Review of David Art's The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria, German Politics and Society 24:3, 108-112.

Antonis A. Ellinas, College of the Holy Cross
instead “that the question of Islam in Europe is not a matter of global war and peace. Rather it raises a more familiar set of domestic policy issues about the relations between church and state, and on occasion even prosaic questions about government regulation and equitable policy enforcement” (3). She contends further “that Muslims are simply a new interest group and a new constituency, and that the European political systems will change as the processes of representation, challenge and cooperation take place” (3).

There is a “clash of values,” Klausen admits, but it is driven by older conflicts between European secularists and conservatives unable to reach a consensus about the centrality of “Christianity” in the construction of a (post-Cold War) European identity. National churches of various sorts refuse to part with their own historically negotiated privileges (e.g., guaranteed seats for Anglican Bishops in the British House of Lords), yet would deny Islam state recognition and accommodation as Europe’s third largest religion. Total membership estimates run from fifteen to twenty million, ranging from five million in France to a few hundred thousand in smaller European Union (EU) states. “Christian” biases regarding a plethora of work-free (paid) holidays, symbols, and even business practices are at odds with overwhelmingly secular populations, yet proposals to include a single Muslim holiday in the national calendar or to undercut foreign funding of mosques through domestic subsidies are construed as potential vehicles for the “global spread of Islam” (9).

At the same time, an obvious dearth of home-grown professional clerics has unwittingly created space for ongoing imports of radical imams, with no working knowledge of the language or cultures of their civilizations. In fact, she characterizes both propositions as “counterproductive” and “dangerously misleading,” arguing instead “that the question of Islam in Europe is not a matter of global war and peace. Rather it raises a more familiar set of domestic policy issues about the relations between church and state, and on occasion even prosaic questions about government regulation and equitable policy enforcement” (3). She contends further “that Muslims are simply a new interest group and a new constituency, and that the European political systems will change as the processes of representation, challenge and cooperation take place” (3).

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political refugees. The charge is that the human-rights culture in the new countries of settlement allows radical clerics to do in Europe what they could not do at home, for example, agitate for a Shariah regime. Of course, some splinter groups are more radical, neo-orthodox or fundamentalist than others, but what they share, according to Klausen, “is the opportunistic exploitation of Islam and a new utopia, which re-imagines the ummah as a revolutionary but unawakened subject. They are fringe groups whose appeal is limited to alienated youths and intellectuals. They are also ‘homegrown’ in terms of leadership and recruitment, and indeed are nauseatingly familiar on the European political landscape” (46). The home-grown reference is unclear, since imams heading these groups are transported and financed by outside governments and organizations.

Klausen provides impressionistic reports on her six countries, stressing organizational efforts, structural barriers and problematic ties to external Islamicist qua fundamentalist associations (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood). National politicians insist on “congregational structures” compatible with German, Danish, French and Swedish law. The Germans apply highly legalistic criteria to recognition as a “corporation of pubic law”—as a result, Berlin winds up with the most conservative federation winning a court battle to offer Islamic instruction in public schools. The French build Grand Mosques (to match the Grandes Ecoles), and use typically complicated electoral procedures for national and regional representation in the French Council for the Muslim Faith: 1,500 mosques plus countless associations elect 150 individuals to a general assembly, while seven federations and five grand mosques get to pick twenty-four organizational representatives, added to ten “unaffiliated personalities” appointed for their “moral and spiritual qualities.” The Dutch like to pillarize everything, trying to give everyone a religious base of his/her own (at least until 1983). Britain openly privileges the Anglican Church, impelling Muslims to use social activism to promote religious principles—since race, not religion, is the only category that offers some protection against discrimination. Denmark, meanwhile, “stands out as the country with the least official interest in developing a dialogue with its Muslim residents … The consistent unwillingness of the Danish national and local government to engage in coordinating efforts with Muslims goes a long way to explain the comparative dis-
Netherlands have the most active integration policies, including language and job-training subsidies (62). National debates all bear the markings of a he said-she said exchange: “The Greek chorus of talk shows and opinion pages cry, ‘the problem with Muslims is that they won’t integrate.’ And Muslims cry back, ‘the problem is that you won’t let us in’” (68).

The book’s strongest sections focus on concrete public policy differences with regard to official church-state relations, toleration of halal slaughtering practices, securing Muslim resting places in church- and city-owned cemeteries, headscarf bans, mosque construction, and other daily-life issues. All six countries have a history of constitutionally privileging relationships between the state and national or “recognized” churches. Klausen stresses two models: first, religious monopolies or state sponsorship of officially recognized religions; secondly, those pursuing strict separation of church and state (only found officially in the Netherlands since 1983). By contrast, W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. Van Koningsveld offer a more differentiated picture, offering four church-state models that do more justice to the complex court verdicts Klausen treats later.1

The problems Muslim face in carving out spaces for themselves differ from one political culture to another. Correspondingly, national governments pick different battles to fight in demanding neutrality, laïcité, assimilation or, alternatively, blocking religious equal treatment. “French and German lawmakers decided to make a symbol of the headscarf; British lawmakers decided not to do so” (131). Bavarians resist headscarves by putting crucifixes back into classrooms. Madame Chirac seeks an exemption for her favorite Mother Superior who would otherwise be forced to remove her wimple for her identification photo (138), and Cherie Booth (Blair) defends a sixteen-year-old jilbab (chador)-wearer at Luton High, even though her brother is part of an extremist group (183-184). The net result is the same: states expend more energy on exclusion than inclusion.

