

The Resurgence and Decline of the Social Democratic Party in the Berlin Republic (1990–2020)

Abstract:

The “misery of Social Democracy” has causes that go back further than reunification and even beyond. In historical retrospect, the SPD has already experienced its rise and fall in the Bonn Republic, which will be briefly recalled here. The history of Social Democrats in the Bonn Republic represents the backdrop against which the resurgence of the SPD took place in the first decade after reunification, culminating in the “red-green project” and the adoption of “Agenda 2010”, the hotly contested political program to renew the welfare state. The new decline of the SPD from 2003 to the present has many causes, most of them unconnected to reunification. The explanations offered by the literature on the decline of Social Democracy can be sorted into five approaches: materialist, ideational, electoral, institutional, and personal (biographical). Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which each approach considers the decline of Social Democracy fateful and irreversible. The article concludes with an outlook on the 2021 Bundestag election.

Key Words:

Agenda 2010, Bundestag Elections, Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Explanatory Approaches for the Decline of Social Democracy, Grand Coalition, Hartz Reforms, Party Membership, Red-Green Coalition, Gerhard Schröder, Social Democracy, Social Democrats (SPD), “Volkspartei”

Winand Gellner's and John Robertson's (2003: 2) conclusion from the previous volume that even after a decade of reunification, “the real costs” of this successful political transformation would not be foreseeable for years to come, could be described as almost clairvoyant with regard to the fate of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) as well as the development of Germany's party system. In 2002, when the volume went to press, the SPD was in nearly as good a position as it had been thirty years earlier, when it had become the strongest party for the first time in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and Chancellor Willy Brandt (SPD) had been confirmed in office as leader of the social-liberal coalition. In the 2002 Bundestag elections, the SPD also came in just ahead of the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)

and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (SPD) was able to continue the red-green coalition formed in 1998. Even the party system had hardly changed since 1972: Apart from the CDU/CSU, SPD and the Liberals (FDP), only the Greens were represented in the Bundestag, while the PDS, the successor to the German Democratic Republic (GDR)'s state party SED, had failed for the first time since 1990 at the election threshold.

Nearly two decades and four disappointing Bundestag elections later, we know that the real costs of reunification for the SPD occurred only after a considerable delay – although it goes without saying that not all the challenges facing the SPD and the German party system today can be traced back to the political upheaval of 1989/90. Many socioeconomic developments that continue to affect the parties began long before reunification and were sometimes only intensified, sometimes not even touched by it, and sometimes even halted for a time (Saalfeld 2003). Moreover, the further history progressed after reunification, the less the changes could be traced back directly to the epochal upheaval, and the more they intermingled with the following actions of political actors. The direct consequences of reunification thus increasingly became indirect consequences mediated by political action. It was only the “Agenda 2010”, which Chancellor Schröder pushed through even against resistance in his own ranks, that led to a split in the political Left and turned the PDS, which had hitherto only been successful in the East, into a Left Party that was successful throughout Germany.

Thus, although the current “misery of Social Democracy” (Steinbrück 2017) can hardly be dismissed, it has causes that go back further than reunification (Dahrendorf 1987) and even beyond. In historical retrospect, the SPD has already experienced its rise and fall in the Bonn Republic, which will be briefly recalled here (Chapter 1). The history of the Social Democrats in the Bonn Republic represents the backdrop against which the resurgence of Social Democracy took place in the first decade after reunification, culminating in the “red-green project” (Egle et al. 2003, Egle/Zohlnhöfer 2007, Wolfrum 2013) and the adoption of “Agenda 2010”, the hotly contested political program to renew the welfare state that laid the foundation for Germany's economic success over the past two decades (Chapter 2). The new decline of the SPD from 2003 to the present (Chapter 3) has many causes, most of them like Agenda 2010, the changing cleavage structure of German society or the organizational calamities of the party unconnected to reunification. The explanations offered by the literature on the decline of Social Democracy, which is not confined to Germany but is international in scale, can be sorted into five approaches: materialist, ideational, electoral, institutional, and personal (biographical). Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which each approach considers the decline of Social Democracy fateful and irreversible (Chapter 4). The contribution concludes with an outlook on the 2021 Bundestag election (Chapter 5).

1) The rise and decline of the SPD in the Bonn Republic: from “Traditionskompanie” to “Staatspartei” and back into the political wilderness (1949–1990)

Although the Social Democrats, along with the Christian Democrats, were the main political force behind the adoption of the Basic Law (Nielauß 1998) and Konrad Adenauer was elected chancellor by a majority of only one vote after the first Bundestag elections in 1949, the SPD quickly fell into political marginalization at the federal level during the first decade of the Bonn Republic. This had just as much to do with the political issues the party represented as with the people acting on its behalf. The first SPD chairman, Kurt Schumacher (1949-52), was a man of principle who committed the party to an anti-capitalist, socialist course in economic policy. In foreign policy, he was committed to rapid reunification and opposed Adenauer's policy of Western integration and rearmament. His successor Erich Ollenhauer (1952-63) was a colorless party secretary who continued Schumacher's political course. Like Schumacher, he was just as unsuccessful in rebuilding the old workers' and class party SPD and opening it up to new voter strata (Walter 2018: 145-65). Even if the often-painted picture of the old “Traditionskompanie” may be too simple, efforts to form a leftist “Volkspartei” (Mintzel 1983) did not make much progress at first (Grebing 2000: 51-83). The election results turned out accordingly: In the first three Bundestag elections with Schumacher and Ollenhauer as chancellor candidates, the SPD stagnated at 30 percent of the votes (Table 1). Moreover, party membership declined by a third between 1947 and 1954 from roundabout 900,000 to 600,000 (Wiesendahl 2006: 29).

The modernization of the SPD started during the 1950s in the states: first in Hesse, Lower Saxony and the city states of Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg, followed by North Rhine-Westphalia in the 1960s. At the federal level, the landslide defeat of 1957 marked the decisive turning point: With Fritz Erler, Carlo Schmid and Herbert Wehner, party and parliamentary group chairman Ollenhauer was joined by three deputy leaders who pressed for political reforms. The party's center of power shifted to the parliamentary group and, starting in 1958, to a new, broad-based party presidium. In 1959, a new basic program was adopted, the Godesberg Program, with which the SPD finally made the transition from a socialist labor party to a Social Democratic “Volkspartei”. The SPD recognized the market economy, committed itself to a pluralistic model of society and accepted Adenauer's fundamental foreign policy decisions. In 1961, the Social Democrats did not run in the Bundestag elections with Ollenhauer, but with the comparatively young and telegenic mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt. Nevertheless, another five years were to pass before the SPD could enter government for the first time at federal level – as the junior partner in a grand coalition (Grebing 2007: 153-72, Walter 2018: 167-95).

Table 1: Bundestag elections results of the SPD in the Bonn Republic, 1949–1987.

Year	Chancellor Candidate	Popular Vote	%	Seats
1949	Kurt Schumacher	6.934.975	29,2	131 (402)
1953	Erich Ollenhauer	7.944.943	28,8	151 (487)
1957	Erich Ollenhauer	9.495.571	31,8	169 (497)
1961	Willy Brandt	11.427.355	36,2	190 (499)
1965	Willy Brandt	12.813.186	39,3	202 (496)
1969	Willy Brandt	14.065.716	42,7	224 (496)
1972	Willy Brandt	17.175.169	45,8	230 (496)
1976	Helmut Schmidt	16.099.019	42,6	214 (496)
1980	Helmut Schmidt	16.260.677	42,9	218 (497)
1983	Hans-Jochen Vogel	14.865.807	38,2	193 (498)
1987	Johannes Rau	14.025.763	37,0	186 (497)

Source: Bundeswahlleiter 2018: 29–47, 98–100.

The SPD conquered the chancellorship for the first time in 1969, when Willy Brandt formed the social-liberal coalition with the FDP. It was only now, 20 years after its foundation, that the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), for some until then a pure “CDU-Staat”, had passed the democracy test and completed its first meaningful “change of power” (Baring 1982, Bracher et al. 1986). It was only now, too, that the SPD became fully a “Staatspartei” (Grebing 2000: 65–83) at the federal level as well, as it had been in most states since 1946. In the 16 years that the SPD governed in the grand and social-liberal coalition, major political reform projects in foreign and domestic policy were initiated and carried out: a new *détente* policy towards the East, development aid to the “Third World”, reforms in the fields of economic, educational, social and judicial policy. The social-liberal 1970s were the heyday of Social Democracy in Germany. With Brandt’s re-election in 1972, the SPD surpassed the Christian Democrats as the strongest party in the Bundestag for the first time. Although it was unable to repeat this result in 1976 and 1980, the SPD remained strong enough under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1974–82) to govern with the FDP until 1982 in what was then the German two-and-a-half party system with two big parties above 40 percent and a small hinge party, the FDP, with around ten percent of the vote (Horst 2013: 173–174). Since the end of the 1960s, members have been flocking to the SPD in droves. In 1976, the party achieved its current record of over one million members (Wiesendahl 2006: 33).

The 1980s saw the decline of the SPD – but from today’s point of view on a still quite high level. The fall of the SPD was initiated in the last years of the social-liberal coalition when Chancellor Schmidt was no longer able to convince the left wing of his party of his policies. At the end of the 1970s, the limits of expanding the welfare state were reached everywhere in the West, and the party moved on to a policy of budget consolidation. Neo-Keynesian economic governance, which had led to the problem of stagflation (economic stagnation coupled with inflation), was replaced by supply-side economics, which sought to unleash forces of growth again. Especially on the left wing of the SPD, this approach found much less approval than

with the chancellor and the liberal cabinet members. In addition, the left wing of the SPD was concerned by the expansion of nuclear energy, by some legal border crossings in the fight against terrorism, and above all by the forthcoming installation of Pershing II and cruise missiles in West Germany due to Nato's double-track decision, which was pushed by their chancellor (Jäger/Link 1987). Parallel to the internal conflicts of the social-liberal coalition, the social movements – above all the anti-nuclear, women's and peace movement – gained in importance and even led to the emergence of a new political party, the Greens, who first entered the Bundestag in 1983. Since the Greens of the 1980s regarded themselves as a fundamental opposition and the FDP had reoriented itself toward the CDU/CSU, the SPD's chances of participating in government had declined sharply. Neither in 1983 nor in 1987 did the party have a realistic prospect of power (Table 1).

