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The German Party System: Eternal Crisis?

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Keele European Parties Research Unit
(KEPRU)

Working Paper 2

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ISSN 1475-1569
ISBN 1-899488-09-X

KEPRU Working Papers are published by:

School of Politics, International Relations and the Environment (SPIRE)
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ST5 5BG, UK

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fax +44 (0)1782 58 3592
www.keele.ac.uk/depts/spire/

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ABSTRACT*

Ever since the early years of the Federal Republic, the German debate about political parties and the party system has been almost obsessed with the theme of crisis. Contrary to what seems to be the dominant view from within Germany, this article argues that, by and large, the German party system has performed well. Gordon Smith's centrality thesis can explain why this has been the case. However, there are indications that the future may not be so benign.

Looking back on more than 50 years of academic writing on the German party system reveals a never ending concern with crisis. In the 1950s (and ever since) the worried question was whether Bonn was, after all, doomed to become 'Weimar'.¹ In the 1960s, ideological convergence of the large parties provoked concern about the 'vanishing opposition'² and gave rise to criticisms about their lack of ideological distinctiveness which, allegedly, had turned them into *Allerweltparteien* - the slightly pejorative German translation of Kirchheimer's original term 'catch-all party'.³ It was during the 1970s when some analysts saw the Federal Republic on the trail towards a one-party state⁴ or worried about 'parties contra citizens'.⁵ At the very least, the verdict was that the party system suffered from a legitimation crisis⁶, like, one is tempted to add, many other institutions of late capitalism. It was hardly surprising that the success of the Greens in the 1980s provoked a new round of alarmed debates about a potential crisis of German parties and the party system.⁷ The surprisingly smooth extension of the West German party system to the new Länder, however, seemed to indicate that the 'helpless giants'⁸ were not quite as disorientated as many thought. Nevertheless, their breathing space was short and the ensuing wave of criticism hit the 'dinosaurs of democracy'⁹ probably harsher than ever before.¹⁰

* A version of this working paper is to appear forthcoming in: Stephen Padgett and Thomas Poguntke (eds.) *Beyond the Politics of Centrality. Party Government in Contemporary Germany. A Festschrift for Gordon Smith, German Politics, Vol. 10, No. 2.*

All this conceals that the history of the German party system is primarily a success story¹¹, and Gordon Smith's interpretation of its dynamic, indentifying a 'politics of centrality' at work, stands out as a convincing explanation of why this has come about¹². In 1949, few contemporaries would have ventured the prediction that the German party system would fulfil what was then considered its most important and imminent functions: government formation, government stability and, somewhat later, government alternation.¹³ Admittedly, this is a one-sidedly governmental perspective, but it reflects both, the Weimar experience and the political situation in 1949 which was dominated by a desire for stability. For obvious reasons, the capacity of the party system to represent of a wide range of political currents was considered of secondary importance.

The debates which have been sketched out above did not always distinguish systematically between parties (normally focusing on the large parties) and the party system, that is, individual parties and the mechanics of interaction between them.¹⁴ Also, they tended to concentrate on a rather diverse aspects including party system fragmentation and legitimacy, the intermittent success of extremist parties and the ideological representativeness of the party system as a whole. The common denominator of these debates is their concern with change. In other words, processes of change tend to be identified with crisis in Germany.¹⁵ It is not uncommon that the obsession with crisis upstages the relevant question as to whether or not ongoing change is really threatening those functions of a party systems which are essential for a working parliamentary democracy. After all, it is not necessarily a sign of crisis when familiar structures begin to change, and what might be a crisis for a single party may even improve the performance of the party system. We may only speak of a crisis if change is beginning to seriously undermine essential functions of the party system. Those can be subsumed under two broad headings, that is, the functions of *representation* and of *government formation*. It is obvious that individual aspects of these functions are mutually contradictory, if not exclusive. Both, government stability and government alternation are essential features of a working party system. Similarly, the representativeness of a party system manifests itself not only through existing parties' capacity to attract a large share of the vote but also through a fair chance for new parties to gain representation. Ultimately, not all new political demands can be integrated by existing parties.

