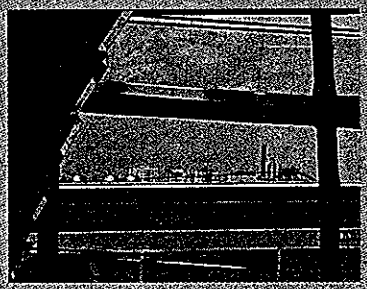
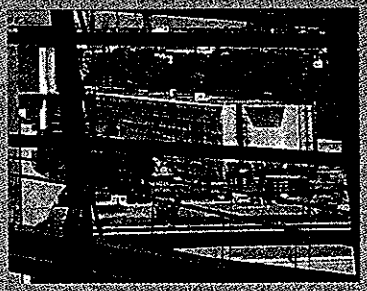
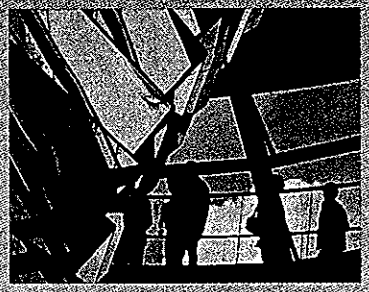
Chapter 15

Germany: Patterns of Interaction


We saw how the Weimar Republic collapsed with the shrinking of the moderate parties and growth of extremist parties—"polarized pluralism." Could this happen in the Federal Republic? For most of the history of West Germany, the answer was no. With only two-plus parties, they, for good political reasons, stuck close to the center of the political spectrum. Political competition in West Germany tended to be **center-seeking**. Voters had their choice of three moderate parties (there were several tiny parties on the ballot, but they were largely ignored), and these three parties could combine in only three different coalitions (CDU and FDP, CDU and SPD, SPD and FDP). This made West German politics stable compared to more tumultuous multiparty systems.

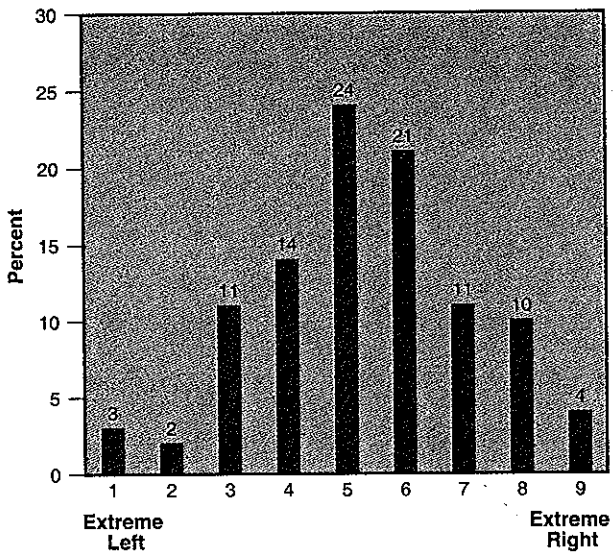
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why has German coalition formation become more difficult?
2. Why is a unimodal distribution of opinion necessary for democracy?
3. How do German political views resemble British and French?
4. What is the difference between *Weltanschauung* and catchall parties?
5. How have German elections come to resemble presidential ones?
6. Are fund-raising scandals part of democracy?
7. What is the union-party linkup in North European countries?
8. In what ways does voting follow geography?

With unification—and even a little before—German politics became less stable and more complex. The party system is no longer "two-plus," but with the arrival of the Greens and Left is now more accurately described as multiparty. The two large parties lost some of their votes to smaller parties. This made coalition formation more difficult, for now a German coalition may require three partners instead of the previous two. Now there are nine possible coalition combinations (see box on page 211). This in turn makes German government less stable and predictable.

PARTIES AND THE ELECTORATE

Social scientists repeatedly find that political opinion in most modern democracies resembles a bell-shaped curve: A lot of people are in the center, with fewer and fewer as one moves to the left or right. If you want to sound scientific you call this a **unimodal** distribution of opinion. (A **bimodal** distribution indicates extreme division, what happened during Weimar.) Routinely, Europeans are asked to place themselves on a one-to-nine ideological scale, one for the most left and nine for the most right. Germany comes out, like most West European countries, as a bell-shaped curve (see graph at the top of page 210).



THE SHAPE OF THE GERMAN ELECTORATE: THE SELF-PLACEMENT OF GERMAN VOTERS ON A LEFT/RIGHT IDEOLOGICAL SCALE

How does this affect political parties? When party leaders come to understand the shape of the electorate, either through modern polling techniques or by losing elections, they usually try to modify their party image so that it appeals to the middle of the opinion spectrum. If the Social Democrats position themselves too far left—say, at two on the nine-point scale—by advocating nationalizing private industry and dropping out of NATO, they may please left-wing ideologues in the party but do poorly in elections because few Germans are at the two position. So the Social Democrats tone down their socialism and emphasize their commitment to democracy plus welfare measures, moving to perhaps the four position.

