Review: “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose?”

Unified Germany in Perspective
Hardware

- Territory: + 44%
- Population ≈ + 25%
- New neighbours: Poland
- Unemployment: from 7.9 to 13 per cent – and back to 7 per cent
- Soldiers: from 670,000 to less than 250,000
- But use of military force re-established as a means of politics

- Lots of derelict industrial sites, massive environmental problems
- Massive internal migration
Federalism/Constitution/Foreign policies

- Number of Länder increased by almost 50 per cent
- Länder/Germany even more heterogeneous than before 1990
- Consensus building in Federal Council ever more complex
- No systemic change
- Changes to constitution mostly cosmetic...
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- No systemic change
- Changes to constitution mostly cosmetic...
- ... until 2006/09: reform of Federalism
- Still exclusively representative concept of democracy at federal level
- More assertive foreign policies; Europe ↔ US more problematic
Welfare State/Economy

- Success of democracy in West Germany linked to Welfare State
- Which was built on the economic success of West Germany
- Economy less competitive in 1990s, but recently rebounding
- Welfare state still based on contributions (conservative model)
- But recent shift toward (more) Anglo-Saxon model
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- But recent shift toward (more) Anglo-Saxon model
- Permanent change? Partly undone by Great Coalitions 05-09, 13-?
- Excellent performance during economic crisis . . .
  - Due to reforms?
  - Large-scale state intervention/corporatism?
  - Structural adaption during 1990s?
Welfare State/Economy II

- Mass unemployment a permanent feature of the system in both halves, but recently massive improvements
- Taxation/Labour market: still high rates & confusion, but improvements
- Economy much more competitive than 10 years ago
- Economic gap between East and West will not close within next 30 years – so what ?!?
Political Culture/attitudes

- Political culture split
- Slightly different notion of democracy / ideal type of government in the East
- Easterners less trustful (probably)
- Socialisation
- Plus massive differences in economic situation
- Differences will not disappear quickly
- Demand for political alternatives/politicians caught
Party System

- Split party system established during 1990s
  - 2+2 in West Germany
  - 3 ‘major’ parties in East Germany
- Lower level of party identification, more volatility, greater impact of short-term factors
- Especially in East Germany
- From 2005/07 “Fluid Five-party System” (with regional variation)
Party System

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- Lower level of party identification, more volatility, greater impact of short-term factors
- Especially in East Germany
- From 2005/07 “Fluid Five-party System” (with regional variation)
- (Economic) Reform not a political issue?
  - Economic Crises
  - *Rollback* a major political issue
Why do people vote the way they do?

1. Political Sociology: Cleavages, Groups loyalties
2. Ann-Arbor:
   ▶ Party identification
   ▶ Candidates
   ▶ Issues
3. Rational Choice: Issues
Parties and public opinion

- Do parties have to represent voters?
- Or can they shape the distribution of preferences?
- If so, under which circumstances?
- Directional voting
Research Design

- Look at public opinion
  - Security/Equality
  - Over time
  - Compare supporters of major left/right parties
- Look at party manifestos
  - Emphasis
  - Orientation of major right party
  - Polarisation
Figures & Tables: Support for benefit cuts

- Germany
- Denmark
- Sweden
- Netherlands

The absence of values for some elections reflects the omission of the welfare benefits item from national election studies.
Figures & Tables: Support for retrenchment

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<th>Reform course % agree</th>
<th>Coal subsidies*</th>
<th>Home-owner bonus*</th>
<th>Job creation*</th>
<th>Commuter tax break*</th>
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<th>Unemployment spt*</th>
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*% agree with benefit reductions.
Figures & Tables: Emphasis on Welfare/Market
Figures & Tables: Position centre-right party

FIGURE 5
CENTRE-RIGHT PARTY: MARKET ECONOMY – WELFARE


Germany  Denmark  Sweden  Netherlands

Unified Germany in Perspective  Review: 25 years after (13/16)
Figures & Tables: Polarisation centre-right vs. centre-left

**Figure 6**

Polarisation Centre-Right – Centre-Left Party

- **Germany**
- **Denmark**
- **Sweden**
- **Netherlands**

Graph showing the polarisation index for Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands from 1972 to 2002.
Conclusion

- SPD and especially CDU not engaged in “cultivating” preferences for welfare state reform
- 2005 Land election disasters and federal election deadlock largely due to this
Conclusion

- SPD and especially CDU not engaged in “cultivating” preferences for welfare state reform
- 2005 Land election disasters and federal election deadlock largely due to this
- Confirmed by Grand Coalition policies and 09-11
- Economic Crises: “We’re all Keynesianists now”
- Further reforms unlikely
Class questions

1. Do you buy the story?
2. In your view, what are the most important changes in / the most interesting features of the “New Germany”?
3. What else could/should have been covered on this course?