

Chapter two deals succinctly with the ‘official’ history of the GDR. In it, Cooke illustrates just how difficult it was to strike a balance between ‘moving on’ and ‘dealing with’ many aspects of GDR history (such as bringing Stasi operatives to justice). Chapter three sees him move on to analyse how authors have chosen to depict the ubiquitous Stasi in literary works, while chapter four maps out the differing ways that film makers have sought to deal with the GDR past. Chapters three and four illustrate that writers and film makers have, over time, gradually changed the way in which they have dealt with life in the GDR, moving from the understandable eagerness of victims to tell their stories through to rather more nuanced and sophisticated statements of everyday lives through to – at times – quite light-hearted depictions of some of the quirkiest sides of East German life. Cooke is careful to point out that there were always groups who were unhappy with each of these waves, complicating matters further still.

Chapter five tackles one of the most controversial facets of Germany’s changing relationship with its GDR past; that of ‘Ostalgie’ and the industry that has grown up around it. Cooke does an excellent job of dissecting the wave of ‘Ostalgie’ TV shows that have been aired over the last 5–10 years, illustrating that for many western Germans (and particularly those who worked on them) the GDR still seemed like a strange country that had been far, far away; quirky, odd and a million metaphorical miles from the current FRG. The fact that upwards of 17 million East Germans lived there appeared to make the place no less exotic. The final substantive chapter moves from one electronic medium to another, taking a fresh and original look at the virtual GDR that exists in cyberspace. Although necessarily limited in scope – keeping track of all of the websites dedicated to some aspect of East Germany would have been a far too daunting task – Cooke illustrates that there are clear and distinct patterns to be found in how cyberspacers deal with East Germany. A number of snapshots they may be, but they give a vivid picture of how everyday citizens deal with their own versions of the GDR in the privacy of the virtual world.

Cooke’s book is subsequently rich in detail and is a genuinely fascinating read. He has pulled off the trick of writing a book that is intellectually rigorous and yet also eminently readable. No mean feat, and for that reason it is a book that should be very high up on the ‘to read’ lists of anyone interested in GDR, post-GDR and identity politics in contemporary Germany.

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Verfassungsgericht, Regierung und Opposition. Die vergleichende Analyse eines Spannungsdreiecks. By CHRISTOPH HÖNNIGE. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2007. Pp.280; €34.90 pb. ISBN-13 978-3-531-15310-0.

While political scientists have widely analysed the impact of constitutional courts on politics and policy outcomes over the last decade, no consensus has evolved on the question of whether ‘judicialisation’ is a general and self-enforcing phenomenon leading to a new mode of judicial governance or whether constitutional courts should be seen as just another political actor whose impact can be constrained by

strategic behaviour of governments and opposition parties. Christoph Hönnige's study subscribes to the latter view and shows that opposition parties act strategically when deciding whether to appeal to the constitutional court and that the court's political composition plays a major role in this decision. Theoretically, the study models the consequences of judges' preferences on the likelihood of decisions favouring opposition parties and thus on the opposition's willingness to challenge a law in court. Empirically, it tests a number of hypotheses derived from this model using data on opposition appeals and court decisions in France and Germany. The author finds robust empirical support for his thesis that the political compositions of the respective courts have systematic consequences on both opposition behaviour and outcomes.

The book starts out with a useful summary of the American and European literature on legal and extralegal motives of constitutional judges, concluding that judges can be conceptualised as policy-seekers and thus can be integrated in standard spatial models of politics. Chapter 3 proposes such a model based on Tsebelis' Veto Player Theory and derives several hypotheses about the conditions under which opposition parties are likely to succeed in court and will therefore decide to challenge government laws. The two main hypotheses state that (1) opposition parties are more likely to win if the court and the government are 'incongruent', i.e. the court prefers the legislative status quo to the government's ideal point, and (2) a strategically acting opposition is more likely to challenge laws under this condition. Furthermore, the model shows that the extent to which the government has to adjust its proposals to the preferences of the court ('autolimitation') is not fixed but depends on the relative policy distances between the government, the court, and the legislative status quo.

Before testing these (and other) hypotheses, Hönnige justifies his case selection by showing that the French *Conseil constitutionnel* and the German *Bundesverfassungsgericht* are the most different cases in the context of European constitutional courts. Chapters 4 and 5 offer the currently most comprehensive survey of institutional characteristics of European constitutional courts and provide data that will be valuable far beyond the context of this study. In chapters 6 and 7, Hönnige tests his hypotheses using quantitative data on opposition appeals and abstract review decisions in France and Germany during the period 1974 to 2002. His analyses show robust support for the hypothesis that the political composition of the court matters for the success of opposition appeals in both countries even when controlling for alternative explanations of judges' behaviour. Concerning the second main hypothesis, the author finds the expected negative effect of the distance between preferences of the court and the opposition on the latter's willingness to challenge laws in the French case but only in one of the two senates of the German court.

Overall, this study is a valuable contribution to the political science analysis of constitutional courts. Hönnige argues convincingly that governments, opposition parties, and constitutional courts interact strategically, which inherently limits the potential for an all-encompassing judicialisation of politics. Instead, the preferences of judges which are tied to their mode of selection are central for understanding the effects of constitutional courts on politics and ultimately policies.

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