Now they do much better in elections, but the left wing of the SPD is unhappy with the dilution of socialist gospel. Finally, sniffing the possibility of becoming Germany's governing party, the SPD throws out socialism and tells the electorate that they will do a better job running the capitalist, market economy. Now they are in roughly the five position, but the party's left wingers are angry, accusing the SPD leadership of selling out to capitalism; some left-wing socialists even quit the SPD. But the SPD does well in elections. By emphasizing democracy and minimizing socialism, they gain many centrist Germans. But now there is some vacant ideological space on the left, which the Greens and Left party fill.

The preceding, in a nutshell, is the history of the SPD. A century ago the Social Democrats started to shed their Marxism, in practice if not yet in theory. In the 1950s, seeing the CDU triumphantly win the center, they decided to break out of their left-wing stronghold. Meeting in Bad Godesberg (just outside Bonn) in 1959, they drew up a Basic Program so moderate one can hardly find any socialism in it. Marxism was *kaputt;* the SPD proclaimed itself "rooted in Christian ethics, humanism and classical philosophy."

While the Social Democrats moved rightward, the Christian Democrats had in the meantime already taken a broad swath of the ideological spectrum, claiming to stand for everything—a party of all Germans—just as the British Conservatives used to claim to represent all Britons. The CDU downplayed its conservatism, for it, too, understood that if the party image were too rightist it would lose the big prize in the center. The result is two large parties that have generally tried to be centrist but in so doing have rubbed their respective left and right wings the wrong way (see boxes on pages 212 and 213). They also make politics boring.

center-seeking Parties trying to win a big centrist vote with moderate programs. (See page 209.)

unimodal Single-peaked distribution. (See page 209.)

bimodal Two-peaked distribution. (See page 209.)

Key Concepts

Germany's Coalitions

Two-party coalitions have been the norm for Germany, usually consisting of one large party and one small party. When either of the two large parties (CDU or SPD) gets around 40 percent of the vote (and of Bundestag seats), formerly the case, it forms a coalition with a small party that won around 10 percent and thus controls a (bare) majority of the Bundestag. This relatively happy situation gives rise to coalition possibilities 1 through 4, which have governed the FRG thus far:

1. Christian-Liberal Coalition: The CDU/CSU wins about 40 percent of Bundestag seats and the FDP wins about 10 percent, allowing for the same coalition that sustained Kohl and earlier cabinets in power.
2. Social-Liberal Coalition: The SPD edges out the CDU with about 40 percent of Bundestag seats and turns to the FDP with, say, 10 percent in order to rebuild the coalition that supported Brandt and Schmidt in the 1970s.
3. Grand Coalition: If the two big parties, the CDU and SPD, shrink to around 35 percent, and the small parties get about 10 percent each, then coalition possibilities 1 and 2 are in fact impossible. The two big parties could make a coalition with each other; they did in the late 1960s and again in 2005 (see page 187).
4. Red-Green Coalition: If the SPD (red) gets 40 percent and the Greens get 10 percent, they build a social-ecological coalition, which Schröder did from 1998 to 2005.

Five other coalitions are possible but difficult:

5. "Traffic Light" (*Ampel*) Coalition: Red, green, and yellow (for the FDP). If the SPD won under 40 percent, it might need two small coalition partners, each with 6 to 10 percent of Bundestag seats, in order to build a majority. The Greens and Liberals, however, are ideologically incompatible and oppose each other.
6. "Jamaica" Coalition (named after the colors of the Jamaican flag): This coalition would be the rightwing counterpart of the above *Ampel*—black (CDU), yellow (FDP), and green. The FDP and Greens, however, are ideologically incompatible and oppose each other.
7. An SPD-Left coalition: The new Left party is too far left for most other parties but in a pinch the SPD could turn to it. A complicating factor: Left leader Oskar Lafontaine had earlier led the SPD but split angrily with centrist Chancellor Schröder; they still hate each other.
8. An all-left coalition: If the SPD gets about 40 percent and the Greens and Left both get 5 percent, all three could form a leftist coalition.
9. A "government of national unity" of all parties: These can be useful for emergency situations such as war, but not for much else. According to the theory of coalitions, you stop adding partners once you have topped 50 percent; there is no point to adding more. And an all-party coalition would not stay together for long.

The fragmentation of the German party system into five parties makes one long for the old and relatively simple "two-plus" system in which the only alternatives were, with two exceptions, coalition possibilities 1 and 2.

The game is never finished, though. While they had transformed themselves into a center-left party, the SPD allowed the area on their left to be taken over by newer, more radical parties, the Greens and Left. (In one study Green voters placed themselves at 3.4 on the scale.) Partly to try to win over these leftist voters, partly in response to Juso (see box below) influence within the SPD, and partly out of irritation at the hawkishness of the Reagan administration, the SPD moved leftward in the late 1980s, much like the British Labour party had done earlier. The SPD came out against both U.S. nuclear missiles in Germany and nuclear power plants, two key Green demands. But the shift hurt the SPD in elections; they dropped from 42.9 percent of the vote in 1980 to 33.5 in 1990, their poorest showing since 1957.

