

IS THERE A SINGLE GERMAN PARTY SYSTEM?

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ABSTRACT

Few aspects of politics have been as variable as partisan politics in the two decades since German unification. In the East, citizens had to learn about democratic electoral politics and the party system from an almost completely fresh start. In the West, voters experienced a changing partisan landscape and the shifting policy positions of the established parties as they confronted the challenges of unification. This article raises the question of whether there is one party system or two in the Federal Republic. We first describe the voting results since 1990, and examine the evolving links between social milieu and the parties. Then we consider whether citizens are developing affective party ties that reflect the institutionalization of a party system and voter choice. Although there are broad similarities between electoral politics in West and East, the differences have not substantially narrowed in the past two decades.

KEYWORDS

voting; elections; political parties; social class; religion; party identification

*F*ew aspects of politics have been as variable as electoral politics in the two decades since German unification. In the East, the collapse of the communist state led to the emergence of new political parties and citizen groups in 1989-90, which were soon usurped by parties from the West. Thus, easterners had to learn about democratic electoral politics and party competition from an almost completely new start. In the West, voters confronted a changing partisan landscape with the addition of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) and then the Left Party (Linke), and the vari-

ability in the established parties' policy positions as they faced the challenges of unification.

The centrality of elections and political parties to democracy and the governing process makes it especially important to study changes in partisan politics since unification. This essay first provides a brief history of the voting results in Bundestag elections up through the 2009 election, raising the question of whether there is one party system or two. Then, we examine voters' ties to political parties, analyzing the evolving class and religious bases of party support in West and East. Then we consider whether citizens are developing affective party ties that reflect the institutionalization of a party system and voter choice. This leads to a concluding discussion about the prospects for the German party system in the immediate future.

The Evolution of the Party System(s)

The 1990 Bundestag election signaled the initial formation of two similar, but distinct, party systems in West and East. At one level there was a basic commonality. Already by the March 1990 Volkskammer election in the East, the larger, established, and well-funded political parties from the Federal Republic took over the electoral process in the new Länder. By the October 1990 Bundestag election, the eastern party system had essentially become an extension of the party system from the West (with the addition of the PDS).

Even at that time, however, there were major contrasts between parties in both regions. The Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) captured a nearly equal vote share in the West and East, as a reaction to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's successful negotiation of the unification process (see Table 1).¹ While others, especially Oskar Lafontaine and the Social Democrats (SPD), looked on the events with wonder or uncertainty, Kohl quickly embraced the idea of closer ties between the two Germanies. Yet, the CDU's strength in the East ran against the leftist tendencies of the region dating back to the Weimar Republic and the Kaiserreich. In addition, the social bases of the CDU vote in class and religious terms were in stark contrast to their voter base in the West.² The Party of Democratic Socialism also emerged as a distinct regional and ideological party to represent the East, and the SPD fared poorly among eastern voters.

The CDU-led governing coalition lost votes and seats in the 1994 election, although Kohl retained a slim majority. The different centers of

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gravity in West and East, however, were becoming more apparent. The Free Democratic Party (FDP) initially appealed to easterners, due in part to Hans Dietrich Genscher's eastern roots, but its bourgeois liberalism and conservative economic policies eroded its support by 1994. From 12.9 percent of the eastern vote in 1990, the party fell to only 3.5 percent in 1994 (see Table 1). Similarly, the Greens were becoming a predominately western party as they increased their vote share in the West and lost support in the East. The Greens' postmaterial program was at odds with an eastern electorate that was more concerned with their own materialist needs. In addition, the PDS evolved from a postcommunist successor party into a major voice for eastern voters, capturing nearly a fifth of the eastern vote.

Table 1: Election Results in West and East, 1990-2009 (in percent)

Party	1990		1994		1998		2002		2005		2009	
	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	East
CDU/CSU	44.3	41.8	42.1	38.5	37.1	27.3	40.8	28.3	37.5	25.3	34.6	29.8
SPD	35.7	24.3	37.5	31.5	42.3	35.1	38.3	39.7	35.1	30.4	24.1	17.9
FPD	10.6	12.9	7.7	3.5	7.0	3.3	7.6	6.4	10.2	8.0	15.4	10.6
Greens	4.8	6.2	7.9	4.3	7.3	4.1	9.4	4.7	8.8	5.2	11.5	6.8
PDS/Left Party	0.3	11.1	1.0	19.8	1.2	21.6	1.1	16.9	4.9	25.3	8.3	28.5
Other parties	4.3	3.7	3.9	2.4	5.2	8.6	2.8	4.0	3.5	5.8	6.1	6.4

Source: Der Bundeswahlleiter (www.bundeswahlleiter.de).

Note: Table presents Zweitstimmen vote percentages; the West is the earlier Federal Republic and West Berlin, the East is the new Länder and East Berlin.

While change in 1994 primarily affected the smaller parties, regional forces began to affect the major parties more clearly by the 1998 election. The accumulation of sixteen years of governing and the special challenges of unification had taken their toll on the CDU/CSU and Kohl. There had been dramatic improvements in living conditions in the East, but nothing close to the blooming landscapes and tax-free growth that Kohl had promised in 1990. The CDU/CSU thus fared poorly in the election, especially in the eastern Länder that were frustrated by their persistent second-class status. From 41.8 percent of the eastern vote in 1990, the CDU/CSU dropped to 27.3 percent in 1998, indicating the re-emergence of the East's leftist history. The Social Democrats' vote total increased by nearly half over its share in 1990, and the PDS doubled its vote share compared to 1990. If one includes the SPD, PDS and Greens, more than 60 percent of the eastern electorate voted for leftist parties in 1998, compared to 51

percent in the West. This facilitated the formation of a new SPD-Green government with Gerhard Schröder as Chancellor. The FDP, Greens and PDS also deepened their distinct regional bases.