Chapter Two infers there are only modest national differences among leaders who were asked whether problems facing Muslims overlap with those of other migrants, or constitute a special class of hardships, in the short, medium and long run. Two-thirds saw the glass “half-full, half empty” (53). Danish Muslims are “unhappy” with the conservative government (dependent on an anti-immigration party); British Muslims are troubled by the Iraq war; and Germany’s Muslims upset by xenophobic violence. Klausen finds “very high levels of discontent” (56), and only a very small group of satisfied residents. Most had observed or experienced biased treatment regardless of their non-practicing status or personal devotion to religion.

Negative treatment by the media is construed as the single largest problem contributing to “Islamophobia.” Discrimination among average citizens is perceived to be higher in France and Sweden, along with a lack of economic opportunities. Danish, Dutch and German Muslims blame politicians’ right-wing rhetoric and the visibility of xenophobic parties (Jacques Chirac seems to have taken up where Jean-Marie Le Pen left off). Threatened “toughness” against radicals reinforces alienation among Muslims in general. Some states find it harder than others to integrate migrants into the regular labor force. Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden hold the worst records according to an OECD study, paradoxically, since Sweden and the
The book’s most significant findings fall into four categories: First, just as most of these countries made the mistake of allowing foreign governments to finance early mosque construction and to provide temporary imams with no knowledge of host country culture, today’s radical elements are still being imported: permanent Muslim residents and naturalized citizens are largely secular or moderate, with Islam comprising only part of their personal identities—they clearly want a separation of church and state. Efforts to educate domestic imams are only beginning. Secondly, the main barrier to securing “equal treatment” for Muslims as Muslims remains the arcane adherence to church-state relations that were codified a century ago to deal with culture wars between Catholics and Protestants, conservatives and anti-clericals. Average citizens remain oblivious to the fact that established “European” norms, policies and customs “are not necessarily secular, but may reflect their long-standing practices that were instituted in order to appease national churches” (108). Third, the major problem with respect to the equal treatment of Muslims as migrants qua permanent settlers is the gap between supra- and national decision-making regarding immigration (unfunded mandates, as it were), on the one hand, and the pressing need for concrete financial resources and culturally sensitive local policies that would facilitate day-to-day integration, on the other. Many conflicts “have little to do with any global ‘clash of civilizations’ and everything to do with often tedious details of policymaking and the application of norms and rules” (107) that seem neutral but produce disparate impacts. Last but not least, the special problems pertaining to vulnerable youth and ostensibly oppressed women are grounded in a lack of educational and occupational opportunity.

For readers not well acquainted with “clash of civilizations debate,” it might have been better to present the big picture (Chapter Five) as a prelude to the first three chapters. Although the author provides summary tables of elite responses, comparative tables regarding the actual number of Muslims in each country, as well as clearer generational delineations among her interview partners would have eased the flow of information. It would have been intriguing, for example, to see how all parliamentarians stack up (maybe in form of a table) against all clerics, as well as against interviewees from all civic associations. For U.S. readers with less direct exposure to Muslim practices, the categorizations are confusing. Early on the author refers to radical Islamicists, conservative democrats and moderate Muslims, displaced later by Euro-Muslims, neo-orthodox Muslims, and fundamentalists. We then encounter “four models of integrating Islam,” labelling respondents secular-integrationists, voluntarists, anti-clericals and neo-orthodox. In fact, these are not models that describe necessary/sufficient conditions for bringing about integration, but rather personal preferences regarding ideal relationship between church and state. A longer listing of actual Islamic “schools” (Sunni, Alevi, Ishmailis, Sufis, Wahabis Shia) first appears on page 163, albeit without further definition. A table indicating predominant types of Islam practiced by the respective ethnic minorities in each country, along with a broad classification of where each school falls along the moderate to radical spectrum would have been very useful.

The text does contain some errors or distortions regarding the German case (where the author admittedly had to rely on translators). The summary of the Constitutional Court’s 2002 decision regarding halal, for example, “misunderestimates” its religious significance by asserting “the decision was based entirely on the butcher’s right to conduct business” (118). Although he was not a citizen, the justices did apply Article 1 (personality rights) and Article 4 (religious freedom), recognizing that his profession was essential for securing the religious needs and rights of his customers. One reads further on page 144: “The 1949 German constitution says that the state must be neutral in matters of religion …” In fact, this is a matter of judicial interpretation: the word neutral does not appear anywhere in Article 4, 6, and 7 of the Basic Law. Nor can it still be said that “Germany has been among the most generous OECD countries with respect to accepting asylum-seekers” (68). Its reputation has always been better than its record, and that record took a dramatic turn for the worse following the 1993 amendments to the Basic Law. In fact, Germany ranked 18th in refugee admissions in 2003. More importantly, it grants official asylum-recognition to less than 5 percent of all applicants, leaving the rest in legal hell—without work permits or long-
term residency rights, and potentially subject to deportation at any
time. The author later describes Fereshta Ludin, the headscarf plain-
tiff, as someone “who came to Germany as a political refugee from
the Taliban” (177). As the daughter of an Afghan diplomat, Ludin had
lived in Germany as a child. Her family moved to Saudi Arabia,
where she “found religion,” then moved back to Germany. She only
began wearing hejab after completing her Abitur in Baden Württem-
berg, where she acquired citizenship in 1995. Since the trial she has
insisted she came to the FRG to escape Saudi oppression of women.