The SPD is still pulled in two directions. Tugging leftward is the traditional socialist wing once headed by former party chairman Oskar Lafontaine. This wing, based heavily on workers and older people, wants to help those in need and to preserve the welfare state. Tugging rightward is the Blairite wing of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, which wants reforms to cut taxes, pensions, subsidies, bureaucracy, unemployment, and regulations that slow economic growth. The two men had such serious differences that Lafontaine resigned from the cabinet and as party chair in 1999 and in 2005 joined the new Left party. His departure drew sighs of relief from the business community. But Schröder could not turn the SPD into a genuine New Middle on the model of Blair's New Labour. By his second term, many Germans were fed up with Schröder's incoherence and indecisiveness.

THE CHANCELLOR AND THE ELECTORATE

Two factors especially hurt the SPD in the 1990s. The CDU's embrace of rapid unification made the SPD look narrow and carping in its warnings about the expense and economic impact of quick merger. Go slow and think it through, was the SPD message, not a popular one in 1990, although

Political Culture

UNHAPPY ON THE LEFT: THE JUSOS

In his youth, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1998–2005) was a Juso hothead, but he calmed as he aged. The youth branch of the SPD—the *Jungsozialisten,* or Jusos for short—has been a continual thorn in the left side of the party. Limited to people under thirty-five, the Jusos attract (and create) young radicals and Marxists. Impatient and idealistic, many Jusos find the mainstream SPD too moderate and gradualist. One favorite Juso target became, ironically, Schröder, their leader long ago.

Periodically, the SPD has to disown its offspring. If it does not, it costs the party votes. Some Jusos cannot understand that Germans as a whole are moderate in their political views, and there is little support for pulling out of NATO, nationalization of industry, "cultural revolution," and massive taxes on the rich. When the Jusos helped move the SPD toward such positions in the early 1980s, the party lost four national elections in a row, just like the British Labour party. Some Jusos defected to the Greens or Left. The SPD faces the question of whether to try to retain young radicals by moving leftward.

Weltanschauung Literally "world view"; parties offering firm, narrow ideologies.

catchall Nonideological parties that welcome all.

their "I told you so" won them some votes in 1994. SPD chancellor-candidate Oskar Lafontaine in 1990 was also part of the problem. He was too clever and radical for most German voters. The SPD's next candidate, the bearded young intellectual Rudolf Scharping came across in 1994 much the same way. In 1998, the SPD took a leaf from Tony Blair's 1997 success in Britain: Assume vague, centrist positions; emphasize that the conservatives have been in office too long; and offer a younger, outgoing personality for prime minister. The SPD, in effect, learned the unimodal shape of the German electorate in the 1950s and 1960s, forgot it in the 1980s, and remembered it in the late 1990s.

Chancellor Schröder cleverly positioned himself slightly leftward in the 2002 election. By denouncing Washington's Iraq policy, Schröder won over some leftists who might otherwise have voted PDS (explaining why it slumped below the 5 percent threshold) and some pacifists who might not have voted at all. It angered President Bush but narrowly won the election for Schröder. Typically, that is all politicians care about.

In Germany, as in most advanced countries, personality has become more important than ideology in the mind of many voters. With the decline of **Weltanschauung** parties (see box on page 214) and the move of large parties to the center of the political spectrum, the personality of candidates is often what persuades voters. This has long been the case in the United States and is now becoming the European norm as well. Some call it the Americanization of European politics, but it is less a matter of copying than it is of reflecting the rise of ~~catchall~~ parties. Throughout Europe, election posters now feature the face of the top party leader, the person who would become prime minister. Although voting may be by party list, citizens know that in choosing a party they are actually electing a prime minister. In 2005 Schröder was more popular than the SPD while Angela Merkel was less popular than the CDU.

German (and British) campaigns are conducted almost as if they were for the direct election of a president—as in the United States and France. Officially there is no "candidate for chancellor," but in practice the leading figures of the two big parties are clearly identified as

Political Culture

THUNDER ON THE RIGHT: CSU

Bavaria is the Texas of Germany, a land with its own raucous brand of politics. On principle, the Christian Social Union (CSU) never let itself be absorbed into the CDU; instead it calls itself an allied party and sometimes threatens to burst out of Bavaria—where it often wins a majority of the vote—and set itself up in nationwide competition with the CDU.

The CSU is to the right of the CDU, demanding a tougher anti-immigrant stance, a firmer crackdown on radicals, and a rollback of welfare. The CSU's kingpin was the late Franz Josef Strauss, Germany's right-wing tough guy who tried to minimize the Nazi past and used to say, "I do not care who is chancellor under me." Edmund Stoiber, Bavaria's minister-president (governor) and 2002 chancellor candidate, hurt the CDU in the 2005 election when he called East Germans welfare-dependent.

dealignment Voters losing identification with any party.

such—in the media, on billboards, and in the public mind—so that much of the campaign revolves around the personalities of the two leading candidates.