The CDU made some gains after the 1998 election and seemed poised to win several state elections in 1999 and 2000—and then lightning struck. Investigations showed that Kohl had accepted illegal campaign contributions while he was chancellor. His allies within the CDU were forced to resign, and the party's electoral fortunes suffered. The CDU/CSU chose Edmund Stoiber, the head of the Christian Social Union, as its chancellor candidate in 2002. Even though the CDU/CSU gained votes in the West, along with their potential FDP allies, the SPD-Green coalition retained control of the government.

When early elections were called in 2005, the CDU/CSU offered Angela Merkel as their chancellor candidate. As an easterner, one might have expected that she would have special appeal to eastern voters. The CDU/CSU, however, lost vote shares in both West and East. Lafontaine's efforts to link leftists in the West and the PDS voter bloc in the East severely eroded support for the SPD as well, which led the CDU by only five percent in the eastern Länder. The PDS/Linke appeared to be a cross-regional alliance, yet it gained only 4.9 percent of the vote in the West compared to 25.3 percent in the East. Conversely, the Greens and FDP drew greater support from the western electorate. With such a fragmented electorate and party system, the second coming of the "Grand Coalition" between CDU/CSU and SPD formed the post election government.

Merkel and the CDU/CSU retained power after the 2009 election in coalition with the resurgent FDP. Yet, both Volksparteien lost votes in 2009, especially the SPD.³ This probably reflects a negative reaction to the Grand Coalition and Germany's current economic problems, which generated new support for the three minor parties. The FDP, Greens, and the Left Party all won more votes than in any prior election. Yet, even in this election, the East-West gap is apparent. Leftist parties won a majority of votes in the East—where the Left Party received almost the same vote share as the CDU. In contrast, the FDP and Greens gained significantly larger vote shares in the West than in the East, albeit from different voter bases. The CDU/CSU also garnered a substantially larger vote share in the West, so that a majority of Westerners voted for parties in the new center-right government.

In formal terms, the Federal Republic has a single party system that spans the East-West divide. But below this surface similarity exists a persisting difference between the parties in East and West, and to a degree this dif-

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ference has persisted in the two decades since unification. The East has become a bastion of support for leftist parties. Nearly all the parliamentary parties have significantly greater support in one region than the other. This is most clearly evident in the Left Party, but applies to the CDU/CSU, FDP, and Greens as well. If one simply sums the differences in West-East support across all the parties, the last two elections have averaged more than a 20 percent gap in party support—a difference that has not narrowed over time.⁴

Alignment and Realignment in Party Support

The differences in party vote shares in West and East are an initial sign of the contrasts in the party systems across regions. This contrast may run deeper in terms of the bases of party support. Party choice in West Germany long has been structured along class and religious lines.⁵ Thus, we ask how these two cleavages are related to party support. In the former East Germany, where parties lacked core constituencies rooted in longstanding occupational and confessional affiliations, the first few postunification elections saw unexpected patterns with respect to class voting.⁶ Accumulated electoral experience in the East, however, may have led to convergence with Western trends. Moreover, the large differences in the religious composition of the electorate between the two regions may affect levels of party support.

