

# The General Election 2002

De-alignment, Re-alignment, or  
What?

# Outline

- The Electoral System in brief
- The Election result revisited
- East vs. West? German voting behaviour since 1990
- Theories of Voting Behaviour and their application to the German case
- Value orientations in East Germany
- Conclusion

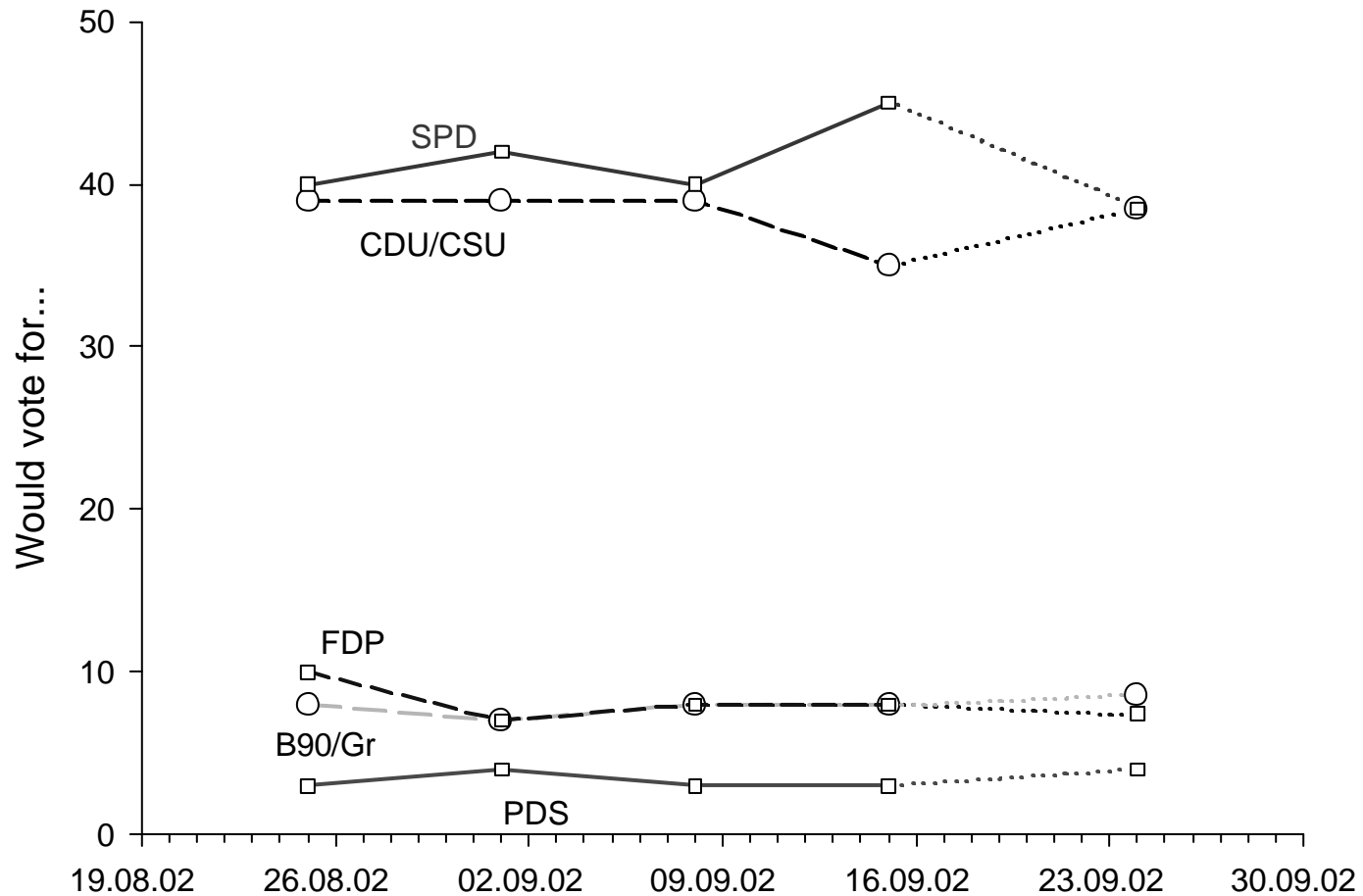
# Electoral System

- 598 regular MPs
  - Half of them elected by first-past-the-post
  - Half of them elected by PR (16 separate lists, votes pooled at the federal level, national 5-percent-threshold)
  - Every voter casts two ballots
  - „Compensation“: District seats are subtracted from PR seats, therefore the system is basically PR
- Quirks may provide for some additional members (Überhangmandate)