The analysis is complicated by the fact that individual indicators for measuring party system properties tell us very little about the actual performance of a party system with regard to the essential functions mentioned above.¹⁶ Given the Weimar experience it was hardly surprising that attention in Germany has always tended to focus on party system fragmentation; even though increasing fragmentation may well enhance the capacity of a party system to facilitate government alternation - if it removes previous asymmetry. Still, a symmetrical party system may well be characterised by its failure to offer alternative government formulae: The dominant parties may be of roughly equal size but one may lack an acceptable coalition partner. These examples may suffice to demonstrate that it is impossible to adequately discuss individual party system indicators within the context of the present article. Instead we will concentrate on the performance of the German party system with regard to its two essential functions during the different phases of German post-war history. It is vital to relate party system performance to these historical phases because, as mentioned already, the relative importance of these functions for democratic stability changed over time. There can be little doubt that government stability was the single most important function of the party system in the 1950s in order to enhance system legitimacy. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, representation and integration of extra-parliamentary protest seemed to be the principal task.

UPHEAVAL AND CONTINUITY

A dialectic of upheaval and continuity characterised the formative phase of the West German party system.¹⁷ Although all parties could connect to political traditions of the Weimar period, the majority of Liberals and Christian Democrats made a conscious choice not just to pick up where they had been forced to leave off in 1933. Excessive party system fragmentation and the emergence of hostile political camps which had been so central in undermining Weimar democracy were to be avoided. Instead of re-establishing the old Weimar parties, both strands of Liberalism largely joined forces and founded the FDP which has ever since been ridden by conflicts between national and economic liberalism on one side and left-liberalism on the other. Similarly, CDU and CSU, albeit relating to their Catholic ancestors, were consciously founded as non-denominational parties. SPD and KPD could reinvigorate their old structures without

much rupture but nevertheless needed to adapt to new societal conditions. Most significantly, this included the foundation of a unified trade union including the Christian labour movement in order to alleviate antagonisms between old social milieux.

In the early years of the Federal Republic any evaluation of the party system was primarily based on its capacity to facilitate stable governments. The uncertain legitimation of the newly established political system could only hope to be consolidated through convincing performance of the new institutions, and the party system played a key role in this. No doubt, avoidance of excessive party system fragmentation was an important precondition. There seemed to be little prospect for this at the outset. Several parties with a strong regional base entered into the competition and the enormous social upheaval caused by war, flight and expulsion had created special interests which the main political parties found difficult to accommodate. Although refugees could only set up their own party after allied licensing had been abolished (the BHE/GB was founded in 1950)¹⁸, eleven parties were represented in the first German Bundestag elected in 1949. Between them, CDU/CSU and SPD secured only 72.1 per cent of the vote. Still, Konrad Adenauer who was to lead a coalition of CDU/CSU, FDP and the rural, Lower Saxony-based DP was elected in the first ballot.

A process of rapid party system concentration set in between 1949 and 1953 which first culminated in 1957 when CDU/CSU gained the first and only overall majority of the vote in a free election to a national parliament in German history.¹⁹ The year 1961 marks the end of this process as the two-and-a-half party system comprising CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD had finally established itself. The demise of the small parties also meant that the cleavage structure underlying the German party system had become simplified. In addition to a dominant left-right dimension it was merely a secondary conflict between clerical and anti-clerical forces which played a significant role in structuring the party system.²⁰ Ever since, this has been reflected by the parties' core electorates: church-oriented voters have remained the most loyal supporters of CDU and CSU, unionised workers have continued to support the SPD disproportionately, and if one wanted to identify such a thing as a Liberal core electorate, it were to be found in the anti-clerical old middle class.²¹