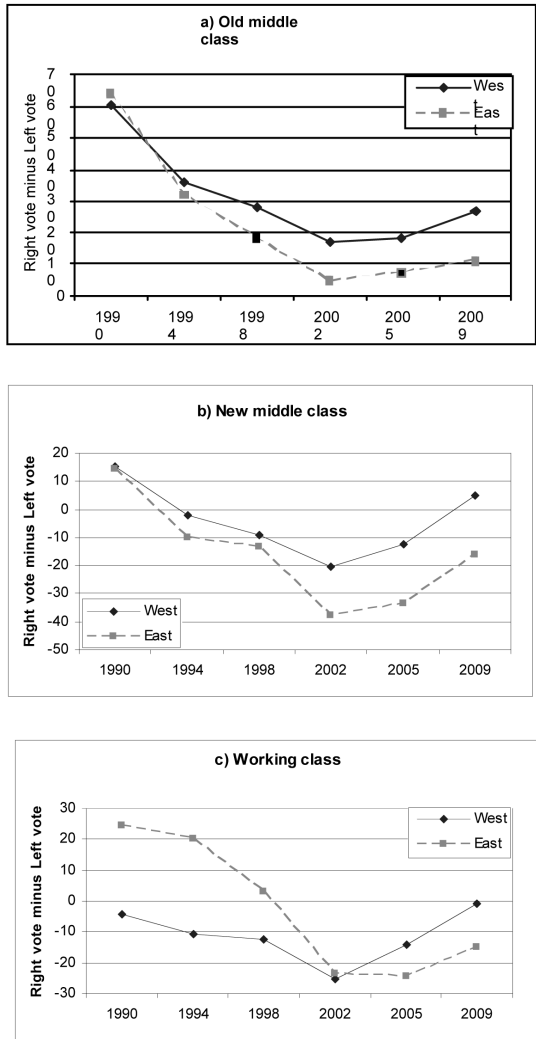
Class Voting

Following previous studies, we analyze class voting by identifying three major categories based on the respondent's occupation: working class, old middle class, and new middle class.⁷ The last category, which includes white collar employees in both the public and private sectors, constitutes the largest occupational group, comprising around 60 percent in the West and 50 percent in the East (civil servants make up a larger proportion in the West). About one-quarter of respondents in the West belong to the working class compared with over 40 percent in the East during the 1990s, though the latter figure declined in the 2000s. The percentage of the old middle class is very stable in the West at around 10-15 percent. There were few entrepreneurs or free professionals in the East at the beginning of the 1990s, but this group has since increased to a level comparable to the West. It is important to keep these shares of the overall population in mind as we examine data on class voting.

Space constraints preclude presentation of data on the class voting pattern for each party over time across both regions.⁸ To summarize the

broad patterns, we created a voting index for each class category by subtracting the vote percentage for leftist parties (SPD, Greens, PDS/Linke) from votes for the Right (CDU/CSU and FDP). Positive values indicate a preference for rightist parties. Figures 1a-c show this index for all three class categories, separately for East and West to compare whether and how each class votes differently in the two regions.

Figure 1: Class Voting Patterns over Time



Sources: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Politbarometer surveys, 1990-2009 (see endnote 6).

Note: The figure plots the vote gap calculated by subtracting vote share of Left parties (SPD + Greens + PDS/Linke) from vote share of center-Right parties (CDU/CSU + FDP).

As expected, old middle class voters consistently prefer rightist parties (see Figure 1a). Although the overwhelming advantage that rightist parties enjoyed among this group in 1990 has since eroded, the voting index remains positive. With the exception of the 1990 election, the CDU/CSU and FDP perform better among the old middle class in the West than in the East. This difference has widened during the 2000s in the West, as the conservative parties regained old middle class support at a higher rate. An examination of the two largest parties reveals that while SPD vote shares are nearly the same for this stratum in both parts of the country, the CDU generally receives slightly less support among the old middle class in the East.

Leftist parties have generally commanded a larger share of the new middle class vote (negative values in Figure 1b) in both parts of the country. Their failure to do so in the West in 2009 is attributable to the collapse in support for the SPD. We can once again observe trajectories trending in the same direction, but the vote gap has widened since 2002, with leftist parties winning higher vote shares among white collar workers in the East. The Greens have performed particularly well among western civil servants in recent elections. The Volksparteien were competitive over the new middle class vote during most of the 1990s, though the SPD achieved greater success in 2002 and 2005 before declining sharply in 2009. In 2009, the Left Party nearly matched the CDU vote among the eastern new middle class, leaving the Social Democrats well behind in third place.

East-West differences are most clearly exposed when we examine working class voting patterns (see Figure 1c). In the West, the SPD has long received a clear plurality from these voters (whereas the Greens do poorly among this class). In stark contrast, the Social Democrats' share of workers' votes in the East is similar to—in fact often lower than—its share among new middle class voters. During the first several postunification elections, blue collar voters in the East supported rightist parties more than the left by a significant margin—an unexpected reversal of not only western patterns but also our traditional understanding of class voting. This anomaly is probably attributable to the weak bonds between eastern workers and the SPD, an initial attraction to Kohl as a result of unification, and negativity toward the Left in reaction to experiences under the German Democratic Republic.

If we use the standard Alford class voting index, namely the difference in support for leftist parties between the middle class (both old and new) and the working class, we find mostly positive values in the West for each election in conformity with traditional models of class voting (see Table 2).⁹ The level of class voting, however, is a shadow of what it was in the Federal Republic 1950s and 1960s, and becomes essentially insignificant in recent elections.

Table 2: The Alford Index of Class Voting in West and East

Region	Election					
	1990	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009
West	13.3	7.0	4.3	5.2	3.2	2.0
East	-3.5	-13.0	-6.3	-4.4	-2.1	-1.0

Sources: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Politbarometer surveys, 1990-2009 (see endnote 7).

Note: The table presents the Alford class voting index that is calculated by subtracting vote share of left parties (SPD + Greens + PDS/Linke) among the middle class (combined old middle class and new middle class) from the leftist vote among the working class. A positive value means the working class leans toward leftist parties.

Regional patterns in workers' vote that had converged over the first four postunification elections are now diverging. Eastern workers have leaned toward leftist parties in recent elections. Moreover, the composition of the leftist vote also varies across regions. The SPD's percentage of votes among eastern workers consistently lags behind its share in the West, but there is disproportionate support for the PDS/Left Party in the East. The Left Party not only attracted increased blue collar support in 2009 in the East, but actually won a plurality among working-class easterners for the first time. In broader terms, leftist parties in the East achieved greater success among white collar employees and civil servants than workers with the exception of 2009 (see Table 2). Whether the narrowing of this gap in the last two elections portends a continuing trend awaits confirmation in future elections.

