Coalition-Building and Political Fragmentation, 1924-1930

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Citation:

STIBBE, Matthew (2020). Coalition-Building and Political Fragmentation, 1924-1930. In: ROSSOL, Nadine and ZIEMANN, Benjamin, (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of the Weimar Republic. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 72-94. [Book Section]

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the functioning and communication of arrangements for power-sharing between political parties in the middle years of the Weimar Republic. It looks at the formation of coalitions at Reich and state level; the role played both by the development of a specific parliamentary culture and by pressures stemming from symbolic and real conflicts beyond the control of the Reichstag and provisional legislatures; the place of the press and press policy; and the slide towards growing political fragmentation, especially after 1928. It also broadens the analysis of coalition-building to encompass the temporary and highly unstable alliances forged between rival forces at the time of direct elections. This includes both the two-round presidential election campaign of March–April 1925, and the two national referendums fought by popular demand during the Weimar period, one in June 1926 over the issue of confiscation of the property of former princely households, and the other in December 1929 over a right-wing proposal to reject the Young Plan.

Keywords: coalition government, elections, emotions, power-sharing, referendums, Reichstag

In the (West) German Federal Republic of the late 1950s and early 1960s, conservative intellectual critics of the Weimar Republic accused it of having failed to reconcile the historically bound idea of the state with the exceptional security requirements of modern, easily endangered, and permanently crisis-prone parliamentary democracies. In their view, the authority of the state, and in particular its governability and freedom to formulate and execute rational policies, took priority over the needs of organized political movements to represent the particular material interests or ideological doctrines of their mass membership.[1] This principle proved impossible to uphold under Weimar, given the sheer number of political parties represented in the Reichstag; their failure to combine to form healthy majorities in defence of the prevailing constitutional order (as opposed to negative majorities attacking it or rendering it unworkable); and their supposed tendency to put the interests of party unity above the imperative to come together in support of the

legitimate—and state-affirming—exercise of executive power, particularly at times of severe internal or external challenge.[2]

The humiliating spectacle of a Reich Chancellor—the non-party technocrat Hans Luther—being openly mocked on the floor of the Reichstag when he reminded warring Weimar parliamentarians in January 1926, during one of the periodic crises in his minority cabinet, that Germany 'must somehow be governed' was itself an illustration of how low the authority of the governing class had fallen since the days of Bismarck.[3] Also regarded as unworthy of a constitutional, law-abiding state were the 1928 and 1930 amnesties for politically motivated murders committed before 1924, granted in the name of Reich President Paul von Hindenburg but actually initiated by the Reichstag (rather than the courts) and supported by all parties bar the SPD.[4] In opposition to the alleged chaos and democratic excess of the Weimar era, the framers of the West German constitution or 'Basic Law' in 1948–9 sought to create what they saw as a *Kanzlerdemokratie*, a liberal parliamentary system that nonetheless restored dignity to the office of Chancellor as chief executive of the federal government and incentivized the formation of 'responsible' political parties whose remit was to gain the broadest support possible for themselves *and* the constitutionally settled state rather than representing particular sectional interests.[5]

The central contention of this chapter is that the conservative critique of Weimar democracy is deficient not only because of its old-fashioned, state-bound historism—which is reminiscent of what Fritz K. Ringer calls the 'German mandarin tradition'[6]—but also because of its one-sided take on German political culture itself during the 1920s, not least in the period 1924–30. Certainly, when compared to the Federal Republic in the second half of the twentieth century, cabinets came and went under Weimar with alarming frequency. In total there were twenty-one different Reich administrations between 1919 and 1933, headed by thirteen different Chancellors. To outside observers, there was scant evidence of any 'reorientation' in the attitude of coalition and opposition parties towards the workings of parliamentary government and its role in democratic state-building, even in the republic's politically calmer 'middle years', a verdict subsequently endorsed by critical (West) German scholars like Michael Stürmer.[7] Yet it is also clear that government at Reich and state levels would have been altogether impossible without some desire for compromise and coalition-building on the part of politicians. The assassination of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau by ex-Freikorps members in 1922, the hyper-inflation and Ruhr crises of 1923, followed by a communist uprising in Hamburg, Reich interventions against left-wing governments in Saxony and Thuringia, and the failed Hitler putsch in Munich in the autumn of that year, brought with them a desire to steady and rationalize politics as a necessary counterpart to currency revaluation, and did so in a way that cut across previous 'boundaries between liberal and conservative visions of authority'.[8]

The army was also keen to end the nation-wide military state-of-emergency imposed by Reich President Friedrich Ebert in September 1923, and to bring to a close the extraordinary executive powers granted to Reichswehr Head of Army Command Hans von Seeckt on 8–9 November, preferring, at this stage, to have a more behind-the-scenes role in German politics. The lifting of emergency military rule on 28 February 1924, at the instiga-

tion of Seeckt rather than civilian Reich ministers, was an important moment in this respect.[9] It allowed Reichstag elections to take place on 4 May (and again on 7 December) in an atmosphere of relative calm. It also brought with it the repeal of detention without trial, the unbanning of the KPD and various extreme right-wing groups, the return of parliamentary sovereignty over law-making for a period lasting more than six years, and the gradual restoration of constitutional government and separation of powers in Bavaria, Thuringia, and Saxony after a brief interlude in 1923–4 when they were governed by state- or Reich-appointed civilian plenipotentiaries (*Staats-* or *Reichskommissare*).[10]

This chapter will examine how power-sharing between parties was negotiated and communicated in the years 1924–30, and will focus on some notable successes of coalition government, in particular the passing of a new Reich law on unemployment insurance in 1927. It will also broaden the concept of 'coalition-building' to encompass the sphere of direct elections, when German voters were treated—or were asked to treat themselves— as one single constituency representing 'the people' as an indivisible whole. In particular it will look at the two-round contest for the Reich Presidency in 1925, narrowly won by the former commander-in-chief, Hindenburg, and at the referendum campaigns of 1926 and 1929, the first fought by a temporary alliance of the left in support of the dispossession of the former royal households, and the second by a short-term collaboration between nationalist and radical right groupings in opposition to the Young Plan.

None of the governmental or cross-party alliances considered here were stable or uncontested, however, and the third part of the chapter will explore the growing fragmentation of politics as the 1920s came to an end. The splintering of the right, particularly after the poor performance of the conservative-nationalist DNVP in the 1928 Reichstag election, and the collapse in support for the liberal DVP and DDP in face of the rise of more narrow middle-class economic interest parties, has drawn most attention in the scholarly literature.[11] However, there were also signs of fracture on the left, not only in regard to worsening relations between the SPD and KPD, but also the appearance of dissident groups like the KPD-O (Communist Party-Opposition). The chapter will conclude by considering how best to explain and evaluate this fragmentation. Was it mostly down to the conflict between economic restraints and utopian expectations, as Detlev J. K. Peukert argued in a landmark book on Weimar Germany first published in 1987?[12] Or do we need an approach that takes greater account of the communicative, performative, symbolic, and spatial dimensions of political experience? If so, might this apply not only at parliamentary level—as Thomas Mergel has expertly demonstrated in his cultural history of the Reichstag as the Weimar Republic's highest law-making body[13]—but also in relation to the above-mentioned presidential election of 1925 and referendum campaigns of 1926 and 1929, during which alternative, more direct ways of 'represent[ing] the people in its entirety' were put on show?[14] Finally, how is this period of coalition-building and political fragmentation to be seen in relation to the broader issue of continuity and change, or stability and crisis, in Weimar's history?

