department, and I would particularly like to thank Louise Saunders for her work. Grants from the British Academy, the University of London Central Research Fund, and the UCL Dean's Fund have assisted periods of research in Germany. I am very grateful for this support.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband and three children for suffering and sustaining the research for and writing of this book. Without my husband's unfailing support, and more than equal partnership in parenting, the book could not have been written. Without my children, recounting the fates of those who were born into less fortunate historical circumstances might have been much less meaningful.

The Course of German History

In those extraordinary months after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, when discussion of the unification of the two Germanies was for the first time in forty years back on the serious political agenda, many voices were raised giving views on ‘the German question’. From a variety of quarters, prejudices were aired which had lain dormant – along with the memories, gas masks and other relics of the Second World War – over the years when the Cold War and the balance of terror had seemed to ensure a fragile peace in a divided Europe. Suddenly, the prospect of a united, economically powerful, and politically sovereign Germany, active again in central Europe and in a position to mediate between East and West, aroused strong emotions among those whose view of Germany had been largely confined to an ill-assorted combination of images of Hitler and sleek West German capitalist competitors. Who were the Germans? What was their national character, if they had one? Who were those people who also called themselves Germans, from the other, Eastern, side of the rapidly crumbling Iron Curtain, who in many ways seemed not a bit like their Western brothers and sisters? Provoked into having to make a rapid response to the collapse of communist rule in Eastern Europe, many people outside Germany found they had a serious deficit of knowledge and understanding. Many Germans, too – both East and West – found that the Iron Curtain, and the proclaimed ‘zero hour’ of 1945, had raised barriers to informed interpretation. History – although it did not come to an end in 1989, as some pundits, like the American scholar Fukuyama, wished to proclaim – had indeed seemed to have stopped, as far as many textbooks were concerned, in 1945. Thereafter, politics and sociology took over – to provide partial snapshots of an apparently eternal present, unconnected with the radically different past.

2 *The Course of German History*

But prejudices based on partial perceptions of Hitler's rule, more than half a century earlier, combined with limited impressions of a rapidly changing present, can scarcely provide a secure basis of understanding. The 'land in the centre of Europe', Germany, had for decades held an uneasy position in the European and world balance of power – as well as being an extraordinary powerhouse of creativity, in cultural and intellectual as well as economic respects. The complexities of German history demand serious and detailed engagement – and many observers have seen it as a most peculiar history, thus provoking heated debates on interpretation.

Over the centuries, there has been a 'German question'. Some analysts have seen its beginnings – somewhat anachronistically – in the 'failure' to establish a unified state in the Middle Ages. In the days of the politically decentralized 'Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation', the multiplicity of German lands – ranging from the more important secular and ecclesiastical principalities and city states through to the minuscule fiefdoms of 'independent imperial knights' – formed an interdependent system over which the emperors (often pursuing dynastic interests outside the empire) never quite gained central control. The cultural and political conflicts involved in the Reformation of the sixteenth century helped to institutionalize the decentralization of the German lands. Religious differences coincided and overlapped with political conflicts to confirm this diversity in the course of the seventeenth century, in the series of conflicts which formed the so-called Thirty Years War (1618–48). Yet the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 was effectively able only to seal a stalemate: neither religious uniformity nor political centralization was achieved. The territorial rulers enjoyed sovereignty within their own states while still remaining formally subordinate to the Emperor. Clashes among states competing for domination in the emerging European state system continued in the 'age of absolutism' of the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While, from myriad small states which made up 'Germany', the ever growing composite state of Brandenburg–Prussia emerged as a powerful rival to Austria, the relatively weak German lands were still easily overrun by an expansionist post-revolutionary France under Napoleon.

Under the impact of Napoleonic aggression, a fundamental reorganization of the domestic and external affairs of the German states was begun. In 1806 the Holy Roman Empire was abolished. Legal, social and economic reforms were introduced, either as a direct result of Napoleonic rule or in a form of 'defensive modernization'. After the eventual defeat of Napoleon, the formation of a German Confederation in 1815 included a strengthened and enlarged Prussia as an intended bulwark against France in the west and tsarist Russia in the east. At the same time, with territorial reorganization and a great reduction in the number of German states, other states too had

increased in size and importance, many duchies having achieved the status of kingdom for the first time with the demise of the old empire.

