

GERMAN UNIFICATION IN THE MIRROR OF HISTORY

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We study the process of German reunification considering the following aspects:

- external effects on the European development
- internal effects on Germany
- the impact on German economy

Looking into history, we compare today's reunification with the foundation of Germany in 1871 and, to some extent, - from an economic point of view - with the annexation of Austria in 1938.

Here is a little summary of the results of our studies:

More than in 1871, Germany is now on its way to becoming Europe's most powerful nation in economy and also a very important political factor.

This process of Germany's rise takes place under historical conditions which are very different from 1871. Today we can observe a strong movement from the Europe of National States to the "United States of Europe", which is an effect of the worldwide internationalisation caused by global problems. Thus, we may raise the question whether the future will have "a European Germany or a German Europe". As European history has shown, the first is the only possible alternative for Germany and for Europe.

Both periods are marked by a rising tide of nationalism. You can see it from the importance which is attached to traditions and from a new attitudes towards foreigners and national minorities.

Relatively tolerant behaviour to these groups becomes more and more aggressive.

A very significant economic feature of the period after the foundation of the German state in 1871 was the so-called "Gründerjahre" (foundationboom).

From 1871 to 1873, a large number of private businesses were established. Their breakdown in the so-called "Gründerkrach" (foundationcrash) in 1873 led to high degree of concentration in German economy.

Similar tendencies can currently be observed in East-Germany. The annexation of Austria in 1938 introduced the integration of two important independent economies.

Although both economies were based on a market economy, economic integration was reached not before 1941. Considering these facts, a rapid economic unification of East and West Germany seems to be impossible.