

## Chapter 6

### The Democratic Culture of Unified Germany

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How can a democratic culture develop among people who have lived for decades in an autocratic system? We examine this issue in the unified Germany, which provides a unique case, but for this very reason a particularly instructive one. German unification integrated two communities with a common history until the end of the Second World War. For a period of 50 years thereafter they lived in two different social 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-experiment, which permit us to analyze the effects of these different social systems on the political culture of their citizens. Germany can be regarded as a sort of laboratory (Rohrschneider 1994) for a possible European unification encompassing the countries of Western and Eastern Europe.

This chapter starts by outlining the theoretical framework including the concept of political support. We consider various normative models of democracy to understand what type of democracy people in West and East Germany ultimately prefer. We then compare demonstration and socialisation theories on the influence of the social structure on political attitudes. On this basis expectations about attitudes towards democracy among the East German population can be formulated. The next section develops the empirical analysis by examining trends in democratic attitudes among Germans. The conclusion summarises the most important findings and considers their consequences for the prospects of democracy in the unified Germany.

#### The Theoretical Framework

##### *The Concept of Political Support*

Political culture is the subjective dimension of politics constituted by the political attitudes of the citizenry (Verba 1965, 315; Almond 1980, 26). As discussed in the first part of this book, this broad definition can be narrowed down by constructing specific analytical questions. According to Almond (1980), a political system is stable to the extent that its political culture is congruent with its political structure. The model in figure 6.1 includes all the elements that Almond (1980, 28) assigned to system culture. This includes attitudes towards the political system on the three hierarchically ordered levels of democratic values, institutions and performance. To this must be added the attitude towards the most important incumbents of authority roles, principally the government. Furthermore, the model places these elements in a causal structure which can be tested with survey data (see Fuchs 1998b). The model postulates that the values of democracy will influence democratic institutions. This effect can be positive only if the value priorities of the citizens are identical with those embodied in the structure of the system. It is a fundamental assumption of our analysis that, due to socialisation in the former German Democratic Republic, East

German citizens can be expected to prefer a model of democracy different to that of the unified Germany. This is one reason why the East German population can be expected to have a more sceptical attitude towards the governing institutions of the unified Germany.

### *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 reflect 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 democratic institutions of one's own country, and if citizens consider them to be fulfilled they evoke convictions of legitimacy in the system.

We restrict our attention to three normative models of democracy: libertarian democracy, liberal democracy and socialist democracy (see table 6.1). Other models in the current theoretical debate - communitarian democracy and deliberative democracy - can be left aside in the context of our analysis.

- Table 6.1 about here -

Table 6.1 summarises the models as succinctly as possible (see Fuchs 1997a for a more comprehensive discussion), distinguishing between the minimal and supplementary elements of democracy. The *minimal* elements are those essential conditions that permit a political system to be regarded as a democracy, using the definitions of Bobbio (1987), Sartori (1987) and Dahl (1989). The minimal elements are three constitutional guarantees: concerning liberal rights, the rule of law, and universal, free and periodic elections. The liberal rights include subjective freedoms and the political rights of participation. The models are distinguished from one another only by the *supplementary* elements. They include constitutional guarantees relating to social rights and direct citizen participation, and also the political realisation of social rights.

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 supplementary elements of this model are nevertheless relatively clearly identifiable in the literature (Eichler 1973; Euchner 1992; Sik 1992; Held 1996). The two contrasting instances are the libertarian model and the socialist model (see table 6.1).

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 in the free market, for a rational actor it is quite sufficient to restrict political participation to periodic elections.

In contrast to the libertarian model, the socialist model develops the conception of a paternalist "nanny" 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.

Libertarians make a number of objections to the 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 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. 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 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>1</sup>. What we expect the analysis public opinion to reveal is that West Germans favour the liberal model whereas East Germans prefer the socialist model.

#### *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, are necessary conditions 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 and the socialisation hypothesis<sup>2</sup>.

Weil (1993) has given an 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 social 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 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 a remarkably high degree of support among citizens for democracy as an ideal form of government and for democratic values (see Chapter 2). 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 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. 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 paternalist "nanny" state 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. The onus of proof differs for each. 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. 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, and in the following analysis 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 social 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 6.1). It is therefore clear that, shortly after the collapse of the socialist social system, the citizens of Central and Eastern European countries were basically in favour of democracy and of the related minimal principles. Yet 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 6.1). 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 social 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 6.1. It begins with the values of democracy, continues with the type of democracy, and concludes with the performance of democracy.