In the course of the nineteenth century it proved to be the economically more advanced Prussia which was able to gain the edge over Austria in competition for domination over the medium-sized German states. Prussia was in the forefront of moves towards economic integration in the Customs Union, in the century which was to see those dramatic processes of transformation associated with industrialization. Attempts to achieve political unification of the German states under liberal auspices failed in 1848, and it was ultimately the Prussian Chancellor Bismarck's policies of 'blood and iron' that produced the unification, fraught with tensions, of a 'small Germany' (*Kleindeutschland*), excluding Austria, in the second German Empire founded in 1871. First seeking to secure its place in Europe, and then to gain a position among the imperial powers of the world, Imperial Germany proved to be an unstable entity. It came to an end, following defeat in the First World War, in the revolutionary autumn of 1918. After Germany's brief and ill-fated attempt at democracy in the Weimar Republic, the initial denouement was to be the genocidal rule of Adolf Hitler and his Third Reich, an empire which was supposed to last a thousand years but in the event collapsed in ruins after a mere dozen, characterized by arguably unequalled evil. It was this outcome – this *Götterdämmerung* – which provides a unique twist to the problem of explaining German history. And it was often under the lengthy shadow of this past that subsequent developments in Germany were perceived.

Many observers puzzled over the apparently peculiar pattern of German history – the allegedly unique German path, or *Sonderweg*. In the later decades of the twentieth century, diverse attempts were made to explain its course. Broadly, whether they wanted to or not, historians of Germany writing after Hitler felt they had to engage in a long-running battle, characterized by local skirmishes over particular periods and issues, on the questions of 'what went wrong?' and 'when did it go wrong?' A rearguard action was mounted by those who wanted to say that not everything did go wrong, or at least, it did not go wrong so early, or it could have been prevented. However far serious historians tried to step outside this sort of framework, the shadow of Hitler stretched a long way back, shaping even counterarguments about the diversity of trends and the non-inevitability of historical outcomes. Moreover, Nazi rule not only had a major impact on subsequent developments in Cold War Europe, divided under the superpowers but also affected the ways in which history after 1945 was viewed and interpreted, from a variety of perspectives.

Given this context, there was a widespread (although far from universal) tendency to castigate Germany's past for what it was not: German history was frequently written in terms of its alleged distortions, failures,

‘turning-points where Germany failed to turn’ (to use A. J. P. Taylor’s phrase). Thus, for example, Germany ‘failed’ to become a centralized state in the Middle Ages. The ‘early bourgeois revolution’ of the 1525 Peasants’ War ‘failed’, because Germany lacked a ‘mature’ bourgeoisie at this very early date (in the view of Marxists following Friedrich Engels). The ‘failure’ to resolve the religious and political conflicts associated with the Reformation led to the petty backwater, *Kleinstaaterei* pattern of the eighteenth century, when a sleepy Germany produced, to be sure, some elevated cultural spirits, but remained at one remove from the real driving forces of history evident in Britain’s industrial revolution or the bourgeois revolution which put an end to the *ancien régime* in France. The pattern of small states allegedly nurtured the bureaucratic, subject mentality displayed by many Germans. Lutheran doctrines of obedience to worldly authority were compounded by Kantian and Hegelian philosophy in a context of absolutist rule over weak civil societies. In her rude awakening of the nineteenth century, Germany became a ‘belated’ nation, with the contradictions between an archaic sociopolitical structure and a rapidly modernizing economy ultimately proving too great to bear without unleashing domestic and eventually international conflicts. Germany’s by now rather more numerous bourgeoisie proved no less ‘immature’ in its incapacity for effective politics. And not only were there structural distortions determining Germany’s long-term road to catastrophe; the ‘land of poets and thinkers’ (*Land der Dichter und Denker*) was also one allegedly characterized by unique cultural patterns emphasizing docility, apoliticism, an exaggerated faith in bureaucracy, excessive militarism and so on.