# Election Facts

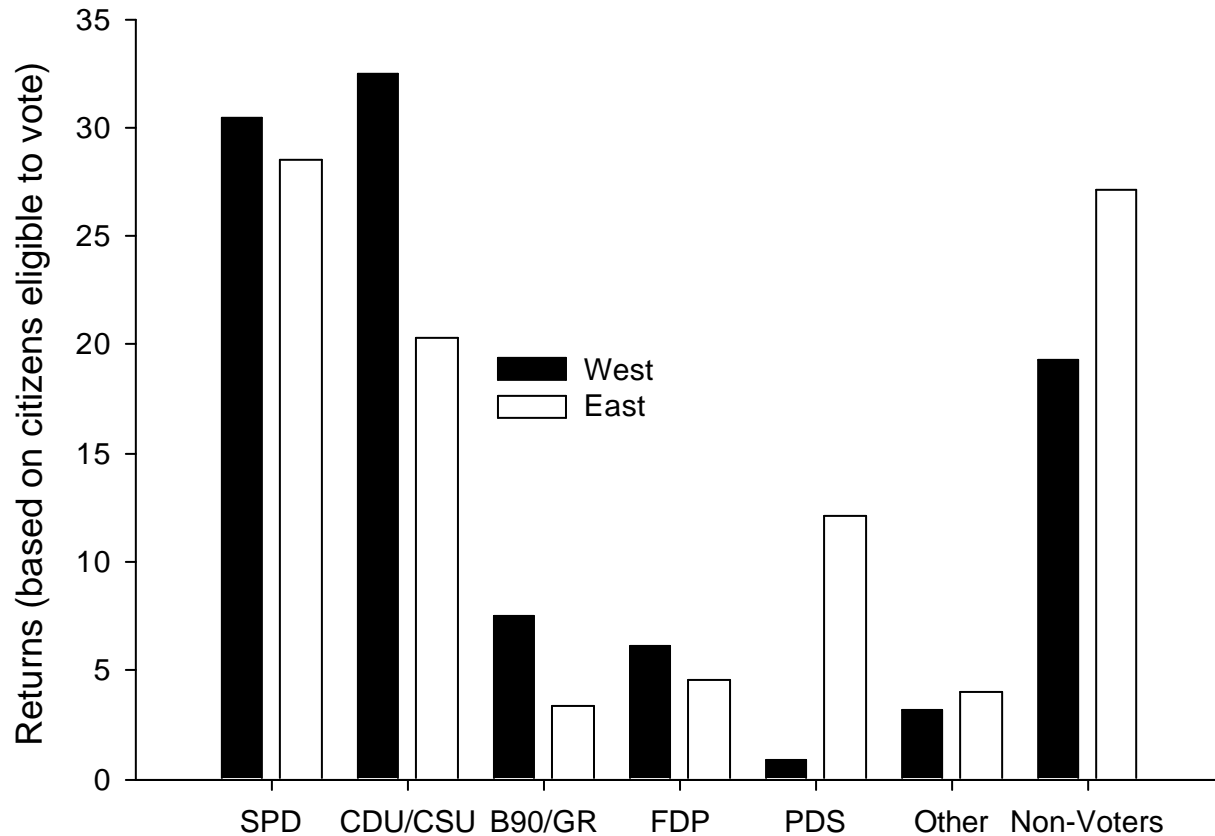
- Sizable last-minute swing
- CDU/CSU and SPD less than 7000 votes apart
- Enormous regional (north/south & east/west) disparities
  - Low turnout in the east
  - Little support for CDU and Greens in the east
  - CSU extremely successful in Bavaria, CDU quite well in Baden-Württemberg
  - PDS defeated, but still strong in the east

