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**A comparative study of Christian Democratic parties in Germany, Austria and the  
Netherlands: at the crossroads between tradition and adaptation**

**by**

**Fraser W. Duncan**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the Department of  
Politics, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Glasgow**

**September 2003**

## Abstract

This study is an in-depth investigation into the Christian Democratic parties of Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, focusing particularly on these parties during the 1990s. The primary intention is to give greater coverage to these oft-neglected parties through an account of political, electoral, programmatic and organisational developments. The research probes the position of the parties in the 1990s and analyses the extent to which the electoral decline of these parties after 1990 was the result of common factors as well as the role of nationally specific contextual variables. This is carried out through a consideration of the contraction of the social bases of Christian Democratic partisanship and detailed case-studies of the parties in the 1990s. The reactions of the parties to this decline are also analysed, looking specifically at strategic, programmatic and organisational changes. Historical background will also be provided by the opening chapters. Chapter two looks at Christian Democrats in the early post-war period, highlighting the rapid rise of such parties and contrasting the lack of a unified Christian Democratic party in the Netherlands while chapter three investigates the reaction of the parties to the loss of national office and/or the emergence of electoral problems. In each case, programmatic and organisational adaptation occurred although as the chapter argues, by the end of the 1980s such efforts were very much marginal after the parties had re-established their position in government. Chapter four then examines the key social bases of Christian Democratic support and illustrates their long-term decline. It concludes that while such change need not necessarily result in electoral problems, there has been a decline of Christian Democratic partisanship in the electorate in the three countries. Chapters five, six and seven analyse the CDU, ÖVP and CDA in the 1990s. In each case, Christian Democrats found their position under greater threat than previously although the scale of their problems varied. Chapter eight scrutinises the development of Christian Democratic electoral programmes using the Comparative Manifestos Project dataset. Although it finds some evidence of divergence in the electoral platforms of the parties, there was also a clear increase in the prominence of traditionalist themes in recent years. The thesis argues that Christian Democrats were undermined in the 1990-9 period by unpopular leadership, an unfavourable issue context, intra-party problems and greater levels of party competition in addition to the erosion of socially rooted partisanship. Furthermore, although programmatic change was limited and the essential components of Christian Democratic identity remained in place, there were clear signs of ideological strain in each party with accompanying organisational problems.

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## Abbreviations

ARP	Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (Anti-Revolutionary Party)
BP	Boerenpartij (Farmers Party)
CDA	Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Appeal)
CDJA	Christen-Democratisch Jongeren Appèl (CDA Youth Party)
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CHU	Christelijk-Historische Unie (Christian Historical Union)
CMP	Comparative Manifestos Project
CPN	Communistische Partij van Nederland (Communist Party of the Netherlands)
CSU	Christlich-Soziale Union (Christian Social Union)
CU	ChristenUnie (Christian Union)
D66	Democraten 66 (Democrats 66)
DGB	Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (German Trade Union Federation)
DNES	Dutch National Election Survey
DP	Deutsche Partei (German Party)
DS'70	Democratisch-Socialisten 1970 (Democratic Socialists 1970)
EC	European Community
EEC	European Economic Community
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (Free Democratic Party of Germany)
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FU	Frauen-Union (CDU Women's Auxiliary Organisation)
GB/BHE	Gesamtdeutscher Block/Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten (Refugees Party)
GL	GroenLinks (Green Left)
GPV	Gereformeed Politiek Verbond (Reformed Political League)
JU	Junge Union (CDU Youth Party)
JVP	Junge Volkspartei (ÖVP Youth Party)
KPÖ	Kommunistische Partei Österreichs (Communist Party of Austria)
KVP	Katholieke Volkspartij (Catholic People's Party)
LiF	Liberales Forum (Liberal Forum)
LN	Leefbaar Nederlands (Liveable Netherlands)
LPF	Lijst Pim Fortuyn (Pim Fortuyn List)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
ÖAAB	Österreichischer Arbeiter- und Angestelltenbund (Austrian Workers and Employees' League)
ÖBB	Österreichischer Bauernbund (Austrian Farmers' League)
ÖGB	Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (Austrian Trade Union Federation)
ÖVP	Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian People's Party)
ÖWB	Österreichischer Wirtschaftsbund (Austrian Business League)
PDS	Partei des demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism)
PPR	Politieke Partij Radicalen (Radical Party)
PSP	Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij (Pacifist-Socialist Party)
PvdA	Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party)
RPF	Reformatoerisch Politieke Federatie (Reformed Political Federation)
SGP	Staatkundig-Gereformeede Partij (Political Reformed Party)

SP	Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
SPÖ	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (Social Democratic Party of Austria)
VVD	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)
WAO	Wet op de arbeidsongeschiktheidsverzekering (work disability benefit)

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## Chapter 1. Christian Democratic Parties: origins, essence and party change

### I. Introduction

Throughout the post-war period in Western Europe, Christian Democratic parties have played a role of unquestionable importance. In many countries, Christian Democrats quickly established a wide electoral base and became the leading party in government. The achievements of these new parties were not inconsiderable: nations devastated by war were rebuilt with American aid, pressing socio-economic problems were tackled (Schulz 1996) and the foundations for long-term peace in Europe were laid through economic co-operation in the ECSC and its successor organisations (Becker 1997:118). Moreover, the ideology of Christian Democracy provided a means through which the right in Europe could overcome its traditional antipathy to democracy (Girvin 1994). By the late 1950s, Christian Democrats throughout mainland Europe had reached “remarkable heights of power” (Fogarty 1959:340) and seemed to have firmly consolidated their position as *the* pre-eminent West European political force. In West Germany, Italy, Austria and Belgium, Christian Democrats became the largest party and routinely claimed the chief executive post<sup>1</sup>. Though not strictly a Christian Democratic party on account of its closed Catholicism, the Catholic People’s Party (KVP) in the Netherlands occupied a similarly pivotal position within the Dutch political system.

