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The Presidentialization of Political Parties in the Federal Republic of Germany

Charles Lees

Introduction

Germany is a parliamentary system but is an interesting case in the context of this volume because it raises the possibility, acknowledged by Samuels and Shugart, that Germany might be one of the instances in which we could find ‘presidentialized features’ (2010, p. 16) in a parliamentary system. The reason for this is that the degree of executive authority the Basic Law invests in the post of Chancellor under Germany’s system of Chancellor Democracy (Mayntz, 1980) constitutes a different kind of relationship between the party as Principal and the Chief Executive as Agent. Nevertheless, as this chapter will reveal, the power of the Chancellor is not fully institutionalized but is rather contingent on the individual Chancellor’s political skillset and subsequent ability to control the Executive and his or her own party. Thus, in as far as we can ‘apply’ the concept of presidentialization to the German case, it is as a potential outlier along the distribution of parliamentary systems rather than as a bone fide exception to the rule that ‘party behavior and organization will tend to mimic constitutional structure’ (Samuels and Shugart, 2010, p. 15).

In terms of control over the Core Executive, the Basic Law stipulates that individual cabinet ministers are responsible to the Chancellor rather than to the Bundestag, and the principle of ‘guidelines competence’ (*Richtlinienkompetenz*) bestowed on the Chancellor does much to maintain the steering capacity of the government and buttress the power enjoyed by the largest party within the executive. These formal executive powers also help with the messier business of inter- party and

intra-party management in the legislature. In terms of processes of leadership, the long-established practices and norms around Chancellor Democracy shape the balance of power within the Core Executive, between the Executive and the Legislature, and also between the Chancellor and his or her own party. And with regard to styles of leadership, the particular emphasis on the Chancellor in German politics naturally also focuses attention on the leading candidates (often misleadingly referred to as ‘Chancellor candidates’) fielded by the two main catch-all parties, the center-right CDU/CSU and the center-left SPD. Thus there is not only an *a priori* bias towards some degree of personalization of party campaigning as a result but also a greater focus on the Chancellor candidates than on the leadership candidates of the other main parties, the free-market FDP, the Greens, and the Left Party. But personalization is not presidentialization.

So, in the German case, there is a degree of congruence between the kind of empirics associated with Chancellor Democracy and what we would expect to find under conditions of presidentialization. However, to be able to isolate and understand the differences we need to keep in mind that unlike the idea of presidentialization, which is explicitly intended to be a comparative tool, the notion of Chancellor Democracy is premised on *sui generis* aspects of the German political system. As Karl-Rudolf Korte points out ‘the peculiarity of the political decision-making process in the parliamentary system of the German Federal Republic becomes obvious if the political system is described as a parliamentary governmental system with chancellor hegemony. The negotiation pact between government and parliamentary majority is distinctive through a strong and *constitutionally secured* [my italics] chancellor system’ (2000, p. 5). And so, whilst the notion of presidentialization is a dynamic concept premised upon generalized observations about contingent processes that

could take place in almost any polity with a de jure or de facto separation of powers, Chancellor Democracy is a more static notion based upon specific assumptions about strongly embedded dynamics that are peculiar in many ways to the Federal Republic of Germany.

Constitutional features and party presidentialization in Germany

For historical reasons, the constitutional order of the Federal Republic of Germany after its establishment in 1949 was designed to constrain the concentration of power; be it within a particular territorial unit, arena of politics, arm of government, or in the hands of a single individual. However, political scientists have identified centripetal forces at work within the constitution that encourage what Gordon Smith (1986) called a ‘politics of centrality’.

Germany is a federal state, made up of sixteen constituent states that are represented federally through the territorial chamber, the Bundesrat. The lower house is the Bundestag, to which members are directly elected through a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system. The MMP system combines a plurality-based first vote for constituency-based candidates and a proportional second vote for state-based party-list candidates. The party list system favors party elites who draw up the lists and allows them to reward loyalty and adherence to the party line (Lees, 2005). There are relatively low levels of district magnitude but the level of disproportionality has risen since German Unification, adding to the centralizing dynamics within the system (Ibid.). The Federal electoral system is not exactly replicated across the constituent states, where systems of seat allocation may differ and, taken in the round, we must conclude that the German electoral system(s) at all

levels presents a distinct mix of incentives and constraints that shape the party system, favors certain actors within it, and shapes the Principal-Agent relationship between party and Chief Executive. So, on the one hand, the system was designed to prevent one- or two-party dominance and also to preserve a strong territorial link between electors and elected, both objectives that are antithetical to presidentialization. On the other, aspects of the electoral system - such as the 5 per cent threshold hurdle to representation and the allocation of 'surplus votes' (*Überhangsmandaten*) – are designed to shut out extremist parties, prevent party system fragmentation, and encourage centripetal political competition¹.