# Last-minute swing



source: monthly & bi-weekly Politbarometer polls

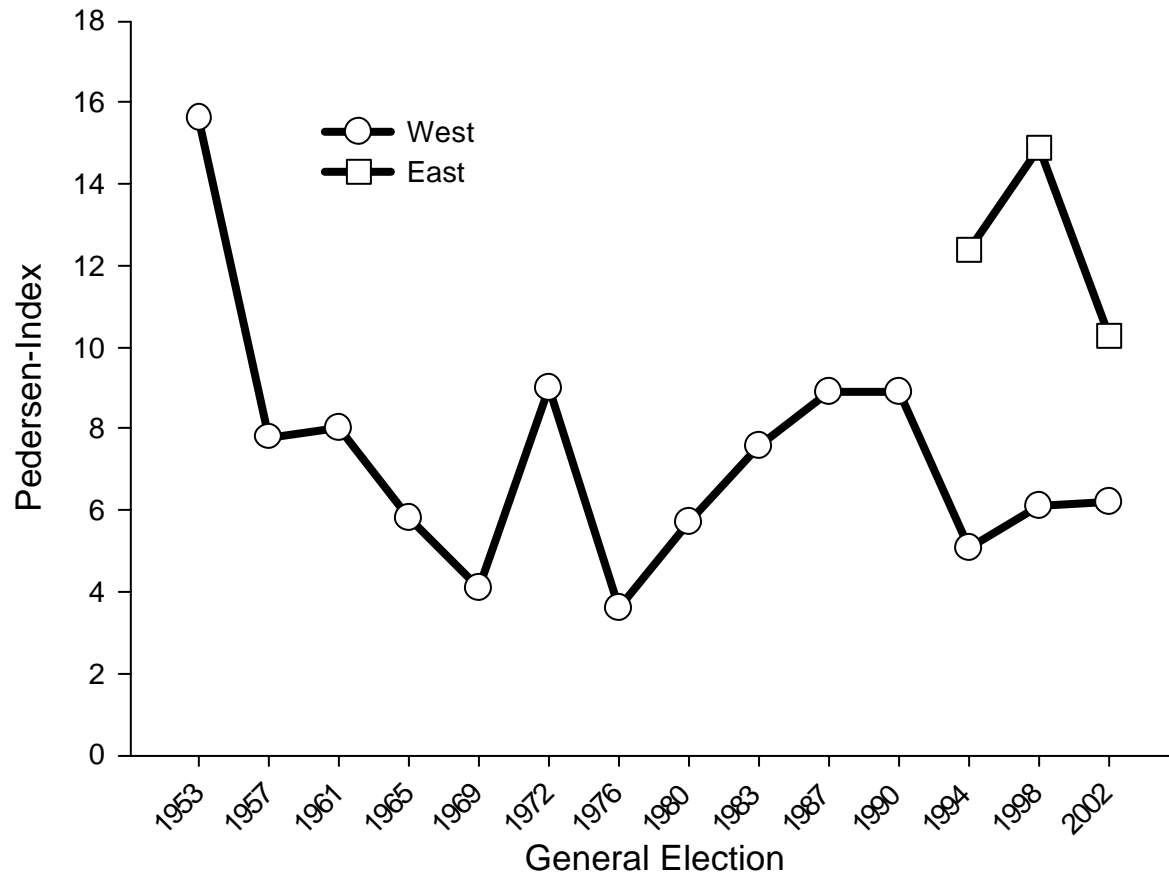
# The Election of 2002 in East/West-Perspective



# Electoral Change 1990-2002

- Panel data not available
- Can be captured on the aggregate level by Pedersen-Index
- Pedersen-Index
  - Measures net-change between two elections
  - Gains of successful parties are added up with increase in non-voting (if any)
  - 0 = no change at all; 100 = political landscape totally restructured

# Pedersen-Index 1953-2002





# Summary

- Cross-sectional east/west differences: CDU less successful, PDS still much more successful in East-Germany.
- Longitudinal east/west differences:
  - West: Party system quite stable since the late 50s, gradually reshaped in the 80s
  - East: Huge net exchanges between political camps; party system still not stable
- How can these findings be explained?