Yet this golden age of Christian Democracy had already begun to unravel by the onset of the 1960s. The challenges faced were the result of both structural and contextual factors. Across all of Western Europe, long term social developments threatened the electoral foundation of Christian Democratic parties with the decline of key social groups. As a consequence, the electoral environment became less hospitable, a change also resulting from the increasingly centrist position of Socialist/Social Democratic parties. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU), hamstrung by a troublesome leadership succession, faced greater competition from the post-Godesberg SPD in the FRG. In the Netherlands, the electoral challenge came not so much from the Labour Party (PvdA) but from the splintering of the party system whereas the dominance of the Belgian Christian People’s Party (CVP) was seriously threatened by the linguistic division destabilising the entire political system. The brief period when the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) held an absolute majority (1966-70) only temporarily masked the mounting

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<sup>1</sup> For the first twenty years of the FRG, the chancellorship was exclusively in the hands of the CDU. Similarly, after the provisional post-war government headed by the socialist Renner, the Austrian Chancellor was a Christian Democrat until 1970. In Belgium, the CVP/PSC supplied the prime minister from 1949 to 1954 and then 1958 until 1973. The stranglehold of the DC on the premiership was even more extreme with no non-Christian Democratic prime minister until 1981.

problems of the party and proved to be an aberration before the start of the SPÖ-dominated Kreisky years. Only the Italian Christian Democrats (DC) could be said to have emerged from the decade relatively unscathed and even there discontent with the performance of the party was pervasive (Donovan 1994:74). Furthermore, the economic context was slightly less favourable to government parties than previously as growth rates slowed, prefiguring the crisis years of the 1970s<sup>2</sup>. The political supremacy of Christian Democratic parties began to ebb away. For the CDU and the ÖVP, this brought them into the unfamiliar surroundings of opposition. Even where Christian Democrats were not cast out of office, their capacity to adapt was seriously strained with the most dramatic example being the eventual fusion of the Dutch confessional parties into the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA).

Table 1.1 Average results for Christian Democratic parties by decade

	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
<i>Germany</i>	31.0	47.7	46.3	46.8	45.9	40.1
<i>Austria</i>	46.9	43.8	46.9	43.2	42.3	28.8
<i>Italy</i>	41.9	41.3	38.7	38.6	33.6	17.8
<i>Belgium</i>	43.0	45.1	36.0	33.9	27.7	24.7
<i>Netherlands</i>	52.5	49.3	46.9	33.3	32.6	20.3

Note: Dutch results pre-1980 based on cumulative KVP, CHU and ARP results. Italian results post-1990 include DC, PPI and CCD/CDU. Belgian results post-1960s based on cumulative CVP and PSC scores.

Gradually, Christian Democrats recovered much of their former strength, benefiting from the general swing to the right across the West. It would be mistaken, however, to equate the past two decades with the earlier period of Christian Democratic hegemony. The new environment these parties found themselves in was more competitive and far less certain as voter loyalty could no longer be taken for granted. Table 1.1 demonstrates that despite the CDU and ÖVP returning to office and the continued Christian Democratic presence in the Belgian and Italian governments, the average result for such parties dropped in the 1980s. This slight decay preceded the more substantial losses sustained in the following decade. It is striking that in each of the five countries the average Christian Democratic electoral result dropped. Christian Democratic parties, therefore, have not been insulated against the gusts of political change sweeping through Western Europe. While the sudden demise of the DC in 1993 and the crumbling of the CDA vote in 1994 were the most extreme examples of change,

<sup>2</sup> This fall was marked in West Germany, less so in Austria and the Netherlands. See OECD

they were by no means unrepresentative of a general trend in support for the centre-right in the 1990s. Indeed, by the late 1990s, the centre-right appeared in retreat across much of Western Europe. The rejuvenation of the centre-left and a succession of novel coalition constellations<sup>3</sup> forced many established centre-right parties of government into opposition. The correspondence between these national developments inevitably prompted debate about the future of the centre-right<sup>4</sup>. The oft-asked question “What’s left of the left?” seemed to have found a matching conundrum in “What’s right about the right?”.

## II. Aims and Methodology

The aim of this thesis is to investigate this decline of Christian Democratic parties, focusing solely on the CDU<sup>5</sup>, the ÖVP and the CDA. The three parties cover a wide range on a spectrum of Christian Democracy: the Dutch party has typically been viewed as more ideologically ‘pure’ than the pragmatic CDU with the Austrian party generally closer to its German counterpart although a wide breadth of opinion is a characteristic of all three (Hanley 1994:5). While support for each party dipped in the 1990s<sup>6</sup>, the scale and nature of the decline varied quite markedly. Both the CDA and the ÖVP endured a sudden and drastic drop in one election followed by further, less severe losses while the pattern of CDU/CSU support shows more gradual deterioration. As well as probing whether the tribulations of Christian Democratic parties in this period are bound to the specificities of national political contexts or whether there are indeed common factors, the thesis will also explore the reaction of the parties to it. Have, for example, the loss of votes and/or office provoked a shift in Christian Democratic ideology and policy? Both of these aims will be pursued through a consideration of the erosion of core bases of Christian Democratic support, detailed case studies of party-related developments in the 1990s and quantitative analysis of Christian Democrat electoral platforms using the Comparative Manifestos Project data.

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figures cited in Peters (1991:5)

<sup>3</sup> The first ever purple coalition (Social Democratic/ Conservative Liberal/ Progressive Liberal) in the Netherlands in 1994 was almost exactly mirrored five years later in Belgium. In the meantime, the *gauche plurielle* alliance had come to power in France in 1997 as had the first ever federal level Red-Green coalition in the FRG in 1998. In some cases, however, these experimental partnerships did not exclude Christian Democratic or centre-right parties e.g. the Irish Rainbow and Italian Olive Tree coalitions.

<sup>4</sup> See Freeland “The right is left bereft” *The Guardian* (22/08/2001); Nolte “Die Krise des Konseratismus” *Die Zeit* nr.31 (26/07/2001); Katz (2002); Chandler (2002).

<sup>5</sup> Although it cannot be left out of the study entirely, the Christian Social Union (CSU) will not be examined here. However, when referring to electoral statistics, the Union parties will frequently be paired together as most quantitative research effectively treats the two parties as one.

<sup>6</sup> See Table 1.1 and appendix for complete election results.