BALANCE AND STABILITY

The unchallenged dominance of the two-and-a-half party system continued until 1983, when the Greens first entered the German Bundestag. For more than two decades, the ‘core parties’²² had succeeded in securing consistently more than 90 per cent of the popular vote and all Bundestag seats. However, this is not the only criterion that identifies the period between 1961 and 1983 as a distinctive phase of the German party system. First and foremost, this phase was marked by a near to perfect performance of the party system when it came to government formation: The party system facilitated stable governments while, at the same time, providing for a feasible alternative. Unlike in the 1950s, when a government without the Christian Democrats was numerically possible but politically unthinkable, the entire period from 1961 to 1983 was characterised by alternative majorities with the FDP occupying a pivotal role. Even though a social-liberal federal coalition government was just as unlikely in 1961 (unlike in the Länder) as a christian-liberal coalition in 1976, the entire period was characterised by the existence of two large parties whose ability to govern depended on support by the FDP. The only exception to this pattern was the Grand Coalition between 1966 and 1969, which remained an exception not least because it ignored the inherent mechanics of the party system, and it was precisely the ensuing marginalisation of parliamentary opposition which seriously undermined one of the key functions of the party system, that is, its capacity for integration. Unintentionally, this lent additional momentum to both, the extra-parliamentary opposition and the extreme right-wing NPD.

From this perspective, it is misleading to regard the formation of the social-liberal coalition in 1969 as a major watershed, although this interpretation has gained widespread recognition. On the contrary, it should be regarded as the expression of a functioning two-and-a-half party system. Still, the *Machtwechsel* of 1969 represented a major test for the stability of the democratic institutions of the Federal Republic. This applies also to the early years of the newly formed social-liberal coalition, particularly to its first term which ended prematurely in 1972. During a phase of intense conflict over fundamental questions of *Deutschlandpolitik* and *Ostpolitik* (but equally over a range of domestic policy issues), the party system fulfilled its essential

functions. It facilitated stable governments, which was epitomised by the failed constructive vote of no confidence and the subsequent early election, and it managed to integrate large portions of the extra-parliamentary opposition. This integrational capacity extended also to conservative portions of the German population. Cut off from the resources of government, the CDU managed to modernise its organisation and could more than double its membership over the course of just one decade.²³ While party membership was declining in most Western European nations during the 1970s, political parties were truly accepted by the German population for the first time. The growth of party membership is much less impressive, however, if the parallel increase of the size of the electorate is taken into account.²⁴ At the same time, the party system reached its maximum concentration when the three Bundestag parties gained 99.1 per cent of the popular vote in the 1976 Bundestag elections.

There have been many attempts at explaining this phenomenon of rapid party system concentration, particularly with a view to the unfavourable initial situation. As the example of the Greens conclusively demonstrated, the famous five per cent hurdle could not prevent the electoral success of relevant political forces in the long run. Alternative explanations usually failed to answer why comparable processes of party system concentration were hardly visible elsewhere. This applies to the end of ideology thesis as well as to Kirchheimer's prediction that the catch-all party was to be the dominant party type in larger European democracies - and not just in Germany.²⁵ The most convincing answer to this intriguing question has thus far been given by Gordon Smith, who has maintained that the success of the catch-all party (and the concomitant party system concentration) has been, to a degree, a German *Sonderweg* fostered by the specific conditions of post-war Germany. In his view, party system concentration was particularly pronounced in Germany, because the National-Socialist past and the permanent confrontation with Communism epitomised by the Iron Curtain running through the nation had truncated the ideological spectrum of the German party system. Both, the extreme left and right had been turned into ideological 'no-go areas' which compelled the parties to compete for the middle ground.²⁶ These taboos were legally fortified by the ban on the National-Socialist Reich Party (SRP) in 1952 and on the Communist Party (KPD) in 1956, the latter being already a reduced to a splinter party by then.²⁷

While the success of the right-wing NPD in the late 1960s could still be regarded as a temporary weakening of the 'negative consensus',²⁸ the consolidation of the Greens since the 1980s has indicated that this demarcating consensus was beginning to wear off with increasing remoteness of the immediate post-war period and its moulding experiences.²⁹ In the end, it was no longer sufficiently strong to bar a party situated clearly to the left of the SPD from entering the Bundestag.