Clearly a brief sketch such as this inevitably bowdlerizes to a certain extent. Nor can justice be done to the full range of attempts to interpret the long sweep of German history. But underlying many such narratives there is a basic, persistent problem which is worth making explicit. To narrate the course of German history in terms of failures and distortions presupposes a ‘normal’ or ‘healthy’ pattern of development. Sometimes the (often implicit) model is the development of liberal parliamentary democracy in Britain, or the experience of a ‘proper’ bourgeois revolution in France; sometimes there is no real country providing a model but rather a schematic view of ‘stages’ of historical development. Proponents of ‘distorted’ versions of German history may come from a variety of theoretical traditions, including both liberal and Marxist perspectives. What unites them is the tendency to explain whatever is seen as nasty about recent German history in terms of long-term ‘failures’ and ‘deviations’ from some supposedly ‘normal’ pattern of development.

But there have increasingly been vigorous reactions against this older form of approach. Most historians now try to ask, with more open minds, about patterns of actual causation – rather than simple depiction of failures – in

German history. Determinist views have on the whole been replaced by closer analysis of shorter-term developments in the context of longer-term traditions and trends. While some historians devote major attention to the role of individual personalities in shaping the course of political history in particular, others have concentrated their energies on exploring patterns of social, economic or cultural development in more detail. Transnational developments and interrelations, as well as historical comparisons, have been given greater attention, as the nation state has increasingly been seen as only a limited unit of analysis within a wider context. Greater theoretical awareness has led to rejections of simple empiricism and of the belief (based on the views of the nineteenth-century German historian Ranke) that one can seek to recount 'how it actually was'. Lively debates between proponents of different schools of historiography continue with a vengeance, particularly in Germany, where the moral implications of any historical interpretation often seem heightened. Given the historical significance of the rule of Hitler, attribution of causality is also in effect allocation of blame. While this is clearly not the place to embark on a comprehensive historiographical survey, the point may be made that there is no single, universally accepted narrative of German history: the field is characterized by vigorous, sometimes quite acerbic, controversy.

Where does this leave current thinking about twentieth-century German history? There are both broad debates about long-term patterns of continuity and discontinuity, as well as more closely focused arguments on specific issues to do with the collapse of Weimar democracy, the rise of the Nazis and, of course, the explanation of the ultimately inexplicable – the mass murder of over six million people on grounds of 'race' in the death camps and killing fields of war-torn Europe. There are also debates about not only the causation but also the historical consequences or longer-term impact of the Third Reich. From the 1960s there were, for example, discussions about whether the Nazis actually played an important role in putative processes of 'modernization' in twentieth-century Germany. With broader historiographical shifts – the 'cultural turn', transnational perspectives, heightened awareness of previously marginalized groups and identities – over recent decades new questions and approaches emerged.

A further twist to previous debates was given by developments since 1945. Long-term explanations of the allegedly inherent instability of German history, culminating in the Nazi catastrophe, were faced with the extraordinary success and stability of the postwar Federal Republic. What had become of the supposedly irredeemable German national character? Moreover, there was in a sense a double problem: for, in a very different way, the German Democratic Republic proved to be one of the most stable and productive states in the area of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. Before 1989 Western historians often chose largely to ignore the GDR, concentrating

most attention on the liberal democracy of western Germany as the new culmination of German history. Even so, attempts to insert developments after 1945 into a longer view were problematic: basic repression in the communist state of the East, the allegedly clear superiority of the democratic system imposed on the West, were to a large extent the underlying premises of Anglo-American interpretations of postwar German history, while Germans themselves (East and West) were caught in the problematic of the morally and politically loaded evaluation of competing systems. In the context of the Cold War there was a tendency on both sides of the Iron Curtain simply to castigate the other system in terms of one's own values rather than exploring with sensitivity the actual mode of functioning and inherent problems of each system – a more nuanced approach which could easily be denounced as a form of fifth columnism.

There is now, too, a final twist to the problem. Any overview of German history must now explain not only the relative stability – and apparent double solution to the German problem – produced by the division of Germany but also the dramatic historical transformation which occurred with the East German revolution in autumn 1989 and the unification of the two Germanies in October 1990. The years from 1945 to 1990 now form a clearly defined historical period. While there are particular debates about aspects of both West and East German history, scholars disagree about how, if at all, the two histories can (or on some views even should be) combined.¹ To present a coherent account of longer-term trends which culminate in the unification of the two Germanies in October 1990 is to enter into new historiographical terrain. And in the early twenty-first century, with united Germany playing a powerful role in Europe, the Third Reich seems finally to be receding into history, displaced in significance by new transnational challenges, including the impact of economic crises, international terrorism, mass migration, environmental pollution, climate change and global pandemics.

