

*War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II* by Thomas U. Berger, Cambridge University Press, 2012. 265 pages, £55.00.

There is a growing public recognition that history has come to play a central role in international and domestic politics. The reasons for this expanded impact vary and include the spreading of democracy, the centrality of human rights norms, increased regional and global interdependence, and the wide role of international networks of advocates and civil society. In each country the mix is different, but few democracies are immune to or unburdened by their past. Nowhere has this trend been more evident than in the different policies of Germany and Japan since WWII, as the two countries embody different trends of the politics of history, both domestically and internationally. Germany is seen as responsible and contrite, while Japan is viewed as unrepentant. Thomas Berger's, *War, Guilt, and World Politics after World War II*, adds Austria to the mix, and compares the history of historical dialogue and accountability in each country. I found the book thorough and informative. It describes the politics of each country since before the end of the war, reminding us of non-linear developments, while underscoring the great similarities between the three after the war: including the failure to establish a clean break with the previous regimes, the continuity of the elite and the administrative backbone, and the failure of the Allies liberating/occupying forces to persuade the public to accept responsibility or feel remorse for the atrocities during the war.

Berger presents three interpretive and distinct explanations for analyzing the impact of history on politics and policies: historical determinism, instrumentalism, and cultural explanation. Determinism refers to history as it happened: that is a positivist empirical perspective of history. Historical facts self-determine how history is viewed, and thus society and politics are shaped by memory of "actual" history. The instrumentalist approach emphasizes the manipulation of history by politicians who use historical discourse to promote their own goals. Cultural analysis privileges the culture of a society as the determining factor that shapes whether a country will embrace responsibility and guilt for its historical violence, or repress memories and emphasize its own victimization. While these are useful "ideal types" it is their dialectical interaction that explains the political use and abuse of the politics of history. While Berger aims to delineate the various factors in each case study, he rightly brings them together in the conclusions, underscoring their interdependency. Regretfully, as readers may recognize, there is very little mainstream political science analysis of the role of historical memory in politics.

Berger tells the history of contrition in Germany, discussing numerous milestones, starting with the widespread sense of victimization among Germans after the war and the failure of denazification, the central role of the expellees' organizations, the denial of knowledge about the Holocaust, and the acknowledgement by Adenauer of the crimes, even if only that these were committed "in the name of" (not by) the Germans. Berger argues that the reason for the political acceptance of German guilt is that leaders "could not afford" to ignore the issue of historical

justice altogether because of outside pressure from victims' groups and the Allies(53). This is a long standing debate: was Adenauer's policy of contrition a result of external pressure or a consequence of his ethical commitments? (For a recent discussion see Lily Gardner Feldman *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). I find the evidence for the primacy of external pressure not persuasive. The cold war ensured that no real pressure would have been placed on West Germany. If anything, the US pressured the Allies to reduce the reparations demands from Germany (54). Indeed in the decade after the war, both Japan and Austria, for different reasons, successfully avoided any pressure to adopt policies of remorse. To stipulate that Germany could not have resisted the demands will need more evidence. After all, the initial policies of contrition were minimal. The importance of early minimal contrition was that it created a new norm which evolved a generation later. The shift that began in the 1960s was a result of domestic pressures, of a new generation, including a political turn to the left and the beginning of détente and human rights. The book describes well the various permutations of guilt over the last 50 years in Germany, and highlights how in contrast to the late 1940s, government policy of contrition is no longer divorced from public opinion, as Germans became proud of acknowledging (and redressing) their national guilt.

The second and much less well known example discussed by Berger is Austria, which provides an intriguing case for the dynamics between historical determinism, instrumentalism, and cultural particularism. Austria is very similar to Germany in its history and responsibility for the Holocaust, yet it has succeeded in painting itself as a victim of Nazism not a perpetrator. Its culture is as close to Germany as two separate countries could be alike. Yet, until the 1990s, Austrians rejected remorse or redress and the country acted more like Japan than Germany. Austria then shifted direction, and, at least in some respects, accepted contrition. It did so at a time when the extreme nationalist right enjoyed electoral success under Jörg Haider. The Austrian story is fascinating, in particular for showing the potential success of international pressure: initially providing Austria an escape by viewing it as victim of Nazism, and later pressuring it to embrace remorse.