Within the case studies of the parties in the 1990s, no uniform model has been applied to guide the research. Rather than impose a rigid system to these chapters, a more flexible approach focusing on political and electoral, programmatic and organisational developments has been employed with the end point being the last election of the 1990s in each country (1998 in Germany and the Netherlands, 1999 in Austria). Therefore, in view of the CDU's strong position in government and lack of leadership change, the focus is on government policy in the German chapter, while for the ÖVP (as junior coalition partner) and the CDA (in opposition post-1994) more attention has been given to events in internal party life. A number of elite interviews have been conducted primarily for background material. In addition, the opening chapters will give a brief historical overview of the parties from 1945-1969 and 1970-89. This will provide valuable historical context which allows for the adoption of longer term perspective on the development of Christian Democratic electoral strength and party ideology. It is vital to acknowledge the exceptionalism of the Dutch parties: prior to 1980, no major Christian Democratic party existed. However, the inclusion of the confessionals is necessary to understand the development of the CDA and also sheds some light on the differences between the confessional parties and their Christian Democratic successors. Before this, however, this chapter will concentrate on the origins and essence of Christian Democracy and a consideration of parties and change.

### **III. Structure of Chapter 1**

Section IV of this chapter will trace the roots of Christian Democracy from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since this point, Christian Democracy has been, in Lucardie's imaginative metaphor, the "lost daughter" who set out from the conservative home (1993:51) who "has developed differently" but whose "family resemblance" is still apparent. Like conservatism, the precursors of post-war Christian Democracy originated in reaction to the French revolution. However, the influence of social Catholicism divided the movement from its conservative contemporaries. Social Catholicism represents the fruit of the interaction between lay Catholic mobilisation and the efforts of the Papacy to direct this. However, it is also vital to acknowledge the importance of the "little" or unofficial tradition of Catholic thought (van Kersbergen 1995) which sought to embrace democracy. Following this, Section V will review the existing literature on Christian Democracy, in the process defining the essence of Christian Democratic identity as well as drawing out the typical policy preferences resulting from this. Although Christian Democracy has been a long-ignored topic, a number of studies have appeared in recent years which have greatly improved our understanding of the phenomenon. Such works have helped to combat the tendency to classify Christian

Democracy simply as a variant or sub-type of conservatism. It will be suggested here that Christian Democracy must be considered as a separate, if related phenomena and the core of this distinctiveness will be examined.

A consequence of the academic concentration on the nature, progress and problems of the European left is that very few researchers have tried to incorporate Christian Democratic parties into theories about political parties. Given this paucity and the lack of English-language work on Christian Democracy, this thesis is not intended as an explicitly theoretical test of an existing model of party change nor an attempt to formulate a new one. Rather, the primary purpose is to make a detailed contribution to our understanding of Christian Democratic parties. Nonetheless, the penultimate part of this chapter will examine the existing literature on political parties, focusing in particular on the question of parties and change. Since the earliest work on parties, the topics of organisation and ideology have been identified as essential to an understanding of how parties work. Political parties are, after all, “organisations ‘with attitude’” which “embody ideological values” (Luther and Müller-Rommel 2002:5). While the focus in this work will be on ideological change, this section will also highlight that it is difficult to separate the two, particularly in analysing party behaviour in response to shifting external environments. The final section will sketch out the chapter-by-chapter development of the thesis.

#### **IV. Origins of Christian Democracy**

Before progressing to the main themes of the thesis, it is worthwhile to consider the roots of Christian Democracy for this lies at the heart of its distinctiveness. Of all Christian Democracy-related topics, this theme has been the most well-explored (e.g. Kalyvas 1996; van Kersbergen 1995; Irving 1978; Pombeni 2000; Burgess 1990). As such authors have demonstrated, the central tenets of Christian Democracy were not created in a vacuum in the aftermath of WWII. The widespread economic and social devastation and political disrepute of the authoritarian right had opened up a gap for new political movements but ideas such as subsidiarity, personalism and solidarity were not wholly novel. The newly founded Christian Democratic parties have been described as a culmination of a slow process of maturation (Sigmund 1987) and drew heavily from the doctrine of social Catholicism which had developed since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, however, the emergent parties also represented a rupture in Catholic politics (Hanley 1994:3). In contrast to their pre-war confessional party predecessors, the Christian Democrats fully espoused democracy and stood for a programme beyond mere defence of Catholic sub-cultural autonomy. In seeking the origins of Christian

Democracy and its ideas, it is necessary to look to the development of both official Vatican doctrine and the unofficial “little tradition” of Catholicism (van Kersbergen 1995:187). While the ideas developed by the theorists within the latter group are the nearest equivalent to the philosophy of the nascent post-war parties, it is only by considering them against wider trends in Catholicism and especially the role of the Papacy that the evolutionary leap from the numerically insignificant group of pro-democratic social reformist Catholic thinkers to Christian Democracy, the dominant political force on mainland Europe post-1945, can be understood.

Until the later stages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Papacy did not have a viable alternative to modernity. Popes such as Leo XII (1823-9) and Gregory XVI (1831-46) strenuously opposed all liberal reforms within the papal states, suppressing press freedom, and denouncing unequivocally the separation of Church and state (Sigmund 1987:536). Not only did the Vatican abhor the noxious individualism and personal freedoms promoted by liberalism, it was also fearful of the threat posed by socialism. Socialism was fiercely decried for its atheistic and materialist conception of the world, its condemnation of private property and its relegation of the status of the family. It was in the words of the later *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), “irreconcilable with true Christianity” (quoted in Walsh 1998:38). Despite the fear that the working class could be lost to socialism, the Vatican could offer no alternative other than a nostalgic romanticism of a pre-modern past. The *Syllabus of Errors* of 1864, condemning the evils of liberalism, seemed to cement the association between the church and the forces of reaction, so that by the time of Pius IX’s death, “the church and its leadership in Rome seemed to be at war against almost every feature of the modern era” (Camp 1969:9).

The rejection of modernity by the Vatican was not shared by all Catholics. In France, a number of writers such as Abbé Felicité de Lamennais were contributing to a burgeoning intellectual trend, the principle aim of which was to find a distinctively Catholic solution to the main problems in society, i.e. the working and living conditions endured by the industrial working class under capitalism. Elsewhere, von Kettler was instrumental in pushing German Catholicism towards a more socially-minded reformism. Moreover, other theorists began to press for more than social reform. Lacordaire was one of the earliest Catholic intellectuals to seek an accommodation between Catholicism and democracy. He argued for the separation of Church and state, press freedom and the full extension of the vote (Irving 1973:28). Despite the modest impact of their views and the unambiguous condemnation of the Papacy, the efforts of

such thinkers marked the beginning of the separation of lay Catholic social and political thinking from the reactionary conservatism of the time.

