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Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev. An Analysis Based on New Archival Evidence, Memoirs, and Interviews by Hannes Adomeit

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German foreign policy in the 1970s and 1980s can be generalized and applied to many other western states. The author even appears to realize this (31) without ever questioning the validity of his approach and his conclusions.

Instead, the value of the book lies in the author's competent analysis of West German foreign policy under Chancellors Schmidt and Kohl from 1975 to 1989. Of particular interest are the sections on the Schmidt government's withdrawal of support for the European Regional Development Fund in 1975, the development of the European Monetary System in the late 1970s, the complicated decision-making and widespread public opposition regarding NATO's "dual track" plan between 1977 and 1983, as well as the evolution of the Single European Act in the mid-1980s.

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Hannes Adomeit. *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev. An Analysis Based on New Archival Evidence, Memoirs, and Interviews.* Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998. Pp. 609. DM 69,—.

The relationship between Russia and Germany has shaped our time like few others. World war, powerful dictatorships, and mass political murder have haunted Germans, Russians, and people inbetween throughout the twentieth century. Hannes Adomeit speaks to this difficult German-Russian relationship from personal experience: a childhood in Memel, East Prussia (now Klaipeda in Lithuania), family diaspora in East and West Germany, and a long career as a scholar and academic analyst in Europe and North America. In *Imperial Overstretch*, Adomeit focuses on the Soviet role in the division and reunification of Germany and the German role in the dissolution of the Soviet system.

He concludes that the Soviet attempt to incorporate its zone of occupation (eventually the German Democratic Republic or GDR) into a Soviet empire was unplanned, a grave blunder that nonetheless followed an imperial logic. It provided short-term economic gain for postwar reconstruction but soon became an economic and political liability. The GDR, Adomeit argues, was a burdensome component in an "imperial overstretch" (à la Paul Kennedy) that weakened and finally doomed the Soviet Union itself. The reunification of Germany in 1990, like its division after 1945, was an unforeseen consequence of internal changes within the Soviet Union and its empire.

Readers who expect a comprehensive treatment of Soviet-German relations since 1945 may be disappointed, for *Imperial Overstretch* does not quite live up to its expansive title. Adomeit focuses mostly on the relationship between the USSR and the GDR and even more narrowly on Gorbachev and German reunification (421 of 575 pages are devoted to this era, 82 pages cover 1945 to the 1980s). Ultimately, he is interested in the Soviet Union (not Germany), and some analytical tension

exists between the desire to provide an extensive study of the Soviet side of German reunification while still exploring larger questions about the fall of the Soviet Union. There is too little detailed analysis of late Soviet history or the other areas in the Soviet empire to put the German factor into broader context. The place of Germany (and imperial overstretch in general) in the Soviet Union's end therefore remains unclear.

Adomeit does provide a wealth of detail on German reunification and the complex workings of late Soviet decision-making from a conservative but generally fair point of view (yet why "peace" movement always in quotation marks?). The book contains a good summary of modern German-Soviet relations, an extensive bibliography, and fascinating tales from archives and personal interviews. In short, *Imperial Overstretch* is a useful contribution to our broader understanding of the dramatic demise of the Soviet Union.

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Michael Libal. *Limits of Persuasion. Germany and the Yugoslav Crisis, 1991-1992*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1997. Pp. 224. \$59.95.

Die Berufung auf das Prinzip der Selbstbestimmung hat die Entscheidung der deutschen Außenpolitik, Slowenien und Kroatien drei Wochen vor seinen EG-Partnern bereits zum 23. Dezember 1991 anzuerkennen, wesentlich beeinflusst. Keine andere Entscheidung hat in der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik jemals so sehr die Kritiker international auf den Plan gerufen. Mit gut fünfjähriger Distanz zu den Ereignissen hat Michael Libal, damals selbst Leiter der Südosteuropa-Abteilung im Bonner Außenministerium, ein Buch vorgelegt, das sich ausführlich mit den Hintergründen und Motiven der deutschen Politik beschäftigt. Um ein wichtiges Ergebnis vorwegzunehmen: Diese Publikation kann als der wohl substantiellste Beitrag zur Problematik bezeichnet werden. Das internationale Schrifttum zeichnet sich dadurch aus, daß zur strittigen Frage der deutschen Anerkennung Sloweniens und Kroatiens noch immer relativ wenige Beiträge in deutscher Sprache vorliegen, während die quantitativ umfangreicheren englischen Publikationen durchweg eine sehr kritische Perspektive gegenüber Bonn erkennen lassen. Libal leistet zweierlei: Zum einen legt er eine ausführliche Chronologie der Ereignisse vor. Im Mittelpunkt steht dabei, wie der Titel des Buches bereits verrät, die Zeitspanne der Jahre 1991-92. Zum anderen aber bemüht sich Libal intensiv um die Analyse der dabei relevanten Motive, Perzeptionen und Entscheidungen. So geht er ausführlich auf die Frage ein, was der Deutschen Interessen im vorliegenden Konfliktfall gewesen sind, wo die Grenzen des Prinzips der Selbstbestimmung liegen, wie weit Deutschlands Verhalten durch die Geschichte determiniert ist, wo die Ursachen des