What then is the argument advanced in this book? Any narrative account is based on certain underlying assumptions about the relative importance of different factors. When dealing with large, complex patterns of historical development, and seeking to tease out the threads of continuity, dynamism and fundamental change, a certain intellectual order must be imposed on the mass of historical material. In the case of Germany since 1918 we are dealing with an extraordinary succession of sociopolitical forms yet also with some basic continuities. In my view, twentieth-century German history cannot be explained in terms primarily of personalities – whatever the undoubted importance of the actions and intentions of certain individuals, most notably of course Adolf Hitler – or in terms of global, impersonal forces, whether to do with 'national character', 'cultural traditions' or any form of long-term structural determination. The account developed here

is premised on the assumption that there is a complex interplay between a number of factors and that human beings have to act within the constraints of given circumstances: both external structural and cultural conditions and 'internal' limits posed by their own views, knowledge and assumptions.

In seeking to explain patterns of stability and change, special attention has to be paid to Germany's changing place in the international system; the roles, relationships and activities of different elite groups; the structure and functioning of the economy; the location and aims of dissenting groups; and what may loosely be called the patterns of political culture among different subordinate social groups. Clearly one cannot simply write an abstract formula of this sort, apply it to different historical periods, weigh up the equation and produce a neat outcome. History is not as straightforward or mechanical a process as that. But when considering the history of Germany since the end of the First World War, the formula just presented does appear to have remarkable explanatory power, as we shall see in more detail in the chapters which follow. Let me preview briefly some of the implications of the elements involved.

The 'land in the centre of Europe' has been intimately affected by, as well as affecting, the international balance of power. Germany played a major role in causing the outbreak of the First World War, but the Treaty of Versailles, particularly in the ammunition it gave to revisionist elements in Germany, also played a role in the causation of the Second World War. However much the latter conflict was Hitler's war, it was also in many respects a continuation of the previous conflict and of the tensions arising from the reorganization of national borders in the attempted resolution of that conflict. Defeat in the Second World War was the precondition for the division of Germany – a division that was, however, also predicated on the new Cold War that had arisen between two superpowers that had largely been drawn into European affairs as a result of German aggression. It was the end of the Cold War, initiated by a crumbling Soviet Union, which was the precondition for the end of the division of Germany. From the 1990s onwards, processes of European integration and expansion were in large part both powered and shaped by united Germany, while in the twenty-first century it enjoyed growing visibility and respect in a global context. German history cannot be understood without reference to wider developments on an international stage.

But nor can developments in Germany be explained solely in terms of that wider context. Clearly, at every stage the balance of domestic forces played a major role in the pattern of developments. And here we come to the aforementioned set of domestic factors. First, there is the issue of the roles and relations of different elite groups within any particular political system. When elites fail to sustain that system – as in the Weimar Republic – it has little chance of success. When elites condone it or acquiesce in it –

however apparently unjust the system may be – then it has less chance of being brought down by internal unrest. This proved to be the case, in rather different ways, in both the Third Reich (where elite resistance to Hitler's dictatorship was belated and unsuccessful) and the GDR for a considerable period of time. In the latter case, semi-critical members of the intelligentsia, for example, were in the end accused of having helped to sustain the regime. Interestingly, the speed of the ultimate collapse – effectively a capitulation in the face of mass protest – of the GDR regime had much to do with dissension within the ruling Communist Party itself (both within the GDR and in the Soviet Union) as to the best way forward out of a crisis. By contrast, when a variety of elites in the main support a given political system, then it is much easier to maintain stability (provided of course that other factors are favourable). Thus, much of the success of the Federal Republic could be explained in terms of the support for West German democracy (in contrast to that of the Weimar Republic) on the part of the vast majority of political, economic, moral and intellectual elites.