In fact, the foundation of the Greens can be regarded as a reaction to the very strength of the politics of centrality among political elites whilst it was increasingly eroding among the mass public. By the late 1970s, there was a marked tendency of the established party system to shield off newly articulating interests which became prevalent among parts of the German population. Activists from the anti-nuclear and, somewhat later, the peace movements were faced with a de facto all-party coalition, at least as far as national parties were concerned. Although there was considerable dissent among several Land party organisations of SPD and FDP, national leaderships of both parties repeatedly succeeded in securing support for their policies. Effectively, this undermined the integration effects of this intra-party dissent and, as frustration with the established parties grew among supporters of the new social movements, finally led to the foundation of the first green-alternative electoral lists for local and Land elections. It was merely the candidature of CSU leader Franz-Josef Strauß in the 1980 federal election which temporarily stabilised the crumbling two-and-a-half party system. Abhorrence of a Chancellor Franz-Josef Strauß made most potential Green voters cast their vote for Helmut Schmidt's SPD a very last time. A brief glance at Land election results before and after the Bundestag elections of 1980s clearly shows that this stabilisation was entirely due a 'stop-Strauß-effect'.³⁰

TOWARDS A NEW EQUILIBRIUM

When the Greens made their entrance into the Bundestag this marked the end of a period of insufficient representativeness of the German party system and helped to reconcile their voters with parliamentary democracy. Therefore, the electoral success of the Green Party did not necessarily signify a crisis of the party system. On the contrary, it had proven its capacity for representation - even if this meant that its

inherent mechanics had changed substantially, which, in turn, undermined its governmental performance. More precisely, the party system lost its potential to provide for alternating governments.

The success of the Greens in 1983 marks the beginning of a new era of the West German party system, because it deprived the FDP of its monopoly to decide which of the large parties was to govern. To be sure, alternative coalitions would have been numerically possible in 1983 and 1987. But this would have had to include the Greens and the FDP, a combination which was politically just as unfeasible as a coalition without the Christian Democrats in the 1950s. In other words, the West German party system had reverted towards substantial imbalance. During this phase, the party system was split into two camps of unequal size, and the left was far from being capable of co-ordinated action necessary to challenge the christian-liberal coalition. It was only towards the end of the 1980s, after the Greens had proven their *Regierungsfähigkeit* in several Land governments and the fundamentalists had lost influence within the party that a so-called traffic light coalition including SPD, FDP and the Greens was beginning to be seriously considered. Ironically, it first saw the light of day on the Land level in Bremen 1991 (until 1995) - at a moment in time when German unification had again substantially altered the balance of power in the German party system.

For a second reason, the year 1983 represents fundamental party system change; a new conflict dimension became relevant in the West German party system which partially cuts across old lines of conflict. Although the Greens were situated clearly on the left of the political spectrum, they nevertheless disagreed vociferously with the more traditional forces within Social Democracy, namely large parts of the trade unions.

It is only in conjunction with these more far-reaching changes that the FDP's decision to switch coalition in September 1982 can rightfully be regarded as a turning point in the history of the West German party system. Taken by itself, the termination of the social-liberal coalition had consequences for the Liberals which were comparable to those inflicted upon the party in the aftermath of the 1969 decision to join the Social Democrats in government. In 1969 the national-liberal wing of the party was

substantially decimated whereas many left-liberals left the party after 1982; in both cases taking respective portions of the electorate with them.³¹ As a result, a change of coalition partners could not be considered before an adequate period of recovery while this did not mean that the party was irrevocably tied to one political camp.

During the years preceding unification the German party system was struggling with increasing disintegration on the right. The constraints of governmental incumbency severely restricted the capability of the Christian parties of integrating voters on the right-wing fringe through radical rhetoric. Main beneficiary were the right-wing neo-populist *Republikaner* (REP; founded in 1983), who won representation in the Berlin Land parliament in 1989 and entered the European parliament in the same year, but the more extreme *German People's Union* (DVU) and the old-style *National Democrats* (NPD) also had some limited success.