### **Empirical Analysis**

#### *Commitment to Democratic Values and Principles*

Democratic values are seen as the highest level in the hierarchy of the objects of support. They include three kinds of component. First, democracy as a principle, measured by attitudes towards democracy as an ideal form of government. Second, there are other related values, especially freedom and equality. Third, different normative models of democracy are to be assigned to this level. On the basis of the socialisation hypothesis, we can formulate certain specific hypotheses about the value level of democracy.

*H#1. The majority of East and West Germans support democracy as an ideal form of government.*

*H#2. East Germans favour a socialist model of democracy and West Germans a liberal model.*

H#3. 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 6.2 about here -

The first hypothesis is confirmed by the distributions shown in table 6.2. The items are not identical. The indicator used in 1991 refers to the attitude towards *democracy as the best form of government*. The item used in 1997 asks only whether *democracy is better than any other form of government*. Both items, however, appropriately operationalize the construct of support for democracy as an ideal form of government. The results show that in both parts of Germany, and at both dates, democracy as an ideal form of government was supported by an overwhelming majority of the population. Nevertheless, 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 an ideal form of government, and, moreover, the two indicators are not identical, we cannot draw any conclusions here about trends over the period 1990 to 1997. Hypothesis 3 can therefore not be tested here with these data.

International comparisons reveal the significance of this level of support for democratic values (see also Dalton 1998, 15). A 1989 Eurobarometer study asked about attitudes to democracy as a form of government as opposed to dictatorship. The results show that West Germany is among the countries with the highest rates of support for democratic values (Fuchs, Guidorossi and Svensson 1995, 349). As the data from the World Values Survey 1994-1997 show, little has changed during the 1990s in this favourable ranking (see Chapter 2). The question used in the World Values Survey is: "*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. Among the many countries under review, the two parts of Germany rank high in their support for democratic values (see table 2.7). West Germany, for example, has the same score as Norway, and East Germany ranks with Switzerland, two traditional democracies with a high degree of legitimacy.

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 but unfortunately they are not available. We therefore rely upon 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 to freedom

and equality. Current research indicates that the 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 to avoid cognitive dissonance between the unfavourable evaluation of the actual socialism of East Germany and the favourable assessment of some of its characteristics. 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 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 socialism in practice was accordingly not the consequence of structural deficiencies of the system but could have been averted by more capable actors.

What 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". Few respondents regarded these two elements as inconsistent with socialism. In table 6.1 these social rights are described as supplementary 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.

- Figure 6.2 about here

Whereas the question on what is understood by socialism is concerned primarily with cognitive orientations, figure 6.2 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 6.2, 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 the second hypothesis but no direct conclusion about the attitude towards the liberal model can be made on this basis.

The time-series in figure 6.2 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.

Freedom and equality are two further values indissolubly linked to democracy, which define it more precisely (Fuchs 1998a). A positive evaluation of democracy implies a positive evaluation of these 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 of which of these values should be given priority in the event of conflict. The normative models of democracy provide 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 6.3 about here -

The time-series in figure 6.3 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>3</sup>

Hypothesis 3 postulates no systematic changes in values 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? 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. Yet 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 the 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 social systems. This assumption is confirmed by the following analysis.

#### *Support for Democratic Institutions*

On this basis we can assume that the majority of East Germans prefer a socialist model of 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 6.1), 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:

*H#4: In West Germany a majority of citizens, and in East Germany a minority of citizens, support the democratic institutions of the unified Germany.*

Scholars largely agree that in West Germany wide-spread and firmly established support for democratic institutions developed in the decades following the founding of the former West German State (Conradt 1980, 1991; Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt 1981; Gabriel 1987; Fuchs 1989). According to these studies West Germany 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 social system and to a positive evaluation of the western social order. The comparison between the two social 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 direct experience. The implications of a liberal democracy can thus become clear only through personal experience with the institutions 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, depends on various factors. One of the most important is the performance of the democracy, which we will examine in the next section.