Beyond the electoral system, the German federal system itself also presents a similar mix. In his comparative study of federations, Alfred Stepan places Germany midway along a 'demos constraining-demos enabling' continuum (2001; Lees, 2002), which is determined along four dimensions: (1) the degree of territorial overrepresentation, (2) the 'policy scope' of the second chamber, (3) the degree to which policy making is constitutionally allocated to supermajorities or to subunits of the federation, and (4) the degree to which the party system is polity-wide in its orientation and incentive systems. The Bundesrat displays a significant degree of territorial overrepresentation, with all German states holding between three and six votes. This prevents the concentration of power within the larger, more populous states and their state-level parties. By contrast, the degree of 'policy scope' exercised by the Bundesrat is fairly modest although the Bundestag increasingly requires the Bundesrat's assent in those instances where legislation has a European dimension that touches upon state competencies (Jeffery, 1994). As Ludger Helms (2005, p. 436) points out, the extent to which the Bundesrat can actually hold up legislative business is dependent on whether or not the opposition parties control the territorial

chamber. And as this is often the case, the center is constrained because it is forced into a de facto coalition with the party that controls the Bundesrat. To balance this, Stepan (2001) identifies more centralizing tendencies elsewhere. Thus, Germany is only modestly placed in terms of the degree to which policy making is constitutionally allocated to supermajorities or to subunits of the federation, and Article 31 of the Basic Law makes it clear that 'Federal law shall take precedence over *Land* law'. Finally, Germany ranks highly in terms of the degree to which the party system is polity-wide in its orientation and incentive systems. Polity-wide parties control nearly all of the seats in the Bundestag and Bundesrat and, although these centralizing tendencies are somewhat offset by the presence of alternative power- and resource-bases in the state-level parties, party elites are able to exert a high degree of party discipline over their members throughout the Republic.

The most specific constitutional constraint, however, lies in the Federal Republic's constitutionally-codified party and election laws. In the Political Parties Act, known as the ParteienGⁱⁱ, Articles 6 to 16 on internal organization, and Article 17 on the nomination of candidates, are most relevant to this study. Article 7 decrees that parties 'are subdivided into regional organizations. The size and scope of these units are determined in the statutes. The regional structure of the party *must be developed to a sufficient degree to enable individual members to participate to a suitable extent in the forming of political opinions within the party* [my italics]' (ParteienG, 1994, p. 5) whilst Article 9 declares that 'assemblies of members or delegates (convention, general assembly) constitute the supreme organ in a given regional organization' (Ibid, pp. 5-6) and Article 17 states that 'candidates for election to parliament must be chosen by secret ballot' (Ibid, p. 9).

In the Federal Election Law, or BGW, the articles that are especially relevant to this volume are Articles 20.2 and 27.1 which state that constituency nominations and list nominations respectively ‘must bear the [...] signatures of the Land party organization or [...] of the executive committees of the *next lower regional organisations* [my italics] (1996, pp. 9 and 12) and Article 21, which stipulates that constituency candidates can only be selected by ‘an assembly of party members [...] or in a special or general assembly of party representatives’ (Ibid, p. 10). Article 27 also makes it clear that individuals can only be nominated in one Land and only appear in one Land list (Ibid, p. 12).

The framework established by the ParteienG and the BGW sets out quite narrow parameters for party and electoral organization that embed the rights of ordinary party members within a Weberian rational-legal framework built around the regional party organization, which is defined as either the Land party or, crucially, the next lower tier of organization. This is a clear *a priori* political and organizational check on centralization and also a guarantee that a certain degree of inclusiveness should operate within all German political parties. In addition, the emphasis on members’ or delegates’ assemblies and secret ballots removes a good deal of discretion from parties in terms of the kind of innovative and/or plebiscitary modes of candidate selection that are available to them. This raises two points of note. First, these constitutional arrangements not only constrain German political parties in comparison to parties in some other polities but also limit the potential for divergence between them. Second, it demonstrates how presidentialization is shaped by the constitutional features of individual polities: in this case limiting both the extent and degree of variance of its overall impact.