The death of Pius IX signalled the commencement of a new phase in the Church's relations with society. Leo XIII (1878-1903) adopted a far more conciliatory position than his predecessors. The encyclicals produced during his reign, most notably *Rerum Novarum* (1891), represented the Church's first serious attempt to present solutions to the difficulties caused by capitalism. Clearly, socialism was still unacceptable and private property was inviolable. Nevertheless, for the first time the predicament of the industrial working class was addressed. The difficulties faced by this group were the result, it was argued, of their exploitation by employers and "the erosion of the traditional bonds of religion and the guild society" (van Kersbergen 1995:222). Rather than advocating a restoration of feudal conditions though, *Rerum Novarum* tentatively developed a theory of how these conditions could be ameliorated. The "hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition" (Article 3 *Rerum Novarum*)<sup>7</sup> should be replaced by a more benevolent attitude derived from the employer's duty to look after his employees.

The Church began to develop "a social doctrine' of its own which in certain respects was radically critical of liberal society" (Pombeni 2000:291) and which attempted to mark out an alternative to socialism and liberalism, a crucial part of Christian Democratic self-identity as will be shown later. The Vatican's answer to the social problems of the industrial age was still quite imprecise, especially on how the improvements in social life were to be effected. Leo's preference was for social reform to be carried out primarily through voluntary Catholic organisations rather than by the state and the concept of charity was still central (Camp 1969:138-43) but even before the creation of the encyclical, the German Catholic party (*Zentrum*) had moved towards a more active form of social policy and other reformers also used the document to justify state intervention. Further refinement of the Church's approach towards state intervention came with *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) in which the principle of subsidiarity was set out clearly. Tasks should be carried out at the lowest level possible, whether that be the individual, family, community, intermediary organisation or state. The concept of subsidiarity and the accompanying belief in social pluralism were to be of great significance within later Christian Democratic thought.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum_en.html) Accessed 13/02/03

Shifts in papal attitudes also brought unintended consequences in the political realm. Overt Catholic political action was still frowned upon but French Catholics were urged to rally behind the Republic in *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes* (1891)<sup>8</sup> albeit without any concessions to militant anti-clericals. This cautious and hesitant accommodation with parliamentary democracy could in no way be described as an endorsement<sup>9</sup> and the beliefs and actions of later popes up until the Second World War stunted the growth of pro-democratic feeling within the Church<sup>10</sup>. Yet the effect of this incremental attitudinal change was to encourage those lay Catholic thinkers already engaged in theorising about Catholicism's relation to the social and political order. The momentum that had created Catholic political parties was largely beyond the control of the Church (Kalyvas 1996:64) but Leo XIII's less dogmatic stance also gave further impetus to the *Zentrum's* social reform efforts (Walton 1994:108). Other Catholic parties were not as progressive (e.g. the Austrian *Christlich-Soziale*) and it took longer for parties to develop in Italy and France. The first mass Italian Catholic political party *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI) formed in 1919, shortly after the final overturning of the prohibition of Catholic involvement in politics and with the blessing of Benedict XV. In France, two proto-Christian Democratic parties, the Action Libérale (based around Albert de Mun) and the more marginal PDP, arose in 1901 and 1924 respectively. The social reformism of the former was fairly weak and arose more from pragmatism (i.e. the need to defeat the socialist danger) rather than from a more genuine belief in the need to remedy the worst aspects of capitalism but the PDP's political philosophy bore a closer resemblance to post-war Christian Democracy. It strongly affirmed the legitimacy of the Republic, personal and press freedoms and argued for social reforms and a harmonisation of the interests of workers and employers.

Although the papacy of Leo XIII encouraged greater Catholic activity in social and political groupings, it had not signified a permanent repudiation of past attitudes. Later popes (such as Pius X 1903-14) seemed inclined to reject modern society completely. Nonetheless, the rapid growth of extensive lay Catholic organisations in the Interbellum was tolerated by Benedict XV (1914-22) and positively encouraged by Pius XI (1922-39). Catholic trade unions had existed in Germany for a number of years<sup>11</sup> and

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_16021892\\_au-milieu-des-sollicitudes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_16021892_au-milieu-des-sollicitudes_en.html). Accessed 13/02/03.

<sup>9</sup> The Vatican would only go so far as to state that none of the different forms of government France had experienced was "in itself, opposed to the principles of sound reason nor to the maxims of Christian doctrine" (Article 14, *Au Milieu des Sollicitudes*).

<sup>10</sup> For example, the bar on Catholic political participation in Italy remained in place from 1867 until 1919.

<sup>11</sup> The *Gesamtverband der christlichen Gewerkschaften Deutschlands*, GcG, was founded in 1899.

this example was increasingly copied in other countries<sup>12</sup>. These Catholic unions were only one part of a wider network of organisations, an emerging Catholic sub-culture which could, in the most extreme cases, shelter and enclose the Catholic population 'from cradle to the grave'<sup>13</sup>. The wave of enthusiasm for such organisations was the first real indication of Catholic acceptance of mass participation yet the increased self-confidence and assertiveness of Catholics was a mixed blessing for democracy. From the mid-1920s onwards, a new mood of intransigence and radicalism, antithetical to the Christian Democratic 'spirit', was increasingly prevalent.

This new disposition was in part due to changes within the Vatican. Pius XI (1922-39), believing that the Church had to give stronger leadership to an increasingly polarised Western world, promoted the new Catholic Action groups. The rise of Catholic Action was linked to the growth of a young, highly educated Catholic intelligentsia who advocated the 'rechristianisation of society' (Conway 1997:43). One effect of this intellectual direction was that the value of politics, and specifically Catholic parties, in promoting Catholic interests was questioned by militants. Involvement in politics inevitably involved compromise with other political parties who lacked any sort of religious inspiration and who stood in the way of the envisioned religious revival. Pro-democratic feeling among Catholics began to ebb away as Catholic Action gathered momentum. Pius XI had little sympathy for confessional parties, believing them to be an ineffective means of preserving Catholic interests. For Pius XI, the choice for the Church was effectively between fascism and communism and like many contemporary conservatives, he preferred the former, convinced that the autonomy of the Church could be maintained within such regimes. Accordingly, he repeatedly undermined the position of the already fragile PPI which splintered into pro- and anti-Mussolini groups (Irving 1978:6). In Germany too, the *Zentrum* suffered through the increasing radicalism of lay Catholics. Faced with declining levels of participation within its organs and the loss of electoral support to the far right, confessional leaders could not look to the Vatican for assistance. Deprived of this support, the subsequent fate of the *Zentrum* and the PPI was not surprising.