# Theories of Voting Behaviour

- Rational Choice (Downs 57)
  - Without further assumptions, predicts “rational ignorance” and “rational abstention” for mass elections (low-cost situation)
  - Does not work well for most of the people most of the time
- Micro-Sociological Theories
  - Lazarsfeld et al. 1944, Berelson et al. 1954
  - Decision is driven by the expectations of family, friends, colleagues
  - Why is there an “Index of Political Predisposition”

# Theories of Voting Behaviour II

- Macro-Sociological Theories
  - Lipset/Rokkan 1967
  - Social conflict leads to stable coalitions between social groups & political parties
  - How does conflict transform into individual behaviour?
- Social Psychological Theories
  - Campbell et al. 1960 (Ann-Arbor-Model)
  - Decision is driven by attitudes regarding political objects (party ID, candidate orientation, issues orientation)

# Why Chose if You Can Have All (or Most) of Them?

- Social psychology can (and should) be combined with sociology & contemporary history
- Group membership & experience are “background variables” that partly explain political attitudes
- Argument already presented in Campbell et al. 1960
- Re-stated for European context by Dalton et al. 1984: Class, religion and other cleavages provide “cues” for party ID

# Cleavages in Pre-War Germany

- Labour vs. Capital:
  - SPD founded by union leaders
  - stable “coalition” between unions/workers and SPD
- Church vs. State:
  - Catholic minority distrusted by protestant state (1870/71), state gained control over education, marriage ceremonies etc.
  - stable “coalition” between catholic lay-people and the “Zentrum” party
- Other cleavages

# Cleavages in Post-War Germany (West)

- In the 50s, SPD & CDU (“Zentrum” party successor) declared themselves “Volksparteien” Catholics no longer a minority, declining church attendance
- Number of workers steadily declining
- Expansion of higher education etc.
- **But:** Class and religion still significant for voters & elites in the 1980s
- Ca. 70% of citizens self-declared party identifiers in 1990

# Unification Facts

- Only about 5% Catholics, 25% Protestants in the East (West ~45%)
- 47% of the labour force are workers by objective criteria (West: 35%). Even more see themselves as workers
- Change in the 90s
  - Religion is about the same (slow decline in the West)
  - Fewer workers in both parts, but decline is faster in the West
- *Conditions in East Germany should clearly favour the SPD*

# But...

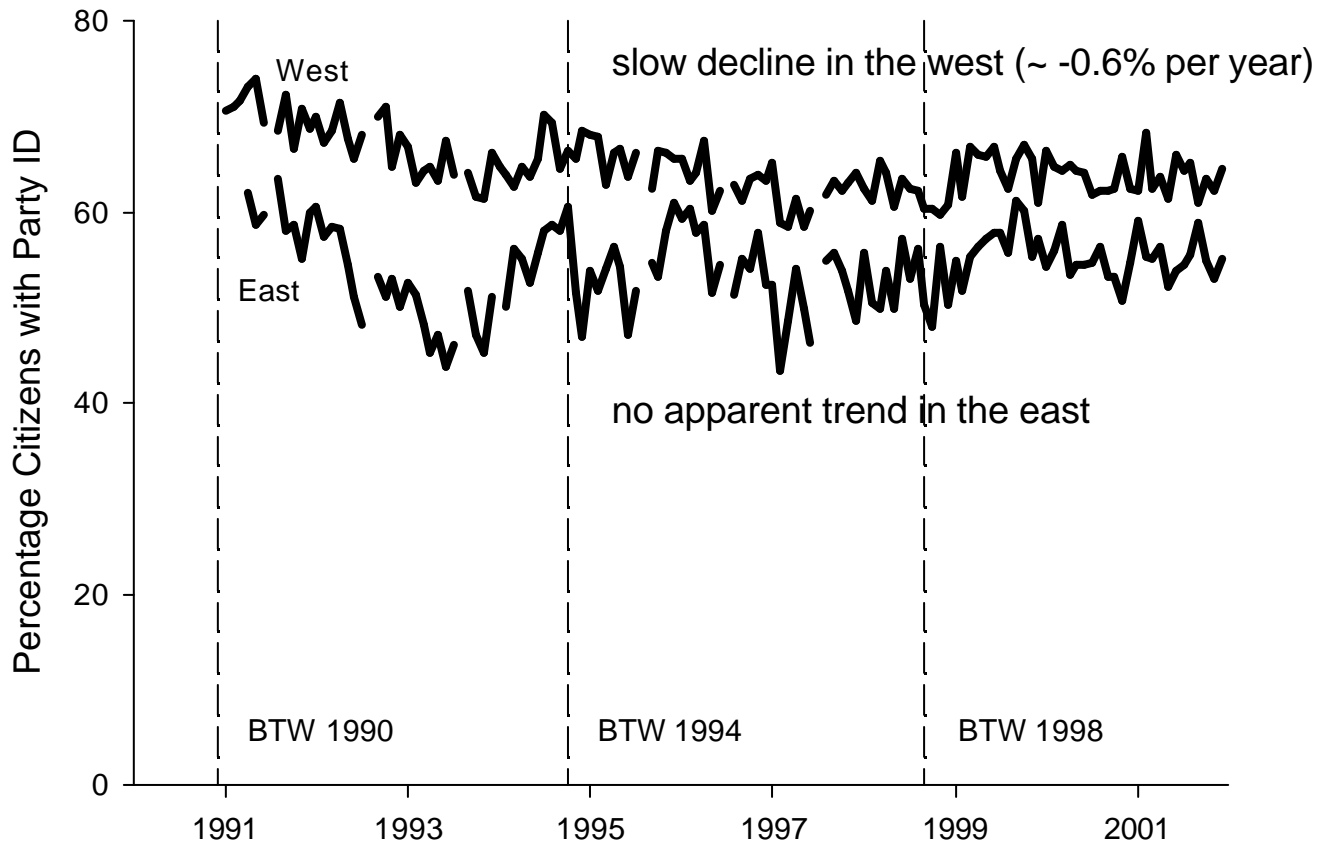
- 1990
  - CDU strongest party in East Germany
  - 50% of East German voters opted for the CDU
  - SPD fails pathetically in its old strongholds
- 1994
  - CDU losses, but still strongest party both parts
  - Returns from East German workers still disproportionately high
  - PDS gets even stronger, backed by public sector employees
- 1998 & 2002
  - SPD gains in the East
  - especially among workers...