The genetic features of German parties

The genetic features of the mainstream parties in the German party system are defined as those parties that survived the period of party system concentration up to 1961 – i.e. the CDU and CSU, SPD, and FDP – as well as the two parties that emerged later, the Greens and the Left Party. All of these parties have significant experience of government office at the level of the constituent states and, with the exception of the Left Party, have also participated in Federal government. Although all six parties are covered, I pay particular attention to the two Catch-all parties, the CDU and SPD, as they are the two *formateuer* parties in the Federal party system and all Federal Chancellors to date have come from within their ranks. In the coverage I refer to the book's framework of internal versus external origins, penetration versus diffusion organizational forms, the extent of charismatic leadership, and the notion of cohesive dominant versus fragmented internal coalitions.

The CDU

The CDU's genesis took place during the period of Allied occupation between 1945 and 1949 as it emerged as a 'mass-based denominational party' (Kirchheimer, 1966), characterized by an incremental religious-based ideology, crosscut by the influence of clerics and other religious and social thinkers, a relatively open membership, and an acceptance of democracy. Although supported by the US Occupation Forces at the time, the CDU has internal origins and no external sponsor.

The CDU is very much part of the family of Christian Democratic parties found in countries such as Italy, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands. Like those parties it was grounded in the specific conditions of post-1945 Europe and had as its

mission to defend bourgeois democracy against leftist parties at home and the Soviet Union internationally, whilst encouraging regional integration as a buttress against both. Although there are small 'German nationalist' and 'Christian Social' tendencies within the party, the internal coalition that emerged around Adenauer is still cohesive and dominant today.

The CDU emerged through a process of territorial diffusion, with a membership drawn from 'a complex variety of groups with extremely varied backgrounds in terms of their pre-Hitler party affiliation' (Heidenheimer, 1960, p. 30). It was built around state-level parties run by local notables who controlled membership and, after 1949, funds and communications with the new Federal capital in Bonn. There was an intense rivalry between these regions that led to the eventual organizational division between the CDU and the CSU, as well as the establishment of Adenauer's hegemonic position within the CDU itself.

The role of Adenauer in particular means that the CDU's internal governance was shaped by a culture of charismatic leadership, albeit constrained by the need to bargain with other organizational power bases, particularly in the Land parties. In the early decades of the Federal Republic, the CDU and its sister party the CSU were considered little more than a so-called 'association for electing the Chancellor' (*Kanzlerwahlverein*) and, by the time the CDU/CSU went into opposition in 1969, the CDU's original membership of over 400,000 had more than halved. The need to modernize the party was made even more apparent by a perceived loss of political initiative to the SPD, which had embraced the catch-all model and developed a more professionalized and centralized mode of party governance. In response to the need to modernize, the CDU's Federal Executive and Federal Committee were given enhanced powers, the party's General Secretary assumed a policy function to match

the post's co-ordination duties, and party finance and budget lines were restructured. So successful were these reforms that, when the CDU returned to government in 1982, it had an efficient party machine and had boosted its membership to over 750,000 (Padgett and Burkett, 1986, p. 107). Once in power after 1982, Helmut Kohl and his ministers re-asserted their dominance over the party machine and Kohl's own influence eventually grew to the kind of levels of personal power enjoyed by Adenauer in the 1950s.

The electoral defeat of Kohl in 1998 was the catalyst for another burst of party reform, first under the short-lived reign of Wolfgang Schauble and more markedly under the current party leader and Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel. Merkel epitomizes the CDU's evolution away from the mass-based denominational party type, being the first female and Protestant CDU leader. Nevertheless, the basic pattern established in the early years of the Federal Republic of a territorially diffused, internally driven party with some history of charismatic leadership and a cohesive dominant coalition remains in place today.

X. 3.2. The SPD

The genetic features of the SPD were shaped by the impact of the merger of the General German Workers' Assembly (ADAV) or 'Lassaleans' and the Social Democratic Workers' Party (SDAP) or 'Eisenachers' in the late 19th century. The party has historic links with the German trades union movement but not to the extent that the unions could be classified as an external sponsor.