The socio-political environment of the 1920s and 1930s, then, was extremely unfavourable to embryonic Christian Democratic ideals. In a situation of increasing political polarisation, the volatile centrist coalitions that made up confessional parties

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<sup>12</sup> For example the *Confédération Française du Travail Catholique* in France and the *Confederazione Italiana dei Lavoratori* in Italy.

<sup>13</sup> This was particularly the case in the Netherlands (see Lijphart 1975; Bakvis 1981) and Austria (see Steiner 1972).

were torn asunder. Papal backing for the Catholic-inspired, corporatist authoritarian regimes of Austria and Portugal also undermined attempts to find some accommodation between Catholicism and liberal democracy. While practical political Catholicism shifted away from the nascent Christian Democratic ideas, isolated “groups of progressive Catholic intellectuals, middle classes and trade unionists clung tenaciously to their democratic and reformist beliefs and rallied to the support of regimes threatened directly from both extremes of right and left” (Burgess 1990:147). The two most prominent figures were Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier. Maritain argued that democracy was the form of government most compatible with Christian beliefs. His conception of a ‘personalist’ and ‘communitarian’ democracy “provided a theoretical justification that drew on Catholic and Thomist conceptions of human nature to argue for free institutions, the welfare state, and political democracy” (Sigmund 1987:541). Mounier argued for a ‘personalist’ philosophy which placed the individual in a social, religious and familial context. Only within these natural structures could the individual approach personal contentment. Before the war, Maritain and Mounier remained marginal voices within mainstream Catholicism but the pro-democratic outlook of Maritain and the personalism espoused by Mounier were very influential in the formative stages of post-war Christian Democracy.

It must be reiterated that those Catholics promoting democracy, social reformism and the separation of Church and state were still a peripheral presence within Catholic communities across Europe. Only in the transformed social, political and economic circumstances of the post-war period could this minority strand of thought grow into the dominant political ideology of Continental Europe in the post-war period. In this respect, the impact of WWII cannot be underestimated. Mass lay Catholic acceptance of the legitimacy of democratic government was undeniably brought about by the sheer scale of human suffering. Authoritarian regimes were now thoroughly discredited. The Church’s complicity (in the form of the Concordats with Germany and Italy) before the commencement of the war prompted a thorough re-evaluation of traditional Catholic thinking. Additionally, the participation in the Resistance by people from different religious backgrounds helped to break down many of the barriers surrounding the ‘closed’ Catholic world. In a period of great upheaval and renewal, the conditions were favourable for a new evolution of Catholic thinking even if the institution itself remained largely reactionary and authoritarian (Girvin 1994:101-3).

The emergent Christian Democratic ideology was not without echoes of past ideas. The influence of the social Catholic tradition shaped these parties decisively.

Christian Democrats denounced the collectivism of socialism and the unchecked individualism within liberalism and instead lauded a model of society based on solidarity, subsidiarity and pluralism. However, in their normative commitment to democracy and the separation of church and state, the new parties were also inspired by the more radical 'small tradition' which had attempted to reconcile Catholicism and democracy. In the transformed circumstances of the post-war period these theories found a receptive audience. The political elites of many countries were searching for a basis on which to rebuild their devastated nations and in the small tradition of political Catholicism, they found a suitably pro-democratic yet malleable source. With any form of Catholic-corporate authoritarianism rejected, the choice that now confronted the Church was between Soviet-style communism and some form of accommodation with liberal democracy (Almond 1948:743-4). There was, then, little alternative for the Catholic hierarchy but to embrace the rapidly developing ideology of Christian Democracy.

#### **V. The essence of Christian Democracy**

A recurrent complaint in the literature on Christian Democracy is the extreme scarcity of English language work within this area of study. Although academic interest has picked up in the last decade (see the edited volumes of Hanley 1994 and Lamberts 1997; Kalyvas 1998; van Kersbergen 1995)<sup>14</sup>, this enthusiasm is long overdue. Symptomatic of the earlier academic disinterest in the Christian Democratic movement is the ambiguity that surrounds the ideology. Unable to trace the inherently flexible ideology of Christian Democracy back to a single doctrinal source, West European specialists have frequently subsumed these parties under the umbrella label of conservatism. Duverger famously asserted in 1966 that the Catholic parties of the Low Countries and Austria were "purely and simply conservative parties that changed their name" (quoted in Kalyvas 1998:4) and even recently, Lane and Errson (1991:108) noted that in many cases Christian Democratic parties were functional equivalents of Conservative parties. This analytic amalgamation of Christian Democracy and conservatism ignores the quite separate gestation of many Christian Democratic ideas as described in Section IV. The religious heritage of Christian Democratic parties continues to shape their identity in decisive ways. As will be shown in this section, the parties retain a traditionalist perspective on

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<sup>14</sup> This increased interest can be seen not just in works specifically on Christian Democracy. For example, a number of people have made comparisons between the Blairite project in Britain and the philosophy of Christian Democracy. Roy Hattersley used the term to describe the Blairite project in Britain (*The Guardian* 27/9/99), Huntington and Bale (2002) have also noticed the overlap between New Labour's Third Way and Christian Democracy as have party-affiliated researchers at the Scientific Institute (Wetenschappelijk Instituut) in the Netherlands (author's interviews).

cultural and moral affairs and the legacy of social Catholicism has left an ambiguous attitude towards state interventionism. Certainly, Christian Democratic parties are parties of the centre-right which attract the support of social groups who in other nations would have been naturally accommodated within a Conservative party but this does not invalidate their examination as a separate party family.

Recent work has firmly emphasised that while a degree of overlap may exist between the two doctrines, Christian Democratic theory and the parties which espouse it must be treated as distinctive entities (van Kersbergen 1995; Hanley 1994; Kalyvas 1996 1998). Passing over the now rather dated contribution of Fogarty (1957), one of the first studies to consider Christian Democracy in this way was Irving's *The Christian Democratic Parties of Western Europe* (1978)<sup>15</sup>. He argues that Christian Democracy cannot be understood simply as a "synonym for Conservatism" (p.xxi), that it represents a central path between liberalism, socialism and conservatism and that the essence of Christian Democratic ideas can be found in the concepts of personalism, pluralism and natural law and in its distinctive social policy and support for European integration. Irving's book is mainly a collection of case studies (on Italy, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France) with a small amount of comparative analysis. While these case studies are rich in historical detail, impressive in geographical and linguistic coverage and contain many valuable insights into these parties, there is perhaps an over-concentration on electoral history without a more rigorous analysis of how the parties have expressed Christian Democratic ideology in practice. For example, a stronger link could be drawn between the sketch of Christian Democratic ideology and the individual case studies. Such criticism, though, cannot obscure Irving's pioneering role in the English language study of Christian Democratic parties.