Although the *Republikaner* had been founded in protest against the continuation of the social-liberal *Deutschlandpolitik* by the newly established government led by the Christian parties, they benefited mainly from the party system's incapacity to respond to problems related to the constitutional right to political asylum in a way which did not allow this conflict to dominate the political agenda over an extended period of time.³² The rise of the parties of the extreme right was interrupted by German unification which temporarily upstaged all other political issues.³³ However, as early as 1992 the *Republikaner* achieved a second wave of electoral successes and won parliamentary representation in the Baden-Württemberg Land parliament with staggering 10.9 per cent. It was only the 1993 compromise over the reform of the right to political asylum which considerably undermined the political attraction of the *Republikaner* and their competitors on the right-wing fringe.

Irrespective of their political undesirability, success and failure of parties on the extreme right clearly indicate phases of satisfactory performance and temporary failure of the German party system. Although its reaction to the asylum issue was disturbingly slow, it finally succeeded to guard off the challenge and re-integrate a considerable portion of the extreme right-wing vote through appropriate policy change. It remains a worrying sign for the performance of the party system, however, that the price that the established parties perceived to be necessary was a large-scale

hollowing-out of the respective article of Basic Law. The unexpected success of the DVU in the Saxony-Anhalt Land elections of April 1998, when they polled 12.9 per cent, clearly indicates that the 'early warning system' of the German party system is not sufficiently sensitive vis-à-vis right-wing temptations.

UNIFIED NATION - DIVIDED PARTY SYSTEM

Apart from intermittent challenges from the right, the German party system seemed to be on the track towards a new equilibrium just before the fall of the Berlin Wall. On the one hand, a government led by the SPD including FDP and Greens was no longer unthinkable. Even more important, though, was the fact that a red-green coalition had become more than just an arithmetic option. The Social Democrats had substantially changed programme and political personnel, and after bitter internal conflicts the Greens had finally embarked on a reformist path including a potential coalition with the SPD.

The most sustained effect of unification on the national party system, however, was the renewed petrification of imbalance. The parliamentary representation on the PDS meant that a coalition to the left of the Christian parties needed a majority without the PDS, which was unanimously considered to be unacceptable for any coalition formula during the early 1990s. Many observers expected this to be merely a temporary aberration. After all, the most surprising result of Land and federal elections in the unification year was the smooth transfer of the West German party system to the new Länder, even though the social composition of individual parties' electorates in East and West remained astonishingly diverse.³⁴ An analysis of the 1990 Bundestag election results reveals that the strength of all parties was almost identical in former East and West Germany if one added the result of the PDS to the left.³⁵ The strategy of (un)friendly take-over of East German parties by their the West German counterparts (with the exception of the Greens) seemed to work although there was little consideration for East German sensitivities.

Immediately after unification a five-party system had become established in East Germany which would have matched its West German counterpart almost exactly had

it not been for the existence of the PDS. The ex-Communists, however, were widely regarded as being doomed to failure.³⁶ Most analysts expected that history would repeat itself and that the PDS would quickly disappear, just like several smaller West German parties had quickly declined after 1949 as the economic miracle set in. Yet, economic problems and disappointed hopes remained sufficiently prevalent to ensure that the PDS, which remained sceptical about the new political and economic system, could attract growing support. While all problems tended to be attributed to the 'Bonn parties', the PDS quickly found itself in a comfortable position capable of benefiting from growing Eastern disillusion with the results of unification.³⁷ Consequently, the party finally consolidated its position as a East German regional party in the 1994 Bundestag elections. Its electoral appeal is based to a considerable degree on the growing saliency of a regionalist conflict dimension which can be interpreted as a centre-periphery conflict.³⁸

To be sure, the strong position of the PDS did not remain the only peculiarity of the party system of the new Länder. The second round of Land elections and the Bundestag elections of 1994 substantially changed the mechanics of Eastern Land party systems. With the exception of Saxony-Anhalt (until 1998) neither FDP nor Alliance90/Greens have been represented in Eastern Land parliaments after 1994. By and large, this resulted in the absence of alternative majorities unless the PDS was made a formal or informal part of the government formula. The national effect of the substantial weakness of the smaller parties in the new Länder was less significant, because FDP and Alliance90/Greens were returned to the Bundestag without serious difficulty. Nevertheless, it had finally become apparent by the mid-1990s that the united Germany had a divided party system.³⁹ In the early 1990s it was still possible to speak of one German party system which was regionally modified through the existence of the PDS. By 1994, however, the structure of party competition and the mechanics of government formation in the new Länder had become substantially different from the familiar pattern in the West.

