

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of *Transformation of the German Political Party System* is to go beyond conventional treatments of German political parties that tend to provide quick snapshots of the state of the polity in a given election year. Rather, the contributors to this volume analyze underlying patterns of continuity and change in reconciling popular demands and system requirements. While ostensibly about German political parties, several authors also place the German experience in a comparative and historical framework. The volume evaluates the performance of the German parties and party system in dealing with the problems of integration and legitimation that are common to all industrialized democracies, and in so doing, presents a sharp analysis of the effects and incompleteness of German unification amidst continuing Europeanization. Specifically, it deals with the pressures on the German political party system deriving from a devolution of state power downward to citizens' initiatives as well as upward with respect to regional and European integration.

In characterizing and evaluating the political party system of a developed nation state in an edited volume, we made several conscious choices to elaborate both continuities and changes in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). We identified four essential tasks to perform. First, we wanted to situate the German political party system within the context of party systems in

other developed countries (Allen). In some respects there are powerful similarities between Germany and its allies, yet on other dimensions we found significant differences. As comparativists, we believe strongly in a core maxim of the subdiscipline, namely to understand what, why, and how we are comparing. Second, we rejected the notion that the story of the German political party system began only with the founding of the Federal Republic immediately after World War II. In two historically-focused chapters (Betz and Richter) we address the deeply-rooted institutional continuities of the German political parties, their constituencies, cleavages, and roles as broad-based membership organizations. Third, we also wanted to capture the significant changes that have transpired in the German political party structure, namely the formation of new political parties within the past two decades (Markovits/Silvia and Leslie). In a fundamental sense, the capacity of a party system to respond to, if not incorporate, new social forces and party groupings within a country's institutional structure provide important clues to its health as a democratic polity. Fourth, we wanted to offer an evaluation of Germany's greatest modern experiment, namely the incorporation of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) into the Federal Republic (Kreikenbom, Phillips, and Seibel). Specifically, we wanted to evaluate how political parties and interest groups in all of a united Germany affected the performance of the German party system.

Christopher S. Allen's chapter, "Germany and the Comparative Political Party Experience: Sclerotic or Dynamic Institutions?" is explicitly comparative, situating the German party system in the context of party systems in other industrialized democracies. It takes a four part perspective that looks comparatively at parties and party systems in the U.S., U.K., France, and Italy to corroborate the claims of whether the German parties are in crisis or not. In the process it identifies different institutional "pathologies" in each of the four countries' party systems. It also briefly examines some of the literature on polit-

ical parties to verify exactly what parties are and what they are supposed to do in a democratic polity and suggests that Germany has developed a party system characterized by dynamic stability at three levels: macro institutional, party systemic, and intra-party. Finally, using a new institutionalist perspective, Allen suggests that characterizing parties as rigid or sclerotic often misses the internal dynamics of these unique collective political institutions.

Hans-Georg Betz's chapter establishes an important historical foundation in arguing that despite a partial erosion in the 1980s and 1990s, German parties have been able to maintain core constituencies while appealing to emerging new social groups. He suggests the key to party durability has been an ability to manage changes in party cleavages in different eras. Germany's postwar pattern of religious and class cleavages was increasingly overlain by cleavages that emerged within the middle class beginning in the 1970s. Their political expression first favored the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in the 1970s, then the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the 1980s. The Greens and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the former East German Communists, now are the dominant institutional expressions of this cleavage. In short, this is a story of change within institutional continuity.

Michaela W. Richter's reassessment builds on Betz's foundation in analyzing the fascinating process by which the party state emerged at the founding of the Federal Republic. Overcoming both Allied and domestic opposition to strong parties in the wake of Weimar, the unlikely coalition of Christian Democrat Konrad Adenauer and Social Democrat Kurt Schumacher, leaders of their respective parties in the British Zone in 1946, helped to grant political parties a privileged position in the democratic FRG. In the process, the party state helped establish representative government, but whether this once vibrant party state has proven a capable actor during the process of unification requires closer scrutiny. Richter suggests two potential

paths: an uncritical acceptance of the party state theory as a legitimating formula or a reinvigoration of the parties as dynamic membership organizations. The former would erode the party state while supposedly paying homage to it while the latter would invigorate German democracy.