A German candidate for chancellor must project strength and levelheadedness. In a country that still fears inflation, the candidate's economic background plays a bigger role than in most nations. Two of Germany's postwar chancellors have been economists. The candidate's adherence to democratic rules also matters, and Franz Josef Strauss's authoritarian streak contributed to his defeat in the 1980 race.

Personality contributed to the results of the 1990s elections, too. The CDU/CSU had the steady, optimistic image of Helmut Kohl. SPD candidates of the 1990s came across as radical intellectuals until Gerhard Schröder ran in 1998. By that point, many Germans were tired of Kohl, who had been in office sixteen years and was showing his age. Much of postwar German politics can be described as parties groping for the right leader to bring them to power in the Bundestag and chancellor's office. When they find the right ones—such as Adenauer and Kohl of the CDU—they stick with them.

GERMAN DEALIGNMENT?

For many years political scientists have worried that American voters have shown an increasing **dealignment** with the main parties. Some decades ago, U.S. parties used to present a fairly clear "party image," and most voters carried around in their heads a fairly clear "party ID."

KEY CONCEPTS

THE "CATCHALL" PARTY

In prewar Europe, many political parties used to imbue their supporters with a "view of the world" (*Weltanschauung*) corresponding to the party's ideology and philosophy. This was especially true of parties on the left, and it came to a high point in Weimar Germany. After World War II most Weltanschauung parties disappeared as they broadened their appeal or merged into bigger parties.

Noting their demise, German political scientist Otto Kirchheimer coined the term "catchall party" to describe what was taking their place: big, loose, pluralist parties that have diluted their ideologies so they can accommodate many diverse groups of supporters. His model of a catchall party was the CDU, a political vacuum cleaner that draws in all manner of groups: farmers, businesspeople, labor, women, Catholics, Protestants, white-collar workers, blue collar, you name it.

For a while, under crusty Kurt Schumacher, the SPD tried to stay a Weltanschauung party, defining itself in rigid and ideological terms that turned away many middle-of-the-road voters. Since 1959, the SPD, too, has become a catchall party, appealing to Germans of all classes and backgrounds. Indeed, by now the catchall party is the norm in modern democracies. Almost axiomatically, any large party is bound to be a catchall party, for example, the French neo-Gaullists, Canadian Liberals, British Conservatives, Japanese Liberal Democrats, and, of course, both major U.S. parties.

transparency Making public political and economic information.

Where the two connected (for example, U.S. Democrats and blue-collar workers), you had reliable party-voter "alignments." These could change every few decades in what were called "realignments," new matches of voters to parties. But some think U.S. voters are dealigning: Their preferences, often unfocused, connect with no party on a long-term basis. Their votes easily shift from one party to another in response to candidate personality and clever advertising.

Is electoral dealignment spreading to West Europe? There is evidence of it in Britain, France, and Germany. Increasingly, Germans dislike both major parties and doubt that either does any better in office than the other. German turnout in elections, as in most of Europe, is falling, from a high of 91 percent in 1972 to a low of 78 percent in 2005. More citizens now scatter their votes among a variety of small parties all over the political spectrum, from left to right. One center-right group that enjoyed brief notice called itself the *Statt* (instead of) party.

Where does dealignment come from? It is the normal and natural maturation process that most advanced democracies go through. One step in this process is the formation of the catchall party (see box on page 214). If two catchall parties face each other, as in the United States and Germany, their positions become so moderate and similar that they become boring. Neither offers much in the way of exciting new choices, programs, or personalities. Joschka Fischer was popular because he was not boring. (After his fourth divorce he got a young girlfriend. Imagine that in U.S. politics.)

Meanwhile, the society is being hit by problems scarcely anyone could imagine a generation ago: immigration, environmental degradation, the movement of jobs to low-wage countries,

DEMOCRACY

GERMANY'S FUND-RAISING SCANDALS

At the start of the new millennium, former Chancellor Helmut Kohl almost single-handedly wrecked his CDU party. As chancellor during the 1990s, Kohl got millions in secret donations for the CDU. Ironically, Kohl himself had demanded a new strict **transparency** law, which requires declaring the source and amounts of big contributions. Then Kohl's successor, Wolfgang Schäuble, admitted to illegal contributions. The CDU declined against the SPD in polls.

The trouble is, soon Land SPD branches stood accused of corruption along with their CDU and CSU counterparts. Bribes, tax evasions, false invoices, and kickbacks on waste-disposal and construction contracts are rife in Germany, involving both major parties. The SPD defense minister was fired for taking money on the side, and the PDS party chief and several other Bundestag members were ousted for personal use of government frequent-flier miles. Peter Eigen, founder of Transparency International in Berlin (see page 535), said Germany "is much more corrupt than previously thought."