The formation of the first red-green coalition following the 1998 Bundestag elections has been regarded as an indication that the party system may finally be moving towards a bi-polar pattern. While this may, as Peter Mair suggests in this volume, be in the interest of Alliance 90/Greens, because it would make them an indispensable

part of any left-wing majority, there are countervailing factors at work. The Social Democrats do whatever they can to prevent such a situation from arising which would seriously restrict their freedom of manoeuvre. Not only have they entered into coalitions with all other Bundestag parties in the Länder, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has also frequently integrated Christian Democrats and Liberals into the policy consensus by making concessions in the Bundesrat and by giving chairs of special commissions to senior Christian Democrats. At the same time, the Greens have suffered substantial decline in the Land elections following their accession to federal government. Arguably, they have given in too easily to the forces of centrality, running the risk of losing their clearly identifiable profile as a party of strong ecological conviction. While it may be unavoidable for a Green minister of the environment to confront anti-nuclear campaigners in order to secure transportation of nuclear waste, the party as a whole has failed to make its long-term goals as a party of government sufficiently clear. Most importantly, the red-green coalition lacks a common political project. This was reflected in the coalition preferences of Social Democratic supporters before the 1998 elections, when substantial portions favoured a social-liberal or a grand coalition. In other words, the coalition with the Greens was only one option for the Social Democratic leadership, and a slightly different election return might have resulted in a different coalition, leaving roughly similar numbers of Social Democratic voters disaffected with the outcome.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Change is an indicator of a functioning party system in a changing society, it is not a symptom of crisis. From this perspective, the party system has performed far better during the different phases of the Bonn republic than many contemporary critics were prepared to admit. It has facilitated stable governments while offering opposition parties a realistic prospect of eventually taking over government. The dominant position of the SPD and CDU/CSU in conjunction with the practice to nominate a chancellor-candidate and declare coalition preferences before election day have tended to turn parliamentary elections into decisions over chancellorship and the composition of government. At the same time, the comparatively high five per cent-hurdle has lured the established parties into neglecting their responsiveness towards

new demands from the public. After all, several Land elections in the 1990s have indicated that the relatively uncontested electoral position of the established parties (which by now includes the Greens) may owe more to the lack of efficient challengers than to their continued appeal to voters. The success of the 'Statt Partei' in Hamburg and the alliance 'Arbeit für Bremen' may be a writing on the wall warning that erosion need not necessarily happen on the right of the political spectrum.⁴⁰

The conclusion must be even more ambivalent for the post-unification years. First, the government formation function of the party system is seriously impeded by the PDS, which is not considered an acceptable coalition partner on the federal level. Second, the representation function of the party system is partially inhibited by the fact that East German grievances still find it hard to gain adequate attention within the former West German parties which continue to be dominated by Western elites. This means, third, that the PDS has a legitimate claim to be the sole representative of East German concerns. Given the party's scepticism towards the new political and economic regime and its coalitional isolation in national politics, this hampers the integration function of the party system. The PDS embodies, in a way, the dilemma of the party system in unified Germany: A failure of the PDS to cross the five per cent hurdle in national elections would be highly undesirable as long as the other parties have not managed to seriously undermine its electoral support by adequately addressing East German problems. After all, a narrow failure of the PDS would mean that some 20 per cent of the East German vote effectively would be denied representation in the Bundestag. On the other hand, the continued existence of the PDS obstructs another essential function of the party system, that is, the provision for alternating governments. The integration of this portion of the East German electorate – or the unreserved absorption of the PDS into the 'democratic consensus' – remains the unresolved challenge for the German party system at the beginning of the new millennium.