2) The resurgence of the SPD in the Berlin Republic: from reunification to the red-green coalition and its reelection (1990 to 2002)

When the citizens of the GDR brought down the SED dictatorship in the fall of 1989 and forced free elections (Thaysen 1990) – first to the GDR's People's Chamber on March 18, 1990, and then to the first all-German elected Bundestag on December 2, 1990 – the German parties needed to react. The SPD was considered by many to be the favorite for the elections in East Germany because it had once had strongholds in Saxony and Thuringia during the Weimar Republic. But not only had more than five decades passed since the collapse of Germany's first democracy, the SPD had also been absorbed by the SED in the GDR and had modernized considerably in the FRG. Neither the newly founded Social Democratic Party (SDP), renamed the "SPD in the GDR" in January 1990 (Grebing 2007: 235), nor its sister party in West Germany were up to the historic moment. Both were skeptical of a quick reunification, SPD chancellor candidate Oskar Lafontaine also argued against the economic and monetary union of the two states. CDU Chancellor Helmut Kohl, on the other hand, seized the "mantle of history" (Leopold von Ranke) with his ten-point plan for German unification, and became the chancellor of German unity. The results are well known: In the first – and last – free People's Chamber election on March 18, 1990, the CDU-led Alliance for Germany won an overwhelming 48 percent of the vote, while the SPD stuck with 22 percent. The SPD won only one of the five elections in the new eastern states on October 14, 1990 (Table 2): that in Brandenburg (Schmitt 2001). In the first all-German Bundestag elections on December 2, 1990, the SPD was defeated with its worst result since 1957 (Tables 1, 3).

From this low point, the only way forward was up. And so it did – starting in in the states. At the time of reunification, Social Democrats already governed in eight of the eleven German

states, including Johannes Rau (1978-1998) in North Rhine-Westphalia, Oskar Lafontaine (1985-1998) in Saarland and Gerhard Schröder (1990-1998) in Lower Saxony. In the first half of the 1990s, other SPD minister presidents included Manfred Stolpe (1990-2002) in Brandenburg, Hans Eichel (1991-1998) in Hesse, Rudolf Scharping (1991-1994) and Kurt Beck (1994-2013) in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany's first female minister president, Heide Simonis (1993-2005), in Schleswig-Holstein, Reinhard Höppner (1994-2002) in Saxony-Anhalt and Henning Scherf (1995-2005) in Bremen (Table 2). More and more often, Social Democrats also governed together with the Greens in the German states (Horst 2010: 349, 402–404).

Table 2: Results of the SPD in State Parliament Elections, 1990 – 2020.

Land	1990-92	1993-96	1997-00	2001-04	2005-08	2009-12	2013-16	2017-20
West Germany								
BW	29,4	25,1		33,3	25,2	23,1	12,7	
BY	26,0	30,0	28,7	19,6	18,6		20,6	9,7
HB	38,8	33,4	42,6	42,3	36,7	38,6	32,8	24,9
HH	48,0	40,4	36,2	36,5/30,5	34,1	48,4	45,6	39,2
HE	40,8	38,0	39,4	29,1	36,7	23,7	30,7	19,8
NI	44,2	44,3	47,9	33,4	30,3		36,0	36,9
NW	50,0	46,0	42,8		37,1	34,5/39,1		31,2
RP	44,8	39,8		44,7	45,6	35,7	36,2	
SL	54,4	49,4	44,4	30,8		24,5/30,6		29,6
SH	46,2	39,8	43,1		38,7	25,4/30,4		27,3
East Germany								
BB	38,2	54,1	39,3	31,9		33,0	31,9	26,2
MV	27,0	29,5	34,3	40,6	30,2	35,6	30,6	
SN	19,1	16,6	10,7	9,8		10,4	12,4	7,7
ST	26,0	34,0	35,9	20,0	21,4	21,5	10,6	
TH	22,8	29,6	18,5	14,5		18,5	12,4	8,2
Berlin								
BE	30,4	23,6	22,4	29,7	30,8	28,3	21,6	

Bold: Minister President belongs to the SPD. Italics: SPD is small coalition partner. BW: Baden-Wuerttemberg. BY: Bavaria. HB: Bremen. HH: Hamburg. HE: Hesse. NI: Lower Saxony. NW: North Rhine-Westphalia. RP: Rhineland-Palatinate. SL: Saarland. SH: Schleswig-Holstein. BB: Brandenburg. MV: Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. SN: Saxony. ST: Saxony-Anhalt. TH: Thuringia. Sources: Bundeswahlleiter 2020: 23–99.

In national politics, however, the SPD initially acted without fortune. First, the new SPD chairman Björn Engholm fell over a scandal in Schleswig-Holstein, then his successor Rudolf Scharping lost the fourth consecutive election to Helmut Kohl in 1994. Scharping was the first and until 2019 last SPD chairman to be elected in an internal party membership vote. The defeated Schröder, however, did not give up his ambitions. Lafontaine toppled the hapless Scharping the year after the lost Bundestag elections (Table 4) and led the SPD on a confrontational and effective opposition course in Bonn (Zohlhöfer 1999). Lafontaine and Schröder then got their act together and planned to replace Kohl's government after 16 years

in office. Their 1998 election campaign under the slogan “justice and innovation” was considered the most modern the SPD had run since Willy Brandt's legendary 1972 campaign (Machnig 1999, Müller 1997, Webel 1999). For the second time in the history of the Federal Republic, the SPD finished ahead of Christian Democrats in the 1998 Bundestag elections (Table 3). Together with the Greens, it also achieved the first complete transfer of power in the history of the republic, i.e. neither of the two coalition partners had belonged to the previous government. Contemporary historians interpreted the “red-green project” as a generational change in politics (Wolfrum 2013): For the first time, the German government was led by politicians who had been politically socialized in the stirring 1960s and 1970s. Joschka Fischer, the popular Green foreign minister, for example, earned his political spurs as a squatter in Frankfurt in the 1970s (Kraushaar 2001: 38–79), while Schröder was chairman of the SPD youth organization and as an attorney defended Horst Mahler, lawyer and member of the left-wing terrorist Red Army Faction (Anda/Kleine 2002: 19–41).

Table 3: Bundestag elections results of the SPD in the Berlin Republic, 1990 – 2017.

Year	Chancellor Candidate	Popular Vote	%	Seats
1990	Oskar Lafontaine	15.545.366	33,5	239 (662)
1994	Rudolf Scharping	17.140.354	36,4	252 (672)
1998	Gerhard Schröder	20.181.269	40,9	298 (669)
2002	Gerhard Schröder	18.488.668	38,5	251 (603)
2005	Gerhard Schröder	16.194.665	34,2	222 (614)
2009	Frank-Walter Steinmeier	9.990.488	23,0	146 (622)
2013	Peer Steinbrück	11.252.215	25,7	193 (631)
2017	Martin Schulz	9.539.381	20,5	153 (709)

Source: Bundeswahlleiter 2018: 48–91, 98–100.

As a coalition, however, the red-green project in 1998 came rather “belatedly” (Lucke 2002: 5). There was thus no honeymoon, because the intra-party conflict between the modernizers around Schröder and the traditionalists led by Lafontaine had hardly been resolved. Since Lafontaine was not only “opposing the government, but history”, as Hamburg's former mayor Klaus von Dohnanyi wisely recognized (Hennecke 2003: 135), he quickly maneuvered himself into the sidelines. In March 1999, Lafontaine gave up as finance minister after less than five months in office and also resigned as party chairman (Table 4). However, the turnaround was limited to the new fiscal consolidation policy, while the traditionalists still had the upper hand in labor market and social policy during the first legislative period. Health care reform and “activating” labor market reforms failed. Only the “Riester pension”, a state-subsidized capital-based private pension plan, pointed in the direction of the “Third Way” and a “renewal of Social Democracy” (Giddens 1998).

Table 4: Party Chairpersons after Willy Brandt, 1987–2020.

Period	Chairperson	Born	State	Springboard Office
1987-91	Hans-Jochen Vogel	1926	BY	Parliamentary group chairman
1991-93	Björn Engholm	1939	SH	Minister President
1993-95	Rudolf Scharping	1947	RP	Minister President
1995-99	Oskar Lafontaine	1943	SL	Minister President
1999-04	Gerhard Schröder	1944	NI	Minister President
2004-05	Franz Müntefering	1940	NW	Parliamentary group chairman
2005-06	Matthias Platzeck	1953	BB	Minister President
2006-08	Kurt Beck	1949	RP	Minister President
2008-09	Franz Müntefering	1940	NW	Retirement
2009-17	Sigmar Gabriel	1959	NI	Minister of the Environment
2017-18	Martin Schulz	1955	NW	EP President
2018-19	Andrea Nahles	1970	NW	Parliamentary group chairwoman
2019-	Saskia Esken	1961	BW	Member of the German Bundestag
2019-	N. Walter-Borjans	1952	NW	Former State Minister of Finance

BY: Bavaria. SH: Schleswig-Holstein. RP: Rhineland-Palatinate. SL: Saarland. NI: Lower Saxony. NW: North Rhine-Westphalia. BB: Brandenburg. BW: Baden-Wuerttemberg. Johannes Rau (1993), Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2008) as well as Malu Dreyer, Thorsten Schäfer-Gümbel and Manuela Schwesig (together in 2019) acted as managing chairpersons. Source: Own research.

In other respects, too, the balance sheet for the first four years of the red-green coalition was rather sobering: The Immigration Act was smuggled through the Bundesrat, the second parliamentary chamber, in a constitutionally dubious manner and ultimately failed before the Federal Constitutional Court, the nuclear phase-out was put on the back burner in negotiations with the energy industry, and the ecological tax reform was watered down. What remained were civil rights advances such as dual citizenship – which was also watered down – and a registered civil partnership for homosexuals, just short of same-sex marriage. And what remained was a change of course in foreign policy that, following the “Nixon goes to China” principle, could probably only be accomplished by the red-green coalition: In the Kosovo war, and before that in Macedonia, a German government sent German soldiers on foreign military missions for the first time since World War II. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Schröder government declared its “unrestricted solidarity” with the United States and supported “Operation Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan. These were undoubtedly remarkable achievements, but by no means ones that brought Chancellor Schröder applause among Social Democrats. In fact, he had to resort to the vote of confidence to push through this position in his governing coalition. Moreover, the alliance obligations within NATO, like the obligations to fiscal solidity within the framework of EU convergence criteria, were a rude reminder that governments cannot always do what they would like to do and that their room for maneuver is limited by exogenous constraints (Zohlnhöfer 2003).