Coalition-Building in the Parliamentary Sphere

When Friedrich Ebert ended the military state-of-emergency in February 1924, the first cabinet of the Catholic Centre Party (Zentrum) politician Wilhelm Marx, supported by a shifting combination of parties in the Reichstag and empowered to undertake a step-by-step revaluation of the Mark through the passage of a time-limited Enabling Act on 8 December 1923, had already been in office for several weeks. However, to fit with the time-frame of this chapter, it makes more sense to begin the analysis of coalition-building with the second Marx cabinet, formed after the 4 May elections. This was a minority government with ministers drawn from three 'bourgeois' parties, the Zentrum, the DDP, and the DVP, or having no party affiliation at all. The forces behind the second Marx cabinet had just 138 out of 472 Reichstag seats between them, so the government had to rely on the ad hoc support of the centre-left SPD (with 100 seats), or the conservative-nationalist DNVP and other right-wing parties (with 95 plus seats), to get business through parliament. This was hardly sustainable in the long run. Indeed, the Reichstag elected in May 1924 was finally dissolved on 20 October 1924, having sat for the last time on 30 August, when, as a condition of the Dawes Plan, the new currency, the gold-backed Reichsmark, was approved without a formal vote.[15]

The Reichstag election of 7 December 1924 led, a month later, to the resignation of the second Marx government and the formation of the first *Bürgerblock* or all-inclusive 'bourgeois' cabinet under the non-party former Minister of Finance, Luther, with the backing of four major right-of-centre parties, the DVP, the DNVP, the Zentrum, and the Bavarian People's Party (BVP). This government enjoyed something closer to a parliamentary majority, with (on paper) between 242 and 274 of the 493 seats, depending on whether the left-liberal DDP were in or out. It lasted almost until the end of 1925, when the DNVP withdrew its support in protest at the Locarno Treaties and especially the Rhineland Pact, under which Germany formally recognized its new, post-1919 borders in Western Europe. The Locarno Treaties subsequently passed through the Reichstag with SPD support, but the latter's refusal to compromise with the DVP on domestic policy and defence spending put paid to the idea of a broader 'grand coalition', at least for the time being.[16] Instead, Luther was able to continue as Chancellor under a reconfigured minority 'bourgeois' government until May 1926.

From May 1926 to June 1928 Marx headed two further minority 'bourgeois' cabinets, the first without DNVP backing, and the second, from January 1927, a revived *Bürgerblock* cabinet with several DNVP ministers in tow, including Oskar Hergt as deputy chancellor and Minister of Justice. Whether this meant that, behind the scenes, the still staunchly anti-republican DNVP was on a path to piecemeal or 'silent' parliamentarization in the mid-1920s, until its substantial loss of support among core followers in the May 1928 Reichstag election forced a marked shift to the right under new leader Alfred Hugenberg, is a matter for debate.[17] The other, more mainstream 'bourgeois' parties now fell in behind a 'grand coalition' headed by the SPD, who, having increased their vote share from 26 per cent to just under 30 per cent, could claim to have nominally 'won' the election. With SPD chairman Hermann Müller as Chancellor, this new, five-party administration of the cen-

tre-left and centre-right was the last to govern Weimar Germany on a purely parliamentary and constitutional basis. Müller's successor, the conservative Catholic politician Heinrich Brüning, who from March 1930 headed a minority centre-right government without the SPD, used presidential decree to force through those of his policies that were unable to secure majority support in the Reichstag. (Table 1 sets out the parliamentary numbers and parties for the period.)

Coalition-Building and Political Fragmentation, 1924–1930

Table 1. Coalition Governments in Weimar Germany, 1924–1930				
Headed by	**Formed on**	**Resigned on**	**Parties backing**	**Notional parliamentary majority**
Wilhelm Marx (Zentrum)	3 June 1924	15 Jan. 1925	Zentrum, DDP, DVP	138 out of 472 seats (= −196)
Hans Luther (non-party)	15 Jan. 1925	5 Dec. 1925	Zentrum, DNVP, DVP, BVP, (DDP)	242 (274) out of 493 seats (= −9 (+55))
Hans Luther (non-party)	19 Jan. 1926	12 May 1926	Zentrum, DDP, DVP, BVP	171 out of 493 seats (= −151)
Wilhelm Marx (Zentrum)	16 May 1926	17 Dec. 1926	Zentrum, DDP, DVP, BVP	171 out of 493 seats (= −151)
Wilhelm Marx (Zentrum)	28 Jan. 1927	12 June 1928	Zentrum, DNVP, DVP, BVP	242 out of 493 seats (= −9)
Hermann Müller (SPD)	28 June 1928	27 Mar. 1930	SPD, Zentrum, DDP, DVP, BVP	301 out of 491 seats (= +111)

Source: Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik, http://www.gonschior.de/weimar.

Coalition-Building and Political Fragmentation, 1924–1930

Were there any patterns in how these different coalitions were put together and how they were presented in the media? And to what extent was the experience at Reich level also reflected in coalition-building at state level? In answer to the first question, it is important to distinguish between objective realities and subjective perceptions. In retrospect, the frequent changes of government in Weimar Germany masked considerable underlying continuities both in policy and personnel, and a growing self-understanding of the Reichstag as a 'social space' where deals were made and legislation enacted. Gustav Stresemann, for instance, was able to retain the position of Foreign Minister—and thereby to personify Weimar foreign policy during this period—from 30 November 1923 through to his untimely death on 3 October 1929, when he was replaced by DVP colleague Julius Curtius. In spite of opposition to his pro-western approach from the DNVP and other parties further to the right (and extreme left), he managed to achieve a string of successes: the Dawes Plan in 1924, the Locarno Treaties in 1925, Germany's entry into the League of Nations in 1926, the Young Plan in 1929, and the Allies' withdrawal from their military occupation of the Rhineland between 1927 and 1930, five years ahead of schedule.[18] Otto Gessler of the DDP remained even longer as Defence Minister, from March 1920 to January 1928, and the Catholic politician Heinrich Brauns survived a full eight years as Minister of Labour, from June 1920 to June 1928. Other figures served more or less continuously in office, even if they switched portfolios, including Hans Luther (Minister of Agriculture, December 1922–October 1923; Minister of Finance, October 1923–January 1925; Chancellor, January 1925–May 1926); Julius Curtius (Minister of Economic Affairs, January 1926–October 1929; Foreign Minister, October 1929–October 1931); Karl Stingl (Minister of Post, November 1922–August 1923 and January 1925–December 1926); and Stingl's BVP colleague, Georg Schätzel (Minister of Post, January 1927–May 1932).[19]

Parliamentary life itself was increasingly conducted on a cross-party basis at Reich level, with a common semantics and shared understanding of how to conduct legislative business effectively—barring one or two admittedly prominent exceptions. Historians are especially keen to highlight the so-called flag-incident of May 1926, when a seemingly trivial dispute over which flag(s) should be flown over Germany's overseas trade missions and consulates—a matter of great symbolic importance to republicans and anti-republicans alike—led to a vote of no confidence and the collapse of the second Luther cabinet.[20] For Franklin C. West, and others, the 'crisis over the Flag Decree' was one example, among many, of the core problem with Weimar's multi-party system, namely that 'no party's leadership could or would undertake actions which threatened its own party's unity'.[21] Compromises between the parties were only possible when made 'at a minimum cost to their own principles'.[22] However, this view is in need of revision, or at least nuancing. In particular, it should not blind us to the manner in which—as Benjamin Ziemann puts it—the 'formal rules and informal procedures [of parliamentary life]' had a cultural impact of their own, 'foster[ing] a sense of cohesion among the deputies which was able to transcend the political cleavages'.[23] From January 1925, Paul Löbe of the SPD served as President of the Reichstag, as he had already done between June 1920 and May 1924. This proved critical not only in holding executive power to account, but in enabling its lawful, democratic exercise, especially when getting aspects of Stresemann's foreign poli-

cy through parliament. He was supported by Vice-Presidents from the DNVP, DVP, and Zentrum. Thus, even when outside government, the SPD parliamentary group had a critical role in the domestic law-making process, and a vested interest in its smooth running, irrespective of questions of wider party unity; the same can be said for the DNVP, at least until May–June 1928.[24]