Despite the wealth of detail ostensibly collected in her personal
interviews, Klausen’s treatments across the six countries are not sym-
metrical. One finds German-Dutch, German-French or Swedish-
Danish comparisons in random progression; the headscarf debate
would have made for an interesting legal comparison across all six
cases. Again, it would help to see how all parliamentarians versus all
clerics versus all civic association leaders respond to multiple “sex-
ual politics” issues, for instance. The author could have strengthened
the “legitimacy” of the study by comparing her results with larger,
representative surveys, notably those by Ruud Koopmans and Paul
Statham regarding “religious claims-making.” The Bibliography con-
tains no references to Germany’s best known Islamic experts, most
of whom have published occasionally in English—Gerdien Yonkers,
Werner Schiffauer, Birgit Rommelspacher and Bassam Tibi, just to
name a few.2

There are too many distracting subtitles—on average, one every
two to three pages, sometimes one per page—that are often out of
synch with the actual content. For example, one on “Ideational, Eco-

demic and Institutional Sources of Resistance to Pluralism” consist
of two-and-a-half pages largely commenting on political parties.
Chapter Three is titled “Faith and Politics” but the rest of headings
read “Belief and Politics.” The Appendix elaborates on the definition
of “elites” and “Muslims” but does not include the undoubtedly very
interesting questionnaire. The analogy with Eurocommunism seems
like quite a stretch to this reader, as does the optimistic assessment
of “liberalism” as a framework of Muslim incorporation, which can eas-
ily backfire as “difference-blind liberalism.”3

I agree that European Muslims are “adapting” to the values of
democratic society, that “in politics, it is the consequences of and
not the motives for action that matter” (209) and that money is a
serious problem, insofar as “the moderates are disadvantaged
because they lack resources” (210). This definitely “puts European
governments on the spot. There can be religious pluralism only if
European governments change existing state-Church policies and
public philosophies that generate controversy and political conflict.
The established churches also face an unaccustomed challenge …” (211).
Jytte Klausen concludes, “the growth of Islamic terrorism is incident-
tal to the conflicts over the accommodation of Muslim relig-
ious practices in Europe but it lends urgency to a problem that has
been in the making for decades” (211). One can only respond: Amen!
Or perhaps even better: Allahu Akbar!

Notes
David Art, The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

**Reviewed by Antonis Ellinas, Politics, Princeton University**

Public deliberation matters. Not only does it change political culture but it also affects important political outcomes. David Art’s book masterfully demonstrates that public debates about the Nazi past nourished different political cultures in Germany and Austria, pushing the far Right along divergent electoral trajectories. He argues that in Germany the culture of contrition blocked the rise of the Republikaner (REP) while in Austria the culture of victimization facilitated the spectacular electoral advances of the Freedom Party (FPO). How?—by affecting the reactions of mainstream parties, media actors and civil society to the far Right. In both countries major parties tried to co-opt the agenda of right-wing populists but in Germany the elite additionally confronted and marginalized the far Right, adopting what Art calls a “combat strategy.” By contrast, in Austria the mainstream parties cooperated with the far Right, major media outlets tacitly supported it and civil society remained relatively passive.

Students of political ideas will be impressed with Art’s analysis of German and Austrian public debates. His book goes beyond the claim that “ideas matter” to show how public debates help generate new ideas and change elite strategies. To explain ideational change, the author develops a framework for operationalizing the otherwise murky concept of public debates. Defined as a set of exchanges among elite political actors reported in the media, a public debate must have sufficient breadth, duration and intensity. The next step in his framework involves the identification of the causal mechanisms that link public debates to ideational change. According to the three-step sequence laid out in Chapter Two, public debates create and consolidate frames, change elite opinion and shift the boundaries of legitimate political discourse.

Art then skillfully applies this framework to the “most similar” cases of Germany (Chapter Three) and Austria (Chapter Four). His analysis begins in the 1980s because “it was during this period that a genuine politics of the past emerged.” In both countries public debates about Nazism formed critical junctures in the process of coming to terms with the past, yielding two distinct political cultures. In Germany, the debates caused by the Bitburg incident, the Richard von Weizsäcker speech and the Historians’ Debate (Historikerstreit) in the mid-1980s helped establish a contrition culture, as elite opinion converged around the critical remembrance of the past. Public deliberation over Nazism changed the boundaries of the legitimate discursive space and produced “political correctness, German style” that punished those who deviated from the newly established deliberative norms (e.g., the forced resignation of Bundestag president Phillip Jenninger in 1988). By contrast, the Waldheim affair of 1986 facilitated the persistence of a victim culture. In fact, the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) and its sympathizers in the conservative media successfully introduced the “new victim frame,” presenting the international outrage against Kurt Waldheim’s wartime past as a campaign orchestrated by American Jews to victimize Austria. This view was opposed by a small segment of civil society, the Greens and later, the Socialists, who created and disseminated an Austrian version of the contrition frame, demanding the critical examination of Austria’s Nazi past. But until the Austrian Wende of 2000, it was the victim frame that dominated national politics, injecting the public discourse with high doses of xenophobia, ethnocentrism and antisemitism.

Public debates are an elusive concept and Art’s book must be praised for the careful comparison of their evolution and their impact. To show how frames evolve, he relies on the qualitative analysis of newspaper content that brings to surface the stark contrast between the German and the Austrian tabloid press. Whereas the German Bild-Zeitung used the debates as an opportunity to reflect critically on the past, in Austria “the Krone became the key actor” disseminating the victim frame. To show the effects of public debates on elite opinion Art interviewed 125 politicians in Germany and Austria whose responses he systematically coded and later placed on a “contrition scale.” His measure clearly shows the relative convergence (or, in the case of Austria, polarization) of opinion within and across the two countries. Importantly, it also demonstrates that attitudes toward the Nazi past do not correlate with age.

