PROGRESSIVE STUDIES program

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Demographic Change and Progressive Political Strategy in Germany

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The "Demographic Change and Progressive Political Strategy" series of papers is a joint project organized under the auspices of the Global Progress and Progressive Studies programs and the Center for American Progress. The research project was launched following the inaugural Global Progress conference held in October 2009 in Madrid, Spain.

The preparatory paper for that conference, "The European Paradox," sought to analyze why the fortunes of European progressive parties had declined following the previous autumn's sudden financial collapse and the global economic recession that ensued. The starting premise was that progressives should, in principle, have had two strengths going for them:

- Modernizing trends were shifting the demographic terrain in their political favor.
- The intellectual and policy bankruptcy of conservatism, which had now proven itself devoid of creative ideas of how to shape the global economic system for the common good.

Despite these latent advantages, we surmised that progressives in Europe were struggling for three primary reasons. First, it was increasingly hard to differentiate themselves from conservative opponents who seemed to be wholeheartedly adopting social democratic policies and language in response to the economic crisis. Second, the nominally progressive majority within their electorate was being split between competing progressive movements. Third, their traditional working-class base was increasingly being seduced by a politics of identity rather than economic arguments.

In response, we argued that if progressives could define their long-term economic agenda more clearly—and thus differentiate themselves from conservatives—as well as establish broader and more inclusive electoral coalitions, and organize more effectively among their core constituencies to convey their message, then they should be able to resolve this paradox.

The research papers in this series each evaluate these demographic and ideological trends in greater national detail and present ideas for how progressives might shape a more effective political strategy.

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Matt Browne, John Halpin, and Ruy Teixeira

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Introduction and summary

The disastrous result for Social Democrats in the 2009 German federal election most likely was an intermezzo. But there is no doubt that long-term social change does not favor the party.

- The traditional core group of Social Democratic voters—the workers and industrially employed—were once a majority but today are a minority. The decline of blue-collar and the rise of white-collar workers, the educational revolution, and industrial change have eroded the traditional societal base of social democracy. Party membership is declining and social democracy is performing poorly among the young. Only among migrants—particularly those from Turkey—are vote shares increasing. But the migrant population is still too small to make a significant difference in terms of electoral fortunes.

This report will analyze these developments and evaluate possibilities for new progressive coalitions. It makes the following recommendations for Social Democrats:

- Social Democrats must develop a new socioeconomic paradigm that stands for new, social, and sustainable growth.

- Social Democrats must promote investment in future-oriented factors, such as education and innovation, as well as investments in social cohesion and the foundations of society.

- The safeguarding of social cohesion must remain social democracy's core political identity, brought to bear by a policy of social justice in tandem with economic innovation.

- To deal with immigration, Social Democrats must develop a policy response that is politically responsible, faithful to the humanist values of social democracy, and focuses on both integration and control.

- Social democracy must resist trends toward the erosion of democracy by promoting inclusionary policies.

- Social democracy must open its party structures and extend contact with civil society groups and new social movements.

- Social democracy must have answers to the perceived threats of social, cultural, and political uncertainty. These answers should become the key elements of a new social democratic narrative, connecting social and economic security, societal recognition and cohesion, democratic participation, and people's happiness and self-realization.

Recent election results and current situation in Germany

Election results and specifics of the 2009 federal election

The 2009 federal election was an election of many electoral records. Unfortunately, many of those records were negative ones. Never before had the two big parties—the Social Democrats, or SPD, and the Christian Democrats, or CDU—gained such a small vote share with only 56.8 percent of the votes. Even worse, 2009 marked the smallest vote share of the Social Democrats since 1949: They only gained 23 percent of the votes. Turnout had never been lower since 1949 as well. With only 70.8 percent, this election was the bottom of a slope that started in 1998 when turnout was already below the average with 82.2 percent. Volatility was also the highest since 1957. All three smaller parties had the best results of their existences (see Table 1).

2009 was the result of an ongoing process of increasing party system fragmentation, volatility, and swing voting. For most of the time until 1983, the German party system had been a two-and-a-half-party system, with the liberals (Free Democratic Party) as the only smaller party. This changed in 1983 when the Green Party made it into parliament at the federal level for the first time. With the German unification in 1990, a fifth party gained seats in the Bundestag, the German parliament. The Party of Democratic Socialism, or PDS, was a successor of the regime party of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the Socialist Unity Party, or SED. This new left competitor was basically a regional party, a party of the East Germans who felt deprived.

At the time before unification, there were some expectations that the Social Democrats would profit from unification and possibly be able to push Helmut Kohl, the Christian Democrat chancellor who governed since 1982, out of office. This hope, however, was unfulfilled for two reasons: Kohl profited from his role as unification chancellor and the Social Democrats suffered from the new competitor on their left. Only after another eight years, the Social Democrats, with Gerhard Schröder as chancellor candidate, were able to get into government

in coalition with the Green Party. The heavy welfare state reforms launched by this government probably triggered the creation of a left-wing party by left-wing unionists and disappointed SPD members in West Germany—that is, the part of today's Germany that was formerly the country of West Germany. This party was called Labour and Social Justice—The Electoral Alternative, or WASG.

TABLE 1

Germany's Christian Democrats and Social Democrats gain their smallest total vote share ever in 2009

Election results and turnout, federal elections in Germany, 1949–2009

Election year	Turnout	Christian Democrats	Social Democrats	Liberals[1]	Greens[2]	PDS[3]/ Left	Others[4]
1949	78.5	31.0	29.2	11.9			27.9
1953	86.0	45.2	28.8	9.5			16.5
1957	87.8	50.2	31.8	7.7			10.3
1961	87.7	45.3	36.2	12.8			5.7
1965	86.8	47.6	39.3	9.5			3.6
1969	86.7	46.1	42.7	5.8			5.4
1972	91.1	44.9	45.8	8.4			1.0
1976	90.7	48.6	42.6	7.9			0.9
1980	88.6	44.5	42.9	10.6	1.5		0.5
1983	89.1	48.8	38.2	7.0	5.6		0.5
1987	84.4	44.3	37.0	9.1	8.3		1.4
1990	77.8	43.8	33.5	11.0	5.0	2.4	4.2
1994	79.0	41.5	36.4	6.9	7.3	4.4	3.5
1998	82.2	35.1	40.9	6.2	6.7	5.1	5.9
2002	79.1	38.5	38.5	7.4	8.6	4.0	3.0
2005	77.7	35.2	34.2	9.8	8.1	8.7	4.0
2009	70.8	33.8	23.0	14.6	10.7	11.9	6.0
Mean	83.8	42.6	36.5	9.2	6.9	6.1	5.9

Source: Election statistics by the Federal Returning Officer.

(1) 1949 and 1953: FDP and DVP.

(2) 1990 and 1994: Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.

(3) 1990: PDS/Linke Liste; 2005 Die Linke/PDS.

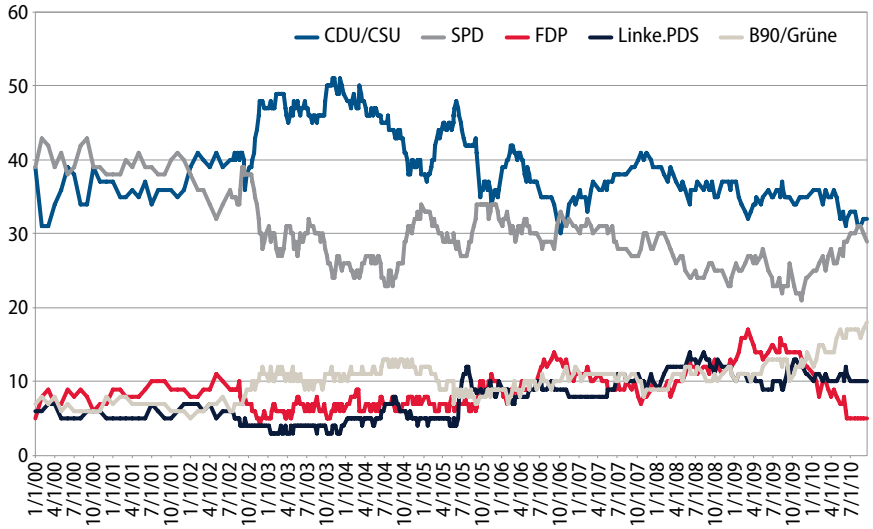
(4) 1949: in % of eligible voters: KPD 5.7; BP 4.2; DP 4.0; ZP 3.1; WAV 2.9; others 5.1.
1953: in % of eligible voters: GB/BHE 5.9; DP 3.3; Zentrum 0.8.
1957: in % of eligible voters: DP 3.5.