The issue of elite support is a complex one, with cultural and moral elements involved as well as material factors. But the latter certainly play an important, indeed major, role, and need to be singled out for attention in respect of implications for popular as well as elite responses to the regime. Industrial and agrarian elites will clearly prefer a political system that appears to work to their economic advantage – again, contrast the critiques of Weimar democracy on the part of certain hard-pressed sectors of business and owners of impoverished, indebted agrarian estates, with the support for West German democracy among thriving industrialists and the well-represented farming lobby. At the level of mass politics, too, material success is important. Most ordinary working people will for obvious reasons tend to prefer a political system that appears to deliver the material goods. The importance of rapid economic growth for the anchoring of democracy in the early years of the history of West Germany cannot be overstated. Basic material satisfaction need not however be of this standard to ensure a more negative, but no less important, outcome: the *lack* of mass support for political opposition movements. At a rather basic level, people are less likely to rise in protest against an unjust and repressive system if the risks of rising are not counterbalanced by the pressures of acute material distress: consumerism is always a technique for rulers in repressive regimes to seek a modicum of popular quiescence. ('Bread and circuses' policies are as old as Roman civilization.) This was the case in the peacetime years of the Third Reich: mindful of the need to sustain his personal popularity or 'charisma', on which the political system of the Third Reich was so dependent, Hitler had constantly to balance considerations of consumer satisfaction with the economic imperatives entailed by preparations for war. Similar considerations were pertinent again for much of the 1960s and 1970s in

the GDR, when a combination of limited pride in economic achievements, stress on social policies and eventual consumer satisfaction, and hopes that hard work might bring a better future, helped to remove any potential mass support for the more ascetic programmes of dissident intellectuals. In contrast, much of the political turbulence of both the early and the later years of the Weimar Republic had to do with acute material distress for large numbers of people, hit either by catastrophic inflation or by the fear or reality of rising unemployment. This led to the willingness of large numbers to countenance radical political movements – of the Left or Right – claiming to offer some form of future salvation.

Finally, there are the key issues of political dissent and opposition and of patterns of political culture under given circumstances. It is important for regime stability that political dissent be contained within certain bounds and that it does not develop into broad, proliferating movements of opposition with mass followings. There are a variety of ways in which this containment may occur: through general satisfaction, for example, squeezing dissenters to a marginal fringe; through massive repression and intimidation, effectively excluding dissent from any articulate body politic; through isolation and limited toleration, allowing controlled ventilation of grievances; and in many other ways. The Weimar Republic was subjected to sustained assaults from a variety of quarters, from Left and Right; it ultimately fell prey to the latter, and its successor regime dealt exceedingly brutally with opposition from the former. The Third Reich itself was ultimately felled from without only because of lack of effective opposition from within. For much of the GDR's history it proved possible to contain and isolate intellectual dissent. But for a variety of reasons, dissent was able to proliferate in East Germany in the course of the 1980s, providing the foundation for the broad-based pressures on the regime in the situation of crisis which was inaugurated by Hungary's opening of the Iron Curtain and the ensuing flood of refugees in summer 1989. Clearly, again, no simple formula will adequately summarize the range of approaches, views and ideals of different groups of dissenters at different times. The character of dissent is affected by inherited cultural traditions as well as institutional and other structural circumstances. But it in turn can closely affect patterns of historical change. Thus, for example, the nonviolent dissent shaped under the protection of the East German Protestant churches in the 1980s played a key role in the 'gentle' pattern of the East German revolution and was a very different phenomenon from earlier 'revolutionary' movements in twentieth-century Germany.

Of course this set of factors cannot in any simple way unlock the course of history: there is a role for chance, for accident, for unforeseen combinations of circumstances, for the impact of personality. It must be the task of a narrative account to bring into play, at each turning, the role of specific elements in the actual pattern of events. But I would suggest that the elements

briefly introduced here together provide a useful framework for interpreting and seeking to explain the turbulent, often tragic, course of German history since 1918. In the chapters which follow, their implications at each stage will be explored in more detail. Let me conclude this chapter by outlining the structure and organization of the book.