Whereas the first half of the book treats political ideas as dependent variables, the second half explores their explanatory potential. Art argues that ideas affect the performance of far-Right parties by
shaping the reactions of mainstream parties, the media and civil society to the extreme Right. In both countries, mainstream actors chose to co-opt the far-Right’s agenda but in Germany they also confronted and marginalized it. Through interviews, participant observations and content analysis Art demonstrates in Chapter Five that major German parties refused to cooperate with the far Right, mainstream media criticized its views and civil society stood up against it. In Chapter Six, he shows that their Austrian counterparts were more willing to work with Jörg Haider’s FPO and to publicize its views. Overall, Germans adopted a combat strategy, but Austrians did not. This, according to Art, accounts for the puzzling failure of the far Right in Germany (it received 1.4 percent of the vote in national elections held between 1986 and 2002) and for its troubling electoral advances in Austria (the FPO averaged 18 percent during the same period).

Students of the far Right will appreciate the important contributions Art makes to the now voluminous literature on the topic. One such contribution is the systematic analysis of media effects, which are usually neglected in analyses of extreme-Right performance. This book offers a corrective by highlighting the stark differences in the way the mainstream press treated the far Right in the two countries. In Germany, a “journalistic ethos” compelled media editors to warn their readers against right-wing populism while in Austria the tabloid press tacitly supported the far Right. More quantifiable measures (e.g., of media exposure and support) will help refine these findings in the future. It is plausible, for example, that a publication’s open hostility to the far Right might benefit, not harm it as the author suggests. Austrian experts have made this case about News and Profil, which kept a critical stance against Haider but showed no hesitation to give him free exposure on their cover pages. Art’s book opens the way for future research on media effects, filling an important gap in the literature on the far Right.

Future research on the far Right might also benefit from Art’s consideration of yet another neglected actor, civil society. As the last two empirical chapters suggest, numerous anti-Nazi demonstrations and protests created enormous organizational obstacles and social pressures for the German far Right. To the contrary, “Austrian civil society did not organize early or actively enough to significantly disrupt the FPO’s organization” nor did it exercise social pressures on far Right activists. Would a more active civil society have stopped Haider’s electoral advances? If so, why did the massive demonstrations in 1993 against Haider’s anti-immigrant “Austria-first” initiative fail to damage FPO’s electoral support? Put more broadly, under what conditions does civil society activism damage the electoral fortunes of the far Right? Art’s analysis does not provide definitive answers but helps raise important questions about the impact of civil society on electoral outcomes.

The book’s focus on the partisan political context is a useful departure from the literature’s preoccupation with sociological, economic and institutional variables. Insights from numerous interviews with party politicians push the analysis beyond the description of mechanistic shifts along a Downsian Left-Right scale that are common in the literature and allow the consideration of the ideational content of political competition. Art shows, for example, that elite norms against historical revisionism were critical in the German Christian Democrats’ decision to rule out cooperation with the REPs—whereas in the absence of such norms, Austrian mainstream parties cooperated with the FPO at the local, and since 2000, at the national level, helping to legitimize its claims. Nevertheless, the concentration on mainstream parties alone, risks viewing far-Right parties as hapless victims of the political environment, unable to influence their electoral fortunes. For the small and unimportant German far-Right parties the analytical pitfall from the focus on major parties is limited. But in the case of Austria, the neglect of the far-Right’s strategies, leadership and appeals might have important explanatory consequences. Given the original size and subsequent growth of the FPO it is reasonable to expect that Haider’s own strategy was nearly as important as that of his rivals. The blending of xenophobic with anti-establishment appeals gave the party a broader reach than the nationalist claims of his German counterparts. And his gradual departure from pan-Germanism, especially after the early 1990s, made the FPO more acceptable or salonfähig. Indeed, by the late 1990s, the FPO was such a sizable force in Austrian politics that its rivals’ strategies as well as the political culture were arguably shaped by the far Right. Art admits as much when he writes that “as Haider’s power grew, politicians increasingly feared taking contrite positions on the Nazi past and thus opening themselves to Haider’s attack.”
Empirical quibbles aside, the biggest challenge for future work will be to come up with generalizable propositions about the effects of political ideas on partisan politics. When confronted with this challenge, the book’s last chapter suddenly drops the earlier emphasis on public debates and focuses on elite strategies. This does not necessarily damage Art’s argument but points to the need to go beyond public debates to fully understand ideational change. Ideas can be generated by broad socioeconomic processes, such as postindustrialism or globalization, or by instrumental political agents who seek to enhance their political capital by manipulating public anxieties. To travel across space and time such ideas might need to be abstracted from the specificities of historical memory. Important as it is for countries like Germany and Austria, the contestation of history needs to become part of a bigger conceptual schema to capture the full range of ideas over which mainstream and far-Right parties contest. Art points in the right direction when he mentions that historical memory is a proxy for “national identity”—indeed, this might be the broader idea at stake when parties debate the Nazi past. The use of this broader concept will make ideas more fit to travel and will allow the consideration of other important themes that are thought to affect the performance of the far Right like immigration and asylum policy. Put simply, party competition over national identity can help account for the electoral performance of the far Right.

By linking the performance of the far Right with ideational change, the book provides an exciting new direction for future scholarship on the topic. Its theoretical contribution and empirical insights will be highly valued by students of European and comparative politics.


**Reviewed by John Bendix, Universität Göttingen**

One purpose of this study, Michael Bernhard tells us at the outset, is to explore the problem of institutional choice. By that he means questions including why new democracies pick particular institutions or why some place executive power in presidents rather than prime ministers. Early on, he also asserts that accounts of institutional choice “look to the preferences and actions of self-interested political actors” (6), and it is those actors that structure the process of choices that lead to an institutional outcome. He then takes us through a brief discussions of Robert Dahl (polyarchy), Juan Linz (crafting parliamentarism or presidentialism; democratic breakdown), Giovanni Sartori (party system typology), Maurice Duverger (more on parties), as well as other luminaries in the field to posit a model that institutional actors shape the process of institutional choice. That process leads to institutional outcomes, and those outcomes, together with social, economic, and political context variables, lead to the success or failure of democracy. He does devote attention to the limitations of the institutional choice orientation, including problems associated with the notion of “interest,” how actors’ preferences are determined, and issues of evidence. A rather interesting point one wishes he had addressed more fully is the assertion that there are four different mechanisms by which institutions can be chosen: consensus, imposition, splitting differences, and trading support across issues. Bernhard also self-critically admits that lumping together social, economic, and political context variables may be too amorphous, although he does try, where relevant, to include these more fully as factors in his case studies.