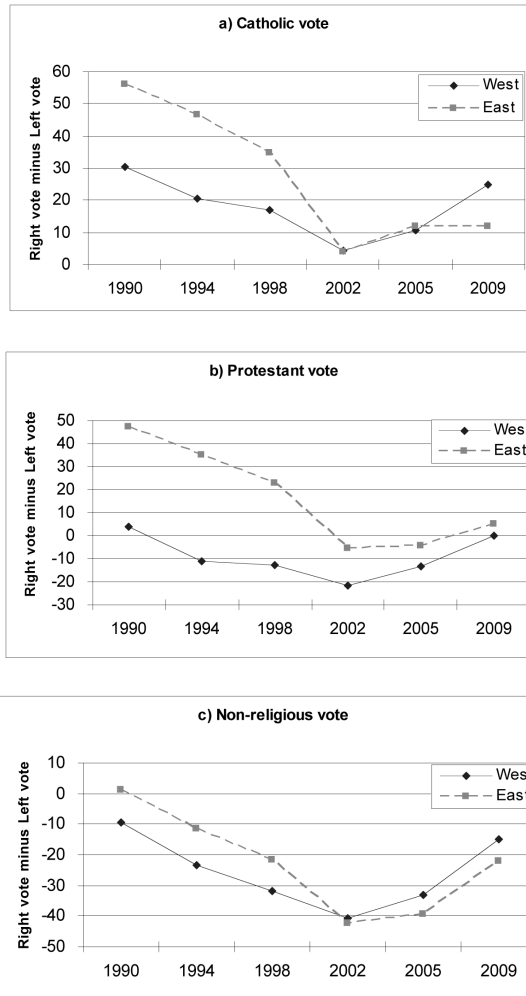
Religious Voting

In addition to class, religious affiliation (or the lack thereof) is another long-standing factor in structuring voting behavior.¹⁰ Catholics and deeply religious voters in the Federal Republic have strongly favored the CDU/CSU. However, there are dramatic differences in the religious composition of both regions. Catholics comprise approximately 40 percent of the population in the West, but have a small presence in the East (slightly over 5 percent). Protestants are more sizeable in the West (around 40 percent) than in the East (below 30 percent). Finally, whereas less than one-fifth of the Western public claim no religious affiliation, this is true of up to two-thirds of easterners, most of whom were socialized under the atheist doctrine of communism.

Similar to our class voting analyses, we compare religious groups in their support for the rightist and leftist party blocs with a vote difference index.¹¹ Figures 2a-c shows the gap in rightist minus leftist vote share among each group. As expected, Catholics display a clear preference for the Right (Figure 2a), specifically the CDU/CSU (the FDP usually receives below-average support from this group). The magnitude of this advantage is practically the

same in both regions in the 2002 and 2005 elections. This advantage, however, only translates into a large lead in actual votes in the West, since Catholics constitute a small minority in the East. Unusually, in 2009 the rightist parties led their opponents by a considerably wider margin among Western Catholics thanks to increased support for the FDP among this group.

Figure 2: Religious Voting Patterns over Time



Sources: Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, Politbarometer surveys, 1990-2009 (see endnote 6).

Note: The figure plots the vote gap calculated by subtracting vote share of Left parties (SPD + Greens + PDS/Linke) from vote share of center-Right parties (CDU/CSU + FDP).

Since Christian Democrat support among Protestants traditionally has been lower than Catholics in the Federal Republic, many anticipated that unification would bring about a decline in CDU/CSU fortunes by adding many more Protestants than Catholics to the electorate. Election results in the first decade of unified Germany confounded such expectations. Figure 2b shows a distinct difference in vote patterns among eastern and western Protestants. Throughout the 1990s, leftist parties did better than the Right in the West, but the reverse was true in the East. In the 2002 and 2005 elections, leftist parties finally managed to win a plurality among eastern Protestants, but they still enjoyed less support among this constituency than might have been predicted based on western voting patterns. Results in 2009 saw a plurality of eastern Protestants casting their ballots for rightist parties. Also noteworthy is the convergence of Protestant voters in both parts of the country over the last decade. In terms of the two large parties, the Christian Democrats have always won a greater share of the Protestant vote in the East, while the Social Democrats have achieved greater success among western Protestants.¹²

Finally, leftist parties are dominant in both East and West among voters who profess no religious affiliation. The magnitude of their leftist preference has increased over time, and regional differences are generally modest (see Figure 2c). Within this party bloc, the Greens perform particularly well in the West. Similarly, the PDS/Left Party finds its core constituency among eastern voters without religious attachment. For example, fully one-third of non-religious easterners voted for the Left Party in 2009. This translates into a greater advantage for the Left Party than the Greens, considering the much larger size of the non-religious group in the East. While the CDU/CSU vote share among non-religious voters is similarly low in both regions, the SPD typically secures a slightly higher proportion of non-religious vote in the West. Similar to the two confessional groups, differences in voting behavior between eastern and western non-religious voters have diminished since the 1990s.

In sum, this section leads to three general observations. First, long-term dealignment in sociostructural cleavages notwithstanding, occupational and confessional classifications still modestly influences voting behavior. The CDU/CSU still counts on solid Catholic support, while the leftist parties (particularly the Greens and PDS/Left Party) appeal to non-religious voters. The self-employed favor the right (the FDP consistently draws above-average support among this group), while blue collar workers in the East have gradually come to join their western counterparts in supporting leftist parties.

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Second, the differing proportions among occupational and confessional categories across regions affect party fortunes. For instance, the large number of non-religious voters in the East strongly benefits leftist parties, particularly the Left Party. Even the CDU has a significant percentage of non-religious and Protestant supporters among its eastern voter base. In contrast, the new middle class is somewhat larger in the West, and this benefits parties such as the Greens and FDP that appeal to these voters. The shrinkage of the blue collar constituency in both parts of the country and the increase in the proportion of old middle class voters in the East could adversely affect the fortune of leftist parties.