The outcome of the ideological struggle between the highly organized Lassaleans and their Eisenacher rivals was a unified party that emerged through a

process of territorial diffusion. Nevertheless, the *de facto* dominance of the Lassaleans in the new party meant that the diffusional effects were offset by centralizing tendencies, so although formal authority was invested in the party congress in fact the executive committee of the party secretariat exercised real day-to-day power (Kirchheimer, 1966). As Hunt observes, ‘from its outset the German labour movement has a dual heritage in organisational as well as in political matters [...] two sharply contrasting models of organisation: the one authoritarian, rigidly centralised, efficient, and disciplined, the other ultra-democratic, loosely federalist in structure, and lax in discipline. In the subsequent history of the Social Democratic Party – and even after it moved away from the class-mass model in the 1950s - one can follow the interplay of these two clashing concepts of organisation’ (1964, pp. 6-7).

As a result the SPD has been prone to challenges to the dominant coalition. The first, successful, challenge to and change of the internal coalition took place through the 1950s and culminated in the adoption of the Bad Godesberg programme of 1959, and was driven by two political factors. The first was the so-called ‘enforced merger’ (*Zwangsvereinigung*) in 1946 between the faction of the SPD in the Russian zone of occupation, led by Otto Grotewohl, and the communist KPD. The new ‘Socialist Unity Party’ (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland*, or SED) evolved quickly into a proto-hegemonic Leninist party that the SPD subsequently defined itself against. The second factor was the run of election defeats for the SPD in 1949, 1953 and 1957. These external shocks eventually forced an ideological and generational change of leadership. Willy Brandt, a former Governing Mayor of Berlin, became SPD leader and was nominated as the party’s leading candidate in 1960, assuming a stronger personal profile that complemented the process of

ideological moderation associated with the newly dominant ‘new socialist’ coalition around the right wing of the SPD.

The second, less successful, challenge to the dominant coalition arose in the 1970s and was driven by an influx of young members with New Left or New Politics orientations who expressed their frustration at the SPD’s moderate course in the 1970s and 1980s. This led to a period of internal debate in the party and the eventual adoption of the 1989 Basic Programme, which included significant post-materialist elements within it. However, the New Left never fully dislodged the SPD Right and the party’s ultimate failure either to suppress or, alternatively, integrate the New Left drove the emergence and eventual consolidation of the Greens as a significant rival on the left of the German party system (Lees, 2000).

The SPD has no culture of charismatic leadership, although there has been an increased personalization of politics over time. Brandt, and to some extent his successor Helmut Schmidt, and after 1998 Gerhard Schröder all pursued a personalized and non-ideological leadership style that often sidelined formal party structures and processes. It was only after the defeat of Schröder in 2005 – and with no obviously charismatic successor in sight – that a more collective style of leadership re-asserted itself in the SPD, albeit centered within a small party elite.

The CSU, FDP, Left Party, and Greens

The CSU shares the same genetic features as the CDU but, unlike its larger sister party, the CSU has never explicitly aspired to develop a cross-confessional appeal. It can be characterized as the extreme result of territorial diffusion, internally driven, with some history of charismatic leadership during the era of Franz-Josef Strauss and

a reasonably cohesive dominant coalition built around a distinct policy mix of economic modernization embedded in a narrative of Bavarian values (sometimes described as the doctrine of the ‘laptop and lederhosen’). The only area of contestation is around the domain of Europe, where some elements of the CSU have developed a ‘soft Eurosceptic’ position (Taggart and Szczerbak, 2002; Lees, 2002).

Although coming from very different political spaces, the FDP and the Left Party are both what Gunther and Diamond would describe as classic programmatic parties (2003; Lees, 2005). Both have relatively clear-cut ideological profiles and occupy niche positions with the party system, in which the FDP focuses on a clear pro-market and ‘western’ message whilst the Left Party mobilizes a strongly left-of-center and overwhelmingly ‘eastern’ social milieu. Both parties are dominated by their elites but whilst the FDP leadership has in recent years lacked a public profile, key members of the Left Party’s leadership, such as Gregor Gysi or Oskar Lafontaine, have enjoyed high levels of national recognition. Both parties also have a clearly defined social base although the means by which these links are organized differ.