The bulk of the book is then devoted to case studies of Weimar Germany, interwar Poland, the Federal Republic of Germany, and postcommunist Poland. The message of each is summarized neatly by the subtitles to the chapters. In the case of Weimar Germany, it was a matter of “defective institutional choice,” which Bernhard largely attributes to “a highly proportional voting system and
presidentialism with a powerful president and weak chancellor” (75), or, in short, to institutional variables. The unfavorable contextual variables, economic in nature, but not helped by ideological cleavages, then contributed to government instability, polarization, and ultimately a deadlocked political system that led to a constitutional dictatorship. Better institutional choices, one might say, could have saved Weimar. However, one wonders how it would sit with Americans who think well of their own system—elements such as majority voting and a powerful president—to hear it be described as a “defective institutional choice” that has led currently to polarization and a deadlocked political system.

In the case of interwar Poland, characterized as “institutional choice by imposition,” the problem was one of interaction between institutional choices and various contextual variables. That led to “unstable and ineffective government and the presence of an excluded charismatic leader with the capacity to make a coup d’état” (111). Here, rather than only finding standard institutional variables (parliamentalism, difficulty in holding early elections, proportional representation, a weak executive, and a confused military command structure), an additional set of factors (called “legacies of the partitions”) comes into play (hybrid economic structure, three separate sets of Polish political actors, foreign authoritarian rule).

Four of these factors influence the direct contextual variables (politicized socioeconomic cleavages, fiscal problems in the state, incorporation of minority populations, and emergence of a charismatic leader)—all of which lead to unstable and ineffective government, and the excluded charismatic leader, General Josef Piłsudski, carrying out a coup. Not to put too fine a point on it, but this complex depiction of variables and factors influencing one another only shows what we knew already: interwar Poland was an unstable mess.

Fortunately, when we come to postwar West Germany—the subtitle is “learning from history”—things appear more encouraging. Yet, here the author becomes rather more vague, and moves away from the language of variables into the terminology of “sets of conditions,” including the socioeconomic context (better in 1945 than in 1918), institutional learning (the Basic Law was a much better designed democratic constitution than its Weimar predecessor), and the conditions of defeat (much more conducive to democratization in 1945 than in 1918). In short, *Bonn ist nicht Weimar*. Bernhard does mention other well-known issues—that the Basic Law emerged from compromises between German politicians and the (generally helpful) Allies, as did its post-war federalist structure—while laying some emphasis on “the continued strength of the institution-framing coalition of political forces as critical” (181) in the early years.¹

Last, the chapter on postcommunist Poland—“institutional choice as an extended process”—is, not surprisingly, a story in progress. Despite contemporary Poland having “made a series of defective institutional choices,” it has been able to correct them along the way, and there has been a “fortuitous combination of contextual and institutional variables” (243) that have helped produce democratic success in Poland. One wonders a little whether Americans would like to be accused of having made a “defective institutional choices” back in the late 18th century by having opted for a presidential rather than a parliamentary system, or indeed, to what standard of perfection Poland is being held here.

Given the wealth of detail provided in the individual chapters, one needs to take Bernhard’s claim about “the critical importance of the strength of the institution-framing coalition in the period following the phase of institutional choice” (259) at face value. Yet, in the rather different context of policy adoption, a similar point has been made, cogently and convincingly by Wade Jacoby.² Choices, in short, need to accord with the wishes and desires of the adopters of programs, policies, or systems—whether cast in terms of political institution-framing coalitions or in terms of what is needed domestically in order to learn lessons from abroad.

In the end, I remain unconvinced by the model driving this study, and by the premises of institutional choice more generally. Bernhard himself acknowledges that with respect to the “interested actors,” the primary variable driving his model, alternate perspectives could be provided by Jon Elster’s multidimensional concept of interest or Max Weber’s *Wertrationalität*. But these suggestions are dropped as soon as they are mentioned and play no part in the later analysis. My lack of enthusiasm, however, derives more deeply from the sense that constraints and not choice are more typically at work, and that social, economic, and political contexts are not variables at all but the matrix within which institutional choice—if one has choice
at all—can be made. German and Polish worlds have been far more Schumpeterian (“social structures, types and attitudes are coins that do not readily melt”) than Bernhard wishes to acknowledge. Frankly, I find it a very American conceit to believe that a country can just remake itself, or freely choose which path to take, or reinvent its political system, and thereby emerge democratic. Political transitions to democracy, after all, “usually emerge from nonlinear, highly uncertain, and imminently reversible processes involving the cautious definition of certain spaces and moves on a multi-layered board.”3 I think it also significant that in the two cases of relative success he examines, postwar West Germany and postcommunist Poland, institutional choice only becomes possible once outsiders change the rules of the game, whether by war and occupation in the former, or the collapse of Soviet state socialism in the latter. To place as much explanatory weight as Bernhard does on the abilities of the “institution-framing coalition … to maintain its strength” bears too much the hallmark of trying to find that one almighty lever, that one thing American politicians can in good conscience support as they pursue their vision of democracy.

Notes

1. An alternate, more sociologically-oriented, bottom-up account can be found in Robert Moeller, West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era (Ann Arbor, 1997), which could serve as corrective inasmuch as it emphasizes that political forces alone were by no means the whole story.


