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Bade: Germany and Migration

Klaus Bade is Germany's leading historian of migration, and this five-part, 450-page book provides a comprehensive history of migration from, to, and within Europe, with special emphasis on Germany. The book's five sections deal with migration and industrialization; migration in the 19th and 20th centuries; migration during and after World War I and II; migration in the Cold War era between 1949 and 1989; and migration in the 1990s. There are 50 pages of footnotes and an extensive bibliography.

Bade is a frequent commentator on migration issues in Germany, and his familiarity with the major migration issues of the 1990s is reflected in the fifth part of the book. Before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the major "migration threat" to Europe was believed to be south-north migration, a continuation of migration from countries in which Germany had recruited guest workers. European countries in the 1980s developed ever more restrictive policies to deal with such migration, under the theory that only by restricting more immigration could the integration of resident or settled foreigners be accelerated.

However, the "crisis years" of 1989-92 showed that Europe and especially Germany did not have viable immigration or integration policies. As migrants flowed into Germany—a million arrived in four years, including ethnic Germans, asylum seekers, and family unification and other migrants—then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl talked of a state of emergency due to immigration in Fall 1992.

Bade emphasizes that Germany was ill-prepared for the early 1990s influx of migrants, in part because the governing conservative political parties repeatedly stated that "Germany is not a country of immigration." Germans in the early 1990s were torn between those who attacked foreigners and those who marched with candles against anti-foreigner violence. Most Germans did not support those who attacked foreigners, but there was widespread agreement among Germans that many asylum seekers were abusing German generosity, coming to Germany for housing and food or a chance to work rather than because they faced persecution at home.

In December 1992, just before a record 438,000 foreigners applied for asylum, a compromise was reached between the major political parties that quickly reduced the number of applicants. Under the compromise, Germany would preserve the constitutional right to asylum and continue to offer foreigners fleeing political persecution housing and other support while their applications were pending. However, procedures were changed to make it difficult for most foreigners to apply for asylum in Germany, since foreigners had to apply for asylum in the first safe country they reached, and Germany was surrounded by safe third countries. The number of asylum applications fell, but illegal immigration and alien smuggling rose.

During the 1990s, the major immigration and asylum debate in Europe has been about how to balance the power of national governments with that of the EU in determining the terms of admission and permission to stay. The 1992 Maastricht and the 1997 Amsterdam Treaties gave the EU more power over visa and asylum policies, respectively, under the theory that more uniformity in EU member-state policies on entrance and asylum would increase intra-EU mobility and help to prevent illegal immigration. Such "third-pillar" EU decision-making on migration issues is an important component of evolving EU federalism.

Bade's discussion of the migration issues facing Europe is wide-ranging. He reminds readers that the differences in the conditions of life that promote migration over national borders are real and often growing, so that dealing with immigration pressures-whether they take the form of immigrants, foreign workers, asylum seekers, or tourists- is likely to be a major challenge confronting the industrial democracies. The EU, built on freedom of movement, may have to deal with the consequences of more internal migration- the number of Italians in Germany rose slightly in the 1990s, and there is resentment of the Germans and English who seek to recreate their culture on the coast of southern Spain.

Bade, Klaus J. 2000. Europa in Bewegung. Migration vom späten 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart. C.H. Beck.