Sadly, no other political scientists followed up Irving's ground-breaking work in the next decade with a study of similar depth. The reluctance to study Christian Democracy as an independent phenomenon was exemplified by Layton-Henry's edited volume on West European conservative parties which included only a cursory examination of these parties before concluding that Christian Democrats could be identified as "conservatives of the pragmatic and reformist tradition" (Layton-Henry 1982:17). A more perceptive approach could be found in von Beyme's (1985) classification of *Familles Spirituelles*. Christian Democracy was identified as one of the nine party families in Western Europe and hence as a separate political phenomenon. It

may be an overstatement to claim, as von Beyme does, that the Catholic political tradition contains “a body of thought in the papal encyclicals which is common to all Catholic Christian Democrats and accepted by them” (p.89) as clearly not everything in the encyclicals would still be considered valid but the link made between this background and the discrete identity of Christian Democratic parties is vital. Von Beyme sees the critical features of Christian Democracy in its open form of Christianity, that is a general belief in religious values without close ties to the church, its self-description as a middle way between unrestricted capitalism and socialism and its stress on the principle of subsidiarity. Though this outline was fairly brief given the scope of the book, von Beyme does correctly highlight important elements of Christian Democratic identity.

Further consideration of Christian Democracy as a separate political phenomenon came with the publication of Hanley’s comparative volume in 1994. This brought together a series of contributions about Christian Democratic parties across Europe, including even the lesser known Scandinavian parties and investigating the non-existence of French and British parties. This range comes at the cost of the detail provided by Irving but one of the advantages of the collection is that a common methodological approach is applied in each case, focusing on the origins, organisation, electorate, ideology and government record. Additionally, the introductory chapters by Dierickx and van Kersbergen explore the ideas of Christian Democracy in more depth than had previously been achieved. The former examines the ideology of Christian Democracy and compares it to other ideal-type ideologies in terms of the balance between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) elements. He classifies Christian Democratic philosophy as being a doctrine caught between community and society, marrying a nostalgic longing for the solidarity of traditional life with currents of progressive social thinking (1994:18). Christian Democrats, he suggests, seek not the disintegration of society into smaller communal units but instead try to counter the negative aspects of mass society through social and cultural policy (p.22). This results in a number of distinctive policies being pursued: strong support for the family, for educational pluralism, for co-management in economic decision-making and for a solidaristic social policy which is “sensitive to economic disparities” but does not aim for economic equality (p.28). In sum, Christian Democratic thinking constitutes a separate ideology.

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<sup>15</sup> The title is something of a misnomer as the book focuses on only those Christian democratic parties within the European Community, thereby ignoring, for example, the Österreichische

Dierickx's argument is fairly convincing and his recognition of the social-personalist and solidaristic component of Christian Democratic thought is significant but the application of his theory is geographically limited. He focuses solely on the Low Countries and omits conservatism from the comparison. Given this national focus, the latter's exclusion is not surprising: in the Netherlands, the term conservative is considered "*a priori* dishonourable or objectionable" (von der Dunk 1982:182). Nonetheless, the position of Christian Democracy vis-à-vis conservatism must be addressed. This deficiency is rectified by van Kersbergen in the same volume. Van Kersbergen systematically refutes the commonly held notions that Christian Democracy can be understood as a sub-type of conservatism, that as a centrist ideology it inherently lacks distinctive features and that Christian Democracy cannot be distinctive because it is a catch-all party. Van Kersbergen rejects the catch-all description on account of the polarising appeal of religion and suggests, instead, that a position in the centre of the political spectrum is not necessarily incompatible with holding principles. In common with von Beyme, he believes that the social component of Christian Democratic thought is critical in differentiating these parties from other party families (van Kersbergen 1994:36). The influence of Catholic social doctrine continues to shape Christian Democracy and results in certain key principles for these parties. These are "integration, (class) compromise, accommodation and pluralism" (p.36). In this way, Christian Democrats elevate the search for a negotiated compromise into a principle with their religious inspiration playing a vital role in social integration.

From the sources examined above, it is possible to sketch the fundamentals of Christian Democratic political philosophy. In contrast to their pre-war confessional precursors, Christian Democrats are committed to democracy and strongly affirm individual freedoms. Freedom, however, is balanced by responsibility and Christian Democrats see their ideas as offering a middle way between the mistakes of liberalism and socialism although by the time of the Cold War anti-Communism was the dominant leitmotif. Although private property is considered inviolable and there is broad acceptance of the market, an atomised, individualist view of society is also rejected. In some countries, Christian Democratic parties explicitly adhere to a personalist philosophy but even in those nations where the term is not used, it is recognised that the fulfilment of the individual can only be brought about through the community and especially the family. In addition to families and communities, the Christian Democratic pluralist model of society foresees a major role for intermediary organisations organised

according to the precept of subsidiarity. State intervention is only justified where a lower organisation is unable to provide a social good.

All Christian Democratic parties believe in a Christian image of man yet theirs is an open Christianity, not bound to one confession nor even to devout believers. Religious values do not provide political solutions but instead produce general political principles<sup>16</sup>. Probing beyond the parties' self-description of their principles, it is possible to discern deeper values which guide the thinking and behaviour of Christian Democrats everywhere: accommodation, integration, pluralism and class compromise (van Kersbergen 1994). These principles do not have the rigidity of firm dogmas; indeed, by their very nature, they raise compromise to an ideal. Like conservative thinkers, Christian Democrats are dubious about the utility of abstract theories about society (Veen & Gruber 2000:23) and sceptical about the state's ability to solve social ills. Nonetheless, their social Catholic inheritance does instil a strong element of social concern. In line with the guideline of subsidiarity, government action, in theory at least, should only seek to complement the activities of non-state organisations but this is always balanced by the demands of solidarity and social justice. Another important component of Christian Democratic thinking is its internationalist dimension. From the beginning, Christian Democrats looked beyond national boundaries. In part, this was a consequence of their connection to religious institutions claiming universal importance but it also represented a rejection, in the aftermath of WWII, of narrow nationalist ambitions and a commitment to international co-operation although first and foremost within the Western alliance (Hanley 1994:8).