Yet, there are obvious indication that the 'politics of centrality'⁴¹ may be at work again. In 1998, the PDS formed a coalition government with the SPD in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, thereby adding to the already impressive range of choice of coalition partners available to the SPD. Whether allowing to be absorbed into the governing consensus of the Federal Republic is a viable strategy for the PdS remains

to be seen, however. The experience of the Greens could be instructive here. Just like they lost their position of being the uncompromising advocate of the New Politics, the PDS may undermine its electorally highly beneficial posture of being the sole defender of the deprived, betrayed and downtrodden East.

NOTES

- ¹ Fritz Rene Allemann, *Bonn ist nicht Weimar* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1956); Eckhard Jesse, 'Die Parteien im westlichen Deutschland von 1945 bis zur deutschen Einheit 1990' in: Oscar W. Gabriel, Oskar Niedermayer and Richard Stöss (eds.), *Parteiendemokratie in Deutschland* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), pp. 75-76.
- ² Otto Kirchheimer, 'Germany: The Vanishing Opposition' in: Robert A. Dahl (ed.) *Political Oppositions in Western Europe* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 237-59.
- ³ Otto Kirchheimer, 'Der Wandel des westeuropäischen Parteiensystems', in: *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 6/1 (1965), pp. 20-41, note 1; Otto Kirchheimer, 'The Transformation of the Western European Party System' in: Joseph LaPalombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 177-200.
- ⁴ Wolf-Dieter Narr, *Auf dem Weg zum Einparteienstaat* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977).
- ⁵ Hermann Scheer, *Parteien kontra Bürger? Die Zukunft der Parteiendemokratie* (München/Zürich: Piper, 1979).
- ⁶ Jürgen Dittberner and Rudolf Ebbinghausen (eds.), *Parteiensystem in der Legitimationskrise* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1973).
- ⁷ Christian Graf von Krockow and Peter Lösche (eds.), *Parteien in der Krise. Das Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik und der Aufstand des Bürgerwillens* (München: Beck, 1986); Peter Haungs and Eckhard Jesse (eds.), *Parteien in der Krise? In- und ausländische Perspektiven* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1987).
- ⁸ Rudolf Wildenmann, *Volksparteien. Ratlose Riesen? Eine Studie unter Mitarbeit von Werner Kaltefleiter, Manfred Kuechler, Alf Mintzel, Karl-Heinz Naßmacher, Hans-Martin Pawlowski, Thomas Poguntke, Gordon Smith, Ulrich Widmaier* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1989). As far as the author remembers the title of this book was suggested by Gordon Smith during our last project meeting.
- ⁹ Jürgen Rüttgers, *Dinosaurier der Demokratie: Wege aus Parteienkrise und Politikverdrossenheit* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1993).
- ¹⁰ Günter Rieger, 'Parteienverdrossenheit' und 'Parteienkritik' in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', in: *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, 25/3 (1994), pp. 459-71.
- ¹¹ Within the restricted scope of this article the focus will be on the federal party system with intermittent references to Land party systems where appropriate.
- ¹² Gordon Smith, 'The German Volkspartei and the Career of the Catch-All Concept' in: Herbert Döring and Gordon Smith (eds.), *Party Governments and Political Culture in Western Germany* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 59-76.
- ¹³ Karlheinz Nicolauß, *Das Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Eine Einführung* (Paderborn u.a.: Schöningh, 1995), pp. 35; Gordon Smith, 'Das deutsche Parteiensystem am Wendepunkt' in: Heinrich Oberreuter (ed.),

- Parteiensystem am Wendepunkt?: Wahlen in der Fernsehdemokratie* (München/Landsberg am Lech: Olzog, 1996), p. 221.
- 14 Gordon Smith, 'A System Perspective on Party System Change', in: *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 1/3 (1989), p. 349.
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- 16 See Oskar Niedermayer, 'Zur systematischen Analyse der Entwicklung von Parteiensystemen' in: Oscar W. Gabriel and Jürgen W. Falter (eds.), *Wahlen und politische Einstellungen in westlichen Demokratien* (Frankfurt am Main u.a.: Peter Lang, 1996), pp. 19-49 for a good overview.
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