In spring 2005 the Social Democrats lost the state elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, one of their strongholds and the largest federal state. To the surprise of many—not to say most—political observers, Chancellor Schröder immediately announced early federal elections, which were held in September 2005, one year prior to the regular vote cycle. To some degree, the 2005 elections were a success for the Social Democrats because, contrary to expectations and pollsters' results, the race was very close in the end (see Figure 1). It was also, however, a success for the left competitor from the East. WASG and PDS joined forces in the federal election of 2005. This was the first step in the success story of the party since the PDS had been regionally limited to East Germany (that is, the part of today's Germany that was formerly the country of East Germany). Together, WASG and PDS received 8.7 percent of the votes.

FIGURE 1

Who voters tell pollsters they're voting for

Vote intention, 2000–2010, data from Deutschlandtrend, infratest dimap



Because of a deadlock—Christian Democrats and liberals together had no majority, SPD and the Green Party together had no majority, a three-party coalition was not feasible because the liberals did not want to join it, and no party wanted a coalition with the left—a grand-coalition government was formed in 2005 with Angela Merkel as chancellor, the first female chancellor in the history of the Federal Republic, and Frank-Walter Steinmeier as foreign minister and vice chancellor. The 2009 election, however, showed that former voters for the Social Democrats were not happy with the role the party played in the grand coalition. Many of them stayed home, which partly explains the low turnout and the disastrous election result for the Social Democrats.

Since then the Social Democrats have recovered at least with regard to survey results. Pollsters see the party even at the moment with Christian Democrats. The liberals have lost about two-thirds of their support. In the polls, the government is far from a majority, whereas Social Democrats and the Greens are close to it (see Figure 1). The Green Party is near 20 percent; the Social Democrats around 30 percent. Both have gained almost 10 percentage points in the polls since the beginning of 2010.

The state of the party

The disastrous election result for the Social Democrats in 2009 was most likely only an intermezzo. It is an effect of their role in government, which was not very rewarding. Although this result can be regarded as the exception and not the rule for the future, the Social Democratic party suffers from structural changes probably more than any other party in Germany. Party membership is on a steep decline in Germany since 1990 with the exception of the Green Party. Otherwise, it hits more or less all parties, although the smaller parties are less affected than the two big ones—the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats.

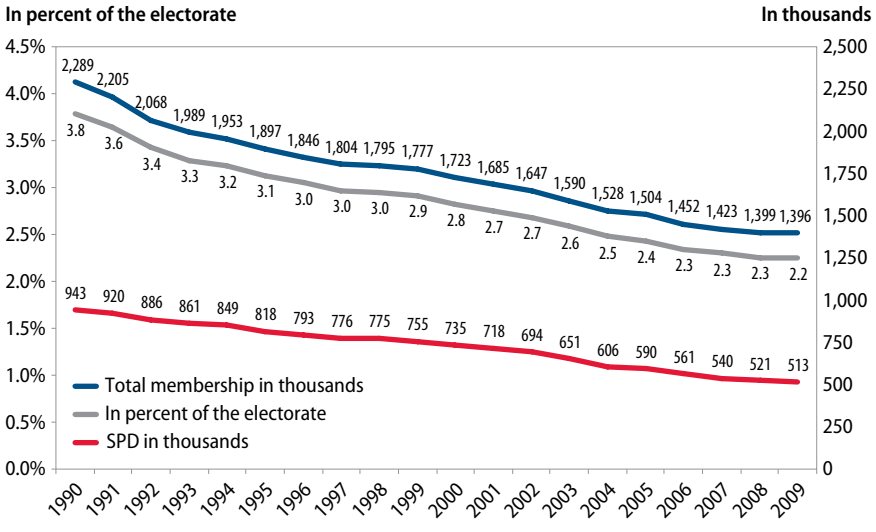
But in contrast to their big competitor, the Social Democrats are more dependent on members for several reasons. The party is not only a campaign machine but also provides a political home for quite a number of people, and membership fees are an important source of income, more than for the Christian Democrats who receive considerably more donations.

Party membership is declining in general. It has gone down from almost 2.3 million to 1.4 million, and for the Social Democrats from 940,000 to 500,000 (see Figure 2). Some see this as an indication of a deep and structural dissatisfaction with the possibilities parties offer for political participation and a say in politics. But this

FIGURE 2

German political party membership is on the decline

Party membership in Germany since 1990



Source: Niedermayer 2009, extended by party's reported membership, own calculations.

development is also part of structural changes in society that are leading to the erosion of traditional bases of party support.

In addition, leadership is an issue in the Social Democratic party. Just the sheer number of party leaders the Social Democrats have had over the last decade or two allows some doubts as to whether the party is in good shape to keep members. Over the last 10 years, the party had seven leaders, and 12 over the last two decades. Relatively short times in office cannot leave an imprint and internal power struggles kept the party from her original duties and challenges.

But even with a good and stable leadership, the Social Democrats might not have been able to stop erosion in the face of the tremendous social change going on in German society and Europe as a whole.

Shifting coalitions

Race and immigration

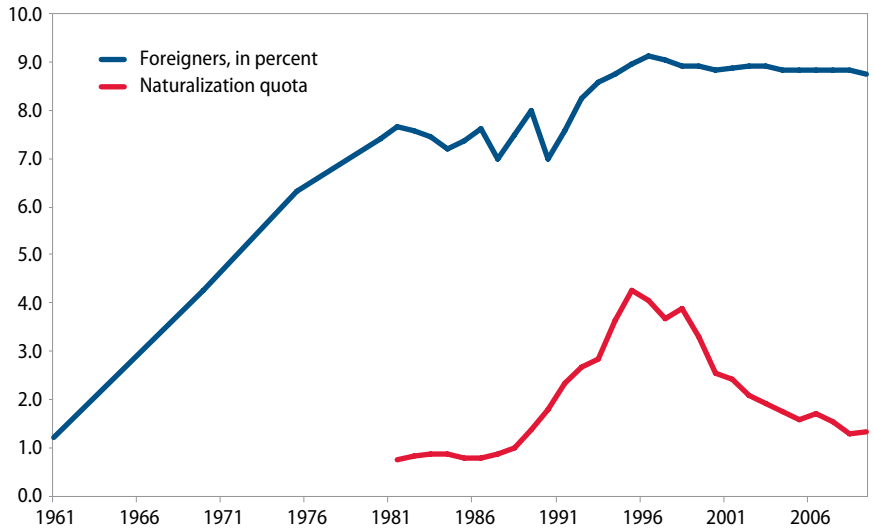
Germany is not a migration country even though it has quite a large migrant population. Immigration law is still basically an instrument to hinder rather than to promote immigration. But with the 2004 immigration law, the times of more or less ad hoc rules and regulations are gone.

The migrant population in Germany increased very strongly from the 1960s until the end of the 1970s. This was a result of work migration that Germany had explicitly invited during the times of the so-called "Wirtschaftswunder" (the German economic boom after World War II). From the early 1980s, the share of work migrants was rather stable until the early 1990s. Then a new increase could be observed until the mid-1990s. After that, the figures stabilized again. Roughly 9 percent of the resident population does not originally come from Germany. The naturalization quota is rather low except for a peak in the mid-1990s (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Germany's migrant population has remained stable since the mid-1990s

Foreigners and naturalization quota in Germany, 1961–present



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2010a, own calculations.

The areas and countries of origin of migrants to Germany are primarily European. About 14 percent had migrated from EU countries in 2009 and another 40 percent from other European

countries. About 28 percent came from Asian regions. Regarding countries of origin, however, Turkey stands out. Turkish immigrants amount to 26 of the 40 percentage points that came from European countries outside of the European Union (see Figure 4). Between 2002 and 2009 almost 1 million people have been naturalized, among them more than 300,000 with Turkish origin (see Figure 5).