The FDP emerged and evolved under the post-1949 MMP electoral system in the ‘old’ West Germany through a process of territorial diffusion and without an external sponsor. It has relatively narrow social links, a small party membership, and a relatively ‘thin’ and elite dominated party organization but no real culture of charismatic leadership. It has a dominant and cohesive coalition based around relatively free market policies but has undergone two successful challenges to the dominant coalition in the past. In 1968, when the ‘social liberal faction’ ousted the previously dominant ‘national liberal’ faction, which led in turn to the replacement of the incumbent leader Erich Mende by Walter Scheel. This change paved the way for

the FDP to enter into coalition with the SPD the following year. The second change took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a process in which the ‘social liberals’ shifted their positions rightwards and, in terms of personnel, were also replaced in some key posts by ‘economic liberals’. Again, this led to the possibility of the FDP entering a new government coalition – this time led by the CDU/CSU. The FDP can be described as an internally-driven party, which emerged through a process of territorial diffusion, with no history of charismatic leadership, and is governed internally by a cohesive dominant coalition built around pro-business and free-market values.

The Left Party is harder to classify. On the one hand, when the PDS emerged in 1990 it was definitely not a party of territorial diffusion, as it inherited the organization and assets of the highly penetrative SED. On the other hand, after its renaming as the Left Party and the subsequent merger with the more ‘west German’ Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG) in 2006/2007, it is now very much a party of territorial diffusion and has no external sponsor. There is a relatively dominant coalition, based upon a ‘democratic socialist’ agenda, although the party retains some of the more anti-democratic elements that made up the SED. In addition, it is worth remembering that WASG emerged from those elements of the SPD left that rejected the strongly reformist course charted by Schröder’s Red-Green coalition and has a somewhat different temperament to the former PDS, despite sharing nominally similar ideological positions (Lees *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, the Left Party as it is now constituted can be described as an internally driven party, which emerged through a process of territorial diffusion, albeit centered geographically in the new Federal states of the former East Germany, with no history of charismatic leadership (despite the name recognition of Gysi or Lafontaine) and is

governed internally by a cohesive dominant coalition built around a program of democratic socialism.

Finally, the Greens' genetic features make it *the* paradigmatic example of a left-libertarian ecological party, emerging out of the 'citizens initiative' groups of the 1970s in response to the SPD's failure to respond effectively to the challenge of the New Politics agenda. To some extent, the Greens had an external sponsor in the wider environmental and peace movements and they were a product of self-conscious territorial diffusion, with a strong emphasis on the distinct identity of local party organizations, many of which retained their own distinct names for many years after the establishment of the national party organization. In addition, the emergent party underwent a process of profound ideological struggle before a dominant coalition emerged, first between the movement's 'New Left' and 'value conservative' strands and, subsequently, when the New Left had won that particular struggle, between its the hardline 'Fundis' and more pragmatic 'Realos' wings; a process that ended when the moderate 'Aufbruch' group formed a centrist dominant coalition with the Realos (Markovits and Gorski, 1993, pp. 192-7). These ideological struggles had organizational consequences as the Greens transformed itself from a movement-based 'anti-party party' - as Petra Kelly famously described the party - into a far more professionalized organization (Lees, 2000) in which the wider movement as external sponsor diminished in importance to the point that the party became to all intents and purposes internally driven. Organizational issues that became enmeshed in the ideological struggle included the principles of 'rotation', a form of delegation democracy in which elected list members were expected to step down from parliament after one term, and 'basis democracy' (*Basisdemokratie*), which endowed the party membership with relatively high levels of formal control

over the parliamentary faction. Both of these principles were designed to impair the professionalization of the party and prevent or at least slow the emergence of the cadre of career politicians found in the other parties. Over time both of these issues were resolved in favor of the forces of professionalization and this was accelerated by both the impact of German Unification, which saw the ‘western’ Greens merge with the more moderate Alliance ‘90 and ‘eastern’ Greens, and also the consolidation of the Greens’ position in the Bundestag, which spurred a sustained transfer of resources and power from the ‘party in the country’ to the parliamentary party. Today, we can describe the Greens as an internally-driven party, which emerged through a process of territorial diffusion, with no history of charismatic leadership, and is governed internally by a cohesive dominant coalition built around a moderate program of left-libertarian and ecologist policies.