One of the most relevant pieces of social legislation enacted during this period was the Law on Labour Exchanges and Unemployment Insurance (*Gesetz über Arbeitsvermittlung und Arbeitslosenversicherung*, AVAVG), which was passed by the Reichstag on 16 July 1927 and came into force on 1 October 1927. This law established a new financial basis for granting benefits to the short-term, involuntarily unemployed from contributions made by employers, employees, and the Reich, and with the needs of family dependants taken into account. Payments would be for a maximum of twenty-six weeks.[25] It also set up a series of labour exchanges to assist those looking for work. It was much criticized in retrospect because it was based on an assumed average of only 700,000 and maximum of 1.4 million unemployed persons at any one time, and thus proved completely unworkable during the Great Depression after 1929. It was also held up by right-wing economists from at least 1928 onwards as an example of the 'excessive', business-unfriendly ambitions of Weimar social policy.[26] Nonetheless, Rudolf Wissell, the SPD Minister of Labour in the 'grand coalition' government of 1928–30, noted in an article published a month after he left office that the law, for all its problems, 'closed a gap in the existing system of social insurance' and thereby 'fulfilled an old working-class demand'. More importantly, it was supported by the 'overwhelming majority of the Reichstag, from the German Nationalists to the Social Democrats'.[27] Indeed, of 493 eligible deputies, 355 voted for it, and only 47—the entire National Socialist and Communist contingents and a handful of dissident DNVP members—against.[28]

For Wissell, following an economic determinist model, this showed that 'the year 1927 was very favourable for social policy' because 'the economic crisis of 1926 had been overcome and the labour market was in good shape', at least in comparison to the winter of 1928–9.[29] Yet it could also be read in a different way, as an indication that day-to-day parliamentary culture and cross-party coalition-building under Weimar mattered as an independent factor in the production of social policy options, in the creation of spaces for political compromise, and even in progress towards democratic state-building. At stake, in other words, was more than just tactical gains for the 'immovable' economic interest groups that Stürmer (among others) sees as dominating the choices made by government and opposition parties in the years 1924–8.[30]

Parliamentary culture apart, much has been made of the SPD's supposed 'policy of abstention' at Reich level after 1923, as seen in its 'negative' approach to coalition negotiations in October-December 1924, December 1925-January 1926, and even in May–June 1928, when its improved showing in the Reichstag election made its participation in government all but inevitable.[31] The 'grand coalition' is sometimes characterized, negatively, as a time when the Social Democrats obstinately refused to abandon the role of chief opposition party while at the same time holding some of the most important offices of state,

namely the Reich Chancellery and the Ministries of Finance, Interior, and Labour. At one point in 1928, the SPD ministers even voted against a defence measure in the Reichstag—the building of 'battle cruiser A' (*Panzerkreuzer A*)—that they had actually approved in cabinet, because the party's parliamentary group instructed them to do so.[32] Wissell, as Minister of Labour, found himself constantly caught between his personal sympathy with the more radical positions on social policy adopted by the Free Trade Unions and left-wing deputies from his own party, and the conservative, pro-business views not only of the 'bourgeois' members of the Müller cabinet, but also of his SPD colleague, the Minister of Finance Rudolf Hilferding.[33]

The 'peculiar negotiating structures of the Reichstag' also contributed to what Mergel refers to as the fundamental 'opaqueness' of parliamentary procedures in Weimar Germany, leading to a cultural disconnect with political movements and trends outside parliament (as opposed to a lack of day-to-day consensus among parliamentarians). For a bill to pass into law, party manifestos and headline-grabbing rhetoric often had to give way to long-drawn-out committee work, the elevation of expert legal and technical advice over partisan media presentation, and the resolution of political disagreements through close attention to detail and forensic analysis. The AVAVG was a classic example. Here the original government bill already contained 175 separate clauses; by the time the amended version was passed on 16 July 1927, this had risen to 275.[34] In July 1928, shortly after Wissell became Minister of Labour, cabinet and parliament agreed changes to the conditions under which unemployment benefits could be claimed—including extensions, under some circumstances, beyond the twenty-six week limit—in spite of the opposition of employers' groups and right-wing parties, and in spite of claims by the Free Trade Unions that the new measures did not go far enough.[35] Given these added complications, it becomes more understandable why the incoming Chancellor, Müller, initially sought to keep the incumbent Minister of Labour, the Catholic priest and Christian trade unionist Brauns, in post in June 1928 in preference to his own party colleague, Wissell. Yet in the end, the attitude of the right wing of the Zentrum, which demanded the recall of Brauns and a reduced commitment to the 'grand coalition', forced Müller's hand.[36]

That the cumbersome process of coalition-building did little to endear elected politicians to the German public is reflected in the declining voter turn-out at elections, from a high-point of 83.0 per cent in January 1919 to 77.4 per cent in May 1924, 78.7 per cent in December 1924 and 75.6 per cent in May 1928.[37] However, this should not be taken as a sign that 'ordinary' Germans were abandoning the notion that indirect or parliamentary democracy was the best way of representing their interests at national and state level. The non-party-affiliated, but usually conservative local, regional, and supra-regional press encouraged sceptical but not entirely rejectionist attitudes, partly as a means of boosting its own importance as an extra-parliamentary force and partly to underline its claim to represent the allegedly true or directly expressed, authentic voice of the people against the so-called self-serving politicians in Berlin (or, as the Bavarians often complained, in 'Red' Prussia). True, only a handful of influential, but hardly representative, left-liberal national newspapers, such as the *Berliner Tageblatt* and the *Vossische Zeitung*, as well as the supra-regional Catholic organ the *Kölnische Volkszeitung* and the SPD's daily journal

Vorwärts, could be relied upon to support the republic wholeheartedly. But this did not mean that the remaining papers were all unremittingly hostile to the new constitutional order, even if they often played to the 'nationalism and anti-socialism' of their largely 'bourgeois readership'.[38] The German-Jewish publicist Edgar Stern-Rubarth, editor-in-chief of the Reich's official press agency, Wolffs Telegraphisches Büro, and a leading advocate of Stresemann's foreign policy, including Franco-German reconciliation, summed up the dilemma facing successive republican administrations in 1927: 'In Metternich's time we bought the journalists, in Bismarck's time we appointed them, today we have to win them over'.[39]

How far did this also reflect the experience of coalition-building and political communication at municipal and state, as opposed to Reich, level? Between 1924 and 1930, variations on the *Bürgerblock*-style of coalition government were tried out in several states (Thuringia, Bavaria, Brunswick, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Württemberg, and others). On the other hand, SPD-led 'grand coalitions' ruled for much of the same period in Prussia, Baden, Hamburg, Hesse, Saxony, Anhalt, and elsewhere. The KPD did not have much influence in any state governments after the 'emergency' of 1923–4, just as it was not much of a threat nationally. Even in the once staunchly 'Red' city-state of Hamburg, where the parliamentary arithmetic in the provincial assembly might in principle have allowed an SPD-KPD coalition in 1927–31, or a minority SPD administration 'tolerated' by the KPD, the Social Democrats still preferred to continue in government with the 'bourgeois' DVP and DDP.[40] The radical right—in the form of the NSDAP and fellow-travellers from the ultra-nationalist and ultra-conservative wings of the DNVP—only really became a disruptive force after the state elections in Thuringia in December 1929 and the Reichstag elections in September 1930.[41]