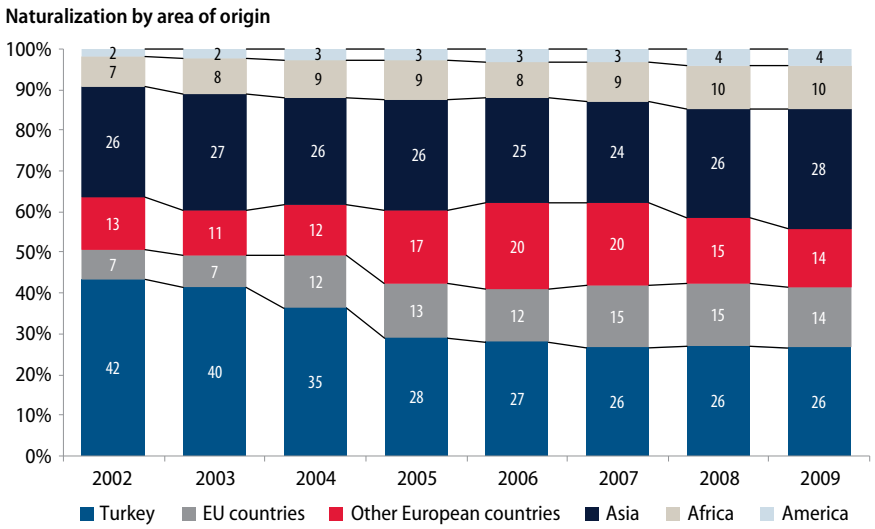
Since unification, about 3.6 million people have been naturalized, and since 1981, 4 million altogether. This shows that the speed has accelerated. Between 1980 and 1990, 38,000 were naturalized annually on average, but since 1990, the average number is about 173,000.

Do these trends matter for politics and elections? The information about voting behavior of migrants is still rather limited. This certainly is related to the limited number of naturalizations as compared to the number of foreign people living in Germany. It implies limited numbers of respondents in surveys, and most surveys do not even bother to ask for a migrant background.

FIGURE 4

Where migrants to Germany come from

Naturalization and area of origin, 2002–2009

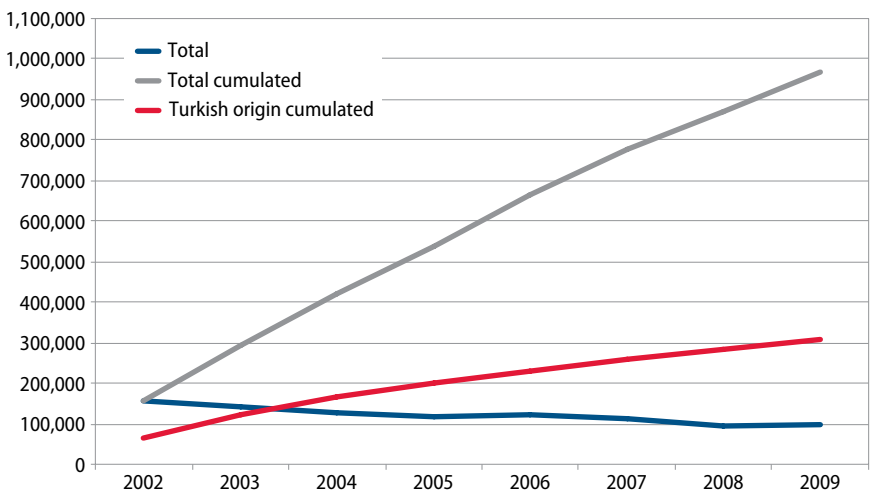


Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2010b, 2005 own calculations.

FIGURE 5

Many of Germany's migrants come from Turkey

Numbers of naturalizations, 2002–2008



Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2009b, own calculations.

In the 2009 elections, as in prior ones, one pattern is reappearing: Migrants from the former Soviet Union, of which many have German ancestry, vote very much in favor of Christian Democrats. In contrast, people from migrant working countries, particularly people from Turkey, vote very much in favor of Social Democrats (see Table 2).

But despite these patterns, immigration levels are too small to expect significant effects on election outcomes—at least at the moment. If immigration continues and rates increase again to figures such as those in the mid-1990s, immigrant votes may become pivotal. At the moment, the share seems too small and voting differences by immigrant group too low to expect important effects.

TABLE 2

How Germany's migrants vote

Migrant background and vote choice in the 2009 federal elections

	N	Christian Democrats	Liberals	Social Democrats	Greens	Left	Others
		%	%	%	%	%	%
No migrant background	2766	34	14	24	12	13	4
Migrant background	264	30	12	31	13	14	1
From migrant worker country	85	13	12	41	15	18	1
From former Soviet Union	60	42	10	27	7	15	0
From Turkey	48	13	2	52	15	17	2

Source: Wahlstudie 2009. German Longitudinal Election Study, pre-election and postelection survey pooled, own calculations.

Class and education

The old stronghold of social democracy, the traditional working class, is withering away. The enormous and continuous change in the structure of the economy has altered the structure of employment, the character of work, the context of work, the size of workplaces and firms, and many other things. Certainly, the transformation from an economy that was predominantly industrial to an economy with a predominant service sector has changed the working environment from blue collar to white collar for many people.

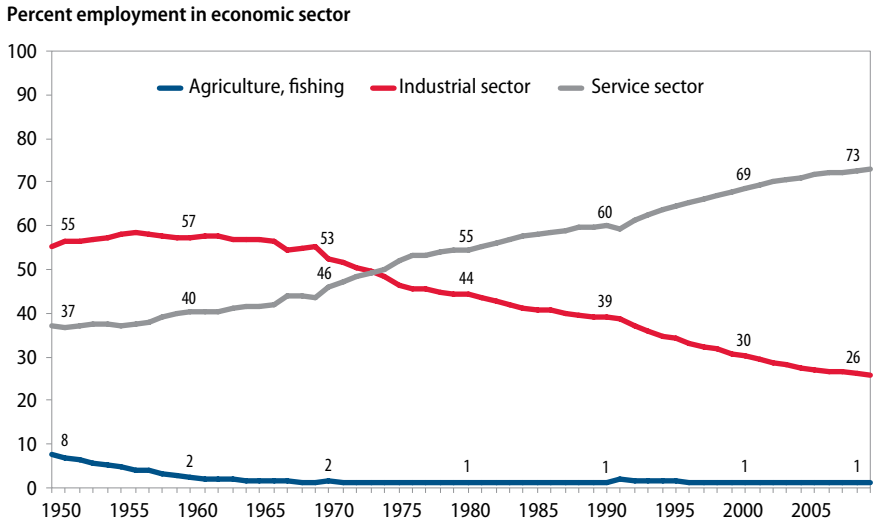
Moreover, within the industrial sector, production shifts from manufacturing-type work or assembly lines to autonomous work groups and automated production lines are steps toward individualization. During the last 60 years, the German economy has been consistently and continuously restructured. The first half of the 1970s marks the turning point at which equal shares of Germany's workforce were employed in the industrial and service sectors (see Figure 6).

At the same time, the proportion and the number of blue-collar workers in the labor force has declined tremendously. The break-even point between blue-collar workers and white-collar workers came later than in the case of industrial sectors, but it came. In the late 1950s, blue-collar workers were the absolute majority in the workforce. Shortly thereafter, they only made the plurality, and in 1985 and 1986, white-collar workers broke even. In 2009, figures were almost identical to 1957 but in reverse. Now, white-collar workers are the absolute majority of the workforce. Blue-collar workers, meanwhile, amount to less than 30 percent (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 6

Germany's economy has been dramatically restructured over the last 60 years

Employment in economic sectors, 1950–2009

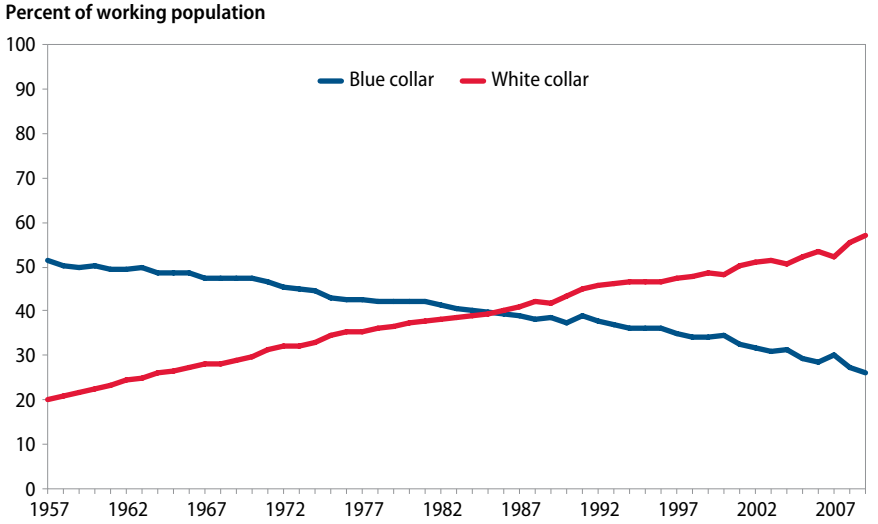


Source: DESTATIS 2010b.