Since the chancellor's key election promise to bring the number of unemployed below the 3.5 million mark was missed, the coalition's re-election was anything but a foregone conclusion. The fact that it nevertheless came about by the narrowest of margins had less to

do with its successful track record than with the government's incumbency advantage. the weakness of the opposition and some unlikely luck. The CDU had to struggle with the consequences of a campaign finance scandal triggered by former Chancellor Kohl and had to hand over the chancellor candidacy to CSU party leader Edmund Stoiber who had difficulties to appeal beyond the Christian Democrat's base. The FDP lurched between Jürgen Möllemann's national populist course and the "fun party" concept of its chairman Guido Westerwelle. By contrast, the two protagonists of the red-green coalition, who for a long time were likewise not saddle-fast, found their way back to their political element in the summer of 2002 – and, clearly, that was campaigning more than governing. Fortune came to their aid: In August 2002, Schröder resolutely opposed the military campaign against Iraq that George W. Bush was planning at the time with flimsy justification. And the chancellor used the catastrophic floods on the Elbe and Danube rivers to showcase his hands-on approach in crisis management – something his opponent Stoiber refrained from doing (Niedermayer 2003). Schröder's election campaign was particularly well received in the new states: In 2002, the SPD achieved a higher vote share in the east than in the west for the first time since reunification (Schultze 2003: 87–88). It also succeeded in persuading one in five PDS voters to cast their district vote for the SPD. In the end, the red-green coalition was confirmed in office only because the PDS was successfully pushed out of the Bundestag (Raschke 2003: 18).

3) The decline of the SPD in the Berlin Republic: Schröder's "Agenda 2010", the division of the political left and the shrinking of the SPD (2003 until today)

The Schröder II government had only been sworn in for two weeks when the first bad news began to pour in. On November 13, 2002, the German Council of Economic Experts criticized the finance minister's over-optimistic tax estimate. On the same day, the European Commission announced that it would open infringement proceedings against the German government for violating the Maastricht convergence criteria. The opposition spoke of "electoral fraud", and Arnulf Baring, writing in the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung", called on citizens to "go to the barricades" against plundering by the state (Hennecke 2003: 7, Thaysen 2003: 206). In the polls, Social Democrats had already plummeted to below 30 percent in December 2002, while Christian Democrats were approaching the 50 percent mark. The SPD lost the state elections in Hesse and Lower Saxony on February 2, 2003 (Table 2), which further strengthened the Christian Democrats' dominant position in the Bundesrat. To counter the government's failed start, Chancellor Schröder decided to act. On March 14, 2003, in a government statement to the German Bundestag, he announced the "Agenda 2010" with which

the red-green coalition and, above all, the SPD are still associated, for better or worse, to this day (Thaysen 2003).

The core element of Agenda 2010 was the so-called “Hartz reforms”. They originated in the Commission on Modern Services in the Labor Market, which Schröder had appointed at the beginning of 2002 under the leadership of Volkswagen manager Peter Hartz and which had presented its proposals in August 2002. In line with the philosophy of the “Third Way”, the overriding goal of the labor market reforms was to combat long-term unemployment by “activating” benefit recipients. The legislative package was divided into four individual measures: Hartz I primarily tightened the requirements in benefit law and introduced education vouchers. Hartz II and Hartz III regulated start-up subsidies (“Ich-AGs”), marginal employment contracts (“Mini-Jobs”) and reformed the Federal Labor Office with the aim of transforming it into a customer-oriented, modern service agency on the labor market. Hartz IV contained the most consequential element of the reform for workers: the merging of unemployment assistance and social welfare into a new uniform basic security (Unemployment Benefit II), which reduced the level of payments and shortened the time of sinking into social welfare for workers aged 55 and older (Schmid 2007: 279-280).

With the Hartz Commission, as well as with his high-publicity “Alliance for Jobs” or the Rürup Commission, which developed proposals for consolidating the social security systems, Schröder had taken up the tradition of neocorporatism that was somewhat weakened in recent decades but still is strong in Germany (Gellner/Robertson 2001). Criticism of this particularly German form of fencing interests by the state in the “Berlin Soviet Republic” (Heinze 2002) did not go unheeded. Particularly problematic was the fact that the Commission had bypassed Parliament and the governing parties in drawing up its reform proposals. From the outset, the reforms therefore smacked of a governmental octroi that the chancellor had pushed through against opposition from within his own ranks. At a special SPD party conference on June 1, 2003, “Basta”-Chancellor Schröder once again threatened to resign in order to extort approval for Agenda 2010. Resistance continued nonetheless: In 2004, “Monday demonstrations” came back to German cities, this time directed not against the SED dictatorship but against the SPD-led government (Schmid 2007). Schröder did not resign as chancellor, but to give the protest an outlet he gave up as party chairman (Table 4).

From the end of 2002 to 2005, the SPD lost a net total of nearly 100,000 members (Table 5). Numerous former party members gathered in the “Electoral Alternative Work & Social Justice” (WASG), which was soon joined by former SPD chairman Oskar Lafontaine. In the same period, the SPD also lost all state elections. After the election in North Rhine-Westphalia in May 2005, the party no longer controlled a single vote in the Bundesrat. Schröder then called early elections, claiming that his government had lost its ability to act (Alemann/Spier 2008: 41-43). For these snap elections, the WASG formed an electoral list together with the PDS.

This new, soon all-German Left returned to the Bundestag with 8.7 percent of the vote and prevented the formation of both a red-green and a black-yellow coalition. Chancellor Schröder, however, managed the feat of running an opposition election campaign after seven years in government. With his warnings about painful social cuts that a black-yellow government under Angela Merkel's leadership would bring, he was able to gain considerable ground in the final spurt of the election campaign. With 34.2 percent of the vote (Table 3), the SPD finished just behind the Christian Democrats (35.2 percent). Schröder had to vacate the field, but the Social Democrats were able to govern for four more years in the grand coalition (Horst 2010: 356).

Table 5: SPD Membership, 1990 – 2019.

Year	Members (n)	%	Year	Members (n)	%
1990	943.402	-	2005	590.485	-2,5
1991	919.871	-2,5	2006	561.239	-5,0
1992	885.958	-3,7	2007	539.861	-3,8
1993	861.480	-2,8	2008	520.970	-3,5
1994	849.374	-1,4	2009	512.520	-1,6
1995	817.650	-3,7	2010	502.062	-2,0
1996	792.773	-3,0	2011	489.638	-2,5
1997	776.183	-2,1	2012	477.037	-2,6
1998	775.036	-0,1	2013	473.662	-0,7
1999	755.066	-2,6	2014	459.902	-2,9
2000	734.667	-2,7	2015	442.814	-3,7
2001	717.513	-2,3	2016	432.706	-2,3
2002	693.894	-3,3	2017	443.152	+2,4
2003	650.798	-6,2	2018	437.754	-1,2
2004	605.807	-6,9	2019	419.340	-4,2
1990-2019	-524.062	-55,6			

Source: Niedermayer 2020: 424–425.

Under the grand coalition, the SPD was unable to halt its decline. Although it did not lose 100,000 members as in the three years before, it still lost 80,000 members in the four years between 2005 and 2009 (Table 5). It also no longer lost every state election during this period, but it did lose most of them (Alemann/Spier 2011: 61). Where it did win, as in Hesse in January 2008, the SPD squandered its victory again. Although SPD top candidate Andrea Ypsilanti had ruled out forming a coalition with the Left Party before the election, she did an about-face after the election. This “voter betrayal”, prevented at the last second by four renegade SPD members of the state parliament (Zastrow 2009), not only shook the SPD in Hesse, which plunged into a bottomless pit in the next election in January 2009 where it remains until today (Table 2); it also cost the SPD in Hamburg a possible victory in February 2008 (Horst 2008: 519-522). SPD party chairman Kurt Beck, who had given Ypsilanti the green light in the middle of the Hamburg election campaign, did resign in September 2008. After Müntefering and Matthias Platzeck, Beck was already the third SPD chairman to fail after the 2005 federal

election (Table 4). He was replaced once again by Müntefering who returned to Berlin from political retirement to organize the SPD election campaign for 2009 alongside Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Frank-Walter Steinmeier. During this “disintegration phase of the Schröder cycle”, the SPD was best characterized by “strategy under wavering leadership” (Raschke 2010).

The power struggles at the top of the party were based on deeper conflicts over politics and policies. Müntefering saw the grand coalition as a suitable means of securing the legacy of Agenda 2010. As vice chancellor and labor minister (2005-07), he watched over the continuation of the Agenda policy, which he enriched with an increase in the retirement age to 67 and the reduction of non-wage labor costs. Müntefering successfully resisted attempts by the left wing of his party to weaken the Hartz reforms. Only in the case of Unemployment Benefit I did party leader Beck succeed in October 2007 in getting the grand coalition to reverse the reduction in the entitlement duration introduced by the red-green coalition (Dümig 2010: 282-286). Beck not only stood for a traditional labor market policy, he also, despite having governed in Rhineland-Palatinate in a coalition with the FDP for more than a decade, strategically represented an opening to the left in order to make the SPD a chancellor's party again. In contrast, Müntefering and 2009 chancellor candidate Steinmeier were staunch opponents of a left-wing coalition. Steinmeier was officially aiming for a coalition with the Greens and the FDP, but was probably secretly speculating on a grand coalition. This could only go wrong because the FDP was not available for this type of coalition – and because both coalition goals made a polarizing election campaign against the CDU/CSU or FDP impossible (Raschke 2010: 87). At the end, the SPD achieved 23 percent of the vote, by then its worst election result in post-war history (Tables 1, 3).