X. 4. The level of centralized party leadership and its changes

In terms of the degree of centralized party leadership, there are distinct principles and practices in the management of executive governance and executive-legislature relations that are embedded within the notion of Chancellor Democracy (Mayntz, 1980) but there is little evidence that the impact of these principles and practices have intensified, at least in terms of management of the core executive. On the one hand, the Chancellor’s resource base has been enhanced over time and the number of staff in the Chancellor’s office grew substantially from around 150 during the Adenauer Chancellorship to over 500 under Kohl (Blondel and Müller-Rommel, 1993), making it the biggest such ‘office’ in Europe. At the same time, in the 20 years until 2005 there had been no evidence of a significant increase in the number of political and policy advisors in the Chancellor’s Office and, indeed, the number of such advisors

declined after the defeat of Kohl in 1998. In addition, a Planning Directorate set up by Schröder after 1998 was disbanded after his second electoral victory in 2002 (Helms, 2005, pp. 434-5).

Attempts to promote or favor outsiders within the core executive have also been largely unsuccessful. Thus, whilst Schröder did have an inner circle or ‘kitchen cabinet’, the key figures, such as Steinmeier (the Chief of the Cabinet Office) or Schilly (the ex-Green who became an SPD member and Interior Minister), were drawn from the formal Weberian structures of government and enjoyed power bases in their own right. In addition, subsequent attempts to place non-partisan ‘experts’ at center stage have floundered on either the needs of coalition building after the election (Merkel’s failed attempt to promote Paul Kirchhof in 2005) or a failure to enter office in the first place (Steinmeier’s unsuccessful championing of Harald Christ in 2009). In addition, although the Schröder governments (1998-2005) often outsourced policy formulation to ‘independent’ commissions outside the formal machinery of government (Lees, 2000), this was not a new practice and dated back to the setting up of the ‘Council of Economic Advisors’ in the 1960s. Indeed, rather than being seen as a symptom or even an instrument of presidentialization, Schröder’s instinct to outsource policy formulation could be regarded as the opposite: namely a strategy of consensual or ‘big tent’ politics that is in many ways antithetical to the process of presidentialization as it is understood as independent from the party and its dynamics.

If the evidence of increasing presidentialization within the core executive is mixed, there is little evidence that the Chancellor’s management of executive-legislative relations has become more presidentialized either. A long-standing convention such as that of the ‘constructive vote of no confidence’ buttresses the

position of the Chancellor vis-à-vis the legislature. Moreover, under normal circumstances the key to the Chancellor's management of the Bundestag is to be found in its relationship with and control over its own party, whilst the relationship between Bundestag and Bundesrat is in part dependent on the electoral cycle in the constituent states and, *ceteris paribus*, tends to constrain the concentration of power in the center (Lees, 2005). The one recent exception to the rule has been the impact of the Euro crisis and Merkel's skill in framing the crisis as 'the Chancellor's business' (*Kanzlersache*); a move which short-circuited the normal dynamic of co-operation between the Chancellor's Office, the Foreign Ministry, which was led by Guido Westerwelle from the junior FDP, and the Finance Ministry, led by Merkel's CDU colleague and rival, Schauble (Lees, 2012). However, this is consistent with what we know about Europeanization and how it privileges the core executive versus the legislature and also party elites vis-à-vis the membership (Carter and Poguntke, 2010; Ladrech, 2007) more than any *prima facie* evidence of presidentialization.

The extent of leadership autonomy within party organizations can be defined as the extent to which Chancellors have been able to govern *past* as opposed to *through* their respective parties. Once again, the analytical basis of this notion is distinct but the empirics of this dimension of presidentialization (personalization) are harder to differentiate from long-standing practices of Chancellor democracy. In his analysis of the dynamic between the roles of government leader and party leader, Arnold Heidenheimer posited a fourfold typology that tried to capture the *public presentation* of this dynamic. The four types were: (1) government and party leader; (2) government and party leader; (3) government (and party) leader; and (4) government-party leader (1961, p. 249). Curiously, at the time that Heidenheimer was writing, there had only been Chancellor Adenauer. Helms provides another

fourfold categorization to describe the *internal relationship* between the Chancellor and his/her party: (1) autonomous, in which the party is used as an instrument; (2) neutral, in that the Chancellor is neither the principal nor the agent of the party; (3) dependent on the party for authority and/or resources; and (4) detached and indifferent to the party (Ibid, p. 148).