FIGURE 7

White-collar workers are increasing while blue-collar workers are decreasing

Blue-collar and white-collar employees in percent of the working population, 1970–2009



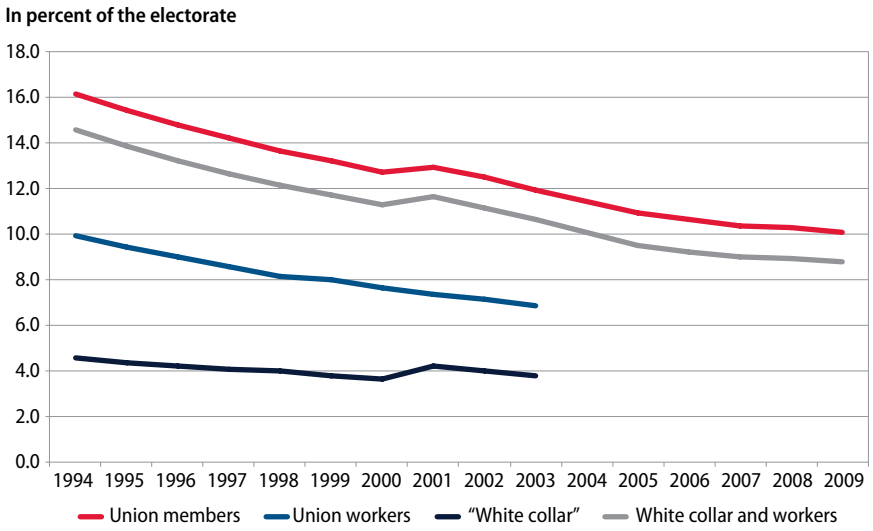
Source: DESTATIS 2010c.

The decline of class not just as a category but a collective experience has also found its expression in the decline of labor union memberships. Since 1994, the figures for union members as a proportion of the electorate have declined from 16 percent to 10 percent (see Figure 8). This implies that the two bases of social democracy that have historically reinforced one another—the traditional working class and the unions—are losing ground and are likely to decline further due to economic change. The numbers of union members and blue-collar workers are still significant and their political effects considerable—but as these groups melt away, this will have a continuing negative effect on social democratic voting.

FIGURE 8

Union members make up less and less of the electorate

Union members as a proportion of the electorate, 1994–2009



Source: DGB 2010, own calculations.

On average, in West Germany, Social Democrats gained 11 percentage points more from blue-collar workers than from those who were not blue-collar workers, 16 percentage points more from labor union members than from those who weren't, and 21 percent more from unionized workers than from those who weren't (see Table 4). These are not negligible figures even if one considers decreasing group sizes. At the moment, group sizes are still large enough to make these disproportionate effects pivotal. But again the extent to which these groups can prop up the social democratic vote is declining over time.

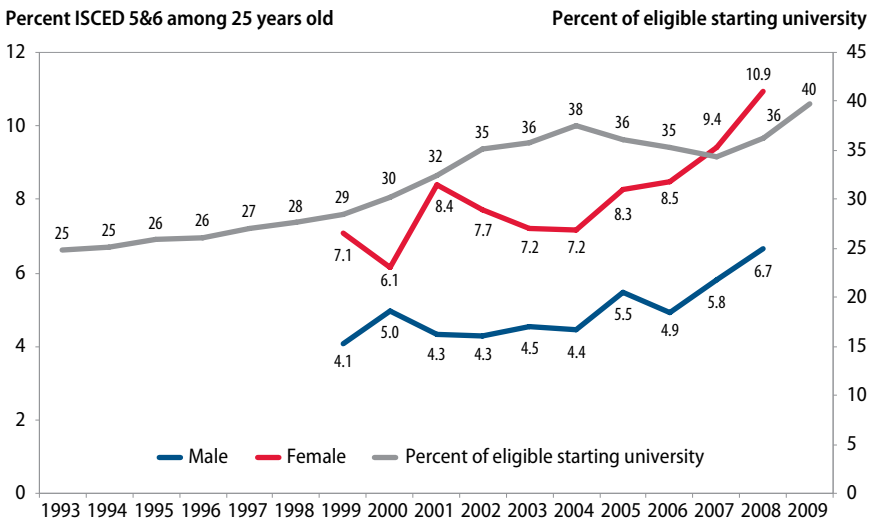
With the restructuring of the workforce and the so-called "educational revolution" in the late 1960s and 1970s, the class structure has not only changed in occupational terms but with regard to education and qualification. The German economy is highly export oriented and competitive because of its diversified quality production, which is regarded as its strength. Permanent increases in productivity need a permanently better educated and qualified workforce and restructuring in favor of production-related services demands a higher-qualified workforce in terms of engineering, planning, and construction.

The trend toward an ever better educated and qualified population started in the 1970s with making more people eligible to enter university than ever before. It was part of the social democratic reforms of the Brandt government but also an answer to increasing demand from the economy.

FIGURE 9

The trend toward a better educated and qualified population

Highly qualified workers among Germany's 25-year-olds and the proportion of entry into university



Source: Statistische Ämter des Bundes und Länder 2010, own calculations.

The growing share of highly qualified workers triggered a discussion about a new class, the professionals, as a significant voter base in the late 1970s. In Germany, professionals in terms of the International Standard Classification of Education, or ISCED-97, are those who have at least a degree from a specialized university (Fachhochschule) or other university.

The highly qualified (college educated) cover ISCED codes 5 and 6. The proportion of these groups among 25-year-olds is continuously rising. Over the last decade, the share among 25-year-olds increased by almost 4 percentage points among males and 2.5 percentage points among females. In 2008, about 9 percent of the 25-year-olds belonged to this group of the highly qualified (see Figure 9). At the same time, the proportion of those eligible for university actually entering it increased by 20 percentage points from 20 to 40, which will lead to a further and progressive increase of the proportion of ISCED 5 and 6 groups.

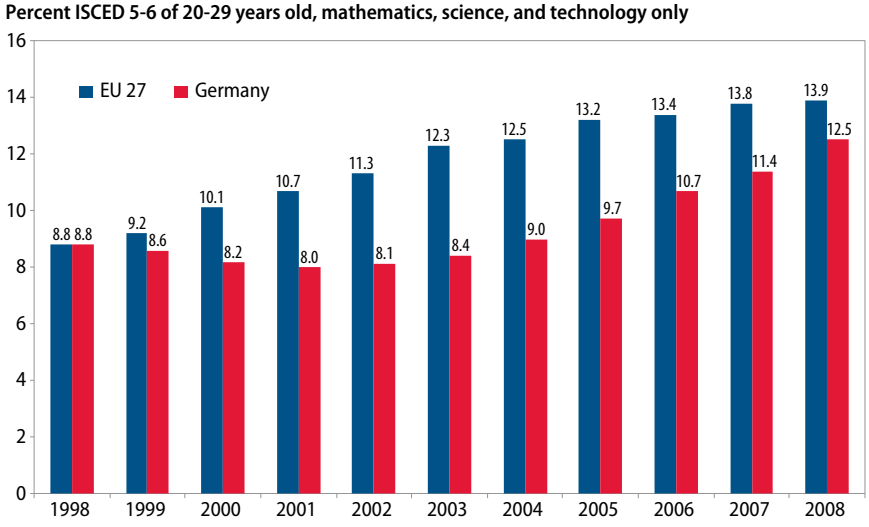
Extending the perspective to a larger age group—people ages 20 to 29 years—shows that the percentage in ISCED 5 and 6 is significantly larger. Figures are only available for mathematics, science, and technology. The share among the 20- to 29-year-olds was rather constant and relatively low compared to the EU average until 2003, but it has increased rapidly since then (5 percentage points). Today, Germany is close to the EU average with about 13 percent of the age group belonging to ISCED 5 and 6 groups in mathematics, science, and technology (see Figure 10).

The group of highly qualified will certainly grow considerably over the next decades. Because they command the resources necessary for political participation to a higher degree than any other group in the population, they will be exceptionally able to make themselves heard. A key question is to what extent they will constitute a new base for social democratic party support.

FIGURE 10

Germany nearly matches the EU average on share of highly qualified workers

Highly qualified workers among 20- to 29-year-olds, in mathematics, science, and technology only, 1998–2008



Source: DESTATIS 2010e, own calculations.