Third, there are some persisting voting differences between East and West. Left/Right patterns of voting have widened among each occupational category in the most recent elections, although religious voting patterns have narrowed.¹³ These patterns are even more striking if one disaggregates leftist and rightist party blocs and compares support for specific parties over time. Except for 2009, we find a negative Alford index in the East and a positive class voting index for the West. To a significant degree, party constellations in East and West remain distinct.

Party Attachments and the Evolution of the Party System

The electoral experiences of the past two decades should have influenced Germans' deeper orientations toward partisan politics. One important trait is the development of long-term psychological attachments to political parties or "party identification." This concept has proven to be one of the most important concepts in understanding electoral behavior in contemporary democracies.¹⁴ Party attachments link voters to their preferred party, provide cues on how to evaluate the political issues and politicians of the day, and stimulate partisans to participate. The existence of such party ties also creates a stable basis of party competition, ensuring the political parties of a core base of support and limiting the potential for new parties to form.

We should expect that these party attachments would strengthen in the East in the years since unification. Party attachments arise from inherited family loyalties and accumulated electoral experience, and both were initially lacking in the East.¹⁵ Few easterners initially should (or could) have displayed the deep affective partisan loyalties that constitute a sense of party identification. Overnight easterners became participants in the Federal Republic's electoral system and had to learn about democratic elections and party competition. Social learning theory would suggest that

these party ties should strengthen after twenty years of electoral experience, which would be a positive sign of the institutionalization of electoral politics in the East.

Previous electoral research focused on the extent of party attachments in the West.¹⁶ In the 1960s, the party system consolidated and party attachments strengthened. Starting in the mid-1970s, however, a decreasing proportion of Westerners express strong feelings of partisan identity, and a growing number do not feel close to any political party. Several factors seem to account for this decline in partisanship in the West. After the decades of postwar growth and policy accomplishments, starting in the 1970s the political parties have struggled with economic recession and the rise of new political issues that create new bases of political competition. Other political institutions—such as citizen-action groups and public interest lobbies—arose to represent these new political interests and challenge the political parties. A series of political scandals at the national and state levels also tarnished party images. In short, these developments created doubts about the ability of political parties to represent the public's interests effectively.

In addition, the growing sophistication of the western electorate should weaken individual party ties.¹⁷ With increased interest and knowledge about politics, people are better able to make their own political decisions without a habitual dependence on party attachments. Furthermore, as voters began to focus on issues as a basis of electoral choice, they became more likely to defect from their normal party predispositions, which then erodes these predispositions. This general pattern is described as a dealignment of long-term party attachments in the Federal Republic. Unification appeared to accelerate this dealignment process in the West, creating major new policy challenges for the Federal Republic. Parties of both the Left and Right struggled to deal with the new political issues of globalization, European integration, and multiculturalism that confront the country today. At question is whether party ties have restabilized twenty years after unification.

Table 3 tracks party identifications among western and eastern voters from unification to the 2005 election (2009 results are not yet available). The western data indicate a slight erosion in the strength of party attachments since 1990. Back in the 1972 election, 75 percent of the electorate indicated attachment to their preferred party. By 1990 this group of partisans fell to 71 percent of the public, and by 2005 only 63 percent. The postunification pace of dealignment has continued the long-term erosion of party ties in the West, and today, fewer Germans now have partisan ties

compared to other established democracies.¹⁸ This suggests that Germany's special problems of unification may have reinforced a more general dealigning process affecting other democracies.

Table 3: The Strength of Partisanship (in percent)

Partisan Strength	West					East				
	1990	1994	1998	2002	2005	1990	1994	1998	2002	2005
Very Strong	11	12	9	12	10	4	6	7	7	7
Strong	29	24	22	25	28	22	19	17	21	24
Weak	31	31	31	27	27	35	34	30	26	26
No party/Don't know	27	31	36	32	34	37	40	44	45	40
Refused	2	2	2	3	2	3	1	2	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	101	100	100	101	101

Source: Data from German election studies collected by the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen; several pre-election and a post-election survey are included for most time points.

Regular measurement of partisanship in the East began in 1991. By then, most voters already had some direct electoral experience with party competition, having participated in two national elections (the March 1990 Volkskammer and December 1990 Bundestag elections), as well as regional and local contests. Still, easterners were less likely to express a sense of party attachment (60 percent in the East versus 71 percent in the West). A decade and half later, eastern partisanship remains essentially unchanged.