Reviewed by Charles King, Government, Georgetown University

How do political parties make foreign policy? In this carefully argued book, Brian C. Rathbun examines this question by focusing on three European powers’ responses to the Balkan crises of the 1990s. Britain, France, and Germany were critical players in the international response to the break-up of Yugoslavia, from the earliest tentative forays of the then-European Community to the armed interventions by NATO in Bosnia and Kosovo. But, as Rathbun shows, in each of these countries, the national debates over the timing, nature, and extent of intervention cannot be read easily from an understanding of national cultures, Realpolitik concerns or old-fashioned institutional politics. In each instance, political parties staked out identifiable positions that were, by and large, reflections of the “ideologies” of the key political parties in the parliaments of each state.

Rathbun contrasts his account with culturalist arguments that take a particular nation-state’s historical experience as a critical factor in conditioning its foreign policy. As these cases reveal, history matters, but it matters in different ways depending on the level of analysis. Nation-states might well be influenced by a common historical experience, but that does not at all prevent genuine disagreement among political parties over discrete policy options. Parties, it turns out, understand history in different ways, seeing it through the lens of their own ideological position on a left-right spectrum. Likewise, Rathbun takes issue with Realpolitik understandings of foreign policymaking. None of the countries examined here could be said to have had a vital national security interest in the outcome of the Bosnia and Kosovo wars. Indeed, it was domestic-level debates about the degree to which national interest was capacious enough to allow for the plight of Bosnians and Kosovars to be interpreted as somehow part of the interest of Britons, French, and Germans.

Rathbun argues that exclusive and inclusive interpretations of the national interest were at stake in the 1990s and that these inter-

**Reviewed by** Catherine Plum, History and Political Science, Western New England College

Judd Stitziel’s monograph *Fashioning Socialism* provides an excellent analysis of production and consumption in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) through an in-depth study of the textile and garment trade. Stitziel’s work encompasses the four decades of communist rule beginning with early symptoms of the fragility of the GDR economy, including a lack of quality raw materials, the need for Western currency and the specter of deficits in lieu of profitability. For party leaders who valorized long-range planning and production goals, clothing was a particularly challenging sector of the economy given the unpredictability and rapid retreat of fashion trends. Stitziel concludes that the East German regime ultimately failed in its attempts to construct an alternative socialist culture possessing its own aesthetic and core consumer values. Overall, he is quite successful in his attempt to use fashion as a lens to explore moments of conflict and consensus between and among central and local state officials and consumers.

Stitziel’s carefully-researched study is a welcome addition to a developing literature on economic history and consumption patterns in East Germany. While inroads have been made into GDR consumption on a macro level and scholars have begun to explore the housing market, the dynamics of HO shops (Handels-Organisation) and Intershops and the gendering of consumption, this text is our first detailed study of the GDR fashion industry. His rationale for studying the production and sale of clothing proves to be well-founded. For example, Stitziel argues cogently that clothing was not just a basic need in East Germany and one of the promised benefits of an egalitarian socialist state. Clothing was also a key point of competition between East and West because of its high visibility. Contributing to the story of the development of the socialist command economy, this study also reveals that the GDR’s fiscal crisis began quite early as a result of prioritizing politics above economic expediency. By examining the textile industry, Stitziel also emphasizes the

interpretations in turn derived from distinct ideologies on both the Left and the Right. This is a compelling way of seeing the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policymaking, but part of the argument seems to rest on the reality of the particular foreign policy that Rathbun is studying—that is, peace enforcement and humanitarian intervention. But the degree to which we allow a real phenomenon called “humanitarian intervention” may well turn out to be terribly time bound. It would not be surprising to find, in a decade or two, that we understand the interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo in ways very different from how we understood them at the time—as much more about Realpolitik, the “CNN effect,” the partisanship and competitive strategies of key elites, or particular conceptions of who was killing whom. What Rathbun has done is to show that however future historians might see the Balkan wars, at the time the debate was precisely about those issues which became of even more concern after 9/11: under what circumstances does the national interest demand the use of military force abroad?

On a final note, *Partisan Interventions* is based on extensive analysis of parliamentary debates, elite speeches, and around a hundred interviews with senior policymakers and other officials. The paragraphs on method at the beginning of the book are models of their kind: a careful summary of how the author “read” primary texts and public statements, making inferences about speakers’ motivations only after careful cross-checking. Those paragraphs in particular ought to be distributed to students in qualitative methods seminars.
role played by surpluses in the East German economy alongside the well-known shortages. Stitzel devotes a whole chapter to the disturbing, embarrassing and costly problem of cheap, unwanted textile goods including clothes. If consumer complaints revolved around the dearth of quality, up-to-date fashion apparel, the presence of cheap textile and clothing surpluses reveals a significant cog in the wheel of East German production present as early as the 1950s. This story provides an important qualification given that the GDR is generally seen as the most successful socialist economy. As Stitzel points out, nations like Hungary and Czechoslovakia eventually produced textile goods of a higher quality than East Germany and at a lower cost. Unfortunately Stitzel’s account never extends beyond this discussion to really grapple with the development and limits of East German nationalism vis-à-vis other socialist nations.