# Explanations I

- Patterns of voting behaviour in the East neither “inverted” nor “returned to normal”
- SED dictatorship has destroyed the traditional ties between the workers and the parties of the left
- Lack of experience with free elections has generally weakened the attachments between citizens and parties
- Lower level of macro-partisanship, party ID less stable on the micro-level (panel analysis)
- Even fewer party identifiers among workers

# Party Identifiers, 1991-2001



source: monthly & bi-weekly Politbarometer polls

# Questions remaining...

- Low level of macro-partisanship in East Germany provides explanation for
  - lower turnout
  - stronger effects of candidates, issues, events
  - higher volatility
- But...
  - why are SPD and PDS doing quite well in the East although they can rely on few long-term partisans?
  - why have the Christian democrats suffered considerable losses in 98/02

# Value Orientations in East Germany

- Sources of eastern value orientations
  - Socialization under SED-rule (primary effect)
  - Interpretation of transformation process shaped by socialization (secondary effect)
- Content
  - emphasis on equality
  - strong, redistributive, “caring” state
  - “socialist democracy”
  - women role
- Value orientations and different living conditions partially explain east/west differences in political preferences

# Political Orientations in Germany, 1994-2002

	1994		1998		2002	
	West	East	West	East	West	East
„Group interest should be subordinate to the common good“	38	56 (1.5)	38	54 (1.4)	34	52 (1.5)
„Socialism is a good idea in principle“	25	61 (2.4)	26	60 (2.3)	23	56 (2.4)
„Important companies should be nationalized“	16	40 (2.5)	11	36 (3.3)	10	31 (3.1)

Source: national election studies, n = 8330. Entries are percentages (“agree” and “fully agree”), in brackets: East-West-ratio

# Role of Women / Working Mothers

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	West	East
„A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work“	69	83
„Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay“	47	29
„Both the husband and wife should contribute to household income“	76	94

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Source: World Values Survey 1997, n = 1924. Entries are percentages (“agree” and “fully agree”)

Remember: Federal Government promised more money for Whole-day schools & day nurseries. CDU/CSU stand on this issue is conservative to inconclusive.

# Conclusion I

- Voting behaviour in the West changes only gradually
- Widespread lack of strong partisan attachment explains high volatility in East Germany → more non- & floating voters; voters more easily frustrated
- Different value orientations explain support for leftist policies in the East (which need not be provided by the SPD!)

# Conclusion II

- The SPD clearly benefited from these effects in 1998 & 2002 (and is still benefiting, according to the polls)
- But: There is no guarantee that Easterners will continue to back the SPD
- Voting behaviour becomes less predictable
- Campaigning (and governing) much more difficult since unification