After the historic electoral defeat in 2009, Müntefering resigned definitely as party chairman – the era of Sigmar Gabriel (2009-17) dawned, who was to stay in office longer than any other party chairman after Willy Brandt (Table 4). Gabriel, environment minister in the second grand coalition (2005-09), led the party for four years in opposition and the first three and a half years of the third grand coalition (2013-18), of which he was vice chancellor. If you will, he led the proof that it made no difference whether the SPD found itself in government or on the opposition benches. The decline continued here as well as there. Although Gabriel wanted to increase inner-party democracy and transparency, the SPD lost another 40,000 members between 2009 and 2013 (Table 5). For the first time, Social Democrats were overtaken by the CDU as Germany's strongest membership party between 2008 and 2011. In the states, the SPD did win back minister presidencies in North Rhine-Westphalia (Feist/Hoffmann 2010), Hamburg (Horst 2011) and Schleswig-Holstein (Horst 2012), but it was unable to decisively broaden its voter base (Table 2).

Nevertheless, by the summer of 2012 it had recovered to at least 30 percent in national polls – not least because the FDP remained unsuccessful in the black-yellow coalition (Jun 2015) and Merkel relied on an informal grand coalition (Schmidt 2008) in euro rescue policy (Zimmermann 2015). However, when it came to nominating the 2013 chancellor candidate in the fall of 2012, the SPD undid all the advances that had been made. Both parliamentary group leader Steinmeier and party leader Gabriel shied away from a candidacy, and by default it fell to Peer Steinbrück, the former finance minister of the second grand coalition. Steinbrück was popular in the media (for a while), but not in his own party. Similar intra-party conflicts as in 2009 paralyzed the party's election campaign. Once again, it was not clear what the party's substantive and strategic goals were. Once again, too, the SPD rejected a grand coalition and a left-wing coalition, but was unable to offer a credible coalition alternative (Spier/Alemann 2015: 51-57). With 25.7 percent of the vote, Steinbrück made only marginal gains compared with 2009 (Table 3).

Because the FDP fell out of the Bundestag and the Greens were not yet ready for a coalition with the CDU/CSU, in 2013, as in 2005, only the grand coalition remained as a viable alternative. In order to bring his reluctant party members into the unloved coalition, SPD leader Gabriel let the party members vote on the coalition agreement for the first time in German history. This certainly had advantages for the SPD's negotiating position in the coalition talks. Even more important, however, was the fact that from 2013 to 2017 the SPD was the center party in the German Bundestag against which no ideologically connected coalition could be formed (Horst 2015: 866). The SPD's gains in coalition bargaining were not so much in offices than in policies. Particularly in labor market and social policy, the SPD was able to achieve its distributive policy goals: the statutory minimum wage, the strengthening of collective bargaining autonomy, the limitation of labor leasing and fixed-term employment contracts, the rent brake in housing, and improvements in long-term care and pension insurance (Schulze Buschoff/Hassel 2019, Voigt 2019). From the middle of the election period onward, however, the “refugee crisis” overshadowed all other policy areas. Although the initial failures in asylum and migration policy became a problem for Merkel's Christian Democrats in particular and gave her a new political competitor on the right flank in the form of the AfD (Alternative for Germany), the SPD was unable to electorally capitalize on this opportunity. Martin Schulz, who was promoted to chancellor candidate (and party chairman) in early 2017 in a similar rashness like Steinmeier and Steinbrück before him, was nobody to follow a strict immigration policy. Worse, having been a member of the European Parliament for 23 years, he had no executive or legislative experience in national politics (Walter 2018: 346).

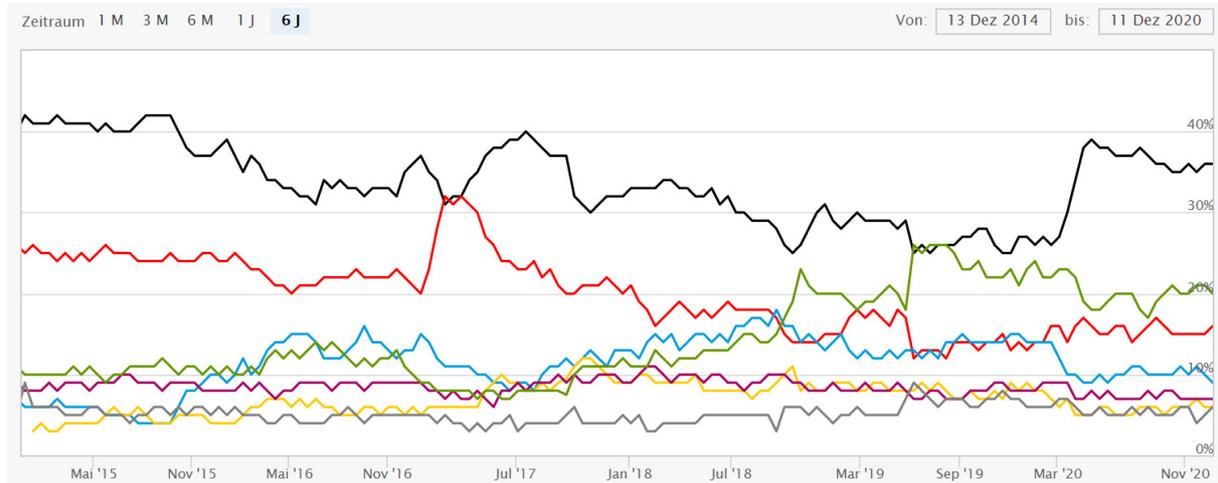
Anyone who thought that it would be impossible after 2009 and 2013 to have a worse election campaign was proven wrong in 2017. The starting position for the SPD was better this time than in the two previous Bundestag elections, because Chancellor Merkel had lost

popularity as a result of her refugee policy. The AfD had managed to pass the electoral threshold in every state election since the summer of 2015, often with double-digit results (Lengfeld 2017: 210). The AfD's entry into the Bundestag therefore had to be expected. When the SPD nominated Schulz as its top candidate in January 2017, it jumped to over 30 percent in national polls. The "Schulz hype" continued until the end of March; during this time, the SPD was on a par with the CDU/CSU. The SPD's plunge in the polls from 32 percent at the end of March to 20.5 percent in the Bundestag election on September 24, 2017 (Figure 1) followed clear missteps by the chancellor candidate. First, he distanced himself from Agenda 2010 and flirted with a left-wing coalition in Oskar Lafontaine's Saarland, of all places – the result: a continuation of the grand coalition led by Saarland CDU Minister President Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (Faus et al. 2018: 9-10). Schulz then suspended his campaign at the request of North Rhine-Westphalia's SPD Minister President Hannelore Kraft at a time when he should have continued to ride his wave of approval (Wiesendahl 2017a: 5) – the result again: lost elections for the SPD in Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia in May 2017 (Table 2). After this series of electoral defeats in the spring 2017, Schulz's election campaign entered an inexorable downward spiral (Feldenkirchen 2017). However, ex-party leader Gabriel did not make it easy for his successor either: out of injured vanity or because he wanted to save his foreign ministry, he could not resist harming Schulz (Faus et al. 2018: 9-13, 46-57).

The only positive legacy of the brief "Schulz hype" remained an increase of 10,000 party members – the first time in the Berlin Republic that the party had gained members at the end of a year (Table 5). Nevertheless, the bottom of the Social Democrats' decline had not yet been reached. Although Schulz had categorically ruled out forming a grand coalition again on election eve, he had to back down a short time later after the FDP refused to form a coalition with the CDU and the Greens. Head of State Steinmeier appealed to the SPD's political responsibility, and the party agreed to join the grand coalition for the third time after 2005 and 2013. As in 2013, it held a member referendum on the coalition agreement (Horst 2018). However, with a turnout of 78 percent, this time only two-thirds of members voted in favor, compared with three-quarters four years earlier. Schulz had to hand over the party chairmanship to Andrea Nahles who in April 2018 was supported by only 66 percent of party delegates. Nahles, too, was unable to stop the SPD's decline. Under her watch, the SPD lost members again – and it lost the 2018/19 state elections in Bavaria, Hesse and Bremen by significant margins (Table 2). In the European elections on May 26, 2019, the SPD finished only third behind the CDU/CSU and the Greens with 15.8 percent of the vote, down 11.5 percentage points from 2014. Nahles, who was also the parliamentary group leader in the Bundestag, retired from all political offices. The SPD elected itself two new chairpersons in an agonizing primary election that lasted several months and achieved a low turnout of 53 percent. Norbert Walter-Borjans and Saskia Esken, who until then had been barely visible in federal

politics, prevailed over Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Klara Geywitz in December 2019. Former party leader Gabriel (2020: 256-261) called the process a “collective leadership failure”. At the end of 2019, the SPD stood at below 15 percent in the polls and was competing with the AfD for third place in the German party system (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Polls from December 2014 to December 2020



Black = CDU/CSU. Red = SPD. Green = The Greens. Purple = Left Party. Blue = AfD. Yellow = Liberals. Grey = Other Parties. Source: Infratest dimap, Sonntagsfrage Bundestagswahl, 11/27/2020, <https://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundesweit/sonntagsfrage/> (Accessed: 12/17/2020).

4) Explaining success and misery of Social Democrats in Germany and beyond

In the Bundestag election year of 2021, German Social Democrats will be in government for the 19th of 23 years since 1998. In these 19 years, the SPD was chancellor party for seven years and junior partner in the grand coalition for twelve years. This impressive track record in government formation is mirrored by solid accomplishments: The unemployment rate fell from 11.7 percent in 2005 to 5.0 percent at the end of 2019 (Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2020). Gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an annual average of 1.9 percent between 2010 and 2019 after overcoming the financial and economic crisis (Statistisches Bundesamt 2020). Public finances have also developed positively since the introduction of the constitutional debt brake. From 2012 to 2018, the target of a maximum new debt of 0.35 percent of GDP was achieved in every year, and debt was even structurally reduced in every second year (Bundesministerium der Finanzen 2019). To this economic and fiscal successes numerous social improvements like the statutory minimum wage, the lowering of the retirement age to 63 (for some) or a so-called pension for lifetime achievement could be added. Furthermore, the societal modernization (immigration law, modern family law, marriage for all) of the Berlin Republic over the past two decades would not have happened without the SPD and the “red-green project”. Nevertheless, the prevailing perception is that of a decline

(Manwaring/Kennedy 2018, Berman/Snegovaya 2019), a crisis (Dostal 2016, Bandau 2019), or a misery of Social Democracy (Dahrendorf 1987, Steinbrück 2018). This perception is not limited to Germany, but can be observed throughout Western Europe. Although Social Democrats are a partner in every second Western European governing coalition, only the Portuguese PS won more than 40 percent of the vote in the last national parliamentary election (Table 6). How can this apparent discrepancy be explained?