Notice how in all advanced democracies—the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Japan—there are party fund-raising scandals. They seem to come with democracy. Parties need big money to conduct elections, and economic interests always need friends in high places. The good news is that all over the world citizens are getting fed up with "money politics" and demanding reforms. For more on these scandals, see Chapter 18 on Japan, where they are especially pronounced.

Rechtsstaat Literally, state of laws; government based on written rules and rights.

and crushing tax and debt burdens. None of the catchall parties has any convincing solution; all waffle in some middle ground. Also, suddenly gone is the cement that helped hold the system together: the Soviet threat and the Cold War. It is a disorienting time, and none of the great catchall parties provides much in the way of guidance. The public response is lower voter turnouts and small and less-stable shares of the vote for the catchall parties; in a word, dealignment.

THE BUNDESTAG AND THE CITIZEN

One reason German elections have become almost presidential elections for chancellor is the murky status of the Bundestag in the mind of many voters. They know what the chancellor does but are not too clear on what the Bundestag does. Part of the blame for this rests on the concept Bundestag deputies have of their role. The **Rechtsstaat** tradition is focused on laws. The Bundestag, now housed in the old Reichstag building in Berlin, is staffed heavily by lawyers and civil servants and has become a law factory.

But is it not a legislature's purpose to legislate? Well, not entirely. By confining their activities to law books and committee meetings, the Bundestag deputies have failed to grasp the less obvious functions of a legislature. Actually, the most important role of a legislature is in overseeing the activities of the national government, catching corruption and inefficiency, uncovering scandals, threatening budget cuts, and keeping the bureaucrats on their toes.

The harsh glare of publicity cures much governmental wrongdoing. Too-cozy relationships between ministers and business thrive in the dark. It is in this area that the Bundestag has been weak. Although there are commissions of inquiry and a question hour, the former are not pursued as thoroughly as on Washington's Capitol Hill—where televised committee hearings are a major preoccupation—and the latter is not carried out with as much polish as in Commons. (Bundestag deputies can be quite insulting, but it sounds crude rather than clever.) In functioning as little but lawmakers, German legislators have contributed to the boredom problem.

One function the Bundestag has failed to develop is that of education. The way a legislature operates, the arguments that are presented, the manner in which members of parliament conduct themselves, these are great teachers of democracy. Instead, Bundestag activity makes a weak impression. The Bundestag does not generate good press because it is a dull story. U.S. senators and representatives get more attention because they do interesting and unpredictable things, like disobeying their own party, something that rarely happens in Germany.

Another function of an effective parliament is to represent people. Voters must feel that someone speaking for them really understands their needs. In this the Bundestag suffers from a problem common to all elected legislatures: It is not representative of the voters. The average Bundestag deputy is close to fifty years old, male, trained as a lawyer, and employed as a civil servant, party leader, or interest-group official.

The strong German party system means that people must slowly work their way up in party ranks before they will be put on a ballot. Accordingly, candidates tend to be older, seasoned, party loyalists rather than bright, fresh, new faces. Unlike the American system, a German candidate cannot "come from out of nowhere" and win an election on his or her own. You are either a piece of the party machine, or you are nothing. The result is unrepresentative representatives. Said one German newspaper: "This gap between electorate and elected has become too wide." Many Germans do not feel represented; they feel that the Bundestag is the arena

where the powerful interests of society work out deals with little reference to the common citizen, the little guy. Such feelings contributed to the Green and Left vote.

THE UNION-PARTY LINKUP

Unions in Germany are still strong but they are not what they used to be, another sign of the fraying of Germany's "consensus model" (discussed in the next chapter). One historical characteristic of North European political systems—and here we include Britain and Sweden along with Germany—has been the close relationship between labor unions and social-democratic parties. In these countries unions are large and cohesive; blue-collar workers are heavily organized, and their unions form a single, large labor federation. Such federations support the social democratic parties with money, manpower, and votes. Often union leaders actually run for office on the party ticket.

Compare this pattern with the Latin European systems. Labor is weakly organized and fragmented into several federations—Communist, Socialist, Christian, and other. The fragmentation dilutes the working-class voice. American unions are also fragmented into several federations and historically did not tie themselves to one party. U.S. labor no longer has the same kind of political input as North European labor. In North Europe, labor unions founded the welfare state.

In Britain, TUC unions are actual constituent members of the Labour Party. In Sweden, the gigantic LO is so close to the Social Democrats that some of their top personnel are the same. The German Basic Law forbids a formal union-party tie, but here, too, everyone knows that labor support is an important pillar of the SPD.

In the United States, 12 percent of the labor force is unionized; in Germany 20 percent is (in Sweden, some 50 percent). Eleven German industrial unions—the largest being the metalworkers (*IG Metall*, with 2.3 million members)—are federated into an umbrella organization, the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB) with 6.6 million members, down from 11.8 million in 1990. (Notice how U.S., British, French, and German unions have all declined. Is this permanent or reversible?)

