

## Germany

Rice

Following the end of the First World War, Germany was a semi-presidential democracy with both parliamentary and presidential characteristics. Some sources view the Weimar Republic initially as a parliamentary democracy with (often unstable) coalition governments, which became akin to a presidential system under Brüning (who ignored parliament and ruled by presidential decree: See Kolb 2005; Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009a)). However, we code the Weimar Republic as a semi-presidential (or dual executive) system. Unlike other countries using semi-presidential system (such as Finland or the French Third Republic) where the president and the PM co-exist in harmony, the semi-presidential system in the Weimar Republic was unique in its “vertical structure” (Shen 2009, 39). In the words of Shen (2009, 39), “although the President and the Chancellor both owned important constitutional powers, they were designed not to be used at the same time.”

Specifically, according to the Weimar Constitution, the Reichskanzler (the chancellor) governs in normal times, while the Reichspräsident (the president) governs in abnormal times, only for a limited time. Therefore, the reason why the Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009a) or other scholars have been treating the Weimar Republic as a parliamentary system is because the Republic was in “stable” for the most of its history (before 1930 or economic crisis in 1929). It seems that the focus on the use (or abuse) of the executive powers of the president under Brüning, leads some scholars describe the period as the end of the parliamentary system. However, there was no constitutional change or regime change, because the Republic was semi-residential system from the beginning (Shen 2009, 39; Stykow 2007, 204; Vincent 1997, 206; Kolb 2005, 118-9; German Bundestag n.d.).<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of 1919, the office of chancellor was filled by Friedrich Ebert, who headed the Weimar coalition, which included the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei: DDP), and the Center Party (Zentrum: Z) (Kolb 2005; Henig 1998). In February, elections were held to fill the National Assembly (the Reichstag) of the new Weimar Republic. At that point, the new chancellor became Philipp Scheidemann, of the SPD, heading the same coalition of the SPD, DDP, and Z. This is not a SOLS change. However, Scheidemann’s government did not last long. In June, he and his cabinet chose to resign instead of signing the Treaty of Versailles (Kolb 2005; Henig 1998). He was replaced by Gustav Bauer, who was also of the SPD with the same coalition. This is not a SOLS change, either (Kolb 2005; Henig 1998).

A new constitution was drafted and ratified shortly thereafter, which created a dual executive. The president’s duty was to appoint the chancellor from the largest faction in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Also note that since the use of the Article 48 was legal (even if it seems that President Hindenburg abused it), POLITY codes the Republic as a democracy (score 6) before July 15, 1933 (since then it codes -9).

Reichstag. The chancellor, like most prime ministers, could be ousted from office by a vote of no confidence. The president also had the power to dissolve the Reichstag, if necessary.

The political situation in Germany remained unstable, despite the new Constitution. Bauer was able to remain in office until March 27, 1920. He resigned due to an attempted coup that took place in Berlin between March 13 and 17, known as the Kapp Putsch. He was then replaced by another SPD/DDP/Z coalition under Hermann Müller (Kolb 2005; Henig 1998). This is not a SOLS change. Müller's government only lasted until June 1920, when elections were held. The SPD was forced to cede control of the government to a coalition of Z, DDP, and DVP (the German People's Party), led by the Center Party leader Konstantin Fehrenbach. This is a SOLS change. Fehrenbach's government lasted until April 1921, when he and his ministers resigned in protest over the reparations assessment given to Germany. He was replaced by another member of the Center Party, Joseph Wirth, who governed with a coalition of SPD and DDP. This is a minor SOLS change.

Wirth's government was only in power until November 1921, when he also resigned in protest over reparations payments. Germany was beginning to feel a great deal of financial strain, and the next chancellor appointed was the non-partisan Wilhelm Cuno. Cuno's government contained ministers from the DDP, Z, DVP, and the Bavarian People's Party (BVP), which is a SOLS change. While Cuno was in office, the French invaded the Ruhr Valley and took control of the German coal and iron industries there, claiming delinquency in reparations payments. Cuno's government cancelled reparations payments and ordered a general strike of miners in the Ruhr Valley, which in turn pushed the German economy into crisis (Turk 1999, 104). Despite the popularity of Cuno's action, in August 1923 the president appointed a new chancellor—Gustav Stresemann of the DVP. This is a SOLS change.

Stresemann created a "unity government" which included all of the major parties (DVP, SPD, Z, and DDP). This government, which only lasted for 100 days, called off the resistance to the French occupation, and opened diplomatic relations with the United States, England, and France (Turk 1999, 105). Following the disagreement over how Stresemann dealt with the leftwing and rightwing threats, the SPD left the coalition on November 3, 1923. This is a minor SOLS change (Paxton and Hessler 2011, 217; Henig 1998; Kolb 2005, 232). The coalition collapsed soon thereafter following the failed Beer Hall Putsch.

On November 23, a new government led by Center Party leader Wilhelm Marx was formed, which is a SOLS change. This government also contained members of the DVP, BVP, and DDP as cabinet ministers (Biesinger 2006, 37; Collier and Pedley 2002, 10; Henig 1998; Kolb 2005, 233). Marx' government lost support in the May elections and on May 26 the BVP dropped out of the coalition, which is coded as a minor SOLS change (Deutsches Historisches Museum n.d.; Fulbrook 2011). Thereafter Marx's minority government lasted until January 1925, when elections were held and the coalition dissolved (Vincent 1997, 307). At that point, another non-partisan Chancellor Hans Luther, was appointed. This is a SOLS change. He governed,

initially, with a coalition of DDP, Z, BVP, DVP, and the German National People's Party (DNVP). The DNVP left the coalition on October 26, 1925 (Henig 1998; Deutsches Historisches Museum n.d.), following a disagreement over the Locarno Treaty (Vincent 1997, 294). This is a minor SOLS change. Luther lost a vote of confidence on May 13, and the president appointed Wilhelm Marx to form another government, which is a SOLS change. Marx's original governing coalition included Marx's own Center Party, the DDP, the DVP, and the BVP (Deutsches Historisches Museum n.d.). In January 1927, the DDP left the coalition and the DNVP joined. This is another minor SOLS change.

In May 1928, elections led to the Center Party losing many of its seats in the Reichstag. This, in turn, led to Marx's resignation on June 28, 1928. Hermann Müller once again became the chancellor, with a coalition of his own party, the SPD, along with Z, DVP, BVP, and DDP. This is a SOLS change. This government remained in power until 1930, when it fell apart. President Hindenburg appointed Heinrich Brüning of the Center Party, to be the next chancellor. At the same time, Hindenburg began accumulating powers to himself through the use of Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution (a section which gave the president power to declare a state of emergency and rule by decree to enforce the laws of the Republic). This, in turn, weakened the power of the Reichstag, and allowed for Brüning to implement many of his domestic policies without legislative approval (Vincent 1997, 368). This new system of government was called the "Presidential Cabinet", and though the chancellor was still the lead executive, he became increasingly dependent on Hindenburg's favor to remain in office.<sup>2</sup> Brüning's minority cabinet was supported by a coalition consisting of Z, BVP, DVP, DDP, the rightwing economic party (Wirtschaftspartei: WP) (Vincent 1997, 105), and People's Conservative Association (Volkskonservative Vereinigung: KVP) (Vincent 1997, 494-5), which is coded as a SOLS change. On November 25, Johann Brecht, the Justice Minister and of the WP, resigned (Patch 2006, 110-1), which is a minor SOLS change. On October 9, 1931, there was a reshuffle of Brüning's cabinet and corresponding coalition, which now consisted of Z, BVP, KVP, the German State Party (Deutsche Staatspartei: DSTP), and the Christian-National Peasants' and Rural People's Party (Landvolk: LV). This is a minor SOLS change (Deutsches Historisches Museum n.d.). Brüning was dismissed by Hindenburg on June 1, 1932. Papen, who was an ultra-rightwing member of the Center Party, was selected as chancellor by President Hindenburg. Papen created a rightwing authoritarian government of the Center Party in coalition with the DNVP (Deutsches Historisches Museum n.d.). As Papen was of the same party as Brüning, this is a minor SOLS change. Papen was in turn replaced by Hindenburg in favor of non-party Schleicher heading a coalition of the DNVP and LV (Deutsches Historisches Museum n.d.), which was coded as a SOLS change.

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that Brüning therefore no longer fully depended on parliament for government and ruled by presidential decree (Kolb 2005). However, there was no constitutional change and as per our coding rules for semi presidential systems, we continue to code coalitions if the Archigos (Goemans et al. 2009a) indicates that the prime minister is the leader.

Papen used Article 48 heavily to justify his actions, which included dissolving the Prussian legislature. He was censured by the Reichstag on September 12, 1932, and was dismissed in December. Hindenburg then appointed the nonpartisan Kurt von Schleicher to be the chancellor, which is a SOLS change. Schleicher was unable to form a coherent policy program, and conservative leaders then convinced Hindenburg that he needed to be replaced with Adolf Hitler, who had quickly become the leader of the growing National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP) (Vincent 1997, 427). This replacement occurred in January 1933, at which point Hitler quickly convinced the Reichstag to pass the Enabling Act of 1933. This act gave Hitler dictatorial powers, and marked the end of the Weimar Republic and democracy in Germany.

Hitler remained in power until 1945, when, facing a German defeat in the Second World War, he committed suicide. Hitler's government should be classified as personalist. Even though the NSDAP existed before Hitler came to power, it quickly assumed the role of Hitler's support party. Hitler controlled the economy, and the military, and had his own domestic security apparatus which suppressed any internal dissent to the NSDAP (Turk 1999, 115-6). These, along with Hitler's cult of personality in Nazi Germany, are clear markers of a personalist government.

Adolf Hitler selected Karl Dönitz (mil) as his successor prior to committing suicide on April 30, 1945 (Simkin n.d., a). Though there is no guidance from Geddes (2003) as to how to code the Dönitz leadership transition, several aspects of the transition suggest that it should not be coded as a major SOLS change. According to the pre-designated successor coding rule, we code no SOLS change for this leadership change since the outgoing leader chooses his successor. Similarly, both Hitler and Dönitz were of the same party. Dönitz served as German head of state for only a short time because, with the German surrender on May 8, 1945, allied governments took over the political affairs of the now occupied German state (U.S. Department of State 2012). We code no SOLS change for May 8, 1945 since Germany lost its independence at that point.

From 1945 until 1990, the "German State" did not exist as one political unit. The Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany, abbreviated FDR) formed as a democratic state in the western portion of the traditional German state while the German Democratic Republic (East Germany, abbreviated FRG) formed as the single party state in the eastern portion of traditional German state. During this period, both states developed their own political systems which are not described here, but rather in their respective country descriptions. This narrative skips ahead to the unification of both Germanys back into the German State in 1990.

Prior to the 1990 unification, Helmut Kohl of the Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU) was chancellor of the FDR. When the FDR and FRG united, Kohl retained his position as chancellor and served in that capacity until 1998 (Cahoon 2012; Goemans et al. 2009b, 350). The GDR was absorbed into the FDR in 1990 so, since Kohl was already chancellor of the FDR (A+E Television Networks 2013; Simkin n.d., b), we code no SOLS change for 1990. In the German elections of 1998, the CDU lost its majority and was replaced by a coalition made up of

the SPD and Alliance90/Greens (Greens) party. Gerhard Schröder of the SPD became the new chancellor and since the former and latter chancellors were not of the same party, we code a major SOLS change for October 27, 1998 (Cahoon 2012; Goemans et al. 2009b, 350). We do not code a minor SOLS change since the coalition change and leadership change coincided with one another.

Schröder remained chancellor until November 22, 2005 when he was replaced by Angela Kasner Merkel of the CDU (Cahoon 2012). At this time, a coalition change also occurred when a new coalition consisting of the CDU and the SPD was formed, however, due to its coincidence with the Schröder/Merkel leadership change, we code only the major SOLS change for 2005. Merkel served as German chancellor through the end of this project's temporal domain.

## References

- "Germany." 2012. *U.S. Department of State*.  
<http://www.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/germany/197872.htm> (August 30, 2013).
- "Helmut Kohl Biography." 2013. A+E Networks. *Biography.com*.  
<http://www.biography.com/articles/Helmut-Kohl-9367556> (August 30, 2013).
- "Kabinette von 1919 bis 1933." *Deutsches Historisches Museum*. No Date.  
<http://www.dhm.de/lemo/html/weimar/verfassung/kabinette/#papen> (August 15, 2012).
- "The Weimar Republic (1918 - 1933)." *German Bundestag*. No Date.  
[http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs\\_e/artandhistory/history/parliamentarism/weimar/index.html](http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/artandhistory/history/parliamentarism/weimar/index.html) (August 15, 2013).
- Biesinger, Joseph A. 2006. *Germany: A Reference Guide from the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: Facts On File.
- Cahoon, Ben. 2012. "Germany." *Worldstatesmen.org*. <http://worldstatesmen.org/Germany.html> (August 30, 2013).
- Fulbrook, Mary. 2011. *A History of Germany 1918-2008: The Divided Nation* (3rd edition). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Geddes, Barbara. 2003. *Paradigms and Sand Castles: Theory Building and Research Design in Comparative Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Goemans, Henk E., Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza. 2009a. "Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders." *Journal of Peace Research* 46(2): 269-283.

- Goemans, Henk E., Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Giacomo Chiozza. 2009b. "Archigos: A Data Set on Leaders 1875-2004." Version 2.9. August 13, 2009.  
<http://www.rochester.edu/college/faculty/hgoemans/Archigos.2.9-August.pdf> (August 14, 2013).
- Henig, Ruth Beatrice. 1998. *The Weimar Republic, 1919-1933*. London: Routledge.
- Kolb, Eberhard. 2005. *The Weimar Republic*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London: Routledge.
- Patch, William L., Jr. 2006. *Heinrich Brüning and the Dissolution of the Weimar Republic*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Paxton, Robert O., and Julie Hessler. 2011. *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (5th edition). Andover: Cengage Learning.
- Shen, Yu-chung. 2009. "The Anomaly of the Weimar Republic's Semi-Presidential Constitution." *Journal of Politics and Law* 2(3): 35-43.
- Simkin, John. No Date., a. "Karl Doenitz." *Spartacus Educational*.  
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/GERdoenitz.htm> (August 30, 2013).
- Simkin, John. No Date., b. "Helmut Kohl." *Spartacus Educational*.  
<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/COLDkohl.htm> (August 30, 2013).
- Styckow, Petra. 2007. *Vergleich politischer Systeme*. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink.
- Turk, Eleanor L. 1999. *The History of Germany*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Vincent, Charles P. 1997. *A Historical Dictionary of Germany's Weimar Republic, 1918-1933*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Woldendorp, Jaap, Hans Keman, and Ian Budge. 2000. *Party Government in 48 Democracies (1945-1998): Composition, Duration, Personnel*. Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Pre-1945 coded by Meera Krishnan on March 30, 2011

Post-1945 coded by Alexander Anderson (Rice) on June 20, 2010

Pre-1945 revised by Eelco van der Maat on September 15, 2012

Pre-1945 revised by Ashley Leeds on May 28, 2013

Pre-1945 revised by Naoko Matsumura on June 07, 2013

Post-1945 revised by Ashley Leeds on July 21, 2010

Post-1945 revised by Eelco van der Maat on September 26, 2011

Combined by Ahra Wu (Rice) on August 30, 2013  
Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) on May 23, 2014