Regardless of the ideological distinctiveness of Christian Democracy, it must also be shown that such parties pursue separate policy agendas. After all, if the distinctiveness of Christian Democratic parties was limited to programmatic rhetoric, then Duverger's description quoted earlier might not be so inaccurate. This can be refuted in a number of ways. Firstly, Laver and Hunt's study (1992) of party leadership positions illustrated that Christian Democratic parties, though right of centre on questions of public ownership, were still far less rightist than Liberal and Conservative parties. Moreover, in contrast to prior expectations, they showed significantly less variation than their Socialist/Social Democratic and Conservative counterparts. Moreover, Christian Democratic parties were even more distinctive in their moral-

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<sup>16</sup> In the CDA's case, these are stewardship, justice, spread responsibility and solidarity while the CDU are freedom, solidarity and justice. The ÖVP has tinkered with its principles regularly but at the time of the last Basic Programme, its principles were freedom, responsibility, sustainability, justice, achievement, security, partnership, subsidiarity, participation and tolerance.

cultural policy<sup>17</sup>, being located to the right of all other party families with the exception of the far-right. Therefore, in terms of party leadership positions at least, Laver and Hunt's data substantiates Christian Democracy's discrete identity.

A second means of establishing the independent identity of Christian Democracy is to ascertain certain characteristic policies which derive from the political philosophy of the movement. In economic policy, Christian Democrats have since the end of the 1940s advocated and implemented the social market. This model was synonymous with Ludwig Erhard, the first finance minister of the FRG but serves as the basis for Christian Democrat economic thinking whether it is explicitly mentioned by a party (e.g. the ÖVP) or not (e.g. the CDA<sup>18</sup>). Although the model was fundamentally based on a capitalist market economy with the commitment to tackling market malformations initially the main social element, the concept subsequently proved flexible enough to include more active state interventionism. As such, it became an alternative between laissez-faire economic liberalism and socialism, albeit more inclined towards the former. Van Kersbergen (1995) argues that Christian Democrat-dominated political regimes produce a characteristic 'social capitalist' form of welfare state. In common with those countries where a strong Social Democratic party had existed, traditionally Christian Democrat-dominated nations are characterised by a high levels of welfare spending. Yet drawing on recent comparative welfare state research, van Kersbergen shows that these welfare regimes diverge from the Social Democratic model in a number of important ways in their noticeable lack of interest in increasing social services or policies aiming for full employment. Moreover, Christian Democratic-shaped welfare states privilege families, are based on cash-benefits with minimal state involvement and rely upon employees insurance for most of the financing. Van Kersbergen convincingly demonstrates how the strain of social Catholic thinking present in Christian Democracy discernibly influences policy outcomes. Combining the analysis of van Kersbergen and that of Laver and Hunt, it can be concluded that while Christian Democratic economic priorities are market-centred, the concept of the social market economy has been sufficiently malleable to accommodate high levels of social expenditure, thus locating this party family to the left of liberals and conservatives on socio-economic affairs.

A second key feature of Christian Democratic parties also identified by Laver and Hunt was been their cultural-moral traditionalism. Typical policies resulting from

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<sup>17</sup> Laver and Hunt call this social policy but it is really a measure of permissiveness.

<sup>18</sup> Although by 1996, CDA programmatic documents did mention the Rhineland economic

this stance include strong support for the family, restrictions on the availability of abortion and divorce, rejection of euthanasia, opposition to cultural permissiveness and defence of a (essentially religious) pluralist educational system. Thus, Christian Democrats have fought a continual battle against the general West European trend towards greater individualism and secularisation. Success in this regard has not been especially extensive<sup>19</sup> with the exception of education (e.g. the preservation of religious schools). It is noticeable, though, that despite the inability of Christian Democrats to reverse or even halt social trends, they have not given up such efforts. Christian Democrats continue to cling to their religiously inspired beliefs about human dignity and the fundamental value of the family and this shapes their policy preferences accordingly.

Finally, within the field of foreign policy, Christian Democratic policy is also marked by its consistent promotion of European integration and a strong commitment to the Atlantic Alliance. From the earliest efforts of di Gasperi, Schuman and Adenauer, Christian Democrats have led and moulded the process. As the introduction of the concept of subsidiarity into European level debates in the late 1980s and early 1990s illustrated, the process of European integration has continued to bear a heavy Christian Democratic influence. This integrationist stance was, of course, not unrelated to the fervent anti-communism within Christian Democratic parties but it also grew from a genuine attempt to end nationalist conflict through new solutions. The intrinsic value attached to European unity has not diminished over time and remains a remarkably constant aspect of Christian Democratic policy.

The aim of the preceding two sections has been to show that the religious roots of Christian Democracy cannot be dismissed as the superficial decoration implied by Duverger. Nor can these roots be said to have entirely withered. The social Catholic heritage of Christian Democracy continues to be relevant to the philosophic identity of the party family and to the policy choices of the individual parties. This argument, however, prompts further questions: if the social Catholic roots of Christian Democracy are a crucial part of its identity, how is this identity affected by secularisation? Indeed, if religious values are held by an ever-decreasing minority and society is increasingly individualised, can a cultural-moral policy based, broadly speaking, on Christian values command support? The dilemma now facing Christian Democrats may now be a choice

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model.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the CDU failed to get the Federal Constitutional Court to overturn the abortion law reforms of the Brandt government in the 1970s while the CDA has at best been able to shape and delay legislation on abortion and euthanasia.

between adherence to their historic traditions and adaptation in the direction of a more secular conservatism (Lucardie 1993; Lucardie and ten Napel 1993)

Aside from cultural-moral issues, Christian Democrats also face a socio-economic quandary. Changes in the global economy, the drive towards deregulated markets within Europe and a shifting demographic balance throws the future of current welfare systems into doubt. This has caused a number of Christian Democratic parties to advocate welfare state retrenchment and market deregulation. Even though such policy shifts have been fairly tepid, the turn toward more neo-liberal solutions has not been electorally popular and as a result, raises questions about the future integrative capacities of Christian Democratic parties (van Kersbergen 1999). The essential flexibility of Christian Democrats has been noted by many writers (e.g. Rutan 1997:1110; Lamberts 1997b:475); as political and economic circumstances have changed, Christian Democratic parties have been able to adjust accordingly, emphasising either social justice and solidarity or a more market-led vision depending on the circumstances. What was always present, however, was a balance between the social and the market, a balance which was also present in the organisational make-up of the parties themselves. If this balance and the flexibility which accompanies it is lost, the nature of Christian Democracy would be fundamentally transformed. Therefore, a further aim of this study is to investigate to what extent these tensions have been visible in the various parties in the 1990s.