The DGB's voice is still heeded by the Social Democrats; its leaders are regularly consulted by SPD chiefs and get some of what they want: an elaborate welfare system, a short work week, and even directors' seats on the boards of large companies (more on this in the next chapter). Many of the SPD's Bundestag deputies have union ties. The labor minister in Schröder's cabinet was deputy chairman of IG Metall.

UNION-PARTY LINKS IN FOUR COUNTRIES

Country	Union	Party Linkage
Britain	TUC	Labour
Sweden	LO	Social Democrat
Germany	DGB	SPD
United States	AFL-CIO	Democrat

There is a new force on the labor front: In 2001 five service unions formed the 3-million-member Verdi (*Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft*) to organize everything from clerks to nurses to civil servants. Service unions like Verdi have different demands than those of the industrial unions in the DGB. As the industrial sector shrinks in favor of services (see page 467), unions shift, too. In modern societies, unions grow most noticeably among government employees and teachers.

The catchall nature of the SPD prevents any one group dominating it. The more the SPD seeks votes in the center of the political spectrum, the more it has to turn away from close cooperation with unions. (The British Labourites faced the same problem with the TUC; when they let the unions dominate, they lost.) Starting in the 1970s, the SPD and unions diverged. Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1974–1982), representing the SPD right, was a better democrat and economist than he was a socialist. Union relations with the SPD grew cool. Still, most German unions support the Social Democrats. The Schröder government had to tell unions that raising wages and benefits works against adding new jobs. Instead, it told them that cutting benefits and flexible work rules were necessary. The unions did not want to hear it and grew angry at Schröder. A few unionists went to the Left party.

On the management side, there is a similar pattern. The powerful *Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie* (Federation of German Industries, BDI) has warm connections with the CDU, but not as close as those of unions with the SPD. The BDI wants flexible labor contracts and tax cuts, points the CDU also likes. One point of conflict: German business wants select immigration (such as computer specialists) to fill high-tech vacancies, but the CDU/CSU says no to all immigration. When the Social Democrats are in power, the BDI finds it can get along with them, too. As in Britain and France, big business does not need to get close to one party; it is to their advantage to work with all parties. The major focus of business is the bureaucracy, not the parties. Providing information to the relevant ministry, explaining to civil servants why regulations should be modified, going along with government economic plans—in these and other ways business quietly cements ties with government.

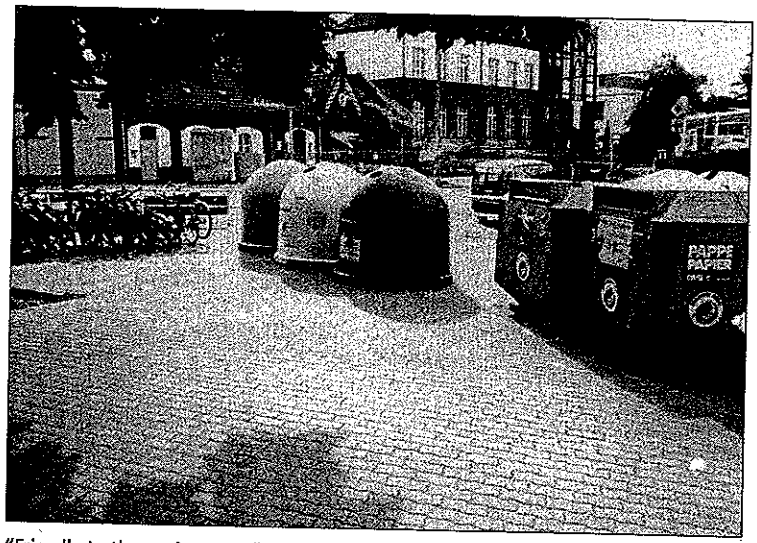
THE LÄNDER AND BERLIN

Britain and France are unitary systems that have moved, respectively, to devolution and decentralization. Germany is a federal system that some would like to make a little more centralized. The interesting thing here is that in both unitary and federal systems there are pressures to move toward a middle ground. Centralization in France was rigid, inefficient, and ignored local wishes and regional pride. Federalism in Germany is often uncoordinated, powerless, and deadlocked and encourages federal-state squabbles. In some ways the distinctions between unitary and federal systems are overdrawn; some see the emergence of a new "regional" pattern midway between the unitary and federal.

Germany is probably more federal than the United States; that is, its Länder run more of their own affairs and get a bigger portion of taxes than do American states. For example, individual and corporate income taxes are split between Berlin and the Länder with equal 42.5 percent shares; local governments get 15 percent. The Länder also get 45.9 percent of the value-added tax, the large but hidden sales tax used throughout Europe (see page 154). The

poorer Länder—the new eastern ones—get additional funds. German Länder are directly plugged into the federal tax system, an idea Americans might do well to consider.