The subtitle of this book is *The Divided Nation*. Germans in the twentieth century have been 'divided' in at least three different, but interrelated, ways. Most obviously, Germany itself was divided after the war: what remained of Hitler's defeated Reich became two German states, truncated parts of a German nation. The legacies of this division, though fading, are still evident in the united Germany of today. The division of Germany after the war was integrally related to the failure, before 1945, to resolve the problems and tensions of a divided society – tensions which by the end of 1932 had led to near civil war conditions and which Hitler's enforced creation of a 'national community' merely exacerbated and displaced. Under Hitler, there were divisions between those accepted as 'folk comrades' and those rejected as 'community aliens'; there were also divisions within people themselves, between public and private selves, between conformity and distance, in psychological compromises made in order to survive through a dictatorial regime. Finally, the consciousness of the century itself is divided: by the historical caesurae of 1933, 1945 and 1990. For those ousted from the new racially defined *Volksgemeinschaft* (ethnic community) under Hitler, 1933 was the key turning point that irredeemably altered their lives. For those who remained, whether or not they supported the 'Fatherland', for a long time 1945 appeared to be a moment when the 'unmasterable' past seemed to have ended and the apparently eternal present began. A form of consciousness developed which had serious difficulties in connecting the past with the present: that which had been swept away before and that which had been built up after the 'Zero Hour' (*Stunde Null*) of 1945. Finally, the demise of the East German dictatorship in 1989 and unification with the West in 1990 led to a new sense of historical division, with many East Germans looking back with a combination of longing and loathing at a hated state and a nostalgically remembered secure society. Only recently have many Germans sought – in convoluted and problematic ways – to reappropriate and normalize the recent past, to recognize lines of continuity as well as change between the periods before and after 1945, before and after 1990. These deep caesurae are also finally being overcome in historical accounts, with historians increasingly crossing the divides of 1945 and 1990 and entering territory previously allotted to political scientists and sociologists.

This book seeks to confront and make connections across these forms of division. It traces the ways in which the problems and conflicts of the Weimar Republic and Third Reich appeared, in very different ways, to have been

resolved in the apparently more stable postwar era of divided Germany. It seeks, too, to consider continuities across the abyss of 1945 and to locate the admittedly irreducible evil of the Third Reich in the realities and normalities of the longer sweep of twentieth-century German history. It reflects, finally, on the character of united Germany after 1990.

The book is organized as follows. Part I traces the descent of a divided society into the Nazi abyss. Chapters analysing the tensions and strains which led to the collapse of Weimar democracy (Chapters 2 and 3), are followed by two chapters (4 and 5) on the Third Reich in the peacetime and wartime years. A relatively large amount of space is allotted to the issue of the 'Final Solution'. It may, with some justice, be asserted that an undue proportion of this text deals with the Holocaust; however, given not only the shattering significance of the Holocaust for the lives (and deaths) of millions of people but also the pivotal role it plays in all popular prejudices about German history, and the major difficulties it has caused for the self-understanding, self-representation and national identities, of post-war Germans – in different ways in East and West – it seems important to give the actual course of events and the difficulties of their explanation a lengthier, more explicit hearing than merely the customary paragraph or two embedded in a wider narrative of the war that is often found in general histories.

Part II then explores the extraordinary historical experiment of the divided nation. Three chronological chapters (6, 7, 8) are followed by four thematic chapters (9, 10, 11, 12) exploring certain aspects of the two Germanies in more depth. While the economic development of the two Germanies and the question of inner-German and foreign relations are dealt with in the three narrative chapters, which establish a basic chronological framework, the focus in the thematic chapters is primarily social, political and cultural (in a broad sense, including issues of political culture). There is inevitably a (hopefully minimal) degree of repetition across chapters, but by treating certain themes analytically an interpretation of the dynamics of development of the two Germanies may be developed, exploring the degrees and nature of their divergence and elucidating the background to the East German revolution of autumn 1989. This revolution, and the radical historical transformation it inaugurated, forms the subject of Chapter 13.

In Part III, Chapter 14 surveys the new social and political landscape of the Berlin Republic, formed out of the incorporation of the 'five new Länder' (or the defunct GDR) in an enlarged Federal Republic, and sketches some of the complex ways in which the doubly dictatorial past of Germany was reconceived after unification. It explores the ways in which Germany under its first female Chancellor, Angela Merkel, won new respect both nationally and internationally in a dramatically changed global situation. Finally, a concluding chapter engages directly with the issue of historical divides,

the pivotal dates of the preceding century. It reflects more broadly on the major patterns of development in Germany since 1918 and proposes a general framework for interpretation of the course of the last century of German history.

The book seeks, ultimately, to present in a readable and intelligible compass an account of some of the major currents of German history since the end of the First World War in the light of wider debates and controversies.

Part I

A Divided Society: The Weimar Republic and the Third Reich