Table 6: Last parliamentary election results of Social Democrats in West European Countries (seat share in the lower chamber)

Country	Election Date	Party	Seats	%	Government
Austria	Sep 2019	SD	40 (183)	21,9	-
Belgium	May 2019	PS / sp.a	20 / 9 (150)	13,3 / 6,0	-
Denmark	Jun 2019	SD	48 (179)	26,8	MinGov*
Finland	Apr 2019	SD	40 (200)	20,0	OversizeGov*
France	Jun 2017	PS	30 (577)	5,2	-
Germany	Sep 2017	SD	153 (709)	21,6	MajGov
Greece	Jul 2019	Syriza	86 (300)	28,7	-
Italy	Mar 2018	PD	122 (630)	19,4	-
Netherlands	Mar 2017	PvdA	9 (150)	6,0	-
Norway	Sep 2017	LP	49 (169)	30,6	-
Portugal	Oct 2019	PS	108 (230)	47,0	MinGov*
Spain	Nov 2019	PSOE	120 (350)	34,3	MinGov*
Sweden	Sep 2018	SAP	100 (349)	28,7	MinGov*
Switzerland	Oct 2019	PS	39 (200)	19,5	OversizeGov
UK	Dec 2019	LP	202 (650)	31,1	-

SD: Social Democrats. PS: Socialist Party. sp.a: Flemish Socialist Party. PD: Democratic Party. PvdA/LP: Labour Party. PSOE: Socialist Workers' Party. SAP: Social Democrat Workers' Party. MinGov: Minority Government. MajGov: Majoritarian Government. *Prime Minister is a Social Democrat. Source: IPU 2020.

Nick Randall (2003) has distinguished four strategies that could be used to explain the historical development of the British Labour Party: materialist, ideational, electoral and institutional explanatory approaches (Bandau 2019). This is a useful classification for all parties and thus also for the SPD. Materialist approaches focus on the economic and social conditions of politics: globalization (Giddens 1998), Europeanization (Scharpf 2017, Streeck 2013), or the financial limits of Social Democratic welfare policies (Merkel et al. 2008) are their preferred topics. They see the scope for political action in the nation-state as small. From their point of view, politicians are no more than compliant executors of economic constraints under the banner of TINA politics: "There Is No Alternative" (Vormann/Lammert 2019). Expansion, acceleration and crises of capitalism are instruments of economic elites to enforce their minority interests against the majority of the population. The crisis of capitalism is above all a crisis of democracy which is at best a post-democracy (Crouch 2004, Mouffe 2018).

Closely related to materialist approaches and often inseparable from them are ideational approaches. They place ideas at the center of their analyses, ideas that do not develop in a

vacuum, but rather spring from economic necessities in good Marxist unity of base and superstructure. In this narrative, the decision of prominent Social Democrats to join the neoliberal economic policy consensus is the original sin of Social Democratic politics. Initial attempts of supply-side and austerity politics (Blyth 2013) were already undertaken by Jimmy Carter in the U.S. or Helmut Schmidt in Germany in the 1970s, but were then resolutely pursued by conservative politicians – Thatcher, Reagan and Kohl – in the 1980s (Horst 1995). In the 1990s, Social Democratic politicians such as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schröder – although they hardly would see it this way – adapted their programs to the neoliberal consensus in following “Third Way” policies. Ideational explanations are generally less deterministic and grant political actors greater room for maneuver than materialistic approaches. A decline of Social Democracy is thus not inevitable. Politicians may also choose to adopt a different governing philosophy (Vormann/Lammert 2019). For example, they might combat right-wing populism, which formed in response to the economic costs of neoliberal excesses, with more traditional welfare-state policies or even left-wing populism (Mouffe 2018, Berman/Snegovaya 2019).

The phenomenon of populism leads to a third explanatory strategy: the electoral approach. The problems that a changing voter structure poses for Social Democratic and Christian Democratic mainstream parties have been discussed for decades. Social Democratic parties suffer particularly from the decline of their traditional constituency, the working class, and – like all parties – from the dealignment of once loyal core voters and the increase in swing voters. Social Democratic parties face a further challenge in that party competition is no longer one-dimensionally oriented toward the conflict between the market and the state on the socioeconomic axis, but additionally on a sociocultural conflict axis. This new values conflict was already described in the 1970s as a shift from material to post-material values (Inglehart 1977), two decades later as a conflict between authoritarian and libertarian values (Kitschelt 1994), and again two decades later as a conflict between cosmopolitans and communitarians (Merkel 2017), anywheres and somewheres (Goodhart 2017), or TAN (traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) and GAL (green/alternative/libertarian) parties (Hooghe/Marks 2018). However, it has to be stressed that the value cleavage does not replace the economic cleavage, but only complements it (Manow 2019). The particular difficulty for the mainstream Social Democratic (and Christian Democratic) parties lies in the pluralization of society, which is atomizing into a “society of singularities” (Reckwitz 2017), and the changing issues, which nowadays often make cultural issues seem more important than economic ones. The younger competitors on the electoral market, especially green and right-wing populist parties, generally have a sharper programmatic profile on these issues (Decker 2018, 2019).

The fourth approach is institutional: This perspective asks about the organizational change of a party and what it means for its relations with the electorate. Party research has a

long tradition of conceptualizing typologies to define the course of party development. As a rule, national conservative and liberal parties began as parties of notabilities, and at least the latter often remained so even after conservative, confessional and, above all, Social Democratic parties had long since developed into milieu parties, mass parties or, after World War II, “catch-all parties” (Kirchheimer 1966). The “Volkspartei” of the first two or three decades after World War II was perhaps the highest stage of maturity for the Christian and Social Democratic parties in Europe. In the 1970s, as we have seen, the German SPD reached the peak of its power to date. At the same time, however, as a catch-all party that wanted to reach as many groups in society as possible with its ultimately interchangeable programs, the socially diverse “Volkspartei” carried within it the seeds of decline because it alienated its loyal core voters. The very purpose of parties is not to represent the people as a whole or the common good. Their task is to represent parts of the whole, to fight for the interests of certain groups. In this function, they map social inequalities (Wiesendahl 2017b). According to the common criticism of catch-all, “electoral professional” (Panebianco 1988) and “cartel parties” (Katz/Mair 1995), they have increasingly lost sight of this task. Mid-level party officials have a strong interest as a political class in monopolizing state resources, i.e. state funding for parties and parliamentary groups, in order to stall competition. Party leaders have sometimes experimented with membership referendums or primary elections to open their parties to new ideas and sympathizers. In the German case, however, they have not been very successful with their reforms of the “member party” (Decker 2016: 241-264).

The cartel party thesis has been criticized from many sides (Helms 2001, Poguntke 2002). The cartelization of party competition may not stand up to empirical scrutiny (Detterbeck 2016). However, there is ample empirical evidence for the parties’ tightening ties to the state and their declining roots in society. To be sure, the parties themselves emphasize that their members are still important to them and that they see themselves as member parties. However, contrary to this self-image, the German party membership studies (Spier et al. 2011, Klein et al. 2019) show considerable gaps in representation of all parties and of the CDU and SPD in particular. In addition to the massive decline in membership already described above, core problems for the SPD are the lack of representation of women (31 percent versus 52 percent in the general population) and the growing age of its membership. Just under half of SPD members were over 65 in 2017 (just over a quarter in the general population), with one in ten even over 80. More than half of all members were pensioners in 2017 (versus 32 percent in the population). That the party had increasingly lost touch with its core voters was particularly evident in members’ formal educational qualifications and occupational status. From 1998 to 2017, the share of members with a secondary school diploma fell from 39 to 23 percent, while the share of those with a high school diploma or university degree rose from 44 to 54 percent over the same period. In 2017, only 16 percent of SPD members were blue-collar workers

(compared with 9 percent in the population), while 44 percent were employed in the public sector, four times as many as in the population (Klein et al. 2019). The specific membership structure of the SPD is seen by many party researchers as the reason why the SPD today is no longer a workers' party but a culturally left-wing party (Micus/Walter 2017: 75) – similar to the "WEIRD" (Western, Educates, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) and righteous progressive left in the United States (Haidt 2012).

Randall (2003) offers a fifth explanatory approach, the synthetic one. This approach is not convincing, however, because it only expresses a self-evident fact – namely, that all four of the above explanatory approaches can also be combined. I would nevertheless add a fifth explanatory approach: the personal or biographical one, which is found mainly in contemporary historical approaches or in studies of political leadership and strategy making (Raschke/Tils 2007). This fifth explanatory approach takes into account the unavoidable fact that a party's success or decline is primarily determined by its political leaders. The success of the SPD in the Bonn Republic in the 1960s and 1970s cannot be explained without the successful interaction of Willy Brandt, Herbert Wehner and Helmut Schmidt over a long period of time (Rupps 2004). Nor can the SPD's resurgence in the Berlin Republic be explained without the effective cooperation of Oskar Lafontaine, Gerhard Schröder, and Franz Müntefering, at least in planning the conquest of power. The accelerating disintegration of the SPD since Agenda 2010 and after Schröder's departure also had reasons that lay in the political actors and their respective strengths and weaknesses. Müntefering, Platzeck, Beck, and again Müntefering failed as party chairs between 2005 and 2009 (Sturm 2009). In preparing the 2009 election campaign, Müntefering and Steinmeier did not harmonize; neither was a hands-on leader, but rather a loyal follower (Raschke 2010). Sigmar Gabriel failed, despite his talents and good approaches, primarily because of his caprice and vulnerability. By surprisingly backing out of a chancellor candidacy twice, in 2013 and 2017, he became the real gravedigger of German Social Democracy. Steinbrück and Schulz played their personal part, but they were also Gabriel's victims (Hickmann/Sturm 2016, Gabriel 2020: 233-321).

5) Prospects for 2021 and beyond: What will it take for the SPD to resurrect again?

How can the SPD return to its old greatness? If one follows the materialistic and electoral explanations, such a resurgence of the SPD is quite impossible. Vote shares at the national level of more than 40 percent, as in the 1970s, are nostalgic reveries; even 30 percent seems utopian at present. What is realistic, as a result of the election polls for the 2021 Bundestag election, is a battle with the Greens for second place in the German party system. Since the Greens will be running a chancellor candidate (Annalena Baerbock or Robert Habeck) for the

first time in their history, a second place and a result of more than 25 percent could be considered a great success. At least, it would save the SPD's status as a potential chancellor's party for the time being (Figure 1).