Looking at the voting behavior of those groups who have an education at the level of ISCED 5 and 6, or are working as professionals—in responsible and leading positions in the market economy or in the public sector—shows that the Social Democrats receive disproportionately low support in this part of the population (see Table 3, rows "Professionals" and "ISCED 5+"). This is true for the German electorate as a whole but the effect is stronger in the West than in the East (see Tables 4 and 5, same rows). Over elections from 1990 to 2009, the Social Democrats gained a little more than 3 percentage points less among professionals than among nonprofessionals and more than 6 percentage points less among those with qualifications of ISCED 5 or higher than among those with less education.[1] These two groups, professionals and ISCED 5+ qualified, will become a larger group of the workforce and the group of blue-collar workers will continue to decline in size. This poses a major challenge for social democracy in Germany.

Generation

Karl Mannheim, a Hungarian-German sociologist, developed a theory of political generations in the 1920s stating that generation can affect political orientations and behavior over a whole lifetime. Significant experiences in the period of adolescence leave their imprint for a very long time. The basic assumption of

generation theory is that if a generation exists, attitudes, values, and orientations acquired will be persistent over the life cycle.

But not every age cohort is a generation. To make an imprint, the period in which the generation may be formed must be significant in terms of collective and public experiences. Whether a particular age cohort has the character of a political generation can be discussed theoretically but only shown empirically by cohort or panel analyses on the stability of attitudes and behavior.

For Germany, as for other European countries, the so-called postwar generation is certainly a generation with a significant and formative collective experience. The same is true for the so-called 1968 generation ("Achtundsechziger") who was the carrier of a cultural revolution in Germany and Europe. Ronald

TABLE 3

Variation in Social Democratic support by social group in Germany as a whole

Disproportionate vote share of the Social Democrats among social groups, 1994–2009, whole Germany (postelection studies, recall-based)

Social Democrats	1990*	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009	Mean
Blue Collar Workers	1.5	2.9	20.1	7.5	2.5	5.4	6.7
Union Members	16.5	10.4	19.3	14.0	25.8	-3.4	13.8
Unionized Workers	15.7	12.7	36.5	16.2	19.2	0.9	16.9
Professionals	-6.3	0.9	-3.8	-2.6	-2.8	-5.4	-3.3
ISCED 5+	-1.2	-9.7	-10.6	-10.4	1.2	-7.4	-6.3
Generations younger vs. pre-1968							
1968 vs. earliest	2.6	3.8	3.3	-1.2	-1.9	-3.9	0.4
"in between" vs. earliest	-5.8	-4.4	-10.1	-8.8	0.2	-9.6	-6.4
millenium vs. earliest			-9.7	8.7	-0.1	-7.6	-2.2
Family							
married vs. not	10.9	1.9	7.7	-2.3	-0.4	-1.4	2.7
partner vs. not	10.5	1.6	7.3	-11.2	0.2	-7.5	0.2
Female	7.7	1.1	-5.0	1.8	1.6	0.0	1.2
Secularized against others							
Catholic, no church attendance	6.9	4.8	-1.3	6.8	4.1	0.5	3.6
Protestant, no church attendance	11.8	2.6	12.9	8.9	4.0	-2.6	6.3
No denomination, no church attendance	-3.0	-1.5	3.6	0.1	-0.4	-1.5	-0.5
West vs. East		9.0	8.3	0.2	4.5	5.3	5.4

* West Germany only

Sources: German Election Studies: Wahlstudie 1990 to Wahlstudie 2009, own calculations.

Inglehart argues that this is the affluent generation of the postwar economic boom who acquired postmaterial value orientations stressing quality of life issues over purely economic concerns.

For quite a while, the so-called 1968 generation of the student revolt disproportionately supported the Social Democrats. The succeeding ("in between") age cohort probably is not a generation. It is also an open question whether its successor, the Millennial cohort, is a generation. But a look into these three "generations" or age cohorts shows that Social Democrats do best in the 1968 cohort, though this has been declining since 2002. Social Democrats do poorly among the Millennial generation and they do even worse in the age cohort between the 1968 and Millennial cohorts (see Table 3). The same is true in the West and East of Germany (see Tables 4 and 5).

TABLE 4

Variation in Social Democratic support by social group in West Germany

Disproportionate vote share of Social Democrats among social groups, 1990–2009, West Germany (postelection studies, recall-based)

Social Democrats, West Germany	1990	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009	Mean
Blue Collar Workers	1.5	9.3	21.3	10.4	5.5	7.6	10.8
Union Members	16.5	16.8	20.8	16.6	30.4	-5.4	15.8
Unionized Workers	15.7	24.9	38.3	17.8	24.4	-1.3	20.8
Professionals	-6.3	-1.3	-5.3	-3.8	-3.3	-6.6	-4.0
ISCED 5+	-1.2	-18.3	-10.2	-14.3	1.6	-7.8	-9.8
Generations younger vs. pre-1968							
1968 vs. earliest	2.6	3.5	4.8	0.4	-1.3	-5.0	0.5
"in between" vs. earliest	-5.8	-3.6	-10.4	-8.2	0.4	-9.4	-6.3
millenium vs. earliest			-6.6	9.6	-0.2	-7.2	-1.1
Family							
married vs. not	10.9	2.7	8.3	-1.6	-0.2	-1.0	1.7
partner vs. not	10.5	3.6	7.8	-12.5	-0.8	-9.3	-2.2
Female	7.7	1.7	-6.9	1.1	0.9	0.0	-0.7
Secularized against others							
Catholic, no church attendance	6.9	1.4	-3.8	6.7	4.2	-1.1	1.5
Protestant, no church attendance	11.8	2.4	16.8	6.5	2.3	-4.9	4.6
No denomination, no church attendance	-3.0	-5.2	9.1	-2.4	-1.4	0.3	0.1
West vs. East							

Sources: German Election Studies: Wahlstudie 1990 to Wahlstudie 2009, own calculations.

TABLE 5

Variation in Social Democratic support by social group in East Germany

Disproportionate vote share of Social Democrats among social groups, 1990–2009, East Germany (postelection studies, recall-based)

Social Democrats, West Germany	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009	Mean
Blue Collar Workers	0.1	16.4	-1.8	-7.3	0.9	1.7
Union Members	2.4	12.9	4.1	3.8	6.0	5.8
Unionized Workers	-3.6	27.8	7.4	-4.0	8.9	7.3
Professionals	4.1	2.9	2.0	-0.8	-0.4	1.6
ISCED 5+	-2.6	-9.1	2.7	0.9	-4.6	-2.5
Generations younger vs. pre-1968						
1968 vs. earliest	3.0	-2.9	-7.3	-4.3	-0.5	-2.4
"in between" vs. earliest	-9.0	-8.8	-11.4	-0.7	-13.0	-8.6
millenium vs. earliest		-17.3	5.3	0.5	-10.6	-5.5
Family						
married vs. not	2.4	6.3	-5.1	-0.8	-3.1	0.0
partner vs. not	0.8	7.5	-7.8	4.2	-0.4	0.9
Female	0.9	3.2	4.5	4.1	0.9	2.7
Secularized against others						
Catholic, no church attendance	-1.0	32.4	2.9	-8.0	50.7	15.4
Protestant, no church attendance	4.4	6.9	17.9	13.6	30.4	14.6
No denomination, no church attendance	9,9	6.5	6.0	6.9	6.3	7.1
West vs. East						

Sources: German Election Studies: Wahlstudie 1990 to Wahlstudie 2009, own calculations.

In general, Social Democrats in Germany do disproportionately poorly among the younger population and better among the older. If this is a generational phenomenon, those people that are young today would likely be lost to Social Democrats in the future, too. But if this was not a generation but a lifecycle effect, there would be some chance that this aging cohort would vote for Social Democrats later on. If so, the overall aging of the population could favor the Social Democrats (see Table 6). On the other hand, if Social Democrats rely heavily on an aging population, they could undercut their own future if they do not succeed in recruiting younger cohorts or generations.

TABLE 6

Germany's overall population will age significantly

Estimated demographic change in Germany, 2008, 2020, and 2060

Age groups	2008	2020	2060
	in millions	in millions	in millions
0 to < 20	15.6	13.7	10.6
20 to <30	9.9	8.6	6.4
30 to <50	24.3	20.0	15.5
50 to <65	15.5	19.3	12.6
65 to <80	12.7	12.7	13.3
80+	4.1	6.0	9.1
Total	**82.1**	**80.1**	**67.4**
	in %	in %	in %
0 to < 20	19.0	17.0	15.7
20 to <30	12.1	10.7	9.5
30 to <50	29.6	24.9	22.9
50 to <65	18.9	24.0	18.6
65 to <80	15.5	15.8	19.7
80+	5.0	7.5	13.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2009a, own calculations. 2020 and 2060 calculated as mean from minimal and maximal estimates.