Japan is viewed as the ultimate obstructionist when it comes to admitting responsibility for the crimes during the 1930s and the war. It is therefore intriguing to learn that in Japan there was public knowledge of war crimes and that immediately after the war there were some initiatives to acknowledge and apologize for these atrocities. Berger makes the case that there was greater knowledge among Japanese of the crimes committed during the war than in Europe. Yet, the differences in politics of contrition between the countries are more complicated to explain. Berger argues these included the sense that Japanese crimes were less horrific than Germany's; that the cause for Japanese aggression was viewed in Japan as more justified (anti-colonialism); the continuity of the regime under the emperor; and the nuclear bombing that transformed Japan into a victim.

In contrast to Austria, which embraced contrition because of international pressure, as Berger describes the (relative modest) shift in Japanese approach to contrition was a result of various forces within civil society, from education disputes to advocacy, to the more explicit political struggle where the governmental international policies had to be balanced against the domestic opposition it faced from the nationalist right. The main source of modest change in Japan, in contrast, came from informal efforts to emphasize contrition. This was manifested in the international arena in a limited willingness to accept responsibility for past crimes, which improved relations regionally, primarily before 2002, and following 2007, but is again deteriorating. This has to be understood in the context of an intense and growing engagement with the history question in both South Korea (where it was part of the democratization process), and China (where the government reawakened the issue to gain diplomatic advantage and domestic popular support).

From a transitional justice perspective, the post war transitions are significant for the minimal accountability during their process of democratization, including the little attention given to war crimes in each of the three countries; the continuity of the old elite (and individuals) in the new government; the almost imperceptible role of international pressure; and the impact of general denial on the place of each country in the international system. All were part of a normalization process, which was primarily notable for public denial and rejection of any responsibility and guilt. While in all three countries there were initial domestic initiatives to acknowledge their guilt for the crimes and the catastrophe brought on by the war, and in Japan, the knowledge of the war crimes was relatively widely disseminated, these efforts were soon marginalized and the discourse of the crimes disappeared. The internal critique would be resuscitated only beginning in the 1970s-80s in Germany, and even later in Japan and Austria.

How important was international pressure? I think this is a critical aspect which the book nicely lays out by showing it was necessary, but not sufficient. That is, the canard that international pressure begets resistance and is adversarial to contrition is shown in each case to be false. Each country at a different pace accommodated international pressure. The different pace of contrition is explained by domestic politics, but what if we move beyond diplomatic pressure to international norms and ethics?

What is the relation between the international discourse and norms regarding apologies and redress and the specific politics in each country, domestically and regionally? I have addressed this at length, (Barkan, *Guilt of Nations*, 2000) and concluded that after the cold war new norms evolved internationally among democracies, and that these shaped expectations and discussions of redress beyond the specifics of each conflict. Berger explicitly rejects my analysis of what he describes as the “nascent international ... regime.” (176) But in truth, I am not sure whether he holds a different position. He seems to emphasize the specific components of each case, yet places the three cases in a larger framework, which to my ears sound like providing new international norms. The comparison on one hand gives priority to the global developing norms

(p 28) and the disappearance of “self-enclosed universe,” while on the other hand in his detailed and informative discussions, Berger gives the impression that on balance the dynamic is primarily domestic, even though the political sphere itself is influenced by external pressure. So while the structure of the book places the cases in relation to each other, I think too little attention is paid to the specific manner in which the three countries influenced each other (primarily Germany’s influence on Austria), and the impact international norms (in contrast to diplomatic pressure) had on the behavior of politicians, victims, and civil society in each country. I think the book shows how external discourse shaped the manner in which international norms were domesticated, but understates the importance of that factor in the analysis.

Berger has written an excellent book which is very informative even for those who have studied the issues before.

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