Organized thematically Fashioning Socialism surveys the East German fashion industry from the acquisition of raw materials and clothing production to the distribution, pricing, purchase, adaptation and reception of manufactured clothing. Stitzel first introduces his readers to the plight of the clothing industry in the 1950s, when factory workers were forced to churn out cloth and clothing from poor quality raw materials on outdated equipment. Shortages and the dearth of decent quality goods meant that the state, its traders and consumers all resorted to illegal means and hoarding. Stitzel portrays the New Economic Plan of the 1960s as being ineffective in the textile industry despite efforts to decentralize and introduce some market forces. He argues further that even as techniques improved in the 1960s to measure consumer demand, industrial planners essentially ignored the newly founded Institute for Market Research. In addition to disagreement over the role of demand in a socialist state, government officials also espoused different opinions on the influence of Western fashion trends. Stitzel maintains that some SED leaders naturally looked to the West and especially Parisian haute couture as a model and assumed the need for individual expression in clothing, whereas others were strong critics of Western styles. A primary point of ideological and material conflict consisted of the presence of exclusive boutiques which sought to acquire and sell high-fashion clothing in a society where class distinctions were supposed to be erased in time. Textile industry leaders found themselves in a difficult position in the sense that the socialist promise required low prices for basic goods, whereby luxury goods needed to be more expensive to make up the difference, but the presence of expensive luxury goods belied the theoretical notion of a society without clear class divisions and inequalities. Lying under the surface of Stitzel’s investigation is the question of GDR leaders’ sense of possessiveness of state-manufactured goods. He does however make clear leaders’ concern with the image of the state. Price fluctuations and the case of large discounts at end-of-season sales called into question the fairness of original prices in addition to their quality. Ultimately, despite state efforts to the contrary, consumers considered goods in normal stores to be substandard and those in the growing number of elite Equisit stores to be normal.

In his discussion of foreign influence, Stitzel’s study of fashion is quite helpful in that it reveals broader Western influences and the preeminence of French haute couture instead of being wed to a typical discussion of Americanization and Soviet influence. Nevertheless, when Stitzel reveals that the Inquisit stores were given French names such as Charmant or Madeleine (127), the author fails to engage in further comment. Sometimes the author makes allusions to the impact of stores in West Berlin—such as when East Berlin stores had an end-of-season sale scheduled before the West Berlin version in early 1960 (111). Stitzel’s study would be even more revealing and interesting if he could find evidence of and further evaluate the relationship between Western and East German marketing and sales techniques.

While maintaining an awareness of the larger context and long-term trends, Stitzel avoids both a “top-down” and a “bottom-up” approach by carefully examining interactions between levels of the state apparatus and citizens. By exploring communication between officials as well as press coverage, Stitzel challenges the notion that state workers passed down a coherent and consistent official party line—a viewpoint that GDR scholars should consider in future studies. Regarding media references to fashion in articles and cartoons, this text reveals a measure of freedom of consumer expression and state responsiveness that may surprise readers. For example, the media played with the name of the people-owned factory called VEB Fashion Print (VEB Modedruck), calling it VEB Misprint (VEB Fehldruck).
Of course, Stitzel and his readers would do well to distinguish the difference between press support of political values and cultural spheres tied to nationalism on the one hand and press treatment of topics such as textiles and fashion, where German traditions had never been internationally determinant. Stitzel advocates the well-conceived notion of self-censorship, whereby party officials, state employees and journalists largely monitored their own speech so that managers rarely had to specifically cut out passages. At the same time his study suggests that self censorship and censorship of views on fashion were not as restrictive as readers might assume given that some published cartoons and articles assumed the superiority of fashion in the West.

Press articles and cartoons are just one source that Stitzel uses effectively. Throughout the monograph Stitzel weaves together narrative and evidence using a variety of published and unpublished sources including anything from government documents, trade publications and fashion magazines to images from films and musicals, cartoons and citizen petitions. The citizen petitions Stitzel analyses are particularly interesting and useful sources for his analysis of moments of conflict and consensus between consumers and government officials. He identifies the wide variety of petitions which ranged from letters draped in socialist language and valorizations to petitions that were sarcastic and questioned the gap in living standard between normal citizens and government leaders. Stitzel argues cogently that the petitions actually helped to stabilize the East German society to some extent even as the general frustrations with consumption undermined the regime over time. Overall Stitzel’s text is particularly informative and innovative in its study of consumer reception. His sources for estimating consumer reactions are highly revealing, including store and fashion show guest book comments as well as the petitions referred to above. At times, Stitzel could delve further into actions taken by East Germans to figuratively vote with their choices of consumer goods. For example, given the fact that West Berlin goods were both cheaper and generally of a higher quality than goods available in East Germany, how far did East Germans from outside of East Berlin go to try to acquire goods from West Berlin? Additionally, when goods were smuggled in or sent from West German relatives, what sorts of goods were common aside from the obvious categories of nylons and fashion jeans for teens?

Language analysis and an awareness of place occasionally accent Stitzel’s discussion of reception. He demonstrates a necessary sensitivity to location given the limits of consumer choices in small towns and rural areas. Media and rural dwellers all demanded that rural areas get their fair share “both in quantity and quality” (146). With respect to the special site of the Equisit store, Stitzel gives his readers a good sense of GDR citizens’ derisive slang. Evidently these stores were popularly called “Ulbricht’s profiteering huts” or “Uwubus” which can be translated as “Ulbricht’s profiteering huts” (134).

Gender also plays a significant role in Stitzel’s analysis of producers and consumers. Textile and garment workers were generally female and women in the GDR were responsible for most purchases. The author provides a humorous and useful examination of the contrast between the so-called Frau Mode (Ms. Fashion) and Herr Geschmack (Mr. Taste), gendered distinctions that assume the traditional notion that female consumers are easily swayed by short-lived fads and that men are more rational with a stable and enduring sense of taste. Stitzel takes into consideration the class-level and employment status of different female historical actors. He alerts his readers to the fact that many of the women making their own clothes or getting friends and relatives to make them were not only the so-called “stronger women” who needed extended or plus sizes, but also working women in the middle and upper classes who were unsatisfied with the styles available. He acknowledges that working women with considerable job responsibilities sacrificed their free time in these endeavors—free time being a scarce commodity indeed given the unequal distribution of childcare and domestic work responsibilities. Similarly Stitzel should consider whether lack of time and shopping frustration were likely factors contributing to the presence of female “impulse buyers” in GDR society. Stitzel also appears to be somewhat dismissive of men’s “lesser concern with dressing fashionably” (150). A stronger evaluation of young men’s fashion trends would improve this study even if that meant searching for youth memoirs and the use of oral history interviews.