For a number of personal, ideational and institutional reasons, however, the SPD's starting position for the Bundestag election on September 26, 2021, is better than the more fatalistic explanations of a materialistic and electoral nature would predict. This is mainly due to the unresolved leadership question in the CDU/CSU, the cycles of gaining and losing power (Korte/Fröhlich 2009: 319-349), the characteristics of the German party system and the open coalition question. After 16 years as chancellor, Angela Merkel, who already stepped down from the CDU party presidency at the end of 2018, will not run again in 2021. Winning elections after such a long time in government would be hard enough with Germany's most popular politician – without her, it will be much harder for the CDU/CSU, which under Merkel has also moved further to the political center than many members are comfortable with. In mid-January 2021, the CDU will elect the successor to hapless party leader Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer. Up for election are North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister President Armin Laschet, Norbert Röttgen, a member of the Bundestag, and Friedrich Merz, the former CDU/CSU parliamentary group leader in the Bundestag. However, whoever prevails in this race will not automatically become chancellor candidate. In December 2020, Bavaria's Minister President Markus Söder (CSU) and Federal Health Minister Jens Spahn (CDU) were more popular than each of the candidates for party chairman (Infratest dimap 2020).

Both were also marginally more popular than SPD Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Compared with all potential CDU/CSU chancellor candidates and even more so with the leading Green candidates, however, Scholz has the advantage that this time the SPD already agreed on him as its top candidate in August 2020. The two newly elected SPD leaders, who tended to be skeptics of the grand coalition and opponents of Scholz, support his candidacy, as does Kevin Kühnert, the influential former left-wing leader of the Young Socialists. The necessary unity within the party thus seems to be ensured. Scholz also has better governing credentials as labor minister in the second grand coalition (2007-09), as first mayor of Hamburg (2011-18) and as finance minister in the fourth grand coalition (since 2018) than any of his potential Christian Democratic or Green rivals. A certain skepticism remains whether Scholz, who is soberly pragmatic and comes across as rather stiff, can spark enough enthusiasm among his supporters and the electorate. His political ideas presented to the public remain rather mainstream, but that need not be a disadvantage (Scholz 2017).

The SPD can draw some hope from the fragmentation and volatility of the German party system that has now come about. Losses and gains on the order of ten percentage points between two Bundestag elections are no longer unusual for the parties. The six-party system represented in the Bundestag not only opens up the possibility of major shifts between parties,

but it also makes coalition building a poker game. A look at the states is instructive in this regard. At the beginning of 2021, in which state elections in Baden-Wuerttemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate (March), Thuringia (April) and Saxony-Anhalt (June) are still to be held before the Bundestag election in the fall, the CDU/CSU, SPD and Greens are governing in eleven states each, the FDP and the Left in three. Almost every conceivable color combination in government is now possible. Depending on how it is counted, there are nine or, if the size of the coalition partners is taken into account, as many as 15 different types of coalition in the 16 states (Bundesrat 2021). Significantly, in addition to Christian Democrats and the Greens, the SPD can also form coalitions with the FDP (in Rhineland-Palatinate) and the Left Party (in Berlin, Bremen and Thuringia). Thus, for the first time in the history of the Berlin Republic, a left-wing coalition no longer seems impossible – although doubts remain about the Left's ability to form a coalition due to its foreign policy positions. Christian Democrats have so far rejected a coalition with both the Left and the AfD. In national government, however, they can (still) afford it. As of early January 2021, they could choose their coalition partner between the Greens and the SPD whereas a pact with the Liberals seems improbable (Figure 1).

Finally, the SPD can also draw hope from the bipolarity and the federal nature of the German party system. In the past, Bundestag election campaigns have always been fought between candidates from the CDU/CSU and the SPD. When Guido Westerwelle (FDP) tried to break this rule in 2002, he failed grandiosely. In principle, it cannot be ruled out that in the future a Green chancellor candidate could take the place of a Social Democrat. However, the coalitions formed so far in the states hint in another direction. In January 2021, there are seven minister presidents each from the CDU/CSU and the SPD, while the Greens and the Left each have only one minister president in their ranks. Against this backdrop, a successful chancellor candidacy by Habeck or Baerbock, of whom only the former has some executive experience in state government, seems more than doubtful. This is even more true in times of the coronavirus pandemic, in which people in top executive positions have far more opportunities to raise their profile than candidates without such positions – which is why since March 2020 Christian Democrats have gained strongly under the sovereign leadership of Chancellor Merkel and Health Minister Spahn, Social Democrats have increased slightly and the Greens have lost significantly in the national polls (Figure 1).

References:

- Alemann, Ulrich von / Spier, Tim (2008). Doppelter Einsatz, halber Sieg? Die SPD und die Bundestagswahl 2005. In Oskar Niedermayer (ed.) *Die Parteien nach der Bundestagswahl 2005* (pp. 37–65). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Alemann, Ulrich von / Spier, Tim (2011). Erholung in der Opposition? Die SPD nach der Bundestagswahl 2009. In Oskar Niedermayer (ed.) *Die Parteien nach der Bundestagswahl 2009* (pp. 57–77). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Anda, Béla / Kleine, Rolf (2002). *Gerhard Schröder. Eine Biographie*. Berlin: Ullstein.
- Bandau, Frank (2019). Was erklärt die Krise der Sozialdemokratie? Ein Literaturüberblick. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 60, 587–609, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11615-019-00187-5> (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Baring, Arnulf (1982). *Machtwechsel. Die Ära Brandt-Scheel*, Stuttgart: DVA.
- Berman, Sheri / Snegovaya, Maria (2019). Populism and the Decline of Social Democracy. *Journal of Democracy* 30(3), 5–19, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/729165> (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Blyth, Mark (2013). *Austerity. The History of a Dangerous Idea*. Oxford, MA: Oxford University Press.
- Bracher, Karl Dietrich / Jäger, Wolfgang / Link, Werner (1986). *Republik im Wandel 1969 – 1974. Die Ära Brandt*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.
- Bundesagentur für Arbeit (2020). Arbeitslosenquote in Deutschland im Jahresdurchschnitt von 2004 bis 2020, 12/11/2020, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/1224/umfrage/arbeitslosenquote-in-deutschland-seit-1995/#professional> (Accessed: 12/28/2020).
- Bundesministerium der Finanzen (2019). Entwicklung der öffentlichen Finanzen, 22.10.2019, https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Web/DE/Themen/Oeffentliche_Finanzen/Stabilitaetspolitik/Entwicklung_Oeffentliche_Finanzen/entwicklung_oeffentliche_finanzen.html# (Accessed: 12/28/2020).
- Bundesrat (2021). Zusammensetzung des Bundesrates, <https://www.bundesrat.de/DE/bundesrat/verteilung/verteilung-node.html> (Accessed: 3.1.2021).
- Bundeswahlleiter (2018). Ergebnisse früherer Bundestagswahlen. Stand: 8. November 2018. Wiesbaden, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/dam/jcr/397735e3-0585-46f6-a0b5-2c60c5b83de6/btw_ab49_gesamt.pdf (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Bundeswahlleiter (2020). Ergebnisse früherer Landtagswahlen. Stand: 6. April 2020. Wiesbaden, https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/dam/jcr/a333e523-0717-42ad-a772-d5ad7e7e97cc/ltw_erg_gesamt.pdf (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Crouch, Colin (2004). *Post-Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Dahrendorf, Ralf (1987). Das Elend der Sozialdemokratie. *Merkur* 41(12), 1021–1038, <https://volltext.merkur-zeitschrift.de/article/99.120210/mr-41-12-1021> (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Decker, Frank (2016). *Parteiendemokratie im Wandel. Beiträge zur Theorie und Empirie*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Decker, Frank (2018). Jenseits von Links und Rechts. Lassen sich Parteien noch klassifizieren? *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 68(46-47), 21–26, <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/279819/lassen-sich-parteien-noch-klassifizieren> (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Decker, Frank (2019). Kosmopolitismus versus Kommunitarismus: eine neue Konfliktlinie in den Parteiensystemen? *Zeitschrift für Politik* 66(4), 445–454, <https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/0044-3360-2019-4-445.pdf> (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Detterbeck, Klaus (2016). Kartellparteien in Mehrebenensystemen. In Sebastian Bukow / Uwe Jun / Oskar Niedermayer (eds.) *Parteien in Staat und Gesellschaft. Zum Verhältnis von Parteienstaat und Parteiendemokratie* (pp. 111–129). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Dostal, Jörg Michael (2017). The Crisis of German Social Democracy Revisited. *The Political Quarterly* 88(2), 230–240, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1467-923X.12316> (accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Dümig, Kathrin (2010). Ruhe nach und vor dem Sturm: Die Arbeitsmarkt- und Beschäftigungspolitik der Großen Koalition. In Christoph Egle / Reimut Zohlnhöfer (eds.) *Die zweite Große Koalition. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Merkel 2005 – 2009* (pp. 279–301). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Egle, Christoph / Zohlnhöfer, Reimut (eds.) (2007). *Ende des rot-grünen Projektes. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Schröder 1998 – 2005*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Egle, Christoph / Ostheim, Tobias / Zohlnhöfer, Reimut (eds.) (2003). *Das rot-grüne Projekt. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Schröder 1998 – 2002*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Faus, Jana / Knaup, Horand / Rüter, Michael / Schroth, Yvonne / Stauss, Frank (2018). *Aus Fehlern lernen. Eine Analyse der Bundestagswahl 2017*. Berlin, https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Sonstiges/Evaluierung_SPD_BTW2017.pdf (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Feist, Ursula / Hoffmann, Hans-Jürgen (2010). Die nordrhein-westfälische Landtagswahl vom 9. Mai 2010: Vom Abwarten zur Kehrtwende. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 41(4), 766–787.
- Feldenkirchen, Markus (2017). Die Schulz-Story: 150 Tage an der Seite des Kanzlerkandidaten – eine große Erzählung über Politik im Jahr 2017. *Der Spiegel* 40, September 30, 2017, 10–27.