Germany's federalism has some drawbacks. For example, there is really no nationwide police force, so law enforcement is a Land affair. Terrorists who commit their crimes in one Land can flee to another, counting on communication and coordination foul-ups to delay police. Cleaning the seriously polluted Rhine River took decades because such matters are controlled by the states, and each sees its environmental responsibilities differently. In 1986 the Bundestag set up a federal environment ministry, but it could not override Land environment ministries. And decentralized education made it impossible for federal authorities to insist on the study of the Nazis and their crimes in schools.



"Friendly to the environment" is the German phrase for using bikes and recycling glass (three, in the center) and paper. The ecology movement is big in Germany.

Many Germans would like Berlin to have more control over things. But the German Länder, like American states, resist moves that would erode the powers of Land officials, and they have the perfect means to do so: the Bundesrat, which is often in the hands of the opposition party. Not directly elected, Bundesrat delegations are designated by Land governments, which usually means the state's political chiefs. The Bundesrat must concur on any move that would alter the balance of powers between federation and state, and they usually reject such moves. The Bundesrat, like the U.S. Senate, acts as a check on both the cabinet and the lower house. A 2006 reform trimmed the Bundesrat's blocking powers in exchange for allowing the Länder to have control of education, civil-service pay, and other areas, which made Germany more federal.

German Voting Patterns

In Britain, as we saw, the vote is structured at least in part along lines of social class and region. Labour usually wins much of the working class, plus Scotland, Wales, and large industrial cities. French voting is similar, with the added factor of religious attitude, clerical or anticlerical. West German voting patterns also tended to follow class, region, and religion, but the addition of East Germany in 1990 muddied some of these generalizations. The general dealignment muddied them further.

GEOGRAPHY

ELECTIONS AND MAPS

Virtually all elections show geographical voting patterns and regional variations in party strength. The map of Britain showing where parties scored above average seldom needs to be changed; major parties tend to preserve their regional strength. Once rooted, regional voting patterns can persist for decades. Here are some of the patterns.

1. *Cities vote liberal.* Urban areas are almost always to the left of rural areas. Cities are places of education, intellectuals, and critical thinking calling for change and reform. Workers tend to be urban, and they are often discontent over wages and benefits. The countryside tends to be calmer, more accepting of the status quo, and often still controlled by political bosses or old traditions. Rural and farming people often resent urban intellectuals for having more experimental notions than common sense. Accordingly, in most countries, big cities vote liberal or left while the countryside and small towns vote conservative or right.

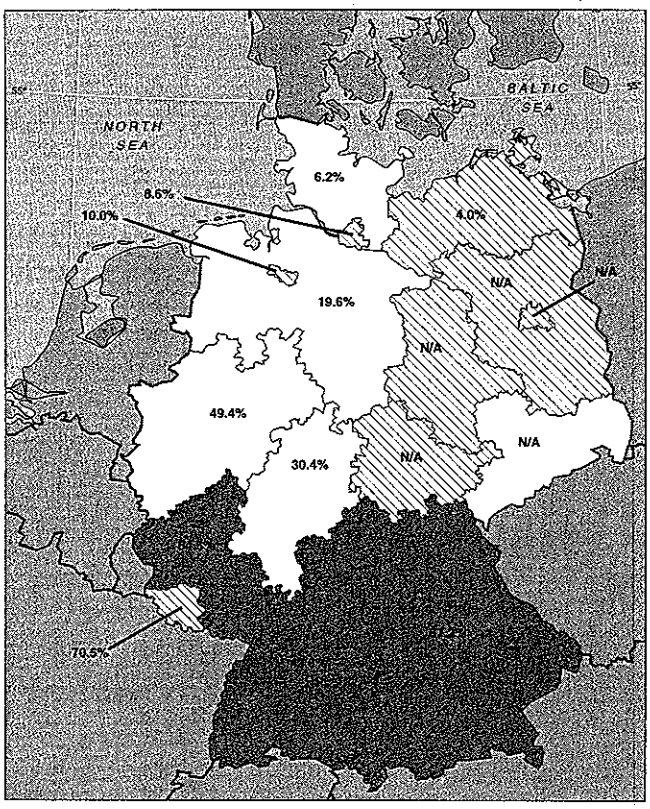
England outside of the big cities votes Conservative; central London votes Labour. Catholic Bavaria votes Christian Social, but Munich votes Social Democrat. Paris needs some qualification, for in Paris the better-off people live in the city while the working class lives in the suburbs. This tends to give Paris a conservative core but a "red belt" around the city, now eroding as the old working-class suburbs gentrify. In Russian elections the big cities, led by Moscow and St. Petersburg, more strongly support relatively liberal parties than the countryside, which likes Putin and fears economic disruption. Iranian city dwellers are more moderate or liberal, rural people more religious and traditional. U.S. elections show strong urban-rural splits.