Marital status, gender, and secularization

The profile of party support with regard to family-related crucial demographic characteristics is mixed. The Social Democrats in Germany have done quite a lot for families over the last decade, in particular for opportunities for a better work-life balance and for a reconciliation of work and family life. However, family policy has traditionally been an area of strength for the center-right parties.

With their approach towards gender equality, however, the Social Democrats have made it an element of progressive politics. But this has not resulted in significantly better support and voting behavior in favor of the Social Democrats. On average, they fare slightly better among those married and those living with a partner, and among women. But the disproportionate support is rather low, and it is not stable. Further, it is weaker or not existent in West Germany. In terms of voter support, these demographic characteristics do not seem to be particularly significant.

The situation is somewhat different with regard to secularized people. Religion is declining in Germany but the proportion of those with a Catholic or Protestant denomination is still high. Each of the major churches has about 25 million members. Many of those are not practicing their religion, however, and they do not regard themselves as religious. Secularization, therefore, has probably progressed further than the figures about denomination suggest.

In order to capture this phenomenon, we separated out three groups to indicate different degrees of secularization: highest degree, those who are not members of a church and do not participate in religious services; medium, those with a Protestant affiliation not taking part in religious services; and low, those with a Catholic affiliation not taking part in religious services.

Social Democrats fare best in the medium secularization group and worst among the high secularization group (see Table 3). But there are strong East-West differences. In East Germany, the disproportionate support for Social Democrats among seculars is considerably higher than in the West (see Tables 4 and 5).

Geography

The German party system has become strongly regionalized with unification. There is no doubt among those who research the development of the German party system that Germany has two separate systems: one in East Germany and one in West Germany.

This is a result of the strong support of the former PDS, now the Left Party, in East Germany. Until the 2005 elections, voting for the PDS/Left in West Germany was insignificant. The PDS only made it into parliament either by a regional divide of the 5 percent threshold as in 1990—which was then discontinued—or by gaining more than three district seats as in 1994. In 2002, it failed to overcome either the nationwide 5 percent threshold or gain three district seats, resulting in representation by just two MPs. Its vote share in the East German region, however, has been consistently robust: 20 percent in 1994, almost 22 percent in 1998, and 25 percent in 2005.

The joining of PDS and WASG, forming the Left Party in 2004, helped overcome the cumbersome situation for the party because the increase in vote share in the West helped them over the 5 percent national hurdle even though they did not receive 5 percent in the West.

A second special region in Germany is Bavaria. Here, not the Christian Democratic Party but her sister party, the Christian Social Union, always produces a dominant election result. But the party's hegemonic role in Bavaria is declining. In some of the bigger Bavarian cities, Social Democrats now receive more support than the Christian Social Union.

It is hard to say how persistent the East-West split in the German party system will be. It is also not really clear what effects a change would have on the Social Democratic party. The regional character of the Left Party could dissolve for two reasons: a) the party disappears, which is unlikely in the East; b) the split disappears because the Left Party becomes successful in the West. The latter would pose a real risk for the Social Democrats, who could lose even more ground.

The new progressive coalition

Is there a new progressive coalition forming in Germany? Would it be possible to create one? There are two ways to deal with this question. One is related to changing social coalitions; the other to changing party coalitions. The difference between social and party coalitions is that the former concerns the relationship of the party to social groups within society while the latter concerns the relationship between the party and other organizations. These two aspects, introduced by the American political scientist Arthur Stinchcombe, are both important and can be interrelated.

With regard to social coalitions, no particular group except for the Social Democrats' traditional core groups of blue-collar workers and union members/workers stands out. There does not appear to be a possible advantage among the highly educated or professionals—rather to the contrary—nor is there a tendency toward disproportionate support among younger generations, families, or women. Even with regard to the secularized, disproportionate support is not so high that one could expect significant new support from this area. Other than among the traditional core groups, then, there is no other group in sight for which it seems likely Social Democrats can build up similarly strong ties and disproportionate support.

When looking at a wider coalition of the center-left parties, however, the situation changes. The Green Party, for example, has considerable disproportionate support among the highly educated, professionals, and the younger generations (see Table 7).

On the other hand, the Green Party is rather weak among blue-collar workers and union members. In terms of social coalitions, then, the Social Democrats and the Green Party are to some extent complementary to each other. The same is true for Social Democrats and the Left Party regarding the most secularized voters who amount to 30 percent of the electorate (see Table 8). The underlying social support conditions thus appear to be there for pursuing coalitions between these parties.

But the electorate is on the move. The 2009 elections marked the highest volatility since 1953; the lowest turnout ever; the largest decline of one single party, namely

the Social Democrats; and a tremendous success for the smaller parties and the liberal FDP in particular.[2]

Do these dynamics change the assessment derived from long-term trends? With regard to the Green Party and the Left Party, the 2009 federal elections confirm the long-term assessment.

Another possible coalition partner is the FDP with which Social Democrats governed together between 1969 and 1982. Are they a potential coalition partner from the perspective of the composition of their electorate? Voting probabilities within social groups suggest not (see table 9), since there is little complementarity in social bases between the parties, with the minor exception of the self-employed.

TABLE 7

Variation in Green Party support by social group in Germany as a whole

Disproportionate vote share of the Green Party among social groups, 1994–2009, whole Germany (postelection studies, recall-based)

Greens	1990*	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009	Mean
Blue Collar Workers	-0.7	-5.2	-5.2	-10.0	-2.1	-6.3	-4.9
Union Members	1.2	0.8	-1.2	0.0	-2.4	2.2	0.1
Unionized Workers	0.2	-3.7	-6.4	-9.8	-4.0	-9.5	-5.5
Professionals	-4.6	0.6	1.6	4.1	4.3	8.2	2.4
ISCED 5+	3.0	6.8	9.3	10.9	9.6	9.2	8.1
Generations younger vs. pre-1968							
1968 vs. earliest	9.8	5.6	4.7	3.5	3.5	7.3	5.7
"in between" vs. earliest	10.5	10.7	7.8	4.7	5.1	14.5	8.9
millenium vs. earliest			8.9	4.4	5.7	14.8	8.4
Family							
married vs. not	-4.0	-4.5	-5.3	-3.7	-3.2	-1.6	-3.7
partner vs. not	2.5	5.3	0.0	-2.0	2.8	-1.9	1.1
Female	0.6	1.5	-0.3	-0.5	0.3	1.0	0.4
Secularized against others							
Catholic, no church attendance	5.6	8.6	8.3	7.4	4.1	-6.4	4.6
Protestant, no church attendance	-1.6	7.2	1.0	-1.5	1.8	9.8	2.8
No denomination, no church attendance	11.0	-0.2	3.6	-0.2	1.7	0.6	2.7
West vs. East		5.8	2.7	4.7	2.3	4.8	4.1

* West Germany only

Sources: German Election Studies: Wahlstudie 1990 to Wahlstudie 2009, own calculations.

TABLE 8

Variation in Left Party support among social groups in Germany as a whole

Disproportionate vote share of the Party of the Left among social groups, 1994–2009, whole Germany(postelection studies, recall-based)

Postcommunists/Left	1990*	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009	Mean
Blue Collar Workers		-1.0	-0.3	0.3	3.4	7.1	1.9
Union Members		4.7	0.7	1.9	4.4	8.1	4.0
Unionized Workers		5.5	-1.6	-1.8	3.1	19.7	5.0
Professionals		11.8	3.2	-0.1	-1.6	-1.4	2.4
ISCED 5+		11.1	6.5	1.9	-0.8	0.1	3.8
Generations younger vs. pre-1968							
1968 vs. earliest		0.4	1.5	-1.5	5.9	2.9	1.9
"in between" vs. earliest		-0.4	0.8	-2.5	0.6	5.0	0.7
millenium vs. earliest			6.1	-2.1	0.6	3.7	2.1
Family							
married vs. not		0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	-2.9	-0.6
partner vs. not		-2.0	1.1	-1.4	1.5	6.5	1.1
Female		-2.1	-1.3	-0.3	-2.9	-2.8	-1.9
Secularized against others							
Catholic, no church attendance		-1.7	-1.0	-1.8	0.1	7.9	0.7
Protestant, no church attendance		0.0	2.8	2.1	1.2	6.2	2.5
No denomination, no church attendance		14.3	13.1	7.9	13.3	14.5	12.6
West vs. East		-12.2	-14.5	-13.4	-13.1	-13.9	-13.4

Sources: German Election Studies: Wahlstudie 1990 to Wahlstudie 2009, own calculations.