- Gabriel, Sigmar (2020). *Mehr Mut! Aufbruch in ein neues Jahrzehnt*. Freiburg: Verlag Herder.
- Gellner, Winand / Robertson, John D. (2001). Germany: The Continuing Dominance of Neocorporatism. In Clive S. Thomas (ed.) *Political Parties and Interest Groups. Shaping Democratic Governance* (pp. 101–117). Portland, OR: Frank Cass.
- Gellner, Winand / Robertson, John D. (eds.) (2003). *The Berlin Republic: German Unification and A Decade of Changes*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Giddens, Anthony (1998): *The Third Way. The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goodhart, David (2017). *The Road to Somewhere. The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*. London: Hurst & Co.
- Grebing, Helga (2000). „Wie weiter, Genossen?“ *Essays zur Sozialdemokratie im Epochenwechsel*. Essen: Klartext-Verlag.
- Grebing, Helga (2007). *Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Von der Revolution 1848 bis ins 21. Jahrhundert*. Berlin: Vorwärts-Buch.
- Haidt, Jonathan (2012). *The Righteous Mind. Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Heinze, Rolf G. (2002). *Die Berliner Räterepublik. Viel Rat – wenig Tat?* Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Helms, Ludger (2001). Die „Kartellparteien“-These und ihre Kritiker. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 42(4), 698–708, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11615-001-0104-z> (Accessed: 3.1.2021).
- Hennecke, Hans Jörg (2003). *Die dritte Republik. Aufbruch und Ernüchterung*. München: Propyläen Verlag.
- Hickmann, Christoph / Sturm, Daniel Friedrich (2016). *Sigmar Gabriel. Patron und Provokateur*. München: dtv.
- Hooghe, Lisbert / Marks, Gary (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy* 25(1), 109–135, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13501763.2017.1310279?journalCode=rjpp20> (Accessed: 12/31/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (1995). *Haushaltspolitik und Regierungspraxis in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und den USA. Ein Vergleich des haushaltspolitischen Entscheidungsprozesses beider Bundesrepubliken zu Zeiten der konservativen Regierungen Reagan/Bush (1981-92) und Kohl (1982-93)*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang.
- Horst, Patrick (2008). Die Wahl zur Hamburger Bürgerschaft vom 24. Februar 2008: Wahlsieger Ole von Beust bildet die erste schwarz-grüne Koalition auf Landesebene. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 39(3), 509–528, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Horst_Hamburgwahl_2008.pdf (Accessed: 12/26/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (2010). Koalitionsbildungen und Koalitionsstrategien im neuen Fünfparteiensystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 20(3-4), 327–408, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Horst_Koalitionsbildungen_und_Koalitionsstrategien_2010.pdf (Accessed: 12/12/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (2011). Die Wahl zur Hamburger Bürgerschaft vom 20. Februar 2011: Ehemalige „Hamburg-Partei“ erobert absolute Mehrheit zurück. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 42(4), 724–744, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Horst_Hamburgwahl_2011.pdf (Accessed: 12/30/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (2012). Die schleswig-holsteinische Landtagswahl vom 6. Mai 2012: SPD, Grüne und SSW bilden erste Dänen-Ampel in Deutschland. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 43(3), 524–543, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Horst_Schleswig-Holstein_Wahl_2012.pdf (Accessed: 12/30/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (2013). Regierungsbildung als Erfolgsgeschichte? Eine empirische Analyse der deutschen Koalitionsdemokratie. In Frank Decker / Eckhard Jesse (eds.) *Die deutsche Koalitionsdemokratie vor der Bundestagswahl 2013* (pp. 161–192). Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Horst_Regierungsbildung_Erfolgsgeschichte_2013.pdf (Accessed 11/29/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (2015). Das Management der dritten Großen Koalition in Deutschland 2013 bis 2015: unangefochtene Dominanz der drei Parteivorsitzenden. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 46(4), 852–873, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Horst_Management_Gro%C3%9Fe_Koalition_2015.pdf (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Horst, Patrick (2018). Die SPD vor dem Mitgliedervotum – was der Eintritt in eine neue Große Koalition der Partei abverlangt. *Gesellschaft · Wirtschaft · Politik* 67(1), 5–10, https://patrickhorst.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Horst_SPD_Mitgliedervotum_2018.pdf (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Inglehart, Ronald (1977). *The Silent Revolution. Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Infratest dimap (2020). ARD DeutschlandTrend Dezember 2020, https://www.infratest-dimap.de/fileadmin/user_upload/DT2012_Bericht.pdf (Accessed: 3.1.2021).
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Parline – Global Data on National Parliaments, <https://data.ipu.org/> (Accessed: 12/15/2020).
- Jäger, Wolfgang / Link, Werner (1987). *Republik im Wandel 1974 – 1982. Die Ära Schmidt*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

- Jun, Uwe (2015). Der elektorale Verlierer der Regierung Merkel II: Gründe für den Absturz der FDP (pp. 113–135). In Reimut Zohlnhöfer / Thomas Saalfeld (eds.) *Politik im Schatten der Krise. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Merkel 2009–2013*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Katz, Richard / Mair, Peter (1995). Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy. The Emergence of the Cartel Party. *Party Politics* 1(1), 5–28, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1354068895001001001> (Accessed: 3.1.2021)
- Kirchheimer, Otto (1966). The Transformation of West European Party Systems. In Joseph LaPalombara / Myron Weiner (eds.) *Political Parties and Political Development* (pp. 177 – 200). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kitschelt, Herbert (1994). *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klein, Markus / Becker, Philipp / Czezinski, Lisa / Lüdecke, Yvonne / Schmidt, Bastian / Springer, Frederik (2019). Die Sozialstruktur der deutschen Parteimitgliedschaften. Empirische Befunde der Deutschen Parteimitgliederstudien 1998, 2009 und 2017. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 50(1), 81–98.
- Korte, Karl-Rudolf / Fröhlich, Manuel (2009). *Politik und Regieren in Deutschland*. Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Kraushaar, Wolfgang (2001). *Fischer in Frankfurt*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.
- Lengfeld, Holger (2017). Die „Alternative für Deutschland“: eine Partei für Modernisierungsverlierer? *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 69(2), 209–232, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11577-017-0446-1> (Accessed: 12/28/2020).
- Lucke, Albrecht von (2002). Etappen eines schleichenden Endes? Eine kurze Geschichte von Rot-Grün. *Vorgänge. Zeitschrift für Bürgerrechte und Gesellschaftspolitik* 22(1), 4–7.
- Machnig, Matthias (1999). Die Kampa als SPD-Wahlkampfzentrale der Bundestagswahl '98. Organisation, Kampagnenformen und Erfolgsfaktoren. *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 12(3), 20–39, http://forschungsjournal.de/sites/default/files/archiv/FJNSB_1999_3.pdf (Accessed: 17.12.2020).
- Manow, Philipp (2019). *Die politische Ökonomie des Populismus*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Manwaring, Rob / Kennedy, Paul (eds.) (2018). *Why the Left Loses. The Decline of the Center-Left in Comparative Perspective*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Merkel, Wolfgang / Petring, Alexander / Henkes, Christian / Egle, Christoph (2008). *Social Democracy in Power. The Capacity to Reform*. London: Routledge.
- Micus, Matthias / Walter, Franz (2017). Vom Ende, und wie es dazu kam. Die SPD als Volkspartei. In Elmar Wiesendahl (ed.) *Parteien und soziale Ungleichheit* (pp. 65–88). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Mintzel, Alf (1983). *Die Volkspartei: Typus und Wirklichkeit – ein Lehrbuch*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Mouffe, Chantal (2018). *For a Left Populism*. London: Verso.
- Müller, Albrecht (1997). *Willy wählen '72 – Siege kann man machen*. Anweiler: Plöger.
- Niclauß, Karlheinz (1998). *Der Weg zum Grundgesetz. Demokratiegründung in Westdeutschland 1945 – 1949*. Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh.
- Niedermayer, Oskar (2003). Wandel durch Flut und Irak-Krieg? Wahlkampfverlauf und Wahlkampfstrategien der Parteien. In Eckhard Jesse (ed.) *Bilanz der Bundestagswahl 2002. Voraussetzungen – Ergebnisse – Folgen* (pp. 37–70). München: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit.
- Niedermayer, Oskar (2020). Parteimitgliedschaften im Jahre 2019. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 51(2), 419–448, <https://www.nomos-elibrary.de/10.5771/0340-1758-2020-2-419/parteimitgliedschaften-im-jahre-2019-jahrgang-51-2020-heft-2> (Accessed: 11/29/2020).
- Panbianco, Angelo (1988). *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Poguntke, Thomas (2001). Zur empirischen Evidenz der Kartellparteien-These. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 33(4), 790–806.
- Randall, Nick (2003). Understanding Labour's ideological trajectory. In John Callaghan / Steven Fielding / Steve Ludlam (eds.) *Interpreting the Labour Party. Approaches to Labour Politics and History* (pp. 8–22). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Raschke, Joachim (2003) Zwei Lager, drei Mehrheiten und der regierende Zufall. Zur Einordnung der Bundestagswahl 2002. *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* 16(1), 14–24, http://forschungsjournal.de/sites/default/files/archiv/FJNSB_2003_1.pdf (Accessed: 17.12.2020).
- Raschke, Joachim (2010). Zerfallsphase des Schröder-Zyklus. Die SPD 2005 – 2009. In Christoph Egle / Reimut Zohlnhöfer (eds.) *Die zweite Große Koalition. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Merkel 2005 – 2009* (pp. 69–98). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Raschke, Joachim / Tils, Ralf (2007). *Politische Strategie. Eine Grundlegung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Reckwitz, Andreas (2017). *Die Gesellschaft der Singularitäten*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Rupps, Martin (2004). *Troika wider Willen. Wie Brandt, Wehner und Schmidt die Republik regierten*. Berlin: Propyläen Verlag.