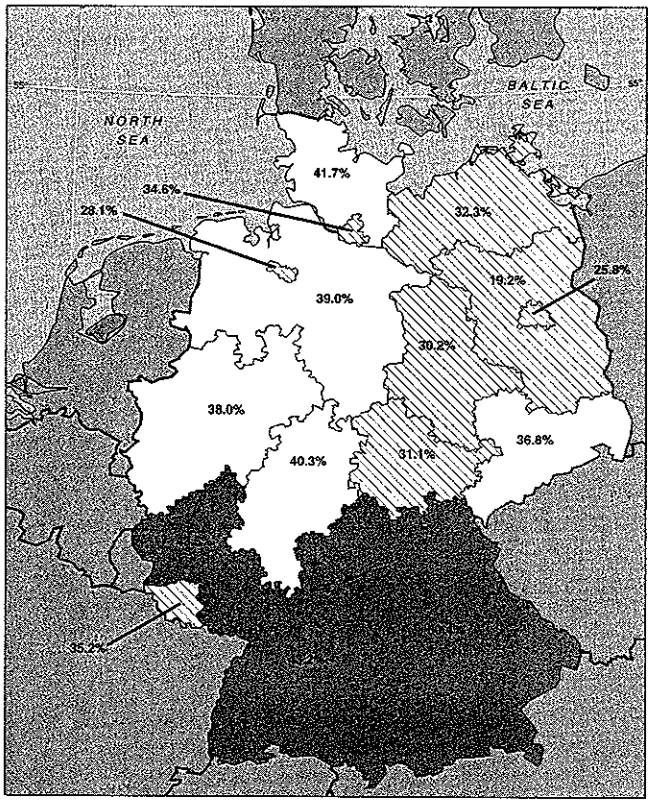
2. *Every country has regional voting.* Regions vote according to their resentments. Typically, the periphery votes against the core area. If the core votes for party X, the periphery votes for party Y. Much depends on how the core area acquired the peripheral region. If by conquest, the periphery long remembers this fact, as has the U.S. South. Scotland and Wales show their resentments toward England by voting Labour, but England stays Tory. France south of the Loire River and Spain south of the Tagus River tend to go Socialist, acting out their resentments toward, respectively, Paris and Madrid. The south of Italy, on the other hand, was long a bastion of conservatism. More recently, the north of Italy spawned a breakaway movement over resentment at paying for the impoverished south. As the Soviet Union's republics held free and fair elections, many strongly nationalistic republic governments took office and proclaimed their independence. Lithuanians and Georgians' hatred of Moscow led them to support nationalistic parties.

3. *Voting follows religion.* Religious attitudes tend to be distributed regionally. Indeed, the religion factor is one explanation for points 1 and 2, previously discussed. Big cities tend to be less religious than small towns, inclining the cities to vote liberal or left. Some regions have different religions than the core area. Scottish Presbyterians show their difference from the Anglicans by not voting Tory. German Protestants are still rather inclined to see the Christian Democratic Union as a Catholic party and therefore to vote against it, a tendency muddied by other factors. Immediately after unification, largely Protestant East Germany went CDU, but it has since swung to leftist parties—the SPD and Left. Religion helped to pull the Soviet Union apart, as Muslim republics installed Islamic regimes that were implicitly anti-Christian. In the Caucasus, persons of Christian origin, even if irreligious, feel threatened. Surrounded by hostile Islamic peoples, they elect implicitly anti-Muslim Christian governments, as in Armenia and Georgia.

Compare Percent of Catholics per Land (top) to Percent of CDU/CSU Vote per Land (bottom)

Close match: The percent of Catholics in each Land (see top map) predicts the percent of CDU/CSU vote in each Land (see bottom map).





In Germany, religion means either Catholic or Protestant. German Catholics are more likely to vote CDU; therefore, heavily Catholic Länder such as Baden-Württemberg generally go with the CDU. The CSU has long had Catholic Bavaria sewn up. Further north, in the largely Protestant Länder, the SPD tends to do better, as they do in large cities. In Germany, the rural and small-town vote tends to go to the CDU. German workers, especially those who belong to a labor union, are generally more loyal to the SPD than British workers are to the Labour party. Thus, an *ideal-typical* (see page 128) SPD voter in Germany is a Protestant worker in a large northern city. His or her CDU counterpart is a middle-class Catholic in a small southern town. The Free Democrats appeal to some of the Protestant middle class, the Greens generally attract the young people, and the Left attracts East Germans and those who feel left out of the overall prosperity.

East Germany—although it is almost completely Protestant, and it followed a pre-1933 SPD voting tradition—went heavily Christian Democrat in 1990. As the costs and disappointments of unification became clear, some East Germans moved to the SPD, confirming the SPD as a party that is more attractive to Protestants and to urban workers. But a good number of Ossis lent their votes to the Greens (who had merged with the East German Alternative/90 in early 1993), then to the ex-Communist Party of Democratic Socialism, and then in 2005 to the Left party. German voting, like the German party system, has become more complex and less predictable.

KEY TERMS

bimodal (p. 210)
catchall (p. 213)
center-seeking (p. 210)
dealignment (p. 214)
Rechtsstaat (p. 216)
transparency (p. 215)
unimodal (p. 210)
Weltanschauung (p. 213)

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