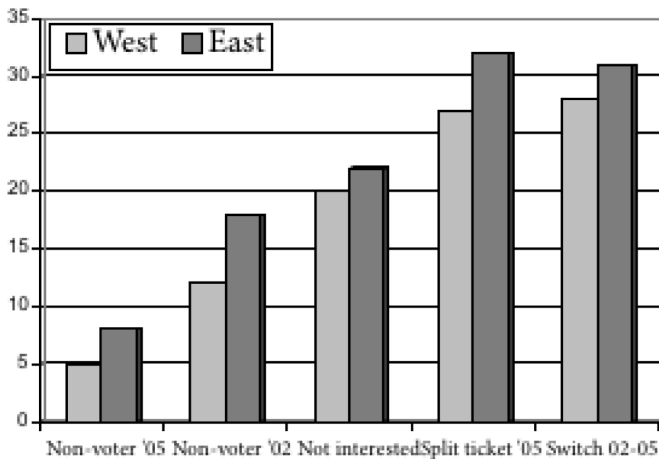
What does the lower level of partisanship in the East imply for the development of electoral politics among these citizens? In one sense, the level of partisanship in the East in 1991 was probably higher than one might expect in a 'new' party system, possibly because most easterners had watched West German electoral politics from afar for decades. In addition, they began their democratic experience with established, efficient, and well-organized parties (in part because the western parties dominated electoral politics in the East). Still, partisan ties are not significantly increasing in the East as social learning theory would predict. The past two decades have been a period of dramatic political change for easterners, having yielded four different government coalitions (1990, 1998, 2005, and 2009). Party positions and party leadership have been relatively volatile, including the addition of the PDS to the party system and its later reformation into the Left Party. Many easterners also feel overlooked by the partisan politics of the Federal Republic. Moreover, many of the dealigning forces present in the West probably carry over to the East.

Scholars have argued that the rapidity with which easterners form party attachments is an important measure of their development of stable

political orientations and their integration into the Federal Republic's party system.¹⁹ For instance, partisan attachments encourage individuals to participate in electoral politics and form positive images about the process. Partisans generally are more stable in their voting preferences, since they enter elections with standing party predispositions. Therefore, splitting one's party support on the *Erststimme* and *Zweitstimme* (first and second votes) as well as shifting voting preferences between elections, are more common among non-partisans. Various pre-election polls in 2009 suggested that as many as a quarter of the electorate was unsure about their vote a week before the election, and ticket-splitting again appeared high.²⁰

Detailed survey data on party attachments are not yet available from the 2009 Bundestag election, but we can demonstrate the continuing differences in party connectedness with evidence from the 2005 election study (see Figure 3).²¹ For instance, the stronger partisan ties in the West are a stimulus to electoral participation. Turnout has been significantly lower in the East, and this continues in 2009.²² Similarly, even with an easterner running as chancellor in 2005, interest in the election was slightly lower in the East. Additional multivariate analyses (not shown) demonstrate that about half of these regional differences are attributable to the weaker party ties in the East.

Figure 3: Evidence of Weak Party Ties in West and East



Source: 2005 Germany Election Study (CSES)

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Partisanship also shapes the stability and predictability of voting choices. The percentage of voters who change party votes between elections has been steadily growing in the Federal Republic, reaching 28 percent of voters in 2005. This pattern of partisan change is strongly related to the strength of party ties, with only 18 percent of strong partisans changing parties between 2002 and 2005, compared to 42 percent among non-partisans. This contributes to a slightly higher proportion of fluid voters in the East in 2005 (and in prior elections). One example from the 2005 Bundestag election clearly illustrates the impact of party attachments: 11.1 percent of non-partisans voted for the new PDS/Left Party alliance in all of Germany, compared to only 6.7 percent among strong partisans. This is not because non-partisans are substantially more liberal in their views. Instead, they are available for mobilization because they lack previous party loyalties. Similarly, the percentage of voters who split their *Erststimme* and *Zweitstimme* between different parties has been steadily growing in the Federal Republic since the 1960s, reaching 27 percent of the voters in 2005. Split-ticket voting remains higher in the East (5 percent more than in the West).

The figure illustrates the direct and indirect consequences of the differing party attachments in West and East.²³ Despite dealignment trends since the 1980s, westerners retain stronger party attachments. Consequently, strong partisans enter elections with their decisions already made: they will vote for “their” party as they have in prior elections. In large part, these voters are unswayed by the dynamics of the campaign except insofar as this mobilizes them to vote. By comparison, easterners have weaker party ties, and thus they are more likely begin the election cycle unsure about how they will vote, possibly shifting their vote since the last election, and are less likely to vote.²⁴ Greater partisan volatility seems likely to continue in the East, unless differences in party attachments eventually converge with the West. These East-West differences are modest, but in an electoral context where a few percentage points may shape coalition outcomes, even modest differences can have large potential implications.

Party Politics in a Unified Germany

This article has considered how the German party system fits Willy Brandt’s famous statement about German unification: “What belongs together will now grow together.” At least in formal terms, Brandt’s description applies to the German party system. Residents of the eastern Länder

were very quickly integrated into the party system of the Federal Republic, and the same set of parties now competes in both West and East.

Yet, this is not so much growing together, as being overtaken by the well-established parties in the West. With the exception of the PDS/Left Party, the current German party system developed through the eastern expansion of the western parties. Moreover, even if the same party names generally appear on the ballots in West and East, this article has highlighted the continuing differences across regions. Most parties have developed a distinct regional bias in their share of the electorate. The CDU/CSU, FDP, and Greens receive a significantly larger share of their vote from the West; the Left Party (and previously the PDS) draws disproportionate support from the East. The regional differences in party support have not narrowed over time.

Moreover, many of these parties have significant differences in their voter clientele across regions. Western working class voters lean toward the SPD (or now the SPD and Left Party), but in the East this social stratum has given greater support to the CDU and FDP. The 2009 Bundestag election marked a convergence of overall middle class-working class Left-Right gap in voting patterns across regions, and if this continues it may foretell greater partisan similarity overall. But easterners from all classes are distinctly more leftist and this gap has widened over time. Religious voting has grown more similar across the two regions. Because religious attachments differ so greatly across regions, however, even similar voting patterns for religious groups have different implications for party strength across East and West. For instance, about a third of the Christian Democratic voters in the East say they have no religion, in marked contrast to core CDU/CSU voters in the West.

