

Peter J. Katzenstein

At Home and Abroad



I grew up in Germany where I passed my Abitur in 1964. Since then I have studied, lived, and taught abroad, for the last 23 years at Cornell. My interests span the fields of comparative and international politics, political economy, security and culture, and Europe and Asia. Broadly speaking, I am interested in understanding the structural changes in world politics that are shaping Europe and Asia after the Cold War. Recent publications: *Tamed Power: Germany in Europe* (1997). *Network Power: Japan and Asia* (1997, with Takashi Shiraishi). *The Culture of National Security: Identity and Norms in World Politics* (1996). *Norms and National Security: Japan's Police and Military as Agents of Nonviolence* (1996). *Japan's National Security: Structures, Norms and Policy Responses in a Changing World* (1993, with Nobuo Okawara). *Defending the Japanese State: Structures, Norms and the Political Responses to Terrorism and Violent Social Protest in the 1970s and 1980s* (1991, with Yutaka Tsujinaka). — Address: Department of Government, Cornell University, 125, McGraw Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853-0001, USA.

Returning from my American home to live for a year abroad in Germany, after an absence of three decades, left me in what some of my postmodern friends call a "liminal" space. I was continuously surprised at how much, and how little, Germany had changed. A prized possession for which I had fought hard as a boy, chestnuts, lay around for the taking. Neither the tiny poodles nor the big BMWs living on Koenigsallee collected them; I did. Amerikaner, both *weisse* and *schwarze*, had left Berlin after unification. But they were still offered in the bakeries, even though now, as thirty years earlier, I never met someone who actually liked the dark variety. But it was the *Negerkuss* (for some) and *Dickmann* (for others) that illustrated the ultimate liminal space where Germany's vibrant capitalist economy intersected with its cautious political correctness.

"When at the Kolleg do as the *Kollegen*" turned out to be a maxim that was not that easy to follow. For one there was the matter of how the

Kollegen perceived me. They saw me, correctly, as a kind of *Zwitter* inhabiting both German and American spaces. There was the difficult period between November and February when I was living in never-never land, between "*Sie*" and "*Du*", while the German fellows appeared to me to be able to circumvent effortlessly and without psychological trauma this treacherous barrier to interpersonal relations. And there was my linguistic incompetence that kept me away from the French table.

I encountered two distinct tribes at the Kolleg — biologists and *Kulturwissenschaftler* (an enchanting term for me, a stranger trying to make a living in the rationalist world of American social science). Members of these tribes talked different dialects; the positivist, "economic" chatter of the biologists clashed often with the "sociological" conversation of the students of culture. Neither tribe had heard of the *Methodenstreit* among German sociologists and economists in the late 19th century.

Preferring to fight their own, the tribes overlooked the fact that *Streit* had generated *Methode*. It is normal practice for good social science to talk out of both sides of its mouth, to have both of its ears attuned to the winds, in short, to be, analytically speaking, at least bilingual and preferably bicultural. In the frequently Manichean world of *Geistes- and Naturwissenschaften*, I learned, social sciences lead a precarious existence, flirting with respectability occasionally without ever reaching it.

More importantly for me, the two tribes shared in the same vision of reality: chaos rather than equilibrium, fuzziness rather than precision, non-linear complexity rather than linear simplicity, path-dependent trajectories rather than time-reversible processes. I took delight in this convergence of post-Newtonianism and post-modernism. And I found it congruent with a "soft" approach to the social sciences that clashes with the ahistorical, "hard" approach often practiced on the other side of the Atlantic. No wonder that I felt at home in Wallotstrasse 19.

Analyzed in the complementary languages of economics and sociology, this vision of reality was quite compatible with the jerry-built structure which, over the years, I had made myself. At lunches and seminars I was learning how it could be applied in novel and imaginative ways to many phenomena I did not even know existed. Before and after meals I was seeking to use it to illuminate the changing role of Germany in Europe. Against the backdrop of Japan's network power in Asia, analyzed in a book I completed in the fall soon after my arrival, Germany's tamed power in Europe was the subject of a volume that I wrote while at the Kolleg. Like a typical professor I did not worry about missing my own unrealistic deadlines; a key chapter of a book on *Mitteleuropa* still remains to be written.

But I did make it to Berlin Mitte. For beyond the Kolleg it was Berlin's cultural life, architecture and history that absorbed me more than I ever imagined before coming. I discovered my voracious appetite for German theater, suppressed by living for decades abroad. I was fascinated by the changes that so visibly transformed the city during the year. I was often reminded of the horrors of Germany's history that confront even the casual visitor at every corner. And I was puzzled by the strong negative reaction of many German intellectuals to a flawed American book on German anti-semitism and the Holocaust.

I felt very much at home in an intellectual community where differences in language did not stop the tribes from talking about their shared views of reality; where discussions were intense, diverse and always interesting; where disagreements could be aired with civility; where genuine friendships blossomed; and where from the first day to the last, all members of the institute's staff treated me like royalty — a most welcome contrast to my scattered experiences in Berlin's shops.

In the end I have learned that both sides of the Atlantic, bucolic Ithaca and metropolitan Berlin, are, for me, one place, not two: at home and abroad. It is a very nice place; I know I will like it there.