State governments, like Reich governments, had an opportunity and an obligation to get legislation passed, to win over journalists, and to build broader confidence among the population. The largest state, Prussia, had already served as an 'unlikely rock of democracy' in the years 1918–25, principally by means of power-sharing between the pro-Weimar parties (SPD, DDP, Zentrum, and latterly the DVP),[42] but also because SPD Minister of Interior Carl Severing won the admiration of the more conservative republican parties through his willingness to appoint non-SPD members to senior administrative positions, and his readiness, alongside Ebert, Gessler, and Seeckt, to countenance authoritarian measures in the face of communist threats.[43] He continued to play that role following the return of the Weimar coalition of SPD, DDP, and Centre Party to office in Prussia, after an extremely brief interlude of minority 'bourgeois' rule, in April 1925. Indeed, for many observers Severing personified the 'new' Prussia: an empirically oriented, pragmatic, and yet still quasi-authoritarian state that practised dictatorial *and* liberal forms of rule simultaneously. As a British Foreign Office memorandum in March 1927 noted:

> Broadly speaking, Prussia is still a 'Beamtenstaat', a State administered by Prussian civil servants working in conjunction with local officials appointed by the duly elected representatives of the people . . . It is safe to say that the majority of these appointments to-day are in the hands of the Weimar parties, Centre, Democrats

> and Social Democrats . . . [although] the majority of Prussian officials being civil servants holding permanent appointments, change can only be effected gradually . . . the Oberregierungspräsident, the Regierungspräsident and the Landrat are all nominated by the Ministry of Interior . . . So far as actual internal administration is concerned, the [November 1918] revolution made little or no change.[44]

On the negative side, the ability of 'Weimar Prussia' to influence Reich policy—for instance in matters of external defence, media, health, education, policing, or all-round governance and use of state-of-emergency legislation—was diminished in view of the fact that the offices of Prussian Minister-President and Reich Chancellor were no longer held by the same person, as they frequently had been under the old Kaiserreich, and the Minister-President no longer sat *ex officio* in the Reich cabinet.[45] Attempts to overcome this, seen, for instance, in hopes that the sitting Minister-President, Otto Braun, might be proposed for the post of Chancellor after the May 1928 Reichstag elections, were thwarted when the SPD executive committee insisted on Müller instead.[46] Bavaria, governed by a clerical-conservative coalition under BVP leader Heinrich Held between 1924 and 1933, would also most likely have vetoed any attempt to 'reunite' the positions of Reich Chancellor and Prussian Minister-President, especially under a popular but ultimately centralizing, bureaucratizing, and rationalizing Social Democrat politician like Braun.[47]

In spite of developing increasing professional expertise in the realm of mass communications, state governments faced even greater challenges in selling a particular message to the voting public than Reich governments. As Matthias Lau has shown, efforts by the *Länder* to steer the regional or provincial media in a particular direction via their own press offices were met with criticisms that such methods were tantamount to an unwarranted politicization of the state's duty to inform its citizens about policy options in an impartial manner, or, worse still, were condemned as a deliberate attempt by 'liberals' to curb free speech.[48] By such means a false equivalence was sometimes constructed between republican and extreme anti-republican forms of political communication, with the conservative, provincial, and clerical right claiming that it was the 'modernizing', 'secular' republicans who had attacked them and destabilized 'their' political order first by introducing 'foreign' or western-style parliamentary-democratic methods without consulting the 'people'.[49]

In Bavaria, the populist BVP Minister-President Held developed his own version of this, supporting the war hero Hindenburg unfailingly while openly opposing Stresemann's 'pro-Allied' foreign policy and regularly pitting South German particularism against the Reich government in Berlin.[50] But there were also countervailing trends and alternative constellations. In post-1923 Hamburg, for example, the governing SPD-DVP-DDP coalition, permanent civil servants, and members of the local press all felt a common interest in representing their city-state's economic importance, and its strategic dependence on free trade and stable international relations, to neighbouring Prussia and the rest of Germany. Here, the asymmetric culture wars waged in the public arena between virulent anti-republicans and the less virulent, but sometimes equally polarized, 'Weimar' parties were largely avoided because of the 'cooperative atmosphere' in which the state's rela-

tionship with journalists was negotiated and renewed.[51] Local members of the DNVP also voiced their unease at the open hostility shown by the national party towards the Locarno Treaties in 1925, believing, correctly, that this would hinder their ability to offer middle-class Hamburg voters a credible alternative to the DVP's openness towards power-sharing with the SPD.[52]

Coalition-Building and Direct Elections

Direct elections—namely referendums and presidential contests—occurred less frequently under Weimar than parliamentary ones, but they were equally important to the twin cultural processes of coalition-building and political fragmentation.[53] The alliances brought together to fight direct elections were indeed very temporary and did nothing to halt the trend towards fragmentation, even if they also reveal a strange consensus between parties and commentators on the importance of symbolic issues in constructing rival visions of the nation. They were often accompanied by real or imagined spikes in street violence and emotion-driven battles over public spaces.[54] And, as Joseph Addison, British *chargé d'affaires* in Berlin, wrote to Conservative Foreign Secretary Sir Austen Chamberlain on 11 June 1926, they poisoned public discourse by 'rais[ing] every conceivable legal and moral problem[,] . . . rous[ing] every shade of political thought [and] monopolis[ing] public attention to the exclusion of all else'.[55]

The disruptive effect of direct elections was further magnified by the fact that they were typically won or lost on the ability of campaigners to mobilize a broad mass of politically indifferent voters, or voters who were less interested in the substance of parliamentary elections than in the symbolism of 'victory'. What mattered was to achieve spatial and representational dominance for one's candidate, 'flag', 'colours', or otherwise over-publicized cause, with 'success' typically measured in terms of the number of rallies and meetings organized, the number of posters plastered across city landscapes, and so on.[56] At the start of the June 1926 referendum on dispossession of the princes, for instance, the KPD reported that it was planning to throw 33 million items of printed material into the campaign, that the SPD was preparing a further 20 million, and that the 'monarchist' side had already distributed 22 million leaflets in Berlin alone.[57] Finally, direct elections tended to reduce complex political issues to a binary and seemingly irreversible 'yes' or 'no' choice. Staying neutral was not a practical option, meaning that direct elections totalized and fractured political communities simultaneously. Furthermore, although there might be a democratic 'result', political conflict could not be reduced *after* a direct election by displacing it into the more opaque and therefore less immediately polarizing fields of parliamentary procedure and the technical sides of framing legislation. In this sense, direct elections laid 'the seeds of the escalation of [political] violence' after 1930, as Dirk Schumann puts it.[58]

The first direct election in the Weimar era, the two-round presidential contest in March–April 1925, won on 26 April by the Reichblock's candidate, Hindenburg, in fact sidestepped major political questions altogether to focus solely on the 77-year-old former

commander-in-chief's 'heroic' personality and 'sacrificial' candidature. The Reichsblock, made up of right and centre-right Protestant parties, had in fact nominated the more divisive Karl Jarres, DVP mayor of Duisburg and Reich Minister of Interior in 1923-4, as its candidate in the first, inconclusive vote on 29 March. Jarres's decision to stand down in favour of Hindenburg was a strategic one, conditional on the simultaneous withdrawal of the BVP's Heinrich Held. It enabled the Reichsblock to expand its support beyond the Protestant-nationalist middle class to include right-wing Catholic voters in Bavaria and elsewhere, and even some nationally minded democrats who were reluctant to support the republican Volksblock's official candidate, Wilhelm Marx, in the second round. Yet it also came at a price, leading to a 'dilution' of the right-wing message and a blurring of political boundaries to the point where Hindenburg's victory could not be claimed as a clear-cut triumph of monarchism over republicanism. Franz Seldte, leader of the radical-nationalist veterans' association, the Stahlhelm, foresaw this, noting in a circular to heads of local branches on 10 April 1925:

> There is no doubt that millions of voters voting for Hindenburg on 26 April will immediately return to their traditional party and interest affiliations after the election. The election result will not be a verdict on the strength of the national movement, but will only be a sign of how broad and great Hindenburg's veneration is amongst the largest sections of society.[59]

Hindenburg's style of campaigning also added to these concerns. He refused to speak to sympathetic right-wing journalists or to travel around the country addressing core supporters. He stayed at home in Hanover, while his campaign team spent most of their energies targeting his opponents rather than selling 'their' candidate. In particular, they attempted to use KPD leader Ernst Thälmann's attacks on Hindenburg as a 'mass slaughterer' and 'General of Defeat' to cast the entire 'anti-Hindenburg' camp, including the moderate Catholic republican Marx, as 'unpatriotic' and disrespectful towards the memory of the war dead.[60] When he did make public pronouncements, for instance in a special radio broadcast on 24 April, Hindenburg avoided all political content, and instead sought to construct a direct relationship between the German people and himself as their national 'saviour'.[61] This tactic worked in so far as Hindenburg won the election, gaining over four million more supporters than Jarres in the first round and beating Marx by 14.66 million to 13.75 million votes. But it was not an overwhelming victory, and certainly it was not a clear-cut indication that the nationalist camp now had a secure upper hand: indeed, almost as many Germans, 14.64 compared to 14.66 million, voted in favour of the outright dispossession of the German princely households in the left-initiated people's referendum (*Volksentscheid*) of 20 June 1926.[62]

This referendum has to be understood in the context of a broader period of political tension at national level lasting from the collapse of the first Luther government in December 1925 over the Locarno Treaties to the formation of the new *Bürgerblock* government in January 1927. Between those times, minority cabinets led by Luther and Marx had to get each of their policies through parliament on the basis of ad hoc arrangements with opposition parties. One piece of legislation put forward by the DDP and approved by the

Luther cabinet was for a Reich-wide law which would unify arrangements for the compensation of the former royal households in Germany in respect of possessions left behind when they abdicated in 1918 and ensure that the interests of the people and state were balanced against the principle of respect for property rights. The DNVP, with its landowner base, was opposed to any legislation that involved confiscation or compulsory purchase of land. At the other extreme, the KPD, backed by the left-wing of the SPD and the German League for Human Rights (Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte), demanded a solution involving total confiscation without compensation or right to judicial appeal. Reluctantly, and because it was unwilling to adopt the only other option on offer, namely supporting the DDP's bill in the Reichstag, the SPD leadership agreed to co-sponsor a referendum on this issue, believing that, even if the vote were lost, it would have advantages in terms of symbolically (re)establishing the party's left-wing credentials.[63]

In fact, staging a referendum by popular initiative on a contentious issue was not all that easy—indeed, it was largely untried before 1926—and winning one was almost impossible. The first step was to form a coalition of interested parties and pressure groups around a proposed law to be directly initiated in the name of the people, in this case the expropriation of the princes without compensation. However, having agreed the wording of the proposed law, the SPD and KPD failed to persuade centrist 'bourgeois' parties like the DDP or the Zentrum officially to join them, giving the referendum campaign a distinctly sectarian aura from the outset. The next stage was to win an initiating petition (*Volksbegehren*) by collecting the signatures of at least 10 per cent of eligible voters, something which was achieved with surprising ease: overall 12.52 million signatures, more than three times the required number, were collected between 4 and 17 March.[64] However, the final step was to achieve not just 50 per cent of the vote in the actual referendum, but 50 per cent of the votes of *all* eligible voters—a much higher bar. All the opposing side had to do was dissuade people from voting at all, as abstention was the de facto equivalent to 'no'.[65] On the other hand, for the 'yes' side, both the petition stage and the referendum stage depended on winning over voters who were usually politically indifferent or unlikely to have a firm party allegiance. The political emotions that needed to be mobilized to achieve this often involved having to marshal symbolic resentments against the 'system' at local level and raise them to the status of a national or even world-historical cause. The KPD in Berlin's working-class Neukölln district, and its paramilitary organization, the Red Front Fighters' League (Roter Frontkämpferbund, RFB), remarked upon this in an article published in January 1926 in the party newspaper, *Die Rote Fahne*:

> Never before have the Red Front Fighters been received by the population of Neukölln as on last Sunday. They were invited into the houses, given chocolate, beer, cognac, wine, cigars and cigarettes out of joy because the insatiable muzzles of the Hohenzollerns, and their like, were finally going to be stopped. Time and again people emphasised: 'We are certainly not supporters of the Communists, but on this question, we will go along with them completely.'[66]

However, Neukölln was already one of the KPD's principal strongholds and, since the war, the location of many violent clashes between the Prussian police and the revolutionary left over the symbolic 'ownership' of public space in Berlin.[67] Furthermore, the article in *Die Rote Fahne* was written before pressure from its own grassroots supporters had forced the SPD to commit itself to backing the plebiscitary initiative, in other words, before the KPD had any idea that a referendum was a serious possibility. The mobilization of 12.52 million signatures for the petition in March—including 1.6 million in Berlin—together with 14.46 million 'yes' voters on polling day, 20 June 1926, was a much more impressive achievement than the 'conquest' of Neukölln, and required the creation of a much broader political base. The Nazis, it should be noted, achieved just 13.75 million votes at the height of their success in July 1932.[68] Yet in June 1926 14.46 million was only 36.38 per cent of eligible voters, not the requisite 50 per cent. The referendum therefore failed to achieve a concrete outcome, which was arguably a much bigger blow to the SPD than the KPD. The latter had championed the 'people' against the former princes. The former could hardly now go back to the 'lesser evil' of supporting the DDP bill in the Reichstag, which was formally abandoned by the new Marx government in July 1926 anyway.

The failure to find a national solution left the matter in the hands of the individual states, but the general public can only have been further confused when the Prussian government under Otto Braun actually came to an agreement with lawyers representing the House of Hohenzollern, an agreement that was approved, with SPD abstentions, in the Prussian parliament in October 1926.[69] Meanwhile, in the Reichstag, political combinations remained fluid and uncertain, with the SPD continuing to back Stresemann's pro-western foreign policy but failing to prevent a majority of bourgeois parties coming together in December 1926 to pass, by 248 to 158 votes, the so-called 'Law to Protect Youth against Trashy and Smutty Literature'. Liberal and left-wing voices criticized this piece of legislation for reimposing censorship and undermining artistic freedom of expression. However, no attempt was made to repeal it by the SPD-led government after 1928, reflecting a 'cross-party consensus in the Reichstag on the need for the moral protection of youth'.[70]

The events of 1926 had certainly done nothing among left-of-centre voters to enhance the standing of the Reichstag and state parliaments as bastions of republican values against the (presumed) reactionary-monarchist President. On the other hand, some non-socialist politicians had seen in Hindenburg's election a chance for the creation of a moderate conservative consensus, one that combined elements of monarchism and republicanism, authoritarianism and parliamentarism, to create what Luther in January 1926 called a 'government of the centre' (*Regierung der Mitte*).[71] 'Moderate' conservatism was a highly complex and shifting construct, one that at times promised more openness (towards the SPD on the left or the DNVP on the right) and at other times a narrowing of options and a preference for authoritarian modes of government or a 'dictatorship within the bounds of the constitution'.[72] The way in which the June 1926 referendum on dispossession of the former princes split the forces supporting a 'government of the centre', and in particular the Zentrum and the DDP, down the middle, was another sign of the disruptive impact of direct elections.[73] The DDP was forced to defend its bill in the Reichstag, while its youth

wing, the Reichsorganisation der demokratischen Jugend, openly sided with the supporters of the referendum, as did a faction of the parliamentary party under Ludwig Bergsträsser and Ernst Lemmer.[74]