This text would be an excellent addition to a graduate-level seminar on East Germany or on post-1945 Europe given Stitzel’s

**Reviewed by Michael Bernhard, Political Science, Pennsylvania State University**

Cindy Skach’s *Borrowing Constitutional Designs* is a worthwhile and concise book devoted to understanding how and when semi-presidentialism promotes the consolidation of democracy. It is built around theoretical insights concerning the relationship between semi-presidentialism and party systems, and two in-depth case studies of historically important examples of the regime type—Weimar Germany and the French Fifth Republic. It advances our understanding of semi-presidential beyond the last generation of scholarship on this increasingly important form of democracy.

Her major theoretical insight is that the distribution of seats within parliament leads to rather different behaviors and outcomes in semi-presidentialism. She elaborates three different subtypes on the basis of the relationship between presidential and legislative power. When the president’s party has a majority in parliament (or heads a majority coalition government) she labels this “consolidated majority government.” When there is a majority government from a party not allied with the president, this is “divided majority government.” When no party can form a majority government, then there is “divided minority government.” The central argument of the book is that the ability of semi-presidential democracy to govern effectively and sustain itself is enhanced by consolidated majority government and undermined by divided minority government.

The evidence for this is based on the discussion of two famous historical examples of semi-presidentialism. These thorough case analyses make up the bulk of the book. The Weimar Republic in many ways has functioned as the prototype of democratic breakdown in the comparative politics literature. With its highly proportional system of representation and highly divided society (along class, religious, and ideological lines), it suffered from long periods of divided minority government and became a form of constitutional dictatorship under Hindenburg in the years prior to Adolf Hitler’s...
One aspect of Skach’s account that I found underdeveloped was her discussion of how the institutions she analyzes were chosen. Quite often she resorts to abstract arguments concerning the merits or defects of institutional design from an older tradition in constitutional law. From the point of view of an intuitionist political science, such arguments can be limiting. In particular, they can hide the real motivations why political actors support certain institutional configurations—notably considerations of political and economic interest broadly conceived. For instance, Skach explains Weimar’s choice of an almost perfectly proportional electoral system to “assure political equality among parties” (39). However, the story of how almost consensual support for PR came together at the outset of the Weimar period was more complex than this. The Social Democrats, looking retrospectively at how their pluralities under the Kaiser did not translate into seats equal to their vote shares, opted for PR as a guarantee of their voting strength. By contrast, the bourgeois parties took a prospective viewpoint and feared that their own disorganization in the face a radicalized electorate would lead to strong majorities for the Social Democrats under any winner-take-all system. They opted for PR in order to preserve a place in the political system and dilute the strength of the Left. Thus, the two antagonistic political camps opted for PR for very different reasons.

Similarly, in her discussion of the adoption of semi-presidentialism in the Weimar Republic, Skach cites arguments for a president as a counterweight to an unchecked parliamentarism of what some German actors deemed the “French” sort (43). The bourgeois parties framed these arguments out of fear of a parliamentary majority of the Left, but their argument did little to convince the Social Democrats on the merits of a presidency. Rather, the reason why the Social Democrats went along was two-fold. First, the persistent attempts of violent opponents on the far Right to seize power convinced them of the need for a strong executive that could respond forcefully. Second, the Social Democrats also were able to assure that their leader, Friedrich Ebert, would be the first president, named by the constituent assembly (rather than through general elections).

Skach also makes some additional interesting observations that help to explain the success or failure of semi-presidentialism. Given that stability seems to be a function of the way that power in the
legislature is distributed, how well semi-presidentialism works is highly dependent on electoral outcomes. Here she lines up with an increasing number of scholars who argue that the impact of institutional features (e.g., executive power) is contingent on the full ensemble of institutions with which it is aligned (e.g., electoral system), as well as socio-economic context (e.g., cleavage structures). Another important observation she makes concerns the attitude of the president towards political parties. The contrast between Weimar’s last president, Paul von Hindenburg, and De Gaulle, Mitterand, and Chirac could not be starker. Even a charismatic military leader like De Gaulle was prepared to work with the political parties to build winning coalitions in parliament, in a way that Hindenburg’s Junker disgust for mundane politics and the common man did not permit. The contrast between Ebert, a quintessential party man, and Hindenburg is also important as well in understanding Weimar’s failure.

Skach also notes the trend toward adoption of semi-presidentialism in a large number of new democracies, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. For these cases, she applies her findings from the Weimar and Fifth Republic to paint a cautionary picture, arguing that semi-presidentialism may not be a one-size-fits-all recipe for democratic consolidation. Again she stresses the critical importance of the party and electoral systems context as key to whether semi-presidentialism functions well. This cautionary advice is well taken, but I wish she would have carried the analysis even further. My sense is that the experiences of many new democracies support her contentions about party-system context. For example, the lack of strong majorities in the Russian Duma has been one of the factors that has promoted presidential dictatorship, and in Poland the adoption of a less proportional electoral system and the better definition of the responsibilities of the president and prime minister have promoted democratic consolidation. It would have been worth looking more deeply into these two cases and others, because they would provided a firmer evidentiary basis for the insights that Skach gained from her understanding of Weimar and the Fifth Republic.

Notes

1. For example, Matthew Soerg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies; Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering*