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## The political culture of unified Germany

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FS III 98-204

**The Political Culture of Unified Germany**

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## **Abstract**

One condition for the stability of democratic systems is the development of a political culture that is congruent with the implemented structure. As the presented data shows, in unified Germany this kind of congruence exists only in West Germany. In East Germany a majority of citizens is supporting democracy as well, but have a rather skeptical attitude toward the liberal democracy of Germany. This skepticism results partly from socialization and experiences in the state socialist system of the GDR. These lead to the preference of another normative model of democracy than the liberal democracy institutionalized in Germany. Considering the acceptance of the liberal democracy of Germany and the values underlying this model of democracy, the "inner unity" of the community of Germans remains still to be seen.

## **Zusammenfassung**

Eine der Stabilitätsbedingungen demokratischer Systeme ist die Herausbildung einer politischen Kultur, die zu der implementierten Struktur kongruent ist. Wie die präsentierten Daten zeigen, liegt eine derartige Kongruenz im vereinigten Deutschland nur in Westdeutschland vor. In Ostdeutschland befürwortet zwar ebenfalls eine Mehrheit der Bürger eine Demokratie, aber sie stehen der liberalen Demokratie Deutschlands eher skeptisch gegenüber. Diese Skepsis ist u.a. auf die Sozialisation und die Erfahrungen im staatssozialistischen System der DDR zurückzuführen. Diese führten zu der Präferenz eines anderen normativen Modells der Demokratie, als dem der liberalen Demokratie, die in Deutschland institutionalisiert ist. Hinsichtlich der Akzeptanz der liberalen Demokratie Deutschlands und der Wertorientierungen, die diesem Demokratiemodell zugrundeliegen, steht die „innere Einheit“ der Gemeinschaft der Deutschen also noch aus.



## **The Political Culture of Unified Germany**

Dieter Fuchs

### **1. Introduction**

Since the end of the eighties, the legitimation conditions for Western democracies have altered fundamentally. After the collapse of the state-socialist systems in central and eastern Europe there has been no negative alternative, which as such had always had a legitimising effect; secondly, the problems ensuing from a globalised economy have since become increasingly manifest. All Western democracies therefore confront the question of how the established institutions of liberal democracy meet these challenges.

The situation appears even more problematic in the countries of central and eastern Europe. Under the restrictive conditions of globalisation, these countries must first of all consolidate the newly introduced liberal democracy. Democracy research asserts that one of the conditions for consolidation is the formation of a political culture congruent with the institutionalised structure. This raises the sceptical question of how democratic a political culture can be among people who have lived in an autocratic system for decades (Conradt 1997; Rohrschneider 1998). There is a wide range of views and arguments on this issue, which we shall be looking at in greater detail in the course of the analysis.

We examine the extent to which a culture can be said to exist for the democracy of the unified Germany that is congruent with the structure of liberal democracy. Unified Germany is a unique case, but for this very reason a particularly instructive one. German unification integrated within the institutional framework of the former Federal Republic two societal communities that had had a common history until the end of the Second World War. For a period of 50 years thereafter they lived in two different societal systems. A comparative analysis of the political culture of the two parts of Germany thus conforms in almost paradigmatic form to Przeworski and Teune's (1970) "most similar system design". We therefore have a quasi-experimental research design, permitting the effects of these different societal systems on the political culture of their citizens to be analysed. Germany can hence be regarded as a sort of laboratory (Rohrschneider 1994) for a possible European unification encompassing the countries of western and eastern Europe.

Our study proceeds as follows. To begin with, we outline the theoretical framework, which is in three parts. First, the concepts of political culture and political support and the relationship between them are discussed. In this context we also explain why we retain political culture as a meaningful frame of reference for analysing certain issues despite persistent criticism of the concept. Second, we introduce various normative models of democracy. They are needed to interpret the individual data and to decide what type of democracy people in West and East Germany ultimately prefer. Third, the empirical analysis is preceded by a comparison between two competing theories on the influence of the societal structure of state socialism on the political attitudes of the population. It is only on this basis that expectations about attitudes towards democracy among the East German population can be formulated. Then follows the empirical analysis. It examines the extent of and trends in democratic attitudes among Germans at various levels of the democratic system. The conclusion summarises the most important findings and brings them into relation with their consequences for the prospects of democracy in the unified Germany.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### *2.1 Political Culture and Political Support*

#### 2.1.1 The Concept of Political Culture

In recent years, the concept of political culture has experienced a renaissance (Inglehart 1988; Almond 1993). Discussions in two quite different disciplines have contributed to this. In political philosophy, the so-called communitarians (McIntyre 1981; Sandel 1982; Etzioni 1993) have pointed to the importance of civic virtues. In political sociology, especially after the collapse of the state-socialist systems in central and eastern Europe, the issue has been raised of the extent to which the population there can be assumed to have democratic attitudes at all.

Both discussions are grounded in the plausible assumption that an active and stable democracy requires more than legal implementation of the structure of a liberal democracy. Without support for this liberal democracy from the majority of its citizens, it can scarcely survive in the long run, and without democratic virtues co-operative participation by citizens in democratic government is hardly conceivable.

Although the significance of such factors is intuitively plausible, the concept of political culture has repeatedly come under severe attack. We will briefly consider this criticism to derive a general frame of reference for our analysis from the explicit and partly implicitly responses of those who have posited the concept. Criticism focuses on three major points (Almond 1980, 26). The first is concerned with the definition of political culture, the second with the causal relation between culture and structure, and the third with the explanatory power of political culture.

As we know, the concept of political culture was introduced into empirical social studies by Almond and Verba (1963). In this tradition, it is defined as the "subjective orientation to politics" (Verba 1965, 315; Almond 1980, 26). The following definition is somewhat more precise: "political culture is the set of attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about politics current in a nation at a given time" (Almond and Powell 1978, 25). However, many critical authors feel that the second definition is also too open to interpretation to be analytically useful (Dittmer 1977; Kaase 1983; Patrick 1984; Lane 1992).

The concept of political culture is associated with the basic assumption that cultural factors determine the action of citizens and consequently have an indirect impact on political structure. Each of the two other points of criticism address this assumption in a different way. Firstly, the reverse causal direction of structure to culture is postulated (Barry 1970). Secondly, the usefulness of political culture as an explanatory concept is called into question (Barry 1970; Rogowski 1974; Jackman and Miller 1996a; 1996b). This is the most fundamental objection and is advanced primarily from the perspective of the competing rational-choice paradigm. The rational-choice approach also attributes the explanatory objects of political culture (political support, political action, structural performance and stability) to utility-maximisation by individual actors. Taking theory-of-science criteria developed by Lakatos, Laitin (1995) adds two further points of criticism, that political culture is not in a position to predict novel facts, and is unable to formalise its theoretical premises. Laitin concludes that the concept of political culture is a degenerative programme. He regards the shift of many scholars to the rational-choice paradigm as the most drastic symptom of degeneration.

In a certain measure, this critique may be valid for the original version of the concept, but in view of later specification and modification it is at least overstated. Ambiguities about the concept are clarified by distinguishing three levels of the political system and three corresponding levels of political culture: system culture, process culture, policy



culture (Almond and Powell 1978). As far as the stability or consolidation of a political system is concerned, only the system culture is relevant. The concrete attitudes of the system culture relate to the national community, the regime and the authorities (Almond 1980, 28), to the objects of the political system that are distinguished in Easton's (1965) theory.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the causal relation between culture and structure, Almond and Powell (1978, 25) as well as Almond (1980, 29) explicitly stress that it is not a one-way but a mutual relationship. This does not result in a tautological argument, but takes account of the fact that almost all relationships between social phenomena are dynamic in nature. In the rational-choice paradigm, too, this is a central theoretical consideration. It is assumed that rational action on the part of actors is determined by structural constraints, and that this action in its turn can affect structural constraints (Coleman 1990). Such feedback can naturally occur only with a time lag.

The objection of inadequate explanatory power, raised primarily by rational-choice proponents, affects the essence of the scientific status of political culture. But here, too, there are weighty counter-arguments. For the inability to predict novel facts Laitin (1995) cites phenomena that the social sciences *as a whole* cannot predict. And Almond (1980) for his part can refer to a wide range of historical experience of the importance of patriotic and ideological movements for the development of societies, which can hardly be explained in terms of utility-maximising interest calculation. The shift to the rational-choice paradigm that Laitin notes among scholars is not necessarily due to the scientific superiority of the paradigm; it may also related to the internal mechanisms of the academic system. If one remains only on the level of the scientific capacity of paradigms, persistent and massive criticism can also be cited against rational choice. Green and Shapiro (1994) have condensed it into the thesis of the "pathologies of rational choice theory". Criticism is directed precisely at the alleged superiority of the rational-choice paradigm over the political-culture paradigm, namely its explanatory power. Green and Shapiro (1994) call this into fundamental doubt for a substantial range of social phenomena. Within the rational choice framework, Brennan and Lomasky (1993) feel it necessary to take account of co-called expressive motives in explaining electoral preferences. And in large measure these expressive motives are

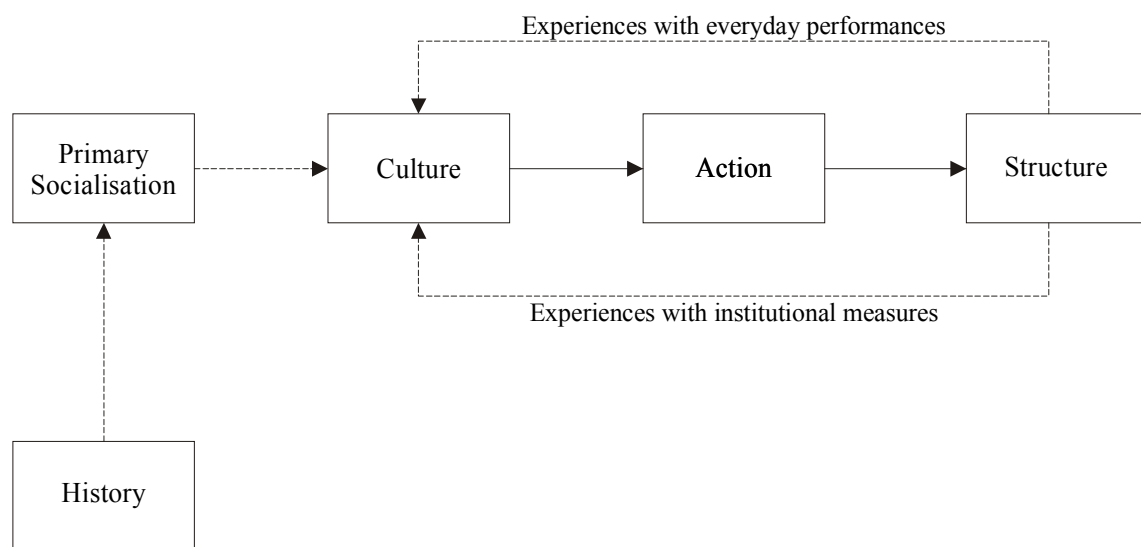
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<sup>1</sup> Fuchs and Roller (1998) offer a somewhat different proposal for defining the concept of political culture more precisely. On the one hand they restrict it substantively to political values and norms, and on the other they expand it beyond currently measurable attitudes to include historical memories stored in institutions and written documents. At least for the political elite they constitute a reservoir of information for arguments and decisions.

nothing other than cultural factors. Almond (1980) himself offers a pragmatic solution to this controversy. The explanatory power of different factors can be explained empirically and need not be decided in advance by an act of faith.

We therefore see no reason to renounce the political-culture paradigm as a frame of reference for the question of the stability or consolidation of democracies. For the purposes of our analysis, we first attempt to bring together in one model the various causal assumptions formulated by the constructors of the paradigm (Almond and Verba 1963; Verba 1965; Almond and Powell 1978; Almond 1980). We can thus at least come close to the criterion of semi-formalisation that Laitin (1995) points out as a positive aspect of Putnam's (1993) concept of political culture as compared with the traditional approach.

*Figure 1: Basic causal assumptions of the concept of political culture*



The central assumption of political culture is the causal chain from culture to action and from action to structure. Two examples will serve to illustrate this. According to a number of theories, which operate to some extent with empirical case studies, the stability of a democratic system depends essentially on the support of its citizens (Easton 1965; Eckstein and Gurr 1975; Almond and Powell 1978; Grew 1978; Linz 1978; Lipset 1981; Linz and Stepan 1996). If a majority of citizens no longer accept their democratic system, they are more likely to participate in revolutionary movements or develop a preference for anti-system parties. In its turn, this renders a change in the

structure of the system or even its collapse scarcely avoidable in the long term. The second example is concerned not with the stability of the democratic system but with its quality. If no civic virtues develop among the members of a society, they are unlikely to participate in a co-operative manner in democratic government.

Political support, civic virtues and democratic value-orientations are influenced by the experience of citizens with the everyday performance of the system and with its institutional mechanisms. But according to the theory, such feedback effects can only be expected in the long run. At any rate, this applies if, in a given democratic system, it can be assumed that support for the system and democratic values are entrenched in the belief system of the citizens. Such attitudes are constituted above all by processes of primary socialisation. And this is shaped by the historical experience of the country concerned.

The general point of reference for our analysis is the stability or consolidation of liberal democracies and the case at issue is the unified Germany. The relevant dimensions of political culture are therefore the system culture with political support as the core element. We deal with the latter in the following section.

### 2.1.2 The Concept of Political Support

One of the most important analytical distinctions in the theory of political support is the dichotomy of diffuse and specific support (Easton 1965; 1975). Diffuse support is distinguished from specific support primarily by the output criterion. It is only then that one of the often cited and plausible underlying ideas in Easton's theory becomes meaningful. He claims that the persistence of a democratic system is probable in proportion to the degree to which support for the system is independent of the erratic and deficient output of the system. The most important attitude for the persistence of a democratic system is diffuse support for the regime (diffuse support can also relate to authorities). In defining diffuse support more precisely, however, Easton again introduces a reference to output. According to Easton (1975, 44ff), continuous experience with the performance of the authorities can be generalised in the longer term in application to the regime, thus constituting a certain form of support for the regime. Easton himself refers to this form as regime trust, and Lipset (1981) understands a similar phenomenon as *effectiveness*. Generalised output evaluations are thus the source of a regime's effectiveness. Such a form of support is completely convincing and in keeping with everyday intuition. However, if it is stipulated it means that diffuse and

specific support can no longer be powerfully distinguished with the aid of the output criterion. This calls into question the theoretical relevance of *this* dichotomy. We therefore propose that the primary distinction be drawn between forms of support at the object level. To begin with, the theoretically relevant distinction will then be that between support for the regime and support for the authorities. Different sources of support forms can then be used for a secondary differentiation. This proposal will be elucidated in the further discussion of Easton's support concept.

Besides the generalised output evaluation, Easton postulates two other sources of diffuse support for the regime. The one consists in the subjective conviction that the regime is in accordance with one's own moral principles, and the resulting attitude is called *legitimacy* (Easton 1975, 450ff). This definition is largely congruent with those of Parsons (1969) and Lipset (1981). The other source is psychological ties with the regime, established through primary socialisation processes (Easton 1975, 444ff). This is truly diffuse support, because, at least in a political sense, it is without substance because it is not focussed on any particular institution or set of institutions.

These three sources of regime support can be associated without any problem with Parsons' (1951, 1969) three universal modes of evaluative orientation towards objects: expressive, moral, and instrumental. To the extent that they are universal orientation modes, they must also be brought into relation equally with all three objects of the political system (community, regime, authorities). In this manner a taxonomy can be constructed with nine forms of support<sup>2</sup> (Fuchs 1989, 26; 1993, 238). The three forms of support relating to the regime are *identification* with the regime (expressive orientation), the *legitimacy* of the regime (moral orientation), and the *effectiveness* of the regime (instrumental orientation).

With reference to Easton, this taxonomy uses the *sources* of an attitude towards an object as a criterion for the further differentiation of this attitude. But the concept of source already implies that it is a factor precedent in matter and time. This circumstance can be used to postulate empirically testable causal relations between different attitudes to democracy. This is attempted in the following model (Figure 2).

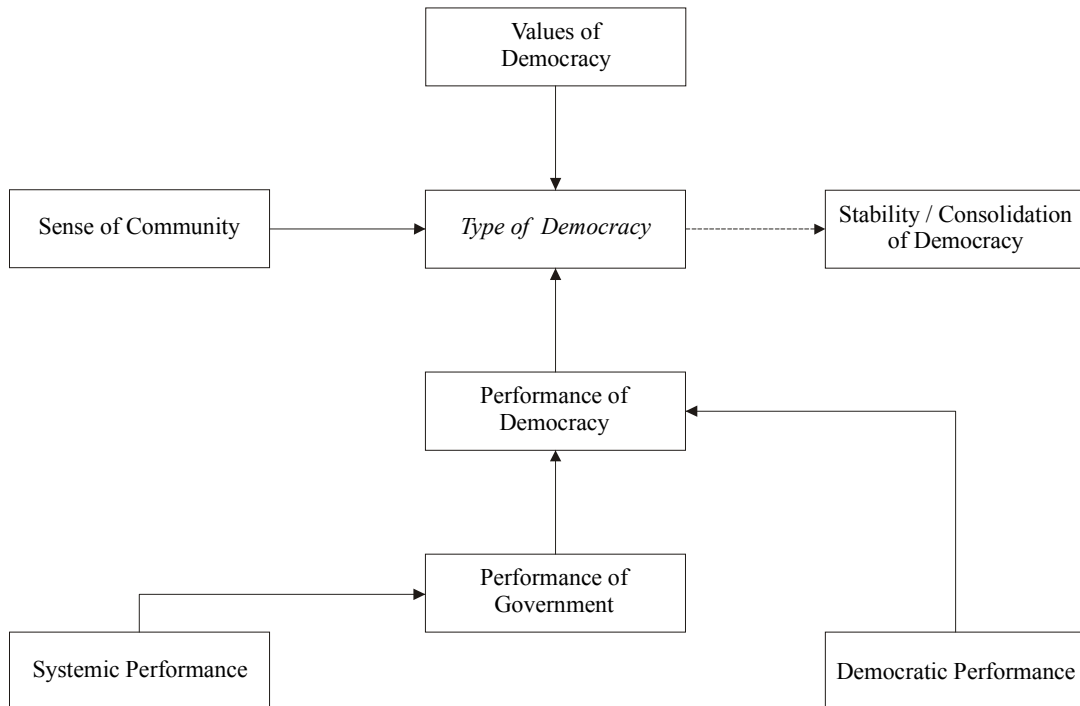
The dimensions of democracy distinguished in the model are compatible with those defined in the introductory chapter (see figure 1.2). The "values of democracy"

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<sup>2</sup> On this taxonomy of political support see also the chapter by Klingemann in this volume.

correspond to "regime principles", "type of democracy" to "regime institutions", "performance of democracy" to "regime processes", and "performance of government" to "political actors". Since we used our terminology in earlier studies, we wish to retain it here. We will now examine the model.

Figure 2: A Model of Support for Democracy



The principal dependent variable, and thus the key to the model, is support for the *type of democracy* as defined by the law of a country. The fundamental assumption is that support for the type of democracy is the direct predictor among cultural factors for the stability or consolidation of this democracy. This holds regardless of what influences this support itself. A positive or negative attitude *as such* towards the type of democracy in a country already has the postulated effect. If, for example, the majority of all citizens or of active citizens no longer accept the democracy of their own country, they develop a disposition to change its structure.

The determinants (sources) of this attitude come into play at a subordinate level. In the model, the direct effects of the values of democracy, the performance of democracy and the sense of community on the type of democracy are specified. The *sense of community* among its members has, as such, nothing to do with democracy, but various authors

(Easton 1965; Taylor 1992; Linz and Stepan 1996) regard it as a helpful factor for support for the political system of a country. Especially in a democracy it is hardly plausible that the democratic institutions can be considered by the citizens as the expression of a community (the demos) if this community does not even exist in their own perception.<sup>3</sup>

The model distinguishes the *values of democracy* from the type of democracy. Both dimensions are covered by Easton's (1965) regime concept. However, we consider it more useful to follow Parsons (1969) in distinguishing between values and structure and then postulating a relationship of influence between the two. Values are understood in this context as "conceptions of the desirable type" (Parsons 1969) of a social system. In our case we are dealing with the normative ideas of citizens about how democracy in their own country should be. To the extent that it corresponds in their perception to these normative ideas, they feel it to be justified and for this reason give it their support. If the type of democracy in a country is accepted solely because it represents values to which the citizens are committed, it is accepted "for its own sake" (Easton 1975) and not because it produces certain outputs. Commitment to these values is established in the first place by primary socialisation (see figure 1). Secondary socialisation and concrete experience during adult life later stabilises or erodes these value ties. The standard by which types of democracy in one's own country are evaluated is, in this case, the values of the citizens, and under the taxonomy we have described, the resulting attitude can be referred to as the *legitimacy of democracy*.

The third determinant of the type of democracy is the *performance of democracy*. This causal relation is associated with the assumption that the attitudes of citizens to the democracy in their country can be differentiated in two dimensions: the attitude towards this democracy as legally defined (type of democracy), and the attitude to it as it actually operates (performance of democracy). This distinction addresses the familiar distinction between constitutional norm and constitutional reality. For citizens it is not enough that their moral principles are given expression in legal norms. The reality of the democracy in their country must be in keeping with these principles if it is legitimately to be described as a democracy (Fuchs 1998a). If democratic norms exist only in the constitution without being implemented in reality, the constitution is reduced to a document without binding effect. That at least the population of Germany can really draw this plausible distinction between constitutional norm and constitutional reality is

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<sup>3</sup> Identification with the national community in western European countries is analysed by Dalton (1988, 18 ff.).

shown by the distributions of the corresponding indicators in a sample taken in 1997, as well as by confirmatory factor analysis of these indicators (the data are not recorded here).

Evaluation of democratic performance, on the one hand, and democratic values on the other hand, have different relationships with democracy itself. Whereas the later is based on a subjective *correspondence* of values to democracy, the former is a *generalisation* from experience to type. Easton (1975, 446) has described this generalisation as the "product of spill-over effects from evaluations of a series of outputs and performance over a long period of time". He continues: "even though the orientations derive from responses to particular outputs initially, they become in time dissociated from performance. They become transformed into generalized attitudes ..."

However, the process of generalisation sets in at a more profound level than that of the performance of democracy. On the one hand, it begins with experience of the behaviour and outputs of the incumbents of authority roles. The model in figure 2 is restricted to the government as the most important collective actor in the decision-making system. On the other hand it begins with the experience of certain outcomes of the political process that are regarded as important by the citizens, and for which attribution of responsibility is initially an open question. A distinction is drawn between systemic performance and democratic performance.

The distinction between systemic performance and democratic performance relates to the double nature of all democratic political systems (Fuchs 1998a). Democracy is always a certain form of a political system, and *as* a political system it has to produce certain results for society. They include a greater or lesser degree of security and well-being for the citizens. But such outputs do not have anything to do with democracy, because in principle they can also be supplied by other forms of political system. They are therefore described as *systemic performance*. The numerous studies examining the influence of economic factors on support for the democratic system are concerned with systemic performance (Clarke and Kornberg 1989; Finkel, Muller and Seligson 1989; Gabriel 1989; Weil 1989; Clarke, Dutt and Kornberg 1993; Anderson and Guillory 1997; Cusack 1997).

The particularity of democracy comes into play when it is a matter of putting democratic principles into practice in the political process. In the case of liberal democracy this concerns primarily the guarantee of fundamental rights, the observance

of certain standards of justice, and the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms. This is condensed into the concept *democratic performance*. From the perspective of the greatest possible stability of a given democracy, systemic performance should be attributed solely to government (see figure 2). In this way the corresponding dissatisfaction of citizens can be cushioned by replacing the government by the opposition, and generalisation at the level of the democratic system obviated. Since democratic performance relates to the realisation of concrete democratic standards, it must be assumed to influence the performance of democracy, which, after all, represent a generalised performance evaluation of the democratic system in the country concerned. Citizens' dissatisfaction at the level of democratic performance accordingly also has a direct impact on the attitude towards democracy as a whole. The effect of the performance of democracy on the type of democracy is based on an instrumental standard of evaluation, the extent to which the democracy of one's own country is able to attain goals one considers important. The resulting attitude can be called the *effectiveness of democracy*. The instrumental evaluation of types of democracy can relate to democratic and to systemic performance. The independence from everyday outputs postulated by Easton (1965, 1975) can meaningfully relate only to systemic performance and not to democratic performance. What form of support predominates in a given country is an empirical question that can be answered only by causal analyses taking account of all the relevant determinants of support for the type of democracy.

The model shown in figure 2 includes all the elements that Almond (1980, 28) assigned to system culture. System culture includes attitudes towards the democratic system on the three hierarchically ordered levels of *values*, *structure* and *performance*. To this must be added the attitude towards the most important incumbents of authority roles, principally the government. Furthermore, it places these elements in a causal structure. To a large extent, this model can be tested on the basis of survey data. Such a test has already been carried out for the unified Germany (Fuchs 1998b).

The model postulates an impact of the values of democracy on the type of democracy. This effect can be positive only if the value priorities of the citizens correspond to those embodied in the structure of the system. However, it is a fundamental assumption of our analysis that, due to socialisation in the former German Democratic Republic, East German citizens prefer a democracy model different to that of the unified Germany. This is one reason why the East German population tends to have a sceptical attitude towards the democracy of the unified Germany. In the following two sections we attempt to justify this assumption theoretically.



## 2.2 Normative Models of Democracy

Ideas about what a democracy is and how it should look are not formed by citizens of their own accord. They are instilled by primary and secondary socialisation processes. The socialisation agents in their turn must take recourse to the stores of knowledge offered by history and theoretical discussion. These stores of knowledge can be summarised in a limited number of democracy models (Held 1996). We refer to them as normative models of democracy because they set out certain principles of how a democracy *ought* to be. Such normative expectations are directed at the democracy of one's own country, and if the citizens consider them to be fulfilled, they evoke convictions of legitimacy among them (see also the preceding chapter).

We restrict our attention to three normative models of democracy: libertarian democracy, liberal democracy and socialist democracy (see table 1). Two other models in the current theoretical debate - communitarian democracy and deliberative democracy - can be left aside in the context of our analysis.

Table 1: Normative Models of Democracy

	Libertarian democracy	Liberal democracy	Socialist democracy
<i>A. Minimal elements of democracy</i>			
1. Constitutional guarantee of liberal basic rights	yes	yes	yes
2. Constitutional guarantee of universal, free and periodic elections	yes	yes	yes
3. Constitutional guarantee of the rule of law	yes	yes	yes
<i>B. Supplemental elements of a democracy</i>			
4. Constitutional guarantee of social rights	no	no	yes
5. Constitutional guarantee of direct citizen participation	no	no	yes
6. Political realization of social rights	no	yes	yes
(Conception of the state)	(Minimal state)	(Welfare state)	(All-embracing welfare state)

Table 1 attempts to describe the three models as succinctly as possible with the aid of six elements. Fuchs (1997a) offers a more comprehensive discussion. The elements are divided into minimal and supplemental elements of democracy. The *minimal elements* are those that permit a political system to be regarded as a democracy. We take up the definitions of Bobbio (1987), Sartori (1987) and Dahl (1989). All models record a „yes“ with regard to these minimal elements, so that they can all be considered legitimate models of democracy. The minimal elements are three constitutional guarantees: the liberal rights, the rule of law and universal, free and periodic elections. The liberal rights include subjective freedoms and political rights of participation. The three models are distinguished from one another only by the *supplemental elements*. They include further constitutional guarantees relating to social rights and direct citizen participation in political decision-making processes. The political realisation of social rights is also listed, a political demand deliberately not codified as a basic right.

Two of the models can be associated relatively easily with prominent representatives of the theoretical discussion: the libertarian model with Nozick (1974) and the liberal model with Rawls (1971, 1993). This is not quite so easy in the case of the socialist model, but the most important supplemental elements of this model are nevertheless relatively clearly identifiable in the literature (Eichler 1973; Euchner 1992; Sik 1992; Held 1996). As the entries for these supplemental elements show, the two contrasting instances are the libertarian model and the socialist model (see table 1).

In Nozick's (1974) *libertarian model* the core elements of liberalism, the individual and his freedom, are most rigorously deployed. In Nozick's theory only a *minimal State* can be justified, since the establishment of a State as such already restricts the freedom of individuals. The notion of the minimal State also implies laying down the rights that individuals have vis-à-vis the State. They consist only in the guarantee of so-called negative rights (Taylor 1985) of individuals vis-à-vis State authority and in the guarantee of free market relations between individuals. *For all other rights* of individuals, the State is *not competent*. The social inequalities and social insecurity arising in society are externalised by the libertarian State. Since the goals of the individual are attained on the free market, for a rational actor it is quite sufficient to restrict political participation to periodic elections.

In complete contrast to the libertarian model, the socialist model develops the conception of a paternalist all-embracing welfare state. The State is responsible for safeguarding against the primary risks of life and for eliminating social inequalities. These social rights are to be constitutionally guaranteed and thus enforceable in the courts. At the political level this means substantial redistribution by the State, in which the citizens are to be directly involved. These two elements - the constitutional guarantee of social rights, and direct participation by the citizens - are also laid down in the constitution of the former German Democratic Republic. However, the socialist model outlined in table 1 is not that of the socialism actually practised in the GDR. It contains the minimal elements of democracy and is accordingly also a model of democracy. It is therefore not congruent with the autocratic system in the GDR, even though there is overlap between these two supplemental elements.

The theoretical discussion has put forward a number of objections regarding a constitutional guarantee of social rights. First, politics is likely to have problems adjusting to the constraints of reality, and the State is likely to be overburdened by the claims made on it. Second, the constitutionalisation of social rights can lead to the politicisation of the judiciary (Saward 1994, 19). Third, the attempt to realise social rights in material form as well entails an almost imperative tendency of the State to intervene in autonomous market processes, and at least partially to abolish the functional distinction achieved between the political and economic systems. Fourth, social rights implemented by the State can be in contradiction to individual freedoms. The liberal models seeks to avoid such problems by setting clear priorities.

Rawl's (1971, 1993) version of the *liberal model* also underlines the importance of social rights. But both in justifying and implementing social rights, it differs from the socialist model in decisive ways. Justification relates directly to the fundamental freedoms. A certain guarantee of social rights or a just distribution of primary goods are first of all to ensure the fair value of individual freedom for all. According to Rawl's theory, in the event of conflict between the freedom of the individual and equality of primary goods, freedom must always win. One of the consequences of this normative weighting is the assignment of the implementation of social rights to the *political system actors* (above all the government). They are explicitly not included among Rawl's constitutional essentials. The constitution of the unified Germany is almost identical with that of the former West Germany. It contains exclusively the minimal elements of democracy as enforceable rights. The social aspects are taken into account by a relatively non-committal precept of social responsibility. At the time it was

founded, the former Federal Republic of Germany can be described as a libertarian democracy with the recommendation of a *political* development towards a welfare state. In the course of its subsequent history, this welfare state was indeed implemented. The actual democracy of the later West German Republic and hence that of the unified Germany thus corresponds most closely to the liberal model<sup>4</sup>. What we expect the analysis of the unified Germany to reveal is that West Germans also favour the liberal model whereas East Germans prefer the socialist model. In the following section we discuss and justify this assumption.

### 2.3 *The Formation of Democratic Attitudes within State-Socialist Systems*

According to the paradigm of political culture, a commitment to democratic values and support for a democratic system based on this commitment is a necessary condition for the consolidation of the system. We therefore return to the question raised in the introductory chapter: can people have acquired democratic values when they have had no experience of democratic institutions over a long period and have lived in an autocratic system (Conradt 1997; Rohrschneider 1998)? Quite different answers are given to this question. The two opposing positions can be described as the demonstration hypothesis and the socialisation hypothesis. We will take a brief look at them<sup>5</sup>.

Weil (1993) has given a incisive account of the *demonstration hypothesis*, taking the unified Germany as his example. He postulates the diffusion of democratic values from the democratic West to the socialist East. The channel of diffusion was primarily mass-media information. To this extent one can speak of system-external learning (Roller 1994). The preconditions for diffusion were the "demonstration" (Weil 1993) of the superiority of the societal system in West Germany in comparison with the state-socialist system in East Germany. The aspects of the German Democratic Republic felt to be particularly negative in comparison with the Federal Republic were economic deficiencies and various restrictions on freedom. Since the Federal Republic was felt to be the more attractive system, the socialisation efforts of the GDR were, according to this theory, fruitless, and a sort of re-socialisation in terms of the West German democratic system took place. The demonstration effects produced by the democratic

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<sup>4</sup> In the European discussion, this liberal model would tend to be called social-liberal and the libertarian model would probably be referred to as liberal.

<sup>5</sup> For a differentiated discussion of competing hypotheses on the formation of democratic attitudes already in the state-socialist systems see Rohrschneider (1998).

system "can serve as a functional equivalent for a reservoir of legitimation that otherwise takes years to build up" (Weil 1993, 209). Dalton (1994) largely concurs with this analysis. A number of authors offer similar arguments for other countries of central and eastern Europe (Starr 1991; Gibson, Duch and Tedin 1992; Evans and Whitefield 1995). Shortly after the introduction of democratic institutions, the demonstration hypothesis appeared to find confirmation in surveys carried out in several central and eastern European countries. They recorded an astonishingly high degree of support among citizens for democracy as a form of government and for democratic values. Klingemann and Hofferbert (1994) concluded that there was a „challenge to the theory that sees socialisation as the core of democratic civic culture“.

The *socialisation hypothesis* has a long tradition in political science. It is grounded in the well-established social-science perception that political value orientations are acquired by means of socialisation processes, and that the institutional context in which individuals live have a significant impact on this socialisation (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton 1965; Parsons 1969; Almond and Powell 1978). Rohrschneider (1994) therefore refers to institutional learning, and Roller (1994) to system-internal learning. The socialisation hypothesis has been explicated and affirmed for the state-socialist societies as a whole by Almond (1983) and Eckstein (1988). It was used by McGregor (1991) and by Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992) in studies on specific central and eastern European countries. In analyses of the eastern Länder in unified Germany, it is represented with varying degrees of explicitness by a range of authors (including Westle 1994; Roller 1994, 1997; Rohrschneider 1994, 1998; Lepsius 1995; Wiesenthal 1996). Lepsius (1995, 27) offers a very peremptory but analytically well-founded view: "the political culture of a democracy is in strong contrast to the political culture of a dictatorship." He describes the German Democratic Republic as a "socialist welfare state with an authority-related, hierarchical decision-making structure" (Lepsius 1995, 24). In this system the State pursues collective interests, which are based firstly on comprehensive social security and secondly in the realisation of egalitarian principles of equality. The socialist State is therefore concerned with the realisation of substantively defined notions of the common good.

According to the socialisation hypotheses, value orientations corresponding to a liberal democracy can develop only to a limited degree in such socialist systems. Some of the constitutive principles of liberal democracy are highly artificial (Lepsius 1995). This is true at least when the thinking and acting of individuals in their everyday life-world is the point of reference. These principles can therefore be acquired only through a

combination of socialisation efforts and continuous experience with politics within the institutional structure of a liberal democracy (see figure 1). They include an understanding of politics as a permanent conflict of interests with corresponding compromises brought about by rules of procedure. A liberal democracy is therefore precisely *not* concerned with realising a pre-determined common good or notion of justice by means of political decision-making processes. The political rationale of a liberal democracy is purely procedural, not substantive. Acknowledging this procedural rationale includes reacting without resignation if one's own demands are not taken up by the democratic process. Lepsius (1995, 29) cites as a graphic example for the difficulty of coping with such principles the statement by a well-known East German civil rights activist after German unification: "We demanded justice and we got the rule of law" (Bärbel Bohley).

The constitutive principles of a liberal democracy include limiting the demands of citizens on the State. In contrast to the state-socialist system of the GDR, a liberal democracy cannot and should not assume responsibility for all the wishes of the citizens, however justified they may be. The citizenry must recognise that the State cannot be responsible in principle for certain wishes and that under certain conditions of reality it may reject certain demands. What wishes and demands are actually concerned must be determined and negotiated politically, but the principle itself must be acknowledged. Rohrschneider (1998) argues along the same lines when he postulates "democratic restraint" as an essential requirement of a "liberal-democratic citizenship".

Depending on which of the two hypotheses is taken, quite different prognoses on the development of liberal democracy in the countries of central and eastern Europe result. According to the socialisation hypothesis, the formation of a political culture congruent with the political structure of liberal democracy is a lengthy process with no guarantee for success. According to the demonstration hypothesis, the question of political culture is no longer relevant for further consolidation because there has been an adequate political culture from the outset. If a sceptical attitude among citizens towards their democracy is ascertained after the change of system, it must therefore have to do with current political reality and not with the socialist heritage (Pollack 1997).

Which of the two hypotheses is more appropriate can only be determined empirically. But in order to address falsifiable expectations in an empirical analysis, it is useful to make a prior decision on a plausibility basis. The onus of proof differs for the two hypotheses. The demonstration hypothesis must show why established social research

findings have to be revised for the post-socialist systems; especially how such profound pre-socialisation could become possible through mass-media communication processes, via which the demonstration effects had largely to be realised. The socialisation hypotheses must show why the democratic systems in the countries of central and eastern Europe were supported by the citizens shortly after their introduction, and why these citizens have accepted democratic principles. We consider the socialisation hypothesis the more plausible of the two, and in the context of further discussion we attempt to appraise it.

We assume the simultaneous occurrence of system-internal and system-external learning (Roller 1994). System-external learning is based on a comparison of the two competing systems. The socialist system comes off considerably worse, and this ultimately leads to the collapse of this system in central and eastern Europe. Since the measure was the societal order of western countries, and this is characterised by democracy and market economy, initial acceptance of these two characteristics is hardly surprising. Support for personal rights, free elections, and the procedures of the rule of law was equally likely. It is hardly conceivable that reasonable individuals can oppose such principles. On the contrary, such principles are likely to have been an evaluative yardstick in comparing the competing systems. It is not by chance that the data referred to by adherents of the demonstration hypothesis are concerned primarily with such relatively uncontroversial principles. According to our theoretical framework, they are all minimal elements of a democracy (see table 1). It is therefore clear that, shortly after the collapse of the socialist societal system, the citizens of central and eastern European countries were basically in favour of a democracy and of the related minimal principles. However, two questions remain open. First, the extent to which this acceptance has persisted. It cannot be excluded that this initial advocacy of democracy in their own country was not so much entrenched support (consent) as superficial support (assent), which eroded under the impression of the problems presented by reality (Fuchs and Roller 1998). The second question is whether it is really *liberal democracy* they have in mind. This is primarily where we have our doubts.

In discussing the socialisation hypothesis, we have pointed out that the implications of a liberal democracy become really apparent only through personal experience and that they can be accepted only in a difficult and protracted learning process. Among other things, this involves limiting responsibility for the primary life-risks of citizens and for the inequalities engendered in the economic system. In these two aspects at least, there is a far-reaching contrast to personal experience in state-socialist systems. They

provided comprehensive social security and a relatively egalitarian distribution of goods. In most countries social security was underpinned by appropriate constitutional norms. A number of analyses show that, at least in the GDR, these aspects were seen as positive by the population and were considered a clear advantage over West Germany (Bauer 1991; Noelle-Neumann 1991; Rohrschneider 1994; Westle 1994; Roller 1997). These rights acquired in the German Democratic Republic were taken up and stabilised by the socialist model of democracy (see table 1). We have already seen that this is a legitimate model of democracy because it includes the minimal elements of every democracy. This model is no mere ineffectual theoretical construct; in most European countries it is advocated by substantial sections of the political elite. In Germany this has been demonstrated quite clearly by various elite studies (Rohrschneider 1994, 1996; Bürklin 1997; Welzel 1997). The heritage of socialism thus consists in a preference for a certain normative model of democracy that does not correspond to the implemented liberal democracy. If this analysis is valid, we must assume there to be latent incongruity between the values of democracy and the type of democracy in the countries of central and eastern Europe. This latency can become manifest through experience in the new societal system and transform the initial assent to the type of democracy into dissent (Fuchs and Roller 1998). How many citizens will undergo this transformation naturally depends on other factors such as the performance of the political actors concerned and international restrictions.

The following empirical analysis keeps to the hierarchical order of the objects of democracy shown in figure 2. It begins with the values of democracy, continues with the type of democracy, and concludes with the performance of democracy.

### **3. Empirical Analysis**

#### *3.1 Commitment to the Values of Democracy*

The values of democracy are the highest level in the hierarchy of the objects of democracy. They include three kinds of component. First, democracy as a value in itself. Since democracy is always a form of political system, the attitude towards democracy as a form of government can be regarded as an indicator for attachment to this value. Second, there are other values materially related to democracy, especially freedom and equality. Third, different normative models of democracy are to be assigned to this level, representing specific configurations of fundamental rights and



fundamental institutional arrangements. On the basis of the socialisation hypothesis, we can state more specific hypotheses about the value level of democracy.

- H1. The majority of East and West Germans support democracy as a form of government.
- H2. East Germans favour a socialist model of democracy and West Germans a liberal model.
- H3. Over the period under review, 1990 (i.e., the advent of German unification) to 1997, no systematic changes in these attitudes can be expected.

*Table 2: Democracy as a Form of Government*

	Democracy is ...	
	the best form of government (1991)	better than any other form of government (1997)
	% <sup>a</sup>	
West Germany	86	88
East Germany	70	81

a Percentage of respondent who agree with the statement.

Source: Institute for Opinion Research Allensbach (1991); FORSA (1997).

The first hypothesis about support for democracy as a form of government is clearly confirmed by the distributions shown in table 2. The 1991 indicator refers to the attitude towards democracy as the best form of government. The 1997 indicator is formulated a little more cautiously, asking whether democracy is better than any other form of government. However, both indicators appropriately operationalize the construct of support for democracy as a form of government. We are not yet considering the specific institutionalisation of democracy in a given country. In both parts of Germany and at both recording dates, democracy as a form of government was supported by an overwhelming majority of the population. This is also the case in response to the rigid formulation of the question in 1991, which asked about the *best* form of government. Nevertheless, given an overall relatively high level of acceptance, the difference between East and West Germany is notable. In East Germany, support for democracy as a form of government is significantly lower than in West Germany at both time points. This could be because some respondents still favour the system of the German Democratic Republic and associate it not with the concept of democracy but with that of socialism.

Since we have only two recording time points for support for democracy as a form of government, and, moreover, the two indicators are not identical, no statement can be

made on the development of the attitude over the period 1990 to 1997. Hypothesis 3 can therefore not be tested with these data.

International comparisons in particular show how significant this empirically recorded support for democracy is (see also Dalton 1998, 15). A 1989 Eurobarometer study asked about attitudes to democracy as a form of government as opposed to dictatorship. The empirical results show that West Germany is among the countries with the highest rates of support for democracy at this level (Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson 1995, 349). As the data from the World Values Survey 1994-1997 show, little has changed during the nineties in this favourable ranking (see Klingemann in this volume). The question used in the World Values Survey was: "Democracy may have problems, but it is better than any other form of government" (alternative answers: agree strongly, agree, disagree, disagree strongly). The rate of agreement in West Germany was 93 per cent and in East Germany 91 per cent (the two positive alternative answers have been aggregated). Among the many countries under review, the two parts of Germany thus rank high in their support for democracy as a form of government (see table 7 in Klingemann). For example, West Germany has the same score as Norway, and East Germany ranks with Switzerland, two countries that are indubitably traditional democracies with a high degree of legitimacy. As opposed to the figures in table 2, the difference between the two parts of Germany recorded by the World Values Survey is only slight.

The second hypothesis postulates a preference for the socialist model of democracy among East Germans and a preference for the liberal model among West Germans. Indicators for all the relevant factors of these models would be needed for appropriate testing. They are not available. For the empirical appraisal of the hypothesis we therefore use two indicators that relate systematically to the two models of democracy. The first is the attitude towards socialism and the other the relative priority given firstly to freedom and secondly to equality. We begin by analysing the attitude towards socialism, first of all discussing the relevant indicator. Current research indicates that the actual socialism of the German Democratic Republic was abolished with the approval of most of its citizens. But at the same time we assume that these same citizens regard some elements of East German socialism as positive, and even as an advantage over West Germany. The question is therefore how cognitive dissonance between the unfavourable evaluation of the actual socialism of East Germany and the favourable assessment of some of its characteristics can be avoided. This can be done by contrasting the *idea of socialism* with *actual socialism*. On an ideal level socialism can be considered positive because it contains social and egalitarian values and can also

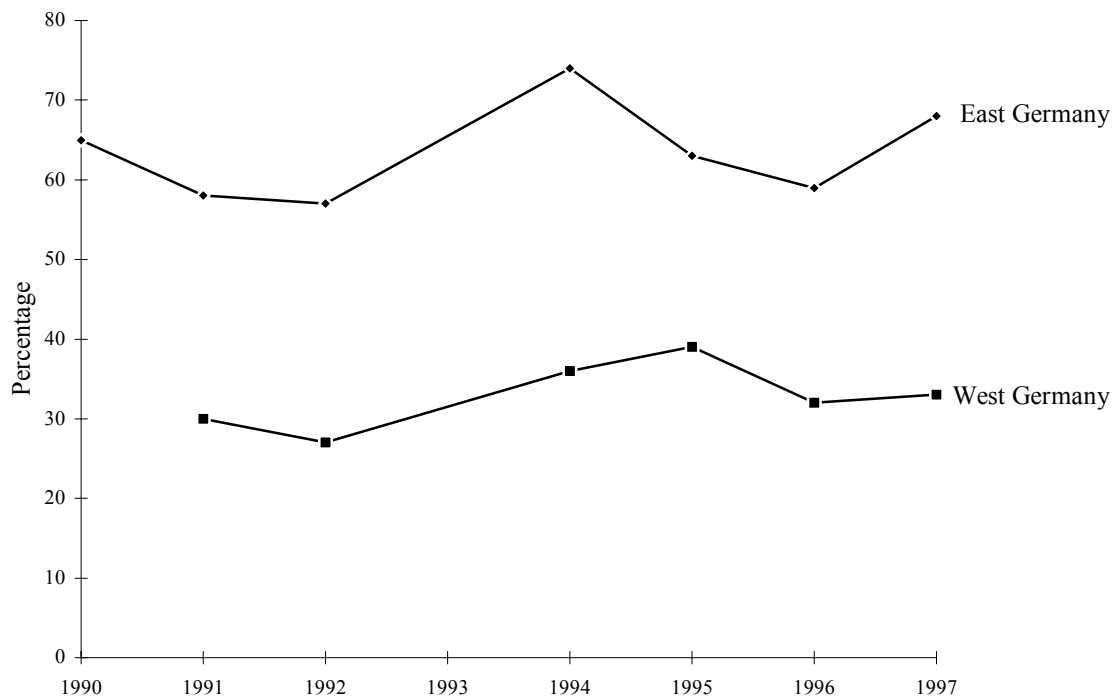
fundamentally be associated with democratic freedoms. In this view, the idea of socialism was poorly implemented in East Germany. A 1992 survey shows that many East Germans make this distinction. Only 28 per cent of respondents give the failure of socialism as the cause for the collapse of the GDR, whereas 60 per cent attribute it to the incompetence of the politicians (Noelle-Neumann and Köcher 1993, 554). The downfall of actual socialism was accordingly not the consequence of structural deficiencies of the system but could have been averted by more capable actors.

What precisely East Germans understand by socialism is shown by how they responded when asked what they felt to be a necessary part of socialism (Noelle-Neumann and Köcher 1993, 552). Social rights were stated to be the most important element. 73 per cent of respondents, for example, considered that the "right to work" was a necessary element of socialism, and 65 per cent felt the same about the "right to kindergarten facilities" Only a very small proportion of respondents regarded these two elements as *not* consistent with socialism. In table 1 these social rights are described as supplemental elements of democracy, which distinguish the socialist model of democracy from the others. The socialist model also includes the minimal elements of a democracy, and to this extent it is to be considered a legitimate model of democracy. Such elements are also represented in the question battery. No less than 59 per cent of respondents state that "freedom of expression for citizens" and "free and secret elections" are necessary elements of socialism. But respondents are in less accord on these two aspects than on social rights. A little over 20 per cent of respondents state that they are *not* consistent with socialism. East Germans thus clearly associate socialism with social rights, and a majority - although not without controversy - with the minimal elements of democracy. For East Germans, the concept of socialism thus largely conserves what is referred to as the socialist model of democracy.

Whereas the question on what is understood by socialism is concerned primarily with cognitive orientations, figure 3 shows how socialism is evaluated. It records over time the proportion of respondents in East and West Germany who consider socialism a good idea that was merely badly implemented. This question directly operationalizes the cognitive operation of dissonance avoidance we have noted. According to the data in figure 3, the difference between East and West Germany is substantial over the entire period. Whereas, on average, about two-thirds of East Germans consider socialism to be a good idea, less than a third of West Germans share this opinion. On the premise that, for East Germans, the idea of socialism is largely associated with the characteristics of the socialist model of democracy, this empirical analysis permits the conclusion that

East Germans have a lasting, positive attitude towards this model of democracy. Support for the model is markedly weaker in West Germany. These data are therefore consistent with first part of the second hypothesis. However, no direct conclusion about the attitude towards the liberal model can be made on this basis.

*Figure 3: Socialism as an Idea, 1990-1997*



*Question:* "Do you think socialism is a good idea that was badly put into practice?"

Here: Percentage of positive responses.

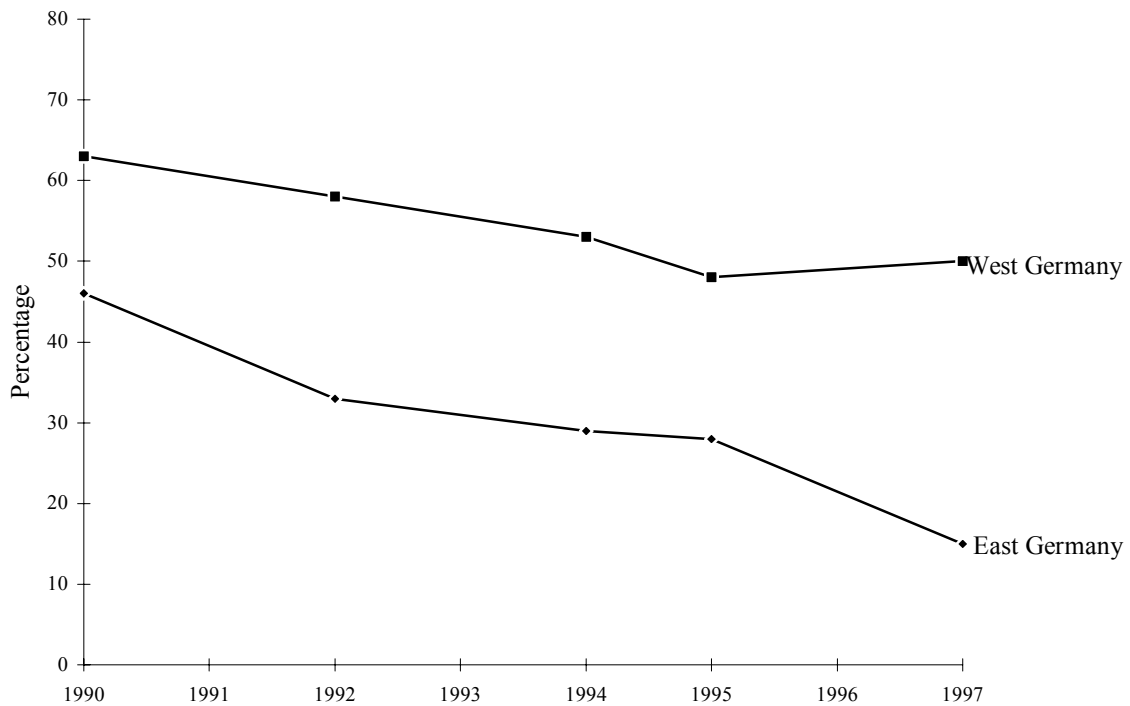
*Source:* Institute for Opinion Research, Allensbach.

The two time series in figure 3 show considerable fluctuation, more marked in East Germany than in the West. The attitude towards the idea of socialism is apparently also influenced by situational factors. But the fluctuation reveals no systematic trend in the sense of hypothesis 3.

Within the spectrum of the values of democracy, democracy itself is naturally the most important. But freedom and equality are two further values indissolubly linked to democracy, and which in a certain manner, define it more precisely (Fuchs 1998a). This means that a positive evaluation of democracy implies a positive evaluation of these two values. However, the relationship between freedom and equality is not free from

contradiction when it comes to institutional and political realisation. This raises the question which of the two fundamentally accepted values is to be given priority in the event of conflict. The normative models of democracy give different answers. Whereas the socialist model prioritises equality, the liberal model opts for freedom. Rawls (1971, 1993), repeatedly and explicitly stresses that, in the event of conflict, freedom should have *unconditional* priority. The subjective priority given to either freedom or equality therefore provides more direct evidence of citizens' preference for the two models of democracy than was possible in the case of attitudes towards the idea of socialism.

Figure 4: Priority of Freedom over Equality, 1990-1997



Question: "Ultimately which is probably more important, freedom or the greatest possible equality?"  
Here: Priority of freedom.

Source: Institute for Opinion Research, Allensbach.

The time series in figure 4 deal with the proportion of the citizenry that gives priority to freedom over equality. This priority is consistent with the liberal model of democracy and thus with the model closest to the democracy of the unified Germany. The difference between East and West Germany is in keeping with the second hypothesis. At all time points, significantly greater priority was given to freedom over equality in

West Germany than in East Germany, the figure for West Germany being over 50 per cent and for East Germany under 50 per cent at all time points.<sup>6</sup>

Hypothesis 3 postulates no systematic changes in attitude at the value level over the period from 1990 to 1997. But the *continuous decline* in the priority of freedom over equality in East Germany is in conspicuous contradiction to this assumption. Whereas almost 50 per cent of East Germans gave priority to freedom over equality in the year of German unification, by 1997 the figure had dropped to only 20 per cent. Over time, the difference between East and West Germany has thus not diminished, indeed it has drastically increased. How is the falsification of the hypothesis to be explained in retrospect? The explanation is likely to be found in situational factors that took effect only in the unified Germany (Pollack 1997; Walz and Brunner 1997; Pollack, Pickel and Jacobs 1998). Another factor could be waning memories of the restrictions and material deficits in the German Democratic Republic. For this reason, disappointment with the material situation in the unified Germany and especially with social security was able to develop unhindered (Lepsius 1995). This had an impact on the preference for equality, which is a central element of an idealised socialism and in subjective contrast to social reality in the unified Germany. However, the significant difference between East and West in the relative priority of freedom over equality recorded shortly after German unification shows that situational factors were not the only explanation. Moreover, how situation is defined depends not only on objective factors. It is defined in the light of standards that are acquired in the course of socialisation.

If we take the time series on the attitude towards the idea of socialism and on the priority of freedom over equality together, the empirical evidence suggests that East and West Germans support different models of democracy, and that this preference is attributable at least in some measure to socialisation in different societal systems. This assumption is stabilised by the empirical findings presented in the following section.

### 3.2 *Support for the Type of Democracy*

On the basis of the theoretical expectations and empirical findings of the preceding section, we can assume that the majority of East Germans prefer a socialist model of

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6 It should be taken into account that undecided respondents were included in the basis for calculating the percentages in figure 4, and that this category varied between 10 and 20 per cent depending on the time point.

democracy, and that the majority of West Germans favour a liberal model. If at the same time we assume that a liberal model of democracy is closer to the type of democracy institutionalised in the unified Germany, we must, according to the support for democracy model (see figure 2), assume the effect of the values of democracy on the type of democracy to be different, namely negative in East Germany and positive in West Germany. Just how strong these effects are cannot be specified a priori, but our analysis so far appears to justify the following hypothesis:

H4. In West Germany a majority and in East Germany a minority of citizens supports the type of democracy of the unified Germany.

The question is, however, from what point in time this can validly be asserted, and how this attitude was able to develop. As far as West Germany is concerned, the answer is relatively unproblematic. Scholars largely agree that that wide-spread and firmly established support for this democracy developed in the decades following the founding of the former West German State, the Federal Republic (Conradt 1980, 1991; Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt 1981; Gabriel 1987; Fuchs 1989). According to these studies it has clearly proved to be more than a fair-weather democracy, accepted by its citizens only in phases of economic prosperity. Democracy has thus been supported for its own sake, and it is implausible that this should suddenly have changed after German unification. Majority support for the type of democracy of the unified Germany must accordingly already have existed in 1990 and is unlikely to have substantially declined in the period that followed.

Expectations for East Germany are more difficult to formulate. According to the socialisation hypothesis we could expect relatively high support for the democracy of the united Germany among East Germany at the beginning of German unity, and a relatively strong decline in this support in the following years. The socialisation hypothesis assumes that, shortly after the introduction of democracy to the countries of central and eastern Europe, there was only latent incongruity between the normative notions of democracy among citizens and the liberal democracy actually implemented. For this reason the incongruity cannot have had a negative impact on evaluation of the liberal democracy in the countries concerned. The latency is attributable to system-external learning, which had led to a negative assessment of the given societal system and to a positive evaluation of the western societal order. The comparison between the two societal orders was possible primarily only via mass-media communication processes. However, since these processes are indirect in nature, they could supply only limited information and did not provide experience of any sort. The implications of a

liberal democracy can thus become clear only through personal experience with politics in the institutional context of the new system of government. Only on the basis of this experience is it more or less probable that the latent incongruity becomes manifest. Just how great this probability is and what effects such a transformation has on support for the democracy of the country concerned depends on various factors. One of the most important is the performance of the democracy in question. For the moment we will disregard this factor, which we will examine in the next section.

However, we consider that the socialisation hypothesis needs to be modified in the case of East Germany. In many ways the German Democratic Republic was much closer to the western societal system than most countries in central and eastern Europe could possibly have been. This propinquity was to the society of West Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany. There were three aspects. First, the common historical experience within the borders of a unified nation-state until the end of the Second World War. Second, territorial contiguity. This gave East Germans access to western television, which they viewed intensively. Third, there were comprehensive family contacts. East Germans must therefore have been relatively well informed about West Germany. They were accordingly also aware of the aspects of this societal system that their socialisation in the GDR would lead them to regard as particularly detrimental: high unemployment, and the comparatively weak social security system (Roller 1997). We therefore assume that East Germans were in certain measure sceptical from the outset about the societal system of the Federal Republic. This scepticism does not exclude that they had an overall preference for West Germany over East Germany, and that they were in favour of unification for practical if for no other reasons. Following this argument, we can thus assume that at the time of German unification there was already manifest incongruity between the values of democracy and the type of democracy in the unified Germany for a significant proportion of East Germans. This had the negative impact on support for the type of democracy in East Germany we have mentioned. In view of subsequent experience, the initial scepticism tended to stabilise rather than diminish. We can now state a fifth hypothesis:

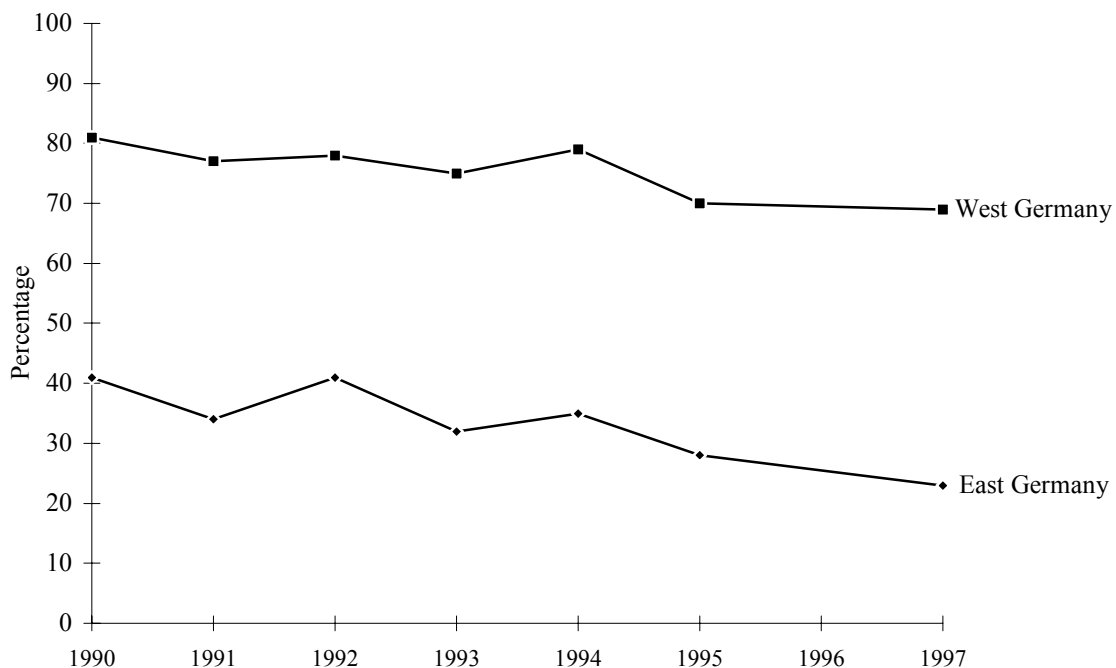
H5. Already at the time of German unification there was a significant difference between West and East Germans in their support for the type of democracy in the unified Germany. Over time this support declined relatively slightly in West Germany and relatively strongly in East Germany.

The time series in figure 5 record the proportion of respondents who considered the democracy of the Federal Republic of Germany as the *best form of government* for the



period from 1990 to 1997. We regard this indicator as a valid operationalization of support for the "type of democracy". The empirical findings presented in figure 5 clearly confirm hypotheses 4 and 5. Already in 1990 the extent of support differed markedly in West and East. 81 per cent of West Germans and 41 per cent of East Germans support the democracy of the Federal Republic. In considering these figures, it should be remembered that the question about the democracy of the Federal Republic as the best form of government is overstated. Had the question been formulated in more reserved terms, the percentage for East Germany would certainly have been higher and would possibly have exceeded 50 per cent. On the one hand, confirmation of the fourth hypothesis for East Germany could thus be tied to this specific indicator. On the other, it can be assumed that the situation in 1990 was special one. The successful unification of Germany certainly had a short-term transfigurational impact that somewhat obscured the "true" attitude towards the democracy of unified Germany. The 41 per cent score in East Germany and the 81 per cent in West Germany accordingly represent a situation-specific exaggeration. However, the formulation of the question does not affect confirmation of the significant difference between West and East Germany asserted in hypothesis five, since the same indicator was used in both samples.

Figure 5: Type of Democracy in Germany, 1990-1997



*Question:* "Do you believe that the democracy we have in the Federal Republic is the best form of government, or is there a better form of government?"

Here: "The democracy we have in the Federal Republic is the best form of government."

*Source:* Institute for Opinion Research, Allensbach.

This initial support declined in both parts of Germany after 1990. In 1997 the figure for West Germany was 69 per cent and for East Germany 23 per cent. Whereas more than two-thirds of West Germans thus still considered the democracy of the Federal Republic to be the best form of government, less than a quarter of East Germans shared this opinion. The 40 percentage-point difference already recorded in 1990 had increased to an enormous 46 point gap.

Our analysis therefore allows us to agree with Pollack (1997, 8) that democracy "in 1990 was accepted by the majority of the East German population". But this acceptance was of democracy in general and not specifically of the democracy institutionalised in the unified Germany. This distinction is very clearly demonstrated by a comparison of similarly formulated indicators. According to a 1991 survey, 70 per cent of East Germans regard democracy in principle as the best form of government, while only 31 per cent felt the same about the democracy of the Federal Republic (Fuchs 1997b, 276). The corresponding figures for West Germany were 86 per cent for democracy in principle and 80 per cent for the democracy of the Federal Republic. In this case the difference in the west is astonishingly small.

Our empirical findings have shown that there has been a substantial difference from the outset between the two parts of Germany in attitudes towards democracy. Attitudes have differed about the idea of socialism, about the priority of freedom over equality, and about the type of democracy in the unified Germany. In all these essential aspects, the political culture of the unified Germany must hence be seen as heterogeneous. What other factor than the different societal systems in which East and West Germans lived for over four decades can have produced this inhomogeneity? But East Germans and West Germans also have a great deal in common. In both parts of Germany the preferred form of government is clearly democracy not autocracy. This attitude persists in East Germany despite disappointment with the democracy of the unified Germany.

### *3.3 Support for the Performance of Democracy*

According to the model in figure 2, support for the type of democracy of a country is the relatively most important attitude for the stability and/or consolidation of this democracy. Apart from the values of democracy, the performance of democracy is assumed to be a factor directly influencing the formation of this attitude. This means

that evaluation of performance can modify the influence of value orientations on the type of democracy. Under certain conditions a lack of positive effect from value orientations can be compensated by positive performance evaluation. This sort of compensation occurred in the case of the former West Germany (Conradt 1980, 1991; Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt 1981; Gabriel 1987; Fuchs 1989). Unlike in East Germany when the country was unified, democracy as a form of government was far from attracting active support among the population when the former Federal Republic was established (Fuchs 1989, 92ff). The attitude tended to be one of "lukewarm" acceptance in the absence of alternatives after the collapse of National Socialism and the lost war. If support for the democracy of the Federal Republic could accordingly not develop "from the top down", the only alternative was for it to have become established "from the bottom up". The so-called "Wirtschaftswunder" or "economic miracle" that set in in the early fifties created the necessary conditions. Gradually people transferred the positive assessment of system performance grounded on economic development to the democracy of the Federal Republic, and ultimately to the values associated with this democracy. Another important factor generating support for the democracy of the Federal Republic was certainly the East-West conflict, which manifested itself with particular virulence in the divided Germany. In the course of time, support for the democracy of the Federal Republic became detached from its origins, constituting an autonomous attitude. As such it was able to develop resistance to performance deficiencies, and this was why it did not become a fair-weather democracy. The history of the Federal Republic is thus an almost paradigmatic example of generalisation from concrete experience within a democracy to the fundamental attitude towards this democracy.

Empirically we have found relatively weak support for the type of democracy in East Germany. Can we therefore assume that a similar generalisation process has occurred there, leading to an increase in support? We will discuss this question on the basis of a further time series. But first we will again formulate hypotheses. The attitude towards the performance of democracy is based on the extent to which people consider their demands to be met in the reality of the democracy concerned. The demands in question are those that people believe they may legitimately make of the democracy in their country. However, such demands depend on people's own normative standards. And these are not identical in West and East Germany. Although social rights are among the most important political goals of people in both parts of Germany, the guarantee of social rights in East Germany is a demand addressed to democracy itself, whereas in West Germany it is directed only to the incumbent government. This theoretical

assumption has also been empirically confirmed by the estimation of a causal model (Fuchs 1998b). But the guarantee of social rights such as job security, security in the event of illness, pension security, etc., always depends on economic development. For the period under review this was marked largely by declining growth rates. The political agenda of the unified Germany therefore tended to address cuts in social spending rather than increases (Roller 1997). Taking the guarantee of social rights as the basis for evaluation, East Germans were therefore hardly able to judge the performance of democracy positively.

On the one hand, economic development is an objective constraint on social policy. On the other, its perception is an independent factor influencing the attitude towards the performance of democracy. This influence may be direct or have an indirect impact via the attitude towards the performance of government. Economic development is the most important dimension of system performance, and, because of the objective course it has taken in the unified Germany, we must assume that the attitude towards system performance will have had a negative impact on the attitude towards the performance of government and/or towards the performance of democracy. This assumption applies in both parts of Germany. Various empirical studies show that this is indeed the case (Walz and Brunner 1997; Pollack, Pickel and Jacobs 1998).

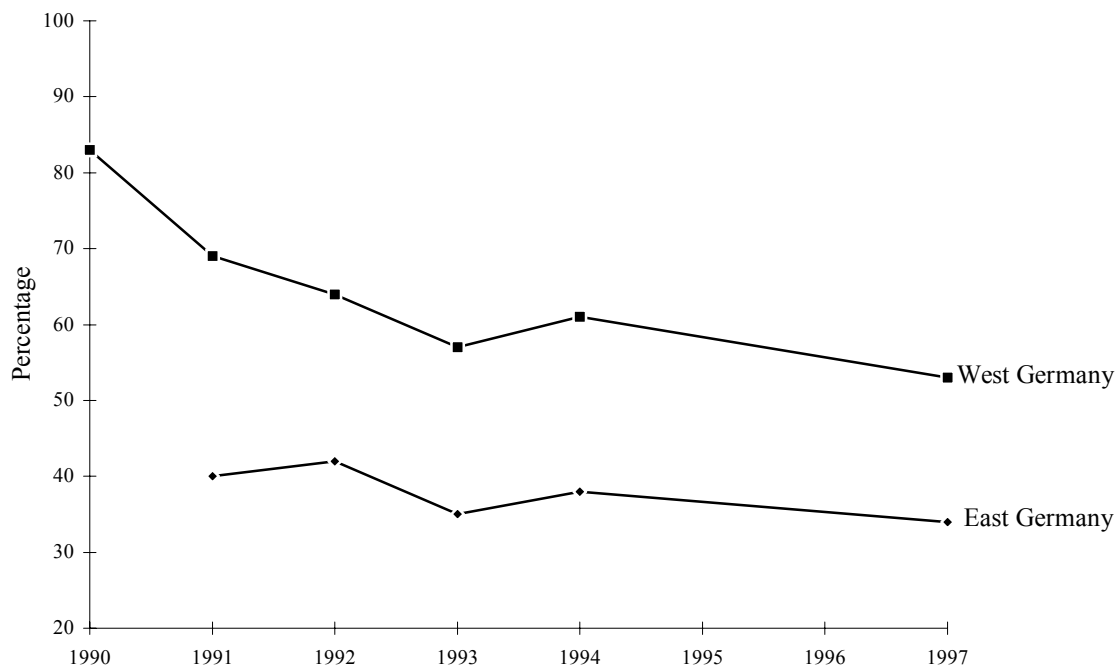
Having considered the most important factors for the attitude towards the performance of the democracy of the unified Germany, we can state two further hypotheses:

- H6. Support for the performance of the democracy of the Federal Republic is significantly higher in West Germany than in East Germany.
- H7. After German unification there was a decline in this support for the performance of democracy in East Germany and in West Germany.

In appraising these hypotheses we take recourse to the indicator of the Eurobarometer that asks about satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one's own country. This indicator has provoked interminable complaints that it does not measure what it purports to measure and that it should be used only for pragmatic reasons. We will not take up the discussion again in this context. We merely point out that the value of the indicator can be determined only in relation to a concept of political support. If it is theoretically appropriate to draw a distinction between support for the type of democracy and for the performance of democracy, this Eurobarometer indicator provides a measure of support for the performance of democracy. And for this attitudinal construct it is an excellent indicator. We can thus turn to analysis of figure 6.

The measurements recorded in figure 6 show the percentages of respondents very satisfied or satisfied with the functioning of the democracy of the Federal Republic. It is immediately apparent that the significant difference between East and West Germany claimed by the sixth hypothesis exists at all points in time. The seventh hypothesis is also confirmed, but only for West Germany. After the high rate of satisfaction in 1990, there was a sharp decline in 1991, which continued in weaker form until 1993. Since then satisfaction with the performance of democracy has settled down at a certain level. But at no time has it been below the 50 per cent mark. The strong decline recorded after 1990 is also attributable to the fact that the 1990 figure was the highest recorded in West Germany since 1976 (Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson 1997). In this case, too, the most important reason for this extraordinary score will probably have been the immediately preceding unification of the country.

*Figure 6: Performance of Democracy in Germany, 1990-1997*



*Question:* "All in all, how satisfied are you with the functioning of democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany? (1) Very satisfied, (2) satisfied, (3) dissatisfied, (4) very dissatisfied?"  
(1,2=satisfaction).

*Source:* Eurobarometer (1990-1994), FORSA (1997).

Unfortunately, there are no figures for East Germany for 1990. Under the impression of German unification, satisfaction with the performance of democracy is likely to have been greater than at other points in time, as has been the case in West Germany. In

contrast to West Germany, no unambiguous development since 1991 can be identified, but a slight decline in support seems to have taken place. The seventh hypothesis is thus confirmed only to a very limited degree for East Germany. Situational factors cannot have had the expected impact. Even at an early date, scepticism about the reality of the democracy in the unified Germany was apparently so strong that later experience was unable significantly to change it.

The empirical findings recorded in figure 6 show that no positive generalisation from the performance of democracy to the more fundamental attitude towards the type of democracy has yet taken place in East Germany. Hence the persistently low support for the type of democracy described in the preceding section. In conclusion we can thus state that democracy in unified Germany is supported by only a minority of East Germans, and that the extent of support has tended to decline over time. In the final section we will discuss what consequences this could have for the further development of the unified Germany.

#### **4. Conclusions**

According to the paradigm of political culture, congruity of structure and culture is a necessary condition for the stability of a democracy. In many studies congruity remains ill-defined (Kaase 1998), but from the point of view of stability, more precise definition presents no problem. The relevant dimension of political culture is the *support* a democracy receives from its citizens. It still has to be decided to which of the various objects of democracy this support must relate and how strong it must be to satisfy the postulate of congruity.

A liberal democracy lives from permanent political disputation about the goals that are to be attained through political processes. Its life-blood is therefore disagreement, *dissensus*, not consensus. However, regulation of this dissensus requires rules of procedure. These rules must be accepted by those involved if they are to fulfil their regulatory function. Consensus at the procedural level is thus a condition for dissensus at the political level. The rules of procedure of a liberal democracy are legally defined by the constitution and embodied in institutions. The specific arrangement of institutions characterises the type of democracy in a particular country. The support of citizens must primarily relate to this type. It cannot be theoretically determined with any certitude how strong support must be if the stability of democracy is not to be at risk.

We therefore propose the following pragmatic solution. If support drops below the 50 per cent mark, hence emanating from only a minority of citizens, the stability of the democracy at issue can be expected to run into problems. The higher the level above the 50 per cent mark that support attains, the more favourable this will be for the stability of the democracy.

If the regulatory structures of a democracy are accepted by its citizens, they are highly unlikely to accept any changes intended by political actors. At the same time, there will be a relatively high degree of probability that everyday political conflicts can be resolved through the regulatory structures. These assumption also apply in principle even where there is no consensus among citizens at the value level. However, it is unlikely that adequate support for the regulatory structures of a democracy can develop and persist if the values by which these structures are legitimated are not accepted by the citizenry. Apart from support for the type of democracy, we accordingly consider commitment to the values of democracy as a further specification of the congruity postulate.

Our empirical analysis has revealed a substantial discrepancy between the two parts of Germany at these two levels of democracy. At the level of the values of democracy, the findings indicate that East Germans tend to favour a socialist model of democracy, whereas West Germans prefer a liberal model. And only such a liberal model is consistent with the democracy institutionalised in the unified Germany. For this among other reasons, support for the type of democracy of the unified Germany is relatively high in West Germany and relatively low in East Germany. This difference between West and East therefore relates not to everyday political disputes but to fundamental attitudes towards democracy. The "inner unity" of the political community of unified Germany has not yet been achieved (Kaase 1995; Kaase and Bauer-Kaase 1998).

We have assumed socialisation in different societal systems to be the principal cause of the discrepancies between West Germans and East Germans. Our findings cannot directly and unquestionably confirm the socialisation hypothesis. But they allow much better interpretation of the empirical evidence than competing hypotheses. Rohrschneider (1998) comes to a very similar conclusion in his comprehensive analysis. We thus assume that the socialisation and experience of East Germans in the German Democratic Republic firstly had a systematic impact on their normative notions of democracy, and secondly produced a sceptical attitude towards the liberal democracy of the unified Germany. These predispositions are again confirmed by negative experience

in the unified Germany. Thus is East Germany predispositions shaped by socialisation and concrete experience are mutually stabilising.

There are two starting points for negative experience. First the deterioration in social security in various areas as a consequence of the economic recession. This deterioration manifested itself in, among other things, increasing unemployment and cuts in social benefits. However, we assume that they gain subjective relevance only through the application of normative standards that are not derived from these objective facts. According to our analysis, the majority of East Germans regard the guarantee of social rights as a legitimate demand on democracy as a form of government. The growing gap between demand and reality must therefore have an adverse effect on the attitude towards the democracy of the unified Germany. Second, the gap in material conditions between West Germany and East Germany that existed from the outset increased in the course of time. If we may assume that the point of reference for assessing their material situation for East Germans differs from that of people in other central and eastern European countries, and is increasingly not the earlier situation in the German Democratic Republic but the comparison with West Germany, *relative deprivation* is the necessary outcome. Such feelings of deprivation can scarcely have a positive impact on the attitude towards a democracy that is still regarded as an import from West Germany. The expectation of many East Germans that a new constitution would be implemented for the unified Germany and that they would be involved in drawing it up, was not fulfilled after unification. Support for the democracy of the unified Germany could therefore not develop through the generalisation of positive experience (Gabriel 1997, 25). All indications on future economic development under the conditions of globalisation suggest that the conditions for positive experience are unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future.

Our analysis reveals a political culture in East Germany that is *not* congruent with the democracy of the unified Germany. The low level of support for the type of democracy implies a disposition to change this type structurally. The direction in which this disposition points is indicated by the preferences recorded at the value level. The majority of East Germans favour a socialist model of democracy. This contains at least two elements that distinguish it from the liberal democracy of the unified Germany, namely the constitutional guarantee of social rights and the constitutional guarantee of direct participation by the citizens in the political decision-making processes. In a liberal democracy such a disposition of the average citizen will remain latent as long as it is not taken up and mobilised by political elites. As elite studies have shown



(Rohrschneider 1994, 1996; Bürklin 1997; Welzel 1997), in Germany there is substantial potential at the elite level, too, in favour of a socialist model of democracy. It cannot therefore be assumed that the disposition for structural change in the liberal democracy of the unified Germany will necessarily remain latent. It has still to be discussed whether precisely this direction of structural change can be more effective in the growing economic competition between countries. The agenda is more likely to contain further limitation of citizens' demands on the state and the associated increase in individual responsibility than an expansion of the welfare state. However, a constitutional guarantee of social rights would make a considerable expansion of the welfare state inevitable.

The future development of democracy in the unified Germany will be shaped not only by East Germany but naturally by West Germany as well. The question is therefore what dynamics will arise from the discrepancies between the two parts of the country and how they are to be evaluated from the perspective of the stability of the liberal democracy of unified Germany. If only size is taken into account, the pressure to adjust would be exerted by the West on the East, and in the long run the East would adapt to the West. Until this adjustment has taken place, the very positive attitude of West Germans, who constitute a clear majority of the German population, could in certain measure neutralise the sceptical attitude of East Germans. Another argument presents itself if we take account of the welfare state tradition in Germany, which is unbroken since Bismarck era in the last century, and which has never suffered interruption (Schmidt 1998). It is still reflected in the high welfare-state demands of citizens in both parts of Germany. Whereas social demands in East Germany are part of democracy as a form of government, in West Germany these demands are directed of incumbent government. In West Germany, social demands are thus merely a political issue, not a systemic one. This is consistent with the liberal model of democracy. But there is no guarantee that this limitation of demands to the everyday political level will continue. The discussion of social rights as basic rights in a democracy could result in pressures, from East Germany, and could also lead to generalisation at the system level in West Germany. It remains to be seen how the dynamics operating between the two parts of Germany actually develop.

We have described East Germans' preference for a socialist model of democracy as a heritage of the state-socialist system of the GDR and explained it in terms of the socialisation hypothesis. If this diagnosis is correct, the same should apply for other central and eastern European countries. The political elites in these countries thus have

to strike a permanent balance between competing demands. On the one hand people expect welfare-state services to be increased, and on the other there are constraints exerted by economic globalisation and international organisations. These international organisations include the European Union, but also economic institutions like the International Monetary Fund. Only the future will show how the political elites of these countries can master the balancing act and what factors make some countries more successful in doing so than others.

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