The republican paramilitary organization the Reichsbanner, which leaned strongly towards the SPD but also had supporters from the 'centrist' DDP and Zentrum in its ranks and was therefore officially obliged to stay neutral in the referendum, also found itself in a deeply uncomfortable position in 1926, with some left-wing and even moderate branches coming out in defiance for a 'yes' vote.[75] In Leipzig, Saxony, the KPD and RFB even sought to sow discord by issuing a flysheet calling on the local Reichsbanner to abandon its official stance and join them in a 'united front' campaign under the distinctly non-neutral slogan: 'Out with the Princes' Parliament! Out with Hindenburg and Marx!'[76] In Berlin, the referendum was sold by the KPD to Reichsbanner members with the claim that the joint KPD-SPD agitation for the initiating petition had already helped to prise 'a large number of former Hindenburg voters from the Hindenburg-Block'.[77]

In these circumstances, fragmentation of the 'centre' could not be avoided, to the detriment of the new (minority) Reich government under Wilhelm Marx which had to deal with unanswered questions from the referendum. Indeed, its first response was to present a bill in the Reichstag which would have prevented further referendums being called on the initiative of only 10 per cent of voters. However, as this was a constitutional change, it required a two-thirds majority, and extremist parties could easily block it. The Prussian government too felt awkwardly compromised, not least as the House of Hohenzollern had been the main focus of pre- and post-referendum anti-monarchist feeling. The SPD drew the appropriate lesson and did not back any more referendum initiatives during the remaining years of the Weimar Republic (and beyond). Nonetheless, anti-Weimar parties were emboldened to make further attempts to use the referendum option as a means of inflaming public opinion against the Reichstag and the mainstream parties. In October 1928, for instance, the KPD launched an initiating petition against the building of 'battle cruiser A' in a bid to further its 'united front' strategy by exploiting divisions between the four SPD Reich ministers and the party's parliamentary base and rank and file. However, it failed to get the requisite number of signatures to begin an actual referendum campaign, falling well short of the 10 per cent threshold with just 2.94 per cent of eligible voters. The decision of the SPD to distance itself from the petition is the main explanation for its collapse—even though the party's elected deputies continued to oppose *Panzerkreuzer A* in the Reichstag.[78]

Twelve months later, a new extra-parliamentary combination calling itself the National Opposition, and made up of a temporary alliance of the DNVP, the NSDAP, the Stahlhelm, the National Rural League (Reichslandbund), and the Pan-German League, achieved 4.14 million signatures—or 10.02 per cent of eligible voters—in its initiating petition against the Young Plan. The subsequent referendum, on 22 December 1929, was far less successful than the 1926 campaign in electoral terms—just 5.84 million Germans, or 13.81 per cent of all voters, backed the National Opposition's proposal that Reich ministers and elected deputies be banned from ratifying the Young Plan on pain of prosecution for trea-

son.[79] Indeed, the Young Plan did not appear to be an issue around which the conservative and radical right could rally a significant amount of middle-class nationalist discontent with the republic, including among the 14 per cent of voters who had supported splinter economic protest and anti-tax candidates in the 1928 Reichstag elections as opposed to mainstream Weimar parties or the DNVP.[80]

The Young Plan was subsequently placed before the Reichstag, where it was ratified by a clear-cut majority of 265 to 192 in March 1930, and then signed into law by Hindenburg in accordance with his constitutional duties.[81] To a certain extent, the campaign against it had burnished the credentials of the Nazi party as the authentic voice of populist national opposition to the republican 'system', and as more consistent in its approach than the 'moderate' DNVP and Stahlhelm members who had shied away from all-out attacks on Hindenburg as well as the 'grand coalition' government in their campaign literature.[82] This was by no means down to Hitler alone; rather it was the 'collective effort' of the party as a whole, which consciously 'targeted the masses', particularly in places where its main competitor was the DNVP.[83] Even so, the real breakthrough for the Nazis came only in the Reichstag elections of September 1930, and had more to do with opposition to Brüning's deflationary policies and contempt for his decision to seek an early dissolution of parliament after failing to secure majority support for his budget cuts than it did with an emotional rejection of the Young Plan.

Coalition-Building and Political Fragmentation

The inclusion of direct elections alongside parliamentary culture in an analysis of coalition-building and political fragmentation in Weimar Germany is illuminating on several fronts. In particular it shows that open-endedness and opportunity for expression of different visions of the future were possible alongside contemporary (and subsequent) narratives of an *überforderte Republik* or a democracy that had (already) 'overreached' itself and had too many alternative futures to choose from.[84] Direct elections drove a coach and horses through established party allegiances, the existing nexus between 'high' and 'low' politics, and the more settled structures of indirect representation, but they failed to act as an emotionally satisfying vent for political discontent. All they did was confirm that Germany and Germans were deeply fragmented along political lines, with divisions manifesting themselves along a range of overlapping axes. Some of these cleavages were ideological, some party-political, some war-related, some not, some national, some local, some material, and some purely symbolic. But none of them, not even the 'people versus the princes' slogan of the referendum campaigners in 1926, could give a positive definition to the republic and who it represented.

True, Otmar Jung is probably right to argue that, politically, the strong 'yes' vote in 1926 'killed the monarchist cause' in Germany in one bold stroke and thus to some extent reset the symbolic meaning—if not the practical consequences—of Hindenburg's presidential victory in 1925.[85] However, to call it a left-populist, or even more broadly, a socially progressive, republic-affirming campaign would be to ignore the fact that the coalition of

Germans who came together in support of 'total confiscation' of princely property was a unique and highly complex one that provided no base for creating a broader political community or set of values. Alongside ardent republicans, it included many centrists and right-wingers upset by the 'confiscation' of 'their' private savings during the currency revaluation of 1923–4, not to mention the usual group of abstainers who, confusingly, could not on this occasion choose to abstain, and thereby display their contempt for *all* Weimar parties, simply by not voting.[86] In other words, the second lesson of this campaign, irrespective of the explanations offered by the left and right at national level, was the more profound for cultural understandings of Weimar politics, namely—as Jung puts it —that it was pointless trying to 'translate the affinities and enmities of the parliamentary sphere into the plebiscitary realm'.[87]

There were of course other 'spaces', beyond the plebiscitary and the parliamentary, where signs of even greater political fragmentation were visible in the late 1920s. The most important of these was the sphere of political violence, which followed its own performative, communicative, spatial, and symbolic rules.[88] The clearest instance of street battles resurging in a more aggressive form after the winter of 1928–9 was the three days of fighting between radical leftists and the Prussian police in the Wedding and Neukölln districts of Berlin on 1–3 May 1929, an event known as 'Bloody May' (*Blutmai*).[89] Law-breaking also came to the countryside in the form of the Landvolkbewegung, a 'self-help' group of disaffected farmers founded in January 1928 in Schleswig-Holstein and spreading from there to other parts of the rural North, which carried out attacks on tax inspectors and occasional bombings of government offices.[90] Both the 'Blutmai' and the Landvolkbewegung were regionally specific developments, but anticipated the more general crisis of 1930–3 when 'transgressing the limits' set by the constitution and the rule of law became the main paradigm of government and the main raison d'être of all, or nearly all, political action.[91] Even before 1930, these transgressions played a part in the growing fragmentation of the DNVP and its rural ally, the Reichslandbund, into 'moderate' and 'extreme' elements, frustrating once and for all hopes that the DNVP might morph into something similar to the Conservative party in Britain.[92] Among anti-fascists, 'breaching the limits' not only cemented the now all-but unhealable KPD-SPD split but aided the formation of dissident communist groups like the KPD-O. The latter was opposed to KPD leader Thälmann's hard-line tactics against the social democrat 'left' and Free Trade Unions, but shared his belief that the coming revolution would only be achieved by means of an 'armed uprising of the proletariat' and a 'fierce, bloody civil war'.[93]