Many of these differences sprang from the unique set of political circumstances and party positions that accompanied unification. What is surprising is the persistence of these patterns over time, and in some cases a widening of regional differences. In addition, social learning theory would predict a gradual growth of party attachments among new voters in the East, but this individual level institutionalization of the party system has not occurred. In short, an important regional gap still persists in the party system, even two decades and six elections after unification.

Such regional contrasts are not entirely new to German politics—think of the CSU and the party traditions of many western Länder. Nevertheless, these differences run deeper in the current West-East contrast. Parties have distinct regional strengths, but the same party also has different voter clienteles across regions. This brings party representatives together in the

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Bundestag with different political constituencies and identities. The CDU Bundestag deputy from the East has a different voter base than one from the Catholic West. The SPD partisan in the East is more middle-class than in the West. This diversity can erode party cohesion, and the SPD-Left Party split may be attributable partially to such tensions. Specific policy issues are also likely to heighten these tensions, such as cultural issues or policies affecting East-West economic policy. German federalism provides a vehicle to address these regional differences, but it probably also has worked to institutionalize these differences, so that Germans have not come together fully in terms of party support.

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Notes

1. Public opinion polls from early 1989 suggested that the Kohl government lagged behind the SPD by more than ten percent and was headed toward defeat in the next Bundestag election. But, the CDU/CSU's standing in the West dramatically improved as a result of unification. See Russell J. Dalton and Alexandra Cole, "The peaceful revolution and German electoral politics," in *The New Germany Votes*, ed., Russell J. Dalton (Providence, 1993).
2. Russell J. Dalton and Wilhelm Bürklin, "Two German electorates?: The social bases of the vote in 1990 and 1994," *German Politics and Society* 34 (1995): 79-99.
3. As a further sign of the public's disillusionment with politics, turnout dropped to 70.8 percent, the lowest level in the Federal Republic's electoral history.
4. This is calculated as the net difference (summing up the gap for parties that gained a greater percentage in the West) based on Table 1:

1990	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009
14.5	18.9	23.9	18.4	22.7	20.5

5. There is an abundant literature on class and religious voting in Germany; see Russell J. Dalton, "Voter Choice and Electoral Politics," in *Developments in German Politics* 3, eds., Stephen Padgett, William E. Paterson, and Gordon Smith (Basingstoke, 2003); Wolfgang G. Gibowski, "Who Voted for Whom—and Why," in *Power Shift in Germany: The 1998 Election and the End of the Kohl Era*, eds., David P. Conradt, Gerald R. Kleinfeld, and Christian Soe (New York, 2000); Franz Urban Pappi, "Die politisierte Sozialstruktur heute: Historische Reminiszenz oder aktuelles Erklärungspotential?" in *Das Ende der politisierte Sozialstruktur?*, eds., Frank Brettschneider, Jan van Deth, and Edeltraud Roller (Opladen, 2002); Bernhard Weßels, "Gruppenbindung und Wahlverhalten. 50 Jahre Wahlen in der Bundesrepublik," in *50 Jahre Empirische Wahlforschung in Deutschland*, eds., Markus Klein, Wolfgang Jagodzinski, Ekkehard Mochmann, and Dieter Ohr (Wiesbaden, 2000).
6. Dalton and Bürklin (see note 2); Martin Elff and Sigrid Roßteutscher, "Die Entwicklung sozialer Konfliktlinien in den Wahlen von 1994 bis 2005," in *Wahlen und Wähler: Analysen aus Anlass der Bundestagswahl 2005*, eds., Oskar Gabriel, Jürgen Falter, and Bernard Weßels (Wiesbaden, 2009).
7. Data for this section are based on Politbarometer surveys conducted by Forschungsgruppe Wahlen in election years (Zentralarchiv study numbers 1920, 1987, 2546, 2559, 3160, 3849, 3850, 4258, 4259). Only surveys conducted after each election are used in the analysis. We measured class by respondent's occupation. Working class includes manual jobs (*ungelehrt oder angelehrt/Landarbeiter, Facharbeiter, and Meister*). New middle class comprises all categories classified under *Angestellte* (white collar employees) and *Beamter* (civil servants). Old middle class refers to the category *Selbständig* (self-employed). The 2009 data are from a Forschungsgruppe exit poll conducted on election day.
8. Appendix A1 presents the class voting patterns for all parties for the 1990-2009 elections. The appendix is available online at: www.00000.000000000.
9. These values are recalculated from the data used in Figure 1. If the Greens, who are not a workers' party judged by either programmatic appeals or membership profiles, are excluded from the calculation, the Alford index for both East and (especially) West increases considerably, but the contrast between the two parts of the country remains the same.
10. See Wolfgang Jagodzinski and Markus Quandt, "Religion und Wahlverhalten in der längsschnittlichen Entwicklung," in Klein et al. (see note 5); Franz Urban Pappi, "Die konfessionell-religiöse Konfliktlinie in der deutschen Wählerschaft. Entstehung, Stabilität und Wandel," in *Wirtschaftlicher Wandel, religiöser Wandel und Wertwandel. Folgen für das politische Verhalten in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, eds., Dieter Obernödörfer, Hans Rattinger and Karl Schmitt (Berlin, 1985).
11. Appendix A2 presents the religious voting patterns for all parties for the 1990-2009 elections. The appendix is available online at: www.00000.000000000.
12. Kai Arzheimer and Harald Schoen find that denominational affiliation rarely was a significant factor in the 1994-2005 elections in distinguishing between CDU/CSU and SPD voters after controlling for frequency of religious attendance. This holds true in both regions of the country, except in 1998 when western Protestants were more likely to support the SPD, and in 1994 when both Catholics and Protestants in East significantly favored the CDU. See Kai Arzheimer and Harald Schoen, "Mehr als seine Erinnerung an das 19. Jahrhundert? Das sozioökonomische und das religiös-konfessionelle Cleavage und Wahlverhalten 1994-2005," in *Der gesamtdeutsche Wähler: Stabilität und Wandel des Wählerverhaltens im wiedervereinigten Deutschland*, eds., Hans Rattinger, Oscar W. Gabriel and Jürgen W. Falter (Baden-Baden, 2007).
13. See Kai Arzheimer and Jürgen W. Falter, "Ist der Osten wirklich rot? Das Wahlverhalten bei der Bundestagswahl 2002 in Ost-West-Perspektive," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 49-50 (2002): 27-35; Harald Schoen and Roland Abold, "Zwei Wählerschaften in einem Land? Wahlverhalten im vereinigten Deutschland," in *Sind wir ein Volk? Ost- und Westdeutschland im Vergleich*, eds., Jürgen W. Falter, Oscar W. Gabriel, Hans Rattinger and Harald Schoen (Munich, 2006).