We consider that the socialisation hypothesis, however, needs to be modified in the case of East Germany. In many ways the German Democratic Republic was much closer to the Western social system than most countries in Central and Eastern Europe. This propinquity was to the society of West 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 social 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 social 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 democratic institutions 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, as we have mentioned. In view of subsequent experience, the initial scepticism tended to stabilise rather than diminish. We can now state a fifth hypothesis:

*H#5: 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.*

- Figure 6.4 about here -

The time-series data in figure 6.4 record the proportion of respondents who considered that the Federal Republic of Germany provided the *best form of government* for the period from 1990 to 1997. The empirical findings presented in figure 6.4 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 form of government of the Federal Republic. In considering these figures, it should be remembered that the question about the *best form of government* is probably overstated. Had the question been formulated in more reserved terms, the percentage for East Germany could have been higher. Therefore confirmation of the fourth hypothesis for East Germany could thus be tied to this specific indicator. But it can also be assumed that the situation in 1990 was special one. The successful unification of Germany certainly had a short-term period-effect that somewhat obscured "true" attitudes 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. Nevertheless, the formulation of the question does not affect confirmation of the significant difference between West and East Germany, since the same indicator was used in both cases.

This initial support declined in both parts of Germany after 1990. By 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 Federal Republic to represent 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 a 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 democratic values, 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.

We have therefore shown 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 instituted in the unified Germany. In all these essential aspects, the political culture of the unified Germany must hence be seen as divided. But East Germans and West Germans also share much 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 government of the unified Germany.

### *Satisfaction with Democratic Performance*

According to the model in figure 6.1, support for democratic institutions is the most important attitude for the stability and/or consolidation of this democracy. Apart from democratic values, the performance of democracy is assumed to directly influence 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 for by positive performance evaluations. 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 recorded 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:

*H#6. Support for the performance of the democracy of the Federal Republic is significantly higher in West Germany than in East Germany.*

*H#7. After German unification there was a decline in support for the performance of democracy in East Germany and in West Germany.*

- Figure 6.5 about here -

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*. As discussed elsewhere in this book, this indicator has provoked considerable criticism 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 and this Eurobarometer indicator provides a measure of support for democratic performance.

The results in figure 6.5 show the percentages of respondents very satisfied or satisfied with the functioning of democracy in 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). This has probably been influenced by the immediately preceding unification of the country.

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 to change it significantly.

Figure 6.5 shows that no positive generalisation from the performance of democracy to the more fundamental attitude towards the type of democracy can yet have taken place in East Germany. This renders plausible the persistently low support for the type of democracy described earlier. Therefore the democracy of the unified Germany is supported by only a minority of East Germans, and support has tended to decline over time. The final section discusses what consequences this could have for the further development of the unified Germany.

### **Conclusions**

According to the paradigm of political culture, congruity of structure and culture is a necessary condition for the stability of the regime, although in many studies congruity remains ill-defined (Kaase 1998). 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 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, probably 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 is to be still expected (Kaase 1995; Kaase and Bauer-Kaase 1998).

We have assumed socialisation in different social systems to be the principal cause of the discrepancies between West Germans and East Germans. Our findings cannot directly and unquestionably confirm this. But it allows 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 had a systematic impact on their normative notions of democracy, and 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 in East Germany predispositions shaped by socialisation and concrete experience are mutually stabilising.

Negative experiences may arise for two reasons. 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. The comparison is increasingly not the earlier situation in the German Democratic Republic but the comparison with West Germany, hence *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 conditions 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 is doubtful 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 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 goes back to the 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. The decisive difference between East and West Germany is the addressee of these demands. Whereas social

demands in East Germany are addressed to democracy as a form of government, in West Germany the addressee is the current political parties and the incumbent government. In West Germany, social demands are thus merely a political issue and 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 legitimate basic rights in a democracy could result in the pressure to adapt coming 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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<sup>1</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>2</sup> For a differentiated discussion of competing hypotheses on the formation of democratic attitudes already in the state-socialist systems see Rohrschneider (1998).

<sup>3</sup> It should be taken into account that undecided respondents were included in the basis for calculating the percentages in figure 6.4, and that this category varied between 10 and 20 per cent depending on the time point.