None of this made the state-political impasse of the early 1930s inevitable, or the 'failure' of the Weimar constitution absolute.[94] The poor showing of the 'yes' side in the anti-Young Plan campaign serves as a useful reminder of the limits of extra-parliamentary radical nationalist mobilization, even in the winter of 1929–30. So too does mass republican flag-waving of the type still seen in August 1930 at the time of the public festivities following the final withdrawal of Allied troops from the Rhineland.[95] Support for the extreme left was patchy and confined to particular regions, with most working-class Germans continuing to back the SPD, even after the disappointments of the 'grand coalition' and the party's subsequent 'toleration' of Brüning's austerity measures. As the district

leadership of the KPD in Hesse secretly reported in October 1928, left-leaning workers in factories in Frankfurt am Main and Offenbach were disappointed by the SPD ministers' support for the building of battle-cruiser A, but were willing to 'forgive this one error' and could not be won over to the communist cause.[96] Throughout 1929, republican visions of democracy remained strong, while the mood among the middle class in early 1930 was more reminiscent of 1923–4 when there was widespread pragmatic acceptance that the collapse of the currency did not (have to) mean the collapse of the constitution. Until the Nazi electoral breakthrough in September 1930, the chief political alternative to social democracy, as McElligott suggests, was 'stability based on conservative and traditionalist authority',[97] a stability that was desired by many mainstream German voters and politicians in the years 1924–30, even if it was not absolutely achievable.

Conclusion

Do these new insights still allow us to follow Peukert in locating the 'crisis' of Weimar modernity not just in the Great Depression, but in the six-year period that preceded it? The cultural and economic uncertainties of the late 1920s were certainly manifest in the intertwined processes of coalition-building and political fragmentation, and expressed themselves in a bewildering array of material hopes, 'fears of national extinction', and less tangible, but equally real, 'symbolic conflicts'.[98] The terms of domestic economic agreements—including the ambitious unemployment insurance scheme of 1927—afforded concrete, if temporary, meaning to social policy but did not fix new visions of national life in a pedagogical or civic sense.[99] Parliamentary culture followed its own rules and customs, but failed to command the wholehearted understanding and respect of vast swathes of the ordinary population.[100] Direct elections were an independent factor in creating expectations of material resolution and symbolic victory, and proceeded according to a logic beyond the control of any one party, movement, or coalition. However, they too were unable to provide a clear, authoritative answer to what the republic was, who it was for, and where its future lay.

However, if the period 1924–30 is seen on its own terms, rather than in relation to other epochs, a different picture emerges. True, the established parties had not yet worked out how to contain political emotions and symbolism within the parliamentary sphere, as opposed to allowing them to spill out into plebiscitary initiatives, street violence, and public spectacle, but they were at least beginning to recognize that this was one of their main challenges—and an important rationale for coalition-building beyond narrow party interest. A certain, qualified loyalty to the Weimar constitution had established itself, albeit one that to varying degrees looked for authoritarian solutions *within* the bounds of the constitution, including limitations on freedom of expression, avoidance of referendums where possible, and use of Article 48 in emergency situations.[101] The decision to dissolve parliament in July 1930 was in this sense the real beginning of the end for Weimar, not only because it represented an unwarranted abuse of presidential power, but because it signalled the abandonment of all pretence at disinterested coalition-building and pitted the naked anti-democratic ambition of Brüning and his minority austerity government

against a growing range of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, law-abiding and law-breaking opponents.

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Notes:

(1.) As argued, most recently, by Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst: Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Verlag, 2019), esp. 198–205.

(2.) Such views could also be found among jurists and officials in the Federal Ministry of Interior. See Martin Diebel, *'Die Stunde der Exekutive': Das Bundesministerium und die Notstandsgesetze 1949–1968* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2019).

(3.) Speech made by Luther before the Reichstag, 27 January 1926, reproduced in *Verhandlungen des Reichstags*, vol. 388, 149 Sitzung, III. Wahlperiode 1924/8 (Berlin: Verlag

der Reichsdruckerei, 1926), 5170. Cited in Franklin C. West, *A Crisis of the Weimar Republic: The German Referendum of 20 June 1926* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1985), 14.

(4.) George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 171. According to Article 49 of the Weimar Constitution of 1919: 'The Reich President exercises the right of amnesty. Reich amnesties require a Reich law.'

(5.) See here Sebastian Ullrich, *Der Weimar-Komplex: Das Scheitern der ersten deutschen Demokratie und die politische Kultur der frühen Bundesrepublik, 1945–1959* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2009), esp. 269–302.

(6.) Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 82.

(7.) See Michael Stürmer, 'Koalitionen und Oppositionen: Bedingungen parlamentarischer Instabilität' (1967), reproduced in Michael Stürmer (ed.), *Die Weimarer Republik: Belagerte Civitas*, 2nd ed. (Königstein-im-Taunus: Athenäum-Verlag, 1985), 237–53, here 250. Also Stürmer's bigger study, *Koalition und Opposition in der Weimarer Republik 1924–1928* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1967), here esp. 283.

(8.) Anthony McElligott, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic: Authority and Authoritarianism, 1916–1936* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 7.

(9.) Stürmer, *Koalition und Opposition*, 34–7.

(10.) Heinrich August Winkler, *Weimar 1918–1933: Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998), 235, 252-3.

(11.) Larry Eugene Jones, '"The Dying Middle": Weimar Germany and the Fragmentation of Bourgeois Politics', *Central European History*, 5/1 (1972), 23–54.

(12.) Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (London: Allen Lane, 1991).

(13.) Thomas Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur in der Weimarer Republik: Politische Kommunikation, symbolische Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Reichstag* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2002).

(14.) See also Mergel, 'High Expectations—Deep Disappointment: Structures of the Public Perception of Politics in the Weimar Republic', in Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (eds), *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 192–210, here 194.

(15.) Winkler, *Weimar*, 238, 266, 268.

(16.) Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, 206; Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill, NC, and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 208.

(17.) See Benjamin Ziemann, 'Weimar was Weimar: Politics, Culture and the Emplotment of the Weimar Republic', *German History*, 28/4 (2010), 542–71, here 562–3.

(18.) Jonathan Wright, *Gustav Stresemann: Weimar's Greatest Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

(19.) A list of the most important ministers in each cabinet can be found in Ursula Büttner, *Weimar: Die überforderte Republik 1918–1933: Leistung und Versagen in Staat, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2008), 810–12.

(20.) On the 'flag incident', see Winkler, *Weimar*, 311–12.

(21.) West, *A Crisis*, xi, 8.

(22.) Ibid., 17.

(23.) Ziemann, 'Weimar was Weimar', 561.

(24.) Cf. Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, esp. 323–31.

(25.) Mommsen, *Rise and Fall*, 227.

(26.) David E. Barclay, *Rudolf Wissell als Sozialpolitiker 1890–1933* (West Berlin: Colloquium Verlag, 1984), 210; McElligott, *Rethinking*, 79–81.

(27.) Rudolf Wissell, 'Einundzwanzig Monate Reichsarbeitsminister', *Die Arbeit: Zeitschrift für Gewerkschaftspolitik und Wirtschaftskunde*, 7/4 (Apr. 1930), 217–28. English translations taken from Ben Fowkes (ed.), *The German Left and the Weimar Republic: A Selection of Documents* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 40–2, here 40-1.

(28.) Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *Arbeitsmarktpolitik und Arbeitsverwaltung in Deutschland 1871–2002: Zwischen Fürsorge, Hoheit und Markt* (Nuremberg: Zentralamt der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit, 2003), 142.

(29.) Wissell, 'Einundzwanzig Monate', 40.

(30.) Stürmer, 'Koalitionen und Oppositionen', 249.

(31.) Mommsen, *Rise and Fall*, 190–1, 208, 248.

(32.) Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, 415.