Helms went on to place seven German Chancellors, from Adenauer to Schröder, based on the internal and external dynamics of the relationships between them and their parties. I have added my own judgmental categorization of Merkel. The most common category is autonomous/government and party leader, which includes Adenauer (CDU), Schröder (SPD), and Merkel (CDU) (Clemens, 2011, 2007; Patzelt, 2006). The second most common is that of detached/government (and party) leader, which includes Ludwig Erhard (CDU) and Helmut Schmidt (SPD). Then we have autonomous/government (and party) leader, which accurately describes Kohl (CDU) and – to a much lesser extent I would argue – also captures some of the political style of Schröder (SPD). Finally, Willie Brandt (SPD) falls into the categories of neutral/government and party leader and to a lesser extent autonomous/government and party leader, whilst Kurt Kiesinger (CDU) falls into the category of neutral/government and party leader.

However, there does not appear to be any party-political dimension to this categorization, with CDU and SPD Chancellors in all three of the most common categorizations (1) autonomous/government and party leader, (2) detached/government (and party) leader, and (3) autonomous/government (and party) leader). Scholars of the political biographies of these politicians might note that there is a tendency for SPD Chancellors (and, indeed, SPD Chancellor-candidates) to emerge from state-level politics, with Brandt cutting his political teeth as Governing

Mayor of the City-State of Berlin, Schröder formerly a Minister-President of the State of Lower Saxony, and Schmidt originally an Interior Minister in the City-State of Hamburg. This contrasts with some CDU Chancellors like Erhard, Kiesinger, and Merkel, who came up through the Bundestag ranks but, then again, Adenauer, Erhard, and Kohl emerged out of state-level politics in the Rhineland. So we can discern no pattern beyond what we know about the skill sets of the politicians involved.

The Presidentialization of parties

In terms of the degree of autonomy exercised by the leadership vis-à-vis the party, Adenauer, Brandt, Schmidt, Kohl, Schröder, and Merkel are relatively ‘strong’ Chancellors but there have also been the two ‘weaker’ Chancellorships of Ludwig Erhard (CDU, 1963 to 1966) and Kiesinger (CDU, 1966-69). The explanations for these two weak Chancellorships can be found in either the narrative of relative political skillsets or in the systemic context in which they operated, but if we look at the record of the current Chancellor, Merkel, she has operated very effectively in a relatively symmetrical Grand Coalition with the SPD as junior partner between 2005 and 2009 and also under what were for her benign conditions of asymmetry in coalition with the FDP as junior partner between 2009 and 2013 (Clemens, 2011; Willarty, 2008; Thompson and Lennartz, 2007).

Moving on to the increased use of plebiscitary mechanisms of communication and mobilization, and a related reliance on personal charisma and mandates, the chapter has demonstrated at some length that the degree of discretion available to German political parties in this regard is narrow. Nevertheless, all of the parties with

the exception of the CSU have enacted statutory reforms to allow members to initiate membership ballots on policy issues and, to a lesser extent, organizational questions and the SPD has even used membership ballots at the land level to elect their candidates for Minister-President (in the states of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony in 2011). In addition, the SPD and FDP have provisions for plebiscites to be initiated from above on organizational matters. As Detterbeck observes, it is unclear whether these measures have been designed to shore up the elites by disempowering mid-level party activists or are genuinely intended to ‘let the members back in’ (2013, pp. 271-2). What we do not see accompanying these changes, however, is an increase in charismatic and personalized appeals. German politics remains very much an elite driven exercise with deals done behind closed doors rather than through appeals to the grassroots, and there remains a strong and historically grounded suspicion of populism and appeals to personal mandates that short-circuit the established rational-legal machinery of party governance.

So where does this leave the overall balance of power across the two dimensions of the party selectorates in Germany? Figure xxx sets out what we know about the party selectorate in German political parties today.

Figure xxx about here

Figure xxx demonstrates that German political parties are clustered towards the center of both dimensions of the selectorate. Moreover, with two exceptions along the dimension of exclusiveness, this is by-and-large where the parties have been located throughout the history of the Federal Republic. *De jure* power remains with

delegates to party assemblies, although this is often an *ex post* rubber-stamp exercise, as *de facto* power is wielded by the party elites, particularly when it comes to the selection of leading candidates (Lübker, 2002). The two exceptions noted above are those in which the Greens and the SPD have redistributed power towards the ordinary party members in recent years. For readers who are acculturated into unitary state politics this may not seem that important but, in the context of federal states such as Germany – and given that the SPD’s leading candidates at the national level normally emerge from state-level politics – this is quite significant. Of more obvious importance, however, was the Greens decision to allow the membership in 2012 to elect their joint national ticket for the 2013 Federal election. This truly was a break from the norm of German politics and very much in keeping with – and almost a throwback to – the party’s genesis as a movement-based anti-party party.