An additional and important aspect of the FDP is that they are on a steep decline. For pollsters, it is not clear whether in the upcoming state elections this year, the liberals will be able to overcome the 5 percent hurdle. If not, they will miss reelection into parliament. And even if liberals could be regarded as a viable coalition partner, their vote share would not suffice for a governmental coalition.

Finally, there is more to potential coalitions than numbers—be they related to composition or size of the electorate. The FDP has changed its outlook and programmatic profile tremendously since the so-called social-liberal coalition of the 1970s. The political profile of the FDP today is not very compatible with the policy goals of Social Democrats—at least not at the federal level.

TABLE 9

Comparing party support within social groups in 2009

Probability of 2009 party vote in social groups, results from logistic regression[1]

	Christian Democrats	Social Democrats	Liberals	Greens	Left Party
Group Variable					
Self-employed	2.1	-3.8	7.1 **	0.0	-2.8
White collar	-1.7	8.3 ***	-0.2	0.1	2.0
Blue collar	-2.3	10.3 ***	-3.3	-3.1	1.9
Labor union member	-2.4	-0.8	0.1	1.6	7.2 ***
Catholic denomination	22.6 ***	0.5	2.9	-2.8	-6.8 ***
Protestant denomination	11.0 ***	4.3 *	0.5	0.3	-5.1 ***
Regular church attendance	16.2 ***	-6.3 *	-2.0	-1.7	-5.2 *
University entrance diploma	-4.7 *	-5.9 **	3.5 *	5.6 ***	-4.9 **
Age groups[2]	10.2 ***	7.1	-1.5	-11.2 ***	-2.6
East Germany	15.6 ***	-5.7 **	-1.9	-3.3 **	7.4 ***
Unemployed	-5.7	-4.6	-2.8	-2.7	7.2 **
Female	3.8	1.2	-4.5 ***	-0.3	-3.8 **
Turkish migrant background	-12.9	31.4	-8.7	0.8	0.6
Nagelkerkes R2	0.11	0.06	0.05	0.11	0.11
Relevant group combinations					
Catholic, regular church attendance	18.0 ***	-6.3	-2.4	-1.3 **	-3.1 ***
Protestant, regular church attendance	17.5 ***	-6.9 **	-2.1	-1.8	-3.9 **
Unionized white collar	-2.4	-1.0 *	0.1	1.6	7.8 **
Unionized blue collar	-2.3	-1.1 **	0.1	1.2 **	8.0 *
Younger 40 and university entrance diploma	-4.1 **	-5.0 **	3.7	9.2 ***	-5.5 *

1 Values show the difference in the probability of the respective group voting for the respective party to the voting probability of those, not belonging to that group (except for age, see next note).

2 Difference in the probability to vote for the respective party among those 65 years old and older to those being younger than 40 years.

*: p <0.05; **: p <0.01; ***: p <0.001

Source: German Longitudinal Election Study, cumulated pre-election and postelection survey, 2009.

The same is true of the center-left of the party system. Being center-left does not necessarily imply that parties are willing to join forces and form coalitions. This is true in particular with regard to Social Democrats and the Left Party. At the national level, there is no visible willingness of Social Democrats to cooperate with this party.

This does not apply to the Green Party, though. Social Democrats and the Green Party already formed a successful coalition, governing from 1998 to 2005.

The Green Party, however, or parts of it, are looking for new coalitions, having already joined coalition governments with Christian Democrats and the FDP at the state level.

This implies that the center-left parties are rather strong competitors. With regard to the Left Party in particular, this is a real trade-off situation for Social Democrats, because, in the West at least, they compete for the same voters (see Tables 5 and 8). This is not true to the same degree with regard to the Green Party. In terms of minimizing competition and complementing social alliances, then, the Social Democratic-Green Party option seems to be the most viable and least risky.

If Social Democrats were able to increase their support among those groups who will become more and more important in the future—the young generation and the professionals—this would in part be in direct competition with the Green Party. But weakening the Green Party and strengthening Social Democrats would most likely not be a successful strategy to gain a government majority. From this point of view—just the rational calculus of trade-off in voter support—the best option would be to regain the support the Social Democrats have lost to the Left Party in West Germany and to extend their support base in the East at the cost of the Left Party.

These numbers arguments are particularly important because they relate to social coalitions between the party and social groups. The prospective vision of social democracy must represent the working people. The composition of this group has changed considerably due to economic and structural changes. Nonetheless, within the industrial sector, the "Facharbeiter" (skilled worker) and "Meister" (master craftsman) still exist today as the engineer or the supervisor of an automated production line. Of course, the situation is more complicated in the service sector. But again, these are working people with interests that should be represented by a Social Democratic party.

The new progressive vision: Social Democratic policies make you happy

If social democracy is to have any hope of reestablishing itself as a leading and transformative force, it must come up with new and convincing solutions to the social, cultural, and political uncertainty citizens feel threatened by. A key role in this will be to find credible answers to the following challenges:

How can we come up with a new socioeconomic paradigm that stands for new, social, and sustainable growth? How can this be properly gauged and specified? In September 2009, a prominent international commission under the leadership of two Nobel Prize winners in economics, Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, presented a report on the measurement of economic performance and social progress. Its verdict on the classical view of growth as an indicator of affluence is devastating. Affluence involves more than a society's gross domestic product.

The aim of economic policy should be to deploy resources where they are most beneficial for society. The credo of Gerhard Schröder and Tony Blair—according to which there is no such thing as left-wing or right-wing economic policies but only right or wrong ones—does not hold: Every economic policy decision has consequences for society and must be subject to political discussion. What benefits society most includes investments in future-oriented factors such as education and innovation.

Also important are investments in social cohesion and the foundations of society. Tony Judt, with his demand for a renaissance of the welfare state as a core social democratic concern, has recast the social democratic debate on the future of the welfare state under the aegis of a 21st century fraught with uncertainty. What at first glance appears to be a retrogressive plea turns out to be a clever, historically well-founded argument to the effect that reforms do not always have to take the form of a search for new and radical ideas, but can also involve a return to mainly hard-won achievements. Just like democracy, social cohesion and its institutional safeguarding via welfare state structures is not a one-way street but has to be justified and defended ever anew. This brings us to the question of cultural uncertainty.

The safeguarding of social cohesion remains social democracy's core political identity, brought to bear by a policy of social justice in tandem with economic innovation. Now, however, a "gradual erosion" of solidarity, which over the long term "undermines the acceptance of left-wing politics," can be discerned.[3] The question is, therefore, how the solidarity of society as a whole can be restored and revivified. Does social democracy need a new understanding of solidarity in the context of increasing heterogeneity?

Many have come to doubt that political notions of solidarity can still command majority support. But the examples of Sweden and Norway show that people are willing to accept higher taxes and social contributions for social security systems if they benefit from high-quality welfare services and, at the same time, discernible limits are imposed on abuse.[4]

An increasing number of political analysts refer to the key significance of policy on migration and integration.[5] Rising immigration, coupled with a lack of social integration, has resulted in social tensions as well as fears of swamping on the part of the established population.[6] Social democratic parties have been either clueless or unwilling to come up with answers to this challenge.

In some European countries, this issue has served as the gateway to success for populist parties. The task, therefore, is to develop a policy response that is both politically responsible and faithful to the humanist values of social democracy and focuses on both integration and control.[7] Embracing this challenge will become increasingly important since immigration will play a key role in the future, and even—as the next paragraph shows—must do so.

Less of a focus in the debate—but of key significance for the future development of the labor market, social security systems, and the economy—is demographic change and the related question of generational justice. The Berlin Institute for Population and Development points out that, given the current demographic structure, population aging in Europe will continue for another 30 to 40 years.[8] Without migration, further growth in the European population is improbable. The approaching contraction will exert enormous effects on every area of the economy and people's lives. In this context, the issue of generational justice will come increasingly to the fore.

The question for social democracy is what a socially just response to the challenge of demographic change might look like. How can the welfare state be adapted to demography without giving a further impulse to the above-

mentioned erosion of solidarity? How is migration policy to be shaped in order to enhance integration and societal acceptance?