14. Sören Holmberg, "Party identification compared across the Atlantic," in *Elections at Home and Abroad*, eds., M. Kent Jennings and Thomas Mann (Ann Arbor, 1994); Dieter Ohr, Markus Quandt, and Hermann Dülmer, "Zur Funktion und Bedeutung der Parteibindung für den modernen Wähler," in *Wahlen und Wähler. Analysen aus Anlass der Bundestagswahl 2002*, eds., Jürgen Falter, Oscar Gabriel und Bernhard Weßels (Wiesbaden, 2005).
15. Max Kaase and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, "The cumbersome way to partisan orientations in a 'new' democracy," in Jennings and Mann (see note 14).
16. Kai Arzheimer und Harald Schoen, "Erste Schritte auf kaum erschlossenem Terrain. Zur Stabilität der Parteiidentifikation in Deutschland," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* (2005) 46: 629-654; Rüdiger Schmitt-Beck and Stefan Weick, "Die dauerhafte Parteiidentifikation— nur noch a Mythos?" *Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren* (2001) 26:1-5; Russell Dalton and Wilhelm Bürklin, "Wähler als Wandervogel: Dealignment and the German Voter," *German Politics and Society* 21 (2003): 57-75; Carsten Zelle, "Social dealignment vs. political frustration," *European Journal for Political Research* 27 (1995): 319-45.
17. See the contrasting views in Russell J. Dalton and Robert Rohrschneider, "Wählerwandel und die Abschwächung der Parteineigungen von 1972 bis 1987," in *Wahlen und Wähler: Analysen aus Anlass der Bundestagswahl 1987*, eds Max Kaase and Hans-Dieter Klingemann. (Opladen, 1990); and Dieter Ohr, Hermann Dülmer, and Markus Quandt, "Kognitive Mobilisierung oder nicht-kognitive De-mobilisierung" in Gabriel, Falter, and Weßels (see note 6).
18. Kaase and Klingemann (see note 14); Russell J. Dalton and Steve Weldon, "Partisanship and party system institutionalization," *Party Politics* 13 (2007): 179-196.
19. Bernard Wessels, "Re-Mobilisierung, 'Floating' oder Abwanderung? Wechselwähler 2002 und 2005 im Vergleich," in *Die Bundestagswahl 2005: Analysen des Wahlkampfes und der Wahlergebnisse*, eds., Frank Brettschneider, Oskar Niedermayer, and Bernard Wessels (Wiesbaden, 2009); Dalton and Bürklin (see note 16); Harald Schoen, "Stimmensplitting bei Bundestagswahlen: Ein Spiegelbild des Verhältnisses zwischen Bürgern und Parteien?" in Klein et al. (see note 5).
20. Another sign of the lack of party ties is the emergence of the Pirate Party in 2009, a youth oriented party that opposes restrictions on internet usage and file sharing on the internet. Even as a narrow single-issue party, it gained 2 percent of the vote nationally or approximately 845,000 *Zweitstimmen*.
21. Bernhard Wessels, "Post-election study of the Bundestagswahl 2005," Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin; available at www.wzb.eu/zkd/dsl/download.en.htm.
22. Turnout was 72.3 percent in the West in 2009 versus 64.8 percent in the East.
23. Region is based on the current region of the interview rather than the respondent's residence in 1989. Given mobility since unification, the differences between western-born and eastern-born voters are probably larger.
24. Except for 2009 when volatility in the West nearly doubled, the net amount of voting switching between elections has been greater in the East (based on net aggregate vote switching in Table 1):

	1990-94	1994-98	1998-02	2002-05	2005-09
East	15.9	11.6	6.2	12.3	10.8
West	5.6	6.5	5.2	7.2	13.9