On the second dimension of centralization, the CDU and CSU are more centralized than the other political parties; albeit for different reasons. In many ways the CDU has travelled the furthest along this dimension from its original starting point. There is no doubt that the CDU has a strong tradition of state-level politics but, unlike the SPD, many of its leaders emerged out of federal-level politics in the Bundestag and the combined CDU/CSU party parliamentary group wields a great deal of influence over state-level politics. The same is at least as true of the CSU but here, given the regional nature of the party’s organization, it is hard to locate the party on the Hazan–Rahat scale. The CSU has not reformed its modes of internal democracy and is not known for its vibrant culture of internal debate. In short the CSU is at least as centralized as the CDU, but this cannot be adequately placed on a national-local scale. For all of the mainstream parties in Germany, the framework established by the ParteienG and the BGW lends a counter-weight to the pull of

national politics, although the cartelization of the German party system has had an impact and the 'national' party organizations, buttressed by the generous resources available to registered parliamentary groups. Thus, they have all travelled to some extent along this dimension towards greater centralization.

X.6. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that many of the features of Chancellor Democracy may under some circumstances resemble those we might expect from presidentialization, but they are contingent rather than the permanent features found in true presidentialized regimes. Thus, Germany is a relative outlier within the distribution of parliamentary systems rather than a true exception.

It is less clear to what extent our intervening variable – as per the book's framework - the genetic features of German political parties, plays a role in determining the extent of presidentialization. One reason for this is that we do not see a great deal of variance across the categories used. The mainstream parties in Germany possess distinct genetic features and have also all undergone processes of organizational development and change (ranging from often quite gradual processes of professionalization to more sudden institutional junctures, including party mergers, re-launches and renamings) that have blurred these features. There are more commonalities than differences. All of the parties (even the Left Party) have internal versus external origins and diffusional rather than penetrational organizational forms. With the exception of the CDU/CSU, there is no tradition of charismatic leadership and, with the exception of the CDU/CSU and the Left Party, each has undergone some degree of change in the composition of internal coalitions. Thus, the SPD saw

one total change in the dominant coalition during the 1950s and a challenge and partial change of coalition through the contestation of the New Politics in the 1970s and 1980s. The FDP saw two changes in coalition, one during the 1960s and one in the late 1970s and early 1980s. And the Greens saw two changes to the dominant coalition; first, when the New Left marginalized the value conservatives and, second, when the centrist Aufbruch group ended the period of ideological struggle between the Realos and the Fundis. All of the mainstream parties are dominated by reasonably coherent coalitions: the CDU/CSU by a moderate right-of-center and broadly pro-European (less so in the CSU) coalition, the SPD by a coalition supporting a moderate left-of-center program with some post-materialist elements, the FDP by its economic liberal tendency, the Left Party by its democratic socialist and (broadly-speaking) eastern mainstream, and the Greens by a pragmatic left-libertarian and (very light green) ecologist coalition.

Moreover, although there have been small shifts in the distribution of power across the two dimensions of the party selectorate, the overall distribution remains reasonably constant across time and across parties. The legal framework of German politics does not bestow a great deal of organizational discretion on German parties and German politics remains dominated by a political class that distrusts charismatic and/or populist means of organization and mobilization and prefers a statecraft defined by elite compromise and embedded within the comfort blanket of Weberian rational-legal authority. Germany remains a 'parliamentary governmental system with chancellor hegemony' (Korte, 2000, 5). Whether this amounts to what is understood in the comparative politics literature as presidentialization remains a matter for debate.

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Notes

ⁱ In addition, the Federal Constitutional Court has acted to curb the activities of or even outlaw extremist parties of the right and left. Court rulings outlawed the Neo-Nazi Socialist Reich Party (SRP) in October 1952 and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in August 1956.

ⁱⁱ The PartienG establishes the constitutional status of parties, their definition in legal terms, and sets out laws on internal organisation (including statutes and programmes, members and delegates assemblies, members' rights, arbitration, and managing regional organisations), nomination of candidates for election, as well as public financing, presentation of accounts.