The erosion of democracy has become a commonplace of political debate. Prompted by the research undertaken by the Polis/Sinus Institute for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, according to which one in three Germans no longer believe that democracy can solve society's problems, more and more investigations and surveys are pointing to a crisis for democracy.[9]

Trust in democracy as a mode of opinion forming and decision making as well as a general belief in the ability of politics to assert the public good continues to dwindle. Colin Crouch has coined the term "post-democracy" to describe this situation of boredom, frustration, and disillusion.

It is the task of social democratic politics to resist this trend and to fight for the inclusion of all social groups in political decision making. This must begin in social democracy's own party structures and extend beyond expandable contacts with civil society groups and new social movements to encompass strengthening elements of direct democracy within the framework of which even unconventional approaches—such as participatory budgeting by citizens or additional votes for families with children, as proposed, for example, in the green paper on the future of democracy in Europe—should be tried.[10] Ultimately, politics must once more be made conceivable and tangible as a means for the positive transformation of social life.

Ideally, the answers expected of social democracy to the perceived threat of social, cultural, and political uncertainty should be key elements of a new social democratic narrative. Social and economic security, societal recognition and cohesion, and democratic participation are not ends in themselves. It is rather the task of politics, society, and the economy to contribute to people's well-being, self-realization, and happiness. But instead of attending only to individual advancement, the "we" feeling should also be taken into account. Tony Judt rightly called for the rediscovery of the ethical view of what constitutes a good society and what the legitimate means are of pursuing this.[11] The objective of a new progressive vision by social democracy therefore could be summarized as the maximization of happiness.

Conclusion and recommendations

The 2009 federal election was an election of many electoral records. Unfortunately, many of those records were negative ones. Never before had the two big parties—the SPD and the CDU—gained such a small vote share with only 56.8 percent of the votes. Even worse, 2009 marked the smallest vote share of the Social Democrats since 1949: They only gained 23 percent of the votes.

2009 was the result of an ongoing process of increasing party system fragmentation, volatility, and swing voting. For most of the time until 1983, the German party system had been a two-and-a-half-party system, with the liberal Free Democratic Party as the only smaller party. This changed in 1983 when the Green Party made it into parliament at the federal level for the first time. With the German unification in 1990, a fifth party—now called the Left Party—gained seats in the Bundestag.

The disastrous election result of the Social Democrats in 2009 was most likely only an intermezzo. But while this result can be regarded as the exception and not as a rule for the future, the Social Democratic party suffers from structural changes probably more than any other party does.

- **Party membership:** This is on a steep decline in Germany since 1990 with the exception of the Green Party. Though party membership is declining in general—from almost 2.3 million to 1.4 million between 1990 and today—Social Democrats have been hit disproportionately strongly (declining from 940,000 to 500,000).

- **Workers:** The old stronghold of social democracy, the working class, is withering away. Two major shifts indicate the change: 1) the first half of the 1970s marks the turning point at which equal shares of the workforce of Germany's society were in the industrial and service sectors; 2) the numbers of blue-collar workers and white-collar employees broke even in the mid-1980s. Today, white-collar employees are the absolute majority of the workforce; blue-collar workers meanwhile amount to less than 30 percent.

- **Union members:** The decline of class not just as a category, but as a collective experience has also found its expression in the decline of labor union memberships. Just since 1994, the figures for union members as a proportion of the electorate have declined from 16 percent to 10 percent.

- **Educational revolution:** With the restructuring of the workforce and the so-called "educational revolution" in the late 1960s and 1970s, the class structure has not only changed in nominal terms but substantively. The highly qualified group has grown and will grow continuously over the next decades. Because this group commands the resources necessary for political participation probably to a higher degree than any other group in the population, they will be able to make themselves heard. The question is which political camp they will adhere to and the extent to which they can provide a new base of support for the Social Democratic party.

- **Generations:** For quite a while, the so-called 1968 generation of the student revolt disproportionally supported the Social Democrats. The party does best in the 1968 cohort, poorly in the Millennial generation, and even worse in the age cohort between the 1968 and the Millennial cohorts. In general, Social Democrats in Germany do relatively poorly among the younger population and better among the older.

- **Religion:** This is declining in Germany but the proportion of those with a Catholic or Protestant affiliation is still high. Each of the major churches has about 25 million members. Many of these members, however, are not practicing their religion and do not regard themselves as religious. Social Democrats fare best in the group of medium secularization and worst among the group of high secularization.

- **Region:** The German party system has become strongly regionalized with unification. Vote share of the left competitor of the Social Democrats—the PDS, renamed into "The Left" now—in the East German region was 20 percent in 1994, almost 22 percent in 1998, 25 percent in 2005, and 28 percent in 2009.

- **Migration:** Germany is not a migration country. But roughly 9 percent of the population has a migrant background. Immigration law is still an instrument to hinder rather than to promote immigration. Voting patterns of migrants differ depending on origin: A plurality of migrants from the former Soviet Union vote for Christian Democrats; a plurality of people from migrant working coun-

tries vote for Social Democrats, as do a majority of those who have a Turkish background. But due to rather restrictive immigration policies, the number of migrants is still too small to expect significant effects on election outcomes—at least at the moment.

Is there a new progressive coalition upcoming or would it be possible to create one? There are two ways to deal with this question. One way relates to changing social coalitions; the other to changing party coalitions. With regard to social coalitions, no particular group except for the traditional core group of social democratic parties stands out. Neither is there a possible advantage among the highly qualified and professionals—rather to the contrary—nor is there strong support among the younger generations, families, and women. Even with regard to the secularized, disproportionate support is not so high that one could expect significant new alliances from this side. With regard to social coalitions, it seems the traditional core groups—workers, union members, and unionized workers—still stand out, and there is no other group in sight with which Social Democrats seem likely to build up similarly strong ties and disproportionate support.

When considering a wider coalition among center-left parties, the situation is somewhat different. The Green Party, for example, has considerable disproportionate support among the highly educated, professionals, and younger generations. In terms of social alliances, the Social Democrats and the Green Party are to some extent complementary to each other and also politically compatible in a number of areas, as their governmental coalition between 1998 and 2005 has demonstrated.

Recommendations

If social democracy is to have any hope of reestablishing itself as a leading and transformative force, it must come up with new and convincing solutions to the social, cultural, and political uncertainties with which citizens feel threatened.

- Social Democrats must develop a new socioeconomic paradigm that stands for new, social, and sustainable growth.

- Social Democrats must promote investment in future-oriented factors, such as education and innovation, as well as investments in social cohesion and the foundations of society.

- The safeguarding of social cohesion must remain social democracy's core political identity, brought to bear by a policy of social justice in tandem with economic innovation.

- To deal with immigration, Social Democrats must develop a policy response that is politically responsible, faithful to the humanist values of social democracy, and focuses on both integration and control.

- Social democracy must resist trends toward the erosion of democracy by promoting inclusionary policies.

- Social democracy must open its party structures and extend contact with civil society groups and new social movements.

- Social democracy must have answers to the perceived threats of social, cultural, and political uncertainty. These answers should become the key elements of a new social democratic narrative, connecting social and economic security, societal recognition and cohesion, democratic participation, and people's happiness and self-realization.

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Endnotes

1 As the OECD points out, it is sometimes questioned whether there is really international comparability—in particular with regard to ISCED 5—because the German dual system of education differs strongly from those in other countries. The OECD claims that those professions including education in university of applied sciences and in universities of cooperative education—which in the German system are subsumed under "Sekundarstufe II" (secondary II)—are internationally fully compatible with ISCED 5b. See: Sind die OECD-Daten zu den Abschlussquoten im Tertiärbereich international vergleichbar?", available at http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/37/39317657.pdf (last accessed January 29, 2011).

2 Weßels, "An Electorate on the Move"; Weßels and others, "Fazit und Ausblick."

3 Hillebrand, "A Society of Empowered Citizens."

4 Ibid.

5 For example: Becker and Cuperus, "Innovating Social Democracy"; Hillebrand, "A Society of Empowered Citizens"; Pfaller, "European Social Democracy."

6 In the European Union, according to the European Commission, over the past 20 years a net annual increase of around 500,000 immigrants has been recorded. These figures have tripled to between 1.6 million and 2 million a year since 2002. Three-quarters of net immigration in the European Union is concentrated in Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom (European Commission 2008).

7 Pfaller, "European Social Democracy."

8 "Berlin Institute for Population and Development," available at http://www.berlin-institut.org.

9 Embacher, *Demokratie!*

10 Schmitter and Trechsel, "*The Future of Democracy in Europe.*"

11 Conversation with Tony Judt, "Eine neu zum Leben erweckte Sozialdemokratie," in: *Neue Gesellschaft/Frankfurter Hefte* (6) (2010): 60.

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