(33.) Barclay, *Rudolf Wissell*, 211.

(34.) Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, 221.

(35.) Barclay, *Rudolf Wissell*, 209–10.

(36.) Mommsen, *Rise and Fall*, 248–9. See also William L. Patch Jr., *Christian Trade Unions in the Weimar Republic, 1918–1933: The Failure of 'Corporate Pluralism'* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 125–6.

(37.) See Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik, at http://www.gonschior.de/weimar.

(38.) Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 119.

(39.) Matthias Lau, *Pressepolitik als Chance: Staatliche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit in den Ländern der Weimarer Republik* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003), 26.

(40.) Richard A. Comfort, *Revolutionary Hamburg: Labor Politics in the Early Weimar Republic* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1966), 130.

(41.) Barry A. Jackisch, *The Pan-German League and Radical Nationalist Politics in Interwar Germany, 1918–39* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

(42.) Dietrich Orlow, *Weimar Prussia, 1918–1925: The Unlikely Rock of Democracy* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1986).

(43.) Martin H. Geyer, 'Grenzüberschreitungen: Vom Belagerungszustand zum Ausnahmezustand', in Niels Werber, Stefan Kaufmann, and Lars Koch (eds), *Erster Weltkrieg: Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2014), 341–84, here 366, 370; Diebel, *Die Stunde der Exekutive*, 155.

(44.) British Foreign Office memorandum on the history of the constitutional and political changes which have occurred since the revolution in the eighteen Federal States which now form the German Reich, 30 Mar. 1927, The National Archives, Kew, London (henceforth TNA), FO 425/549.

(45.) Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600–1947* (London: Allen Lane, 2006), 621–2. For an extensive discussion of Prussia in the years 1925–30, see also Hagen Schulze, *Otto Braun oder Preußens demokratische Sendung: Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen, 1977), 475–625.

(46.) Mommsen, *Rise and Fall*, 249–50.

(47.) Schulze, *Otto Braun*, 533, 590, 593.

(48.) Lau, *Pressepolitik*, 225, 242, 245.

(49.) Jackisch, *The Pan-German League*, esp. 30–2. See also Geyer, 'Grenzüberschreitungen', 353, 366.

(50.) See, for instance, British ambassador Viscount d'Abernon's remarks on a speech by Held in a note to Sir Austen Chamberlain, 26 Apr. 1926, in TNA, FO 425/548.

(51.) Lau, *Pressepolitik*, 51.

(52.) British Foreign Office memorandum, 30 Mar. 1927. The DNVP's vote share in Reichstag elections in Hamburg fell from 21.61% in December 1924 to 12.84% in May 1928, a considerably larger decline than the national average. On the other hand, Stresemann's party, the DVP, actually increased its vote in Hamburg from 13.15% to 13.82%, making it second place behind the SPD on 36.83%. See Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik, at http://www.gonschior.de/weimar.

(53.) Otmar Jung, *Direkte Demokratie in der Weimarer Republik: Die Fälle 'Aufwertung', 'Fürstenenteignung', 'Panzerkreuzerverbot' und 'Youngplan'* (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 1989).

(54.) Dirk Schumann, *Political Violence in the Weimar Republic, 1918–1933: Fight for the Streets and Fear of Civil War* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 176, 205; Fulda, *Press and Politics*, 125–6.

(55.) Addison to Chamberlain, 11 June 1926, in TNA, FO 425/548.

(56.) Benjamin Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations: Republican War Veterans and Weimar Political Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 112.

(57.) ZK der KPD an das Sekretariat des EKKI, 4 June 1926, in Bundesarchiv Berlin, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR (henceforth SAPMO-BArch), RY 5/566, Bl. 17.

(58.) Schumann, *Political Violence*, 312.

(59.) Anna von der Goltz, *Hindenburg: Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 87.

(60.) Ibid., 94–5.

(61.) Ibid., 90–1.

(62.) See Wahlen in der Weimarer Republik, at http://www.gonschior.de/weimar. Also West, *A Crisis*, 273.

(63.) Mommsen, *Rise and Fall*, 239–42.

(64.) Jung, *Direkte Demokratie*, 55.

(65.) Ibid., 10.

(66.) West, *A Crisis*, 10.

(67.) See Axel Weipert, *Das Rote Berlin: Eine Geschichte der Berliner Arbeiterbewegung 1830–1934*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2019), esp. 137-41.

(68.) Ibid., 143; Büttner, *Weimar*, 803.

(69.) Jung, *Direkte Demokratie*, 59; West, *A Crisis*, 12; Schulze, *Otto Braun*, 508–9.

(70.) McElligott, *Rethinking*, 137.

(71.) Luther before the Reichstag, 27 Jan. 1926 (as note 3).

(72.) McElligott, *Rethinking*, 181–8.

(73.) On the tensions that the 1926 referendum caused inside the Zentrum in particular, see Karsten Ruppert, *Im Dienst am Staat von Weimar: Das Zentrum als regierende Partei in der Weimarer Demokratie 1923–1930* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1992), 210–27.

(74.) Ulrich Schüren, *Der Volksentscheid zur Fürstenenteignung 1926* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1978), 162, 224, 226.

(75.) Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations*, 176–7.

(76.) *Reichsbanner in Leipzig!* Flysheet from June 1926, issued by the KPD, Bezirksleitung Westsachsen, in association with the RFB. See Sammlung der Bibliothek des Reichsgerichts, housed in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

(77.) ZK der KPD, Referentenmaterial, 4 June 1926, in SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/1277, Bl. 1–4, here Bl. 4.

(78.) Jung, *Direkte Demokratie*, 104.

(79.) Ibid., 126, 140.

(80.) Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 129, 185–6.

(81.) McElligott, *Rethinking*, 54.

(82.) Jackisch, *The Pan-German League*, 164, 175.

(83.) Jung, *Direkte Demokratie*, 130.

(84.) See Büttner, *Weimar*. Also Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2008).

(85.) Jung, *Direkte Demokratie*, 59.

(86.) Fulda, *Press and Politics*, 124–5.

(87.) Jung, *Direkte Demokratie*, 92.

(88.) Schumann, *Political Violence*.

(89.) Chris Bowlby, 'Blutmai 1929: Police, Parties and Proletarians in a Berlin Confrontation', *Historical Journal*, 29/1 (1986), 137–58; Weipert, *Das rote Berlin*, 144–6.

(90.) Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism*, 114–18.

(91.) Geyer, 'Grenzüberschreitungen', 372-3.

(92.) Thomas Mergel, 'Das Scheitern des deutschen Tory-Konservatismus: Die Umformung der DNVP zu einer rechtsradikalen Partei 1928-1932', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 276 (2003), 323–68.

(93.) *Plattform der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Opposition)* (Berlin: Reichsleitung der KPD-O, 1930), 5–6.

(94.) For a critical approach to discourses on Weimar's *constitutional* 'failure', see Dieter Grimm, 'Mißglückt oder glücklos? Die Weimarer Reichsverfassung im Widerstreit der Meinungen', in Heinrich August Winkler (ed.), *Weimar im Widerstreit: Deutungen der ersten deutschen Republik im geteilten Deutschland* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2002), 151–61.

(95.) Nadine Rossol, *Performing the Nation in Interwar Germany: Sport, Spectacle and Political Symbolism, 1926–1936* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), esp. 80–101.

(96.) Bezirksleitung Hessen der KPD, Bericht über die Durchführung der Kampagne gegen Panzerkreuzerbau, 22 Oct. 1928, in SAPMO-BArch, RY 1/2850, Bl. 94–9.

(97.) McElligott, *Rethinking*, 77.

(98.) Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 276–7; Ziemann, *Contested Commemorations*, 112.

(99.) McElligott, *Rethinking*, 5.

(100.) Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*.

(101.) Büttner, *Weimar*, 507.

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