- Saalfeld, Thomas (2003). The German Party System – Continuity and Change. In Winand Gellner / John D. Robertson (eds.) *The Berlin Republic: German Unification and A Decade of Changes* (pp. 98–128). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. (2017). Vom asymmetrischen Euro-Regime in die Transferunion – und was die deutsche Politik dagegen tun könnte. Cologne: MPIfG Discussion Paper 17/15, https://pure.mpg.de/rest/items/item_2467937/component/file_2479324/content (Accessed 12/02/2020).
- Schmid, Josef (2007). Arbeitsmarkt- und Beschäftigungspolitik – große Reform mit kleiner Wirkung? In Christoph Egle / Reimut Zohlnhöfer (eds.) *Ende des rot-grünen Projektes. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Schröder 1998 – 2005* (pp. 271–294). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Schmidt, Manfred G. (2008). Germany: The Grand Coalition State. In Josep M. Colomer (ed.) *Comparative European Politics* (pp. 58–93). London: Routledge.
- Schmitt, Karl (2001). Wählt der Osten anders? Eine Zwischenbilanz zehn Jahre nach der deutschen Vereinigung. In Ulrich Eith / Gerd Mielke (eds.) *Gesellschaftliche Konflikte und Parteiensysteme. Länder- und Regionalstudien* (pp. 96–110), Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Scholz, Olaf (2017). *Hoffungsland. Eine neue deutsche Wirklichkeit*. Hamburg: Hoffmann & Campe.
- Schultze, Rainer-Olaf (2003). Strukturierte Vielfalt als Wählerentscheidung heute? Eine Analyse der Bundestagswahl vom 22. September 2002. In Eckhard Jesse (ed.) *Bilanz der Bundestagswahl 2002. Voraussetzungen – Ergebnisse – Folgen* (pp. 71–100). München: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit.
- Schulze Buschoff, Karin / Hassel, Anke (2019). Beschäftigungsrekorde bei zunehmender Ungleichheit auf dem Arbeitsmarkt. Arbeitsmarktentwicklung und -politik in der dritten Regierung Merkel (2013 bis 2017). In Reimut Zohlnhöfer / Thomas Saalfeld (eds.) *Zwischen Stillstand, Politikwandel und Krisenmanagement. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Merkel 2013–2017* (pp. 397–414). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Spier, Tim / Alemann, Ulrich von (2015). In ruhigerem Fahrwasser, aber ohne Land in Sicht? Die SPD nach der Bundestagswahl 2013. In Oskar Niedermayer (ed.) *Die Parteien nach der Bundestagswahl 2013* (pp. 49–69). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Spier, Tim / Klein, Markus / Alemann, Ulrich von / Hoffmann, Hanna / Laux, Annika / Nonnenmacher, Alexandra / Rohrbach, Katharina (2011). *Parteimitglieder in Deutschland*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag.
- Statistisches Bundesamt (2020). Entwicklung des realen Bruttoinlandsprodukts (BIP) in Deutschland von 2008 bis 2019 und Prognose des DIW bis 2022, 16.12.2020, <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/74644/umfrage/prognose-zur-entwicklung-des-bip-in-deutschland/> (Accessed: 20/12/16/2020).
- Steinbrück, Peer (2018). *Das Elend der Sozialdemokratie. Anmerkungen eines Genossen*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck.
- Streeck, Wolfgang (2013). *Gekaufte Zeit. Die vertagte Krise des demokratischen Kapitalismus*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Sturm, Daniel Friedrich (2009). *Wohin geht die SPD?* München: dtv.
- Thaysen, Uwe (1990). *Der Runde Tisch. Oder: Wo blieb das Volk? Der Weg der DDR in die Demokratie*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Thaysen, Uwe (2003). Fehlstart der Regierung Schröder II? Regierungsbildung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland – das Beispiel September 2002 bis 14. März 2003. In Eckhard Jesse (ed.) *Bilanz der Bundestagswahl 2002. Voraussetzungen – Ergebnisse – Folgen* (pp. 181–219). München: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit.
- Voigt, Linda (2019). Let the good times roll. Eine Bilanz der Sozialpolitik der dritten Großen Koalition 2013–2017. In Reimut Zohlnhöfer / Thomas Saalfeld (eds.) *Zwischen Stillstand, Politikwandel und Krisenmanagement. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Merkel 2013–2017* (pp. 415–443). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Vormann, Boris / Lammert, Christian (2019). *Democracy in Crisis. The Neoliberal Roots of Popular Unrest*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Walter, Franz (2018). *Die SPD. Biographie einer Partei von Ferdinand Lassalle bis Andrea Nahles*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag.
- Webel, Diana von (1999). Der Wahlkampf der SPD. In Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann / Hans Mathias Kepplinger / Wolfgang Donsbach (eds.) *Kampa. Meinungsklima und Medienwirkung im Bundestagswahlkampf 1998* (pp. 13–39). Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber.
- Wiesendahl, Elmar (2006). *Mitgliederparteien am Ende? Eine Kritik der Niedergangsdiskussion*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Wiesendahl, Elmar (2017a). Strategische Lehren aus dem Bundestagswahlkampf 2017, https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Strategische-Lehren-aus-dem-Bundestagswahlkampf-2017_Elmar-Wiesendahl_Das-Progressive-Zentrum.pdf (Accessed: 12/27/2020).
- Wiesendahl, Elmar (ed.) (2017b). *Parteien und soziale Ungleichheit*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Wolfrum, Edgar (2013). *Rot-Grün an der Macht. Deutschland 1998–2005*. München: Verlag C.H. Beck.
- Zastrow, Volker (2009). *Die Vier. Eine Intrige*. Berlin: Rowohlt.

- Zimmermann, Hubert (2015). Große Koalition für den Euro. Die zweite Merkel-Regierung und die Schuldenkrise in der Eurozone (pp. 353–372). In Reimut Zohlnhöfer / Thomas Saalfeld (eds.) *Politik im Schatten der Krise. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Merkel 2009–2013*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Zohlnhöfer, Reimut (1999). Die große Steuerreform 1998/99: Ein Lehrstück für Politikentwicklung bei Parteienwettbewerb im Bundesstaat. *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 30(2), 326–345.
- Zohlnhöfer, Reimut (2003). Rot-grüne Regierungspolitik in Deutschland 1998–2002. Versuch einer Zwischenbilanz. In Christoph Egle / Tobias Ostheim / Reimut Zohlnhöfer (eds.) *Das rot-grüne Projekt. Eine Bilanz der Regierung Schröder 1998–2002* (pp. 399–419). Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Index:

Adenauer, Konrad

Alliance for Germany

Alliance for Jobs

Alternative for Germany (AfD)

Agenda 2010

Baerbock, Annalena

Beck, Kurt

Black-Yellow Coalition

Brandt, Willy

Bundestag

Bundestag Elections

Bundesrat

Bush, George W.

Christian Democratic Union (CDU)

Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)

Christian Social Union (CSU)

Cleavages

- Sociocultural Cleavage
- Socioeconomic Cleavage

Commission on Modern Services in the Labor Market (Hartz Commission)

Constitutional Debt Brake

Coronavirus Pandemic

Decline of Social Democracy, Explanatory Approaches

- Electoral Explanatory Approaches
- Ideational Explanatory Approaches
- Institutional Explanatory Approaches
- Materialist Explanatory Approaches

- Personal (Biographic) Explanatory Approaches

Dohnanyi, Klaus von

Dual Citizenship

Early Elections (2005)

Eichel, Hans

Electoral Alternative Work & Social Justice (WASG)

Electoral-Professional Party

Engholm, Björn

Erler, Fritz

Esken, Saskia

Fischer, Joschka

Free Democratic Party (FDP) / Liberals

Gabriel, Sigmar

Gellner, Winand

Geywitz, Klara

Godesberg Program

Grand Coalition

Greens / Green Party

Habeck, Robert

Hartz, Peter

Hartz reforms

Höppner, Reinhard

„Ich-AGs“

Iraq War

Kohl, Helmut

Kosovo War

Kraft, Hannelore

Kramp-Karrenbauer, Annegret

Kühnert, Kevin

Lafontaine, Oskar

Laschet, Armin

Left Party

Maastricht / EU Convergence Criteria

Mahler, Horst

Merkel, Angela

Merz, Friedrich

„Mini-Jobs“

Möllemann, Jürgen

Müntefering, Franz

Nahles, Andrea

Neocorporatism

Neoliberal Economic Policy Consensus

Ollenhauer, Erich

Operation Enduring Freedom

Party typology

- Cartel Party
- Catch-All Party
- Electoral-Professional Party
- Mass Party
- Member Party
- Milieu Party

Platzeck, Matthias

Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)

Pension for Lifetime Achievement

People's Chamber

People's Chamber Election 1990

Populism

Post-Democracy

Red Army Faction

Red-Green Project / Red-Green Coalition

Refugee Crisis

Registered Civil Partnership for Homosexuals

Retirement with 63

Retirement with 67

Riester Pension

Robertson, John D.

Röttgen, Norbert

Rürup Commission

Same-Sex Marriage

Scharping, Rudolf

Scherf, Henning

Schmid, Carlo

Scholz, Olaf

Schröder, Gerhard

Schulz, Martin

“Schulz Hype”

Schumacher, Kurt

Simonis, Heide

Social Democratic Party (SPD) / Social Democrats

- Innerparty democracy
- Membership
- Member Vote / Referendum 2013
- Member Vote / Referendum 2017

Social-Liberal Coalition

Socialist Unity Party (SED)

Söder, Markus

Spahn, Jens

“Staatspartei”

Statutory Minimum Wage

Steinbrück, Peer

Steinmeier, Frank-Walter

Stoiber, Edmund

Stolpe, Manfred

Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

Third Way

TINA Politics

Unemployment Benefit I

Unemployment Benefit II

“Volkspartei”

Vote of Confidence (Schröder 2001)

Walter-Borjans, Norbert

Wehner, Herbert

Westerwelle, Guido

Ypsilanti, Andrea

Bio:

Dr. Patrick Horst is a research associate at the Institute for Political Science and Sociology at the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms University of Bonn. His professional interests lie in the fields of comparative democracy research with special regard to parliaments, governments and

coalitions; elections and electoral systems; parties and party systems; federalism and direct democracy; transformations of authoritarian and democratic regimes. He is an expert on the political systems of the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Germany. His most recent publications include: *Halbzeitbilanz der Trump-Regierung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), *Die USA – eine scheiternde Demokratie?* (edited with Philipp Adorf and Frank Decker, Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus, 2018), *Die USA am Ende der Präsidentschaft Barack Obamas. Eine erste Bilanz* (edited with Winand Gellner, Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).

Institutional E-Mail Address:

phorst@uni-bonn.de

Private Contact Address:

Krohnskamp 35g, 22301 Hamburg, E-Mail: dr_patrick_horst@t-online.de