John Leslie examines a troubling new and old phenomenon in his chapter on the changing fortunes of Germany's far right parties. The legal and institutional parameters of parliamentary democracy in the old FRG shaped the electoral chances of far right parties and there is a question whether and how the environment has changed with unification, specifically in terms of the external constraints imposed on these parties. Given this focus, the chapter neither devotes much space to the internal organization and development of far right parties themselves nor does it compare specific events in Germany with similar developments elsewhere in Europe. Instead, the first section considers the prevailing West German parliamentary conditions which shaped the emergence of far right parties in the late 1980s. A second section regards the changes in the political environment accompanying unity which explain developments after Fall 1991, particularly the emergence of xenophobic violence. A final section explores the extent to which, despite the transformations wrought by unification, the relatively restrictive constraints faced by far right parties have remained intact. In doing so, it asks whether the turbulence of unity, rather than assisting parties of the far right, has undermined their electoral chances.

The chapter by Andrei S. Markovits and Stephen J. Silvia focuses on the problems confronting the Alliance Greens that have prompted periodic outbreaks of identity crises in the party and on the German left. They first assess the Alliance Greens as a political party, in particular its relationship with the two other left-of-center political parties, the SPD and the PDS, and with the constituent parties of former Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative coalition, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), CDU

and Christian Social Union (CSU). The discussion concentrates on the Alliance Greens as a political party in the changed topography of Germany's party landscape. The second section looks at the impact of the Alliance Greens as a movement on the content and discourse of contemporary German politics, assessing the trajectory of the Alliance Greens as an innovative force in German politics. The chapter concludes with a discussion of policy, which attains particular salience in light of the Alliance Greens' emergence as another significant electoral force in the Federal Republic and as the junior coalition partner in the first "Red-Green" government elected in 1998. In other words, the importance of Green policy positions grows with the entry of the Alliance Greens into the inner sanctum of German politics at the national level.

Henry Kreikenbom's consideration of de-alignment and realignment begins with Lipset and Rokkan's powerful cleavage theory. He evaluates its impact in a Germany where a new cleavage has been created by the economic and social processes of modern industrial society and the three party system broken open by the Greens. Kreikenbom investigates whether the de-alignment process has been accompanied by the creation of a new coalition of voters and parties or whether this process has led to a party system based on a rational party orientation of voters. A further cleavage has developed among eastern Germans along the ideological dimension of a socialist rather than a western affinity. To analyze this phenomenon, Kreikenbom combines aggregate and individual data analysis complemented by qualitative interviews. He describes the process of de-alignment and realignment in West Germany based on empirical data for the period up to 1989 and then addresses the cleavage structure in the GDR and in the new states (Länder). Last, he addresses possible future developments in the coalitions between voters and parties in a united Germany as determined by the cleavages.

In "Agents of Democratization and Unification," Ann L. Phillips uses the prism of structure-agency theory to investigate

the role German political parties play in the democratic life of the unified FRG. This model is particularly salient given the sister party phenomenon of western German parties extending their reach eastward to encompass the bloc parties of the former GDR. This chapter assesses the transformation of parties as institutions through changes in party leadership, membership, organization and program, evaluating parties as they perform traditional functions and activities. It is the structure-agency dilemma that animates attempted fusion of the sister parties. Phillips concludes the democratization of the parties has generally been successful, but that their efficacy as agents of democracy is weak. Both cultural and contextual differences undercut the ability of western German structures and institutions to take root in the five new states of eastern Germany.

Finally, Wolfgang Seibel departs from a primary focus on political parties, preferring to examine the role that nonprofit organizations play. He suggests they play an essential role in underpinning German parties and the party system, for while parties and interest groups secure political legitimacy as input factors of political systems, nonprofit institutions mobilize political support through both input and output functions. In terms of output, nonprofit institutions provide quasi-public goods, in terms of input, they organize civil society through voluntarism and network structures. Nonprofit institutions are an integral part of the German polity and are essential to political integration. Thus there are important reasons to examine societal continuities and discontinuities again relative to the role of nonprofit institutions after the recent dramatic political changes in Germany. In short, the nonprofit sector may be conceived of as both a determined and a determinant factor of political integration and political stability. On the one hand, the nonprofit sector is dependent on the resource mobilization capacity of civil society. The degree of social networking and voluntarism is crucial to the nonprofit sector's viability and vitality. On the other hand, nonprofit institutions, once they

exist, represent a resource of social order building and political integration in itself.



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