## **VI. Parties and change**

Since the 1970s, the topic of political change in West European politics has received a great deal of attention. The realisation that the frozen party systems famously identified by Lipset and Rokkan (1967) were at least partially thawing prompted a number of studies charting rising electoral volatility (e.g. Pederson 1979; 1983), growing party system fractionalisation (e.g. Laakso and Taagepera 1979) and a general loosening of the bond between voter and party (e.g. Dalton, Beck and Flanagan 1984). Irrespective of whether these changes have heralded an era of dealignment or realignment, the challenge to the individual established parties was still considerable. At worst, parties were confronted by the possibility of “failure” (Lawson and Merkl 1988). Yet party system analysis (e.g. Daalder and Mair 1983; Mair and Bartolini 1990; Franklin et al 1992) attracted the most interest with fewer researchers concentrating on change at the level of party families or individual parties. Nonetheless, a number of studies do take single parties as their subject. For example, political parties are often grouped together in national contexts and then studied for signs of continuity or change (see, for example,

the chapters in Katz and Mair 1994 and some of those in Lawson 1994). When the theme is a single party family, social democratic parties remain the principal topic of investigation (see Koelbe 1992; Patterson and Thomas 1986; Gillespie and Patterson 1993; Kitschelt 1994) although green and far-right parties are also not ignored (recent examples include Richardson and Rootes' (1995) collection of pieces on green parties; Mudde 2000 on far-right). Consequently, centre-right parties have been largely neglected by scholars either as solitary case studies or in a comparative context<sup>20</sup>, a curious phenomenon in view of their pivotal position in most of Western Europe. As a result, there is no model of existing model of party change which has been specifically developed for Christian Democratic parties. Therefore, general models of party change that focus on function, goal priorities, organisation and ideology will be reviewed in this section as regards their applicability to the present study.

Starting from the earliest, predominantly functionalist accounts, the subfield of political parties has been replete with attempts to capture their essence. A key dispute is between the proponents of a primarily vote maximisation definition of parties and those authors who ascribe rather more functions to parties. Typically, parties are seen as vehicles of representation and expression, participation and mobilisation, interest aggregation and elite recruitment which formulate policy and attempt to win office in order to exercise control of government (Macridis 1967:17). For Schumpeter amongst others<sup>21</sup>, however, this last function is by far the most significant. Hence, "a party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power" (Schumpeter 1950:283). The overriding importance of governmental ambition would thus lead us to expect that parties would adapt as necessary in order to achieve office. Ostensibly, Christian Democrats would seem to be perfect examples of the Schumpeterian understanding of political parties. Such parties have clung onto office for impressively long periods of time while at the same time showing a certain degree of ideological flexibility. For example, Broughton (1994:102) describes the CDU as "a party for winning power and maintaining themselves in office rather than implementing a clearly set out ideological stance". This would seem to confirm that such parties are pure vote-maximisers.

However, the vote maximisation model is unsatisfactorily minimalist, even for Christian Democratic parties. As von Beyme (1985:13) recognises, parties are imbued with an ideological identity through their expressive and representative functions in

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<sup>20</sup> Exceptions to this are the studies in Girvin (1988) and Wilson (1998).

<sup>21</sup> Other notable advocates of this approach are Duverger and Epstein.

addition to their other roles. This identity might not be drawn from a coherent doctrine but the “common values and norms” (p.29) of parties are deeper than mere short-term policy choices and cannot be discarded at will (Wilson 1994:271). Applying the threefold model of goals developed by Müller and Strøm (1999), there is little doubt that Christian Democrats prioritise office above votes and policy<sup>22</sup>. Christian Democratic parties are unlikely to abandon this order of goal preference. Participation in government has been a vital factor in binding together the diverse constituent parts of these parties and periods in opposition have been fairly traumatic, often unleashing a cacophony of different voices and interests. Despite this consistent stress on seeking office, however, Christian Democratic principles have not been jettisoned. The roots and nature of Christian Democratic ideology have already been discussed in Sections IV and V of this chapter and it will be argued throughout this thesis that, in programmatic terms at least, continuity has been the prevalent theme. Although change is anticipated for the reasons set out below, the difficulty of achieving ideological adaptation, even in parties seemingly as flexible as the Christian Democrats, will be explored in chapter 3 and the case studies.

A leading strand of party analysis has been based on attempts to formulate cross-national system-level theories of parties and change. These have highlighted transformations in the relative importance of party functions and in organisational styles. Duverger (1964) believed the centralised mass party typical of European socialist parties was ideally suited to the dynamics of competitive electoral politics. The success of these parties would act as a stimulus to the remaining cadre parties based on small groups of elites to adopt the mass model. Yet for Kirchheimer (1966), the mass party was already undergoing a mutation into what he termed the “catch-all party”. This party type was characterised by the shedding of much ideological baggage, further centralisation at the cost of the influence of the individual member, a greater instrumentalism on the part of the leadership, a more inclusive social appeal and close links with interest groups (p.190). The validity of Kirchheimer’s thesis appeared to be confirmed by a number of trends within West European nations, most notably the apparent depolarisation of party politics and the growing distance between party elites and mass membership. This latter tendency was also noticed by Panibianco (1988) who put forward the concept of electoral-professional party type. In this model, the institutionalisation of political parties had led to electoral goals taking precedence over all other aims and as a result,

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<sup>22</sup> In both Germany and Austria (although perhaps less so in the case of the latter), office seeking has been indistinguishable from vote-seeking but in the Netherlands, striving for office has on balance been more important than pure vote maximisation as seen in the flexibility of the CDA, and indeed the KVP, in their choice of coalition partners

parties had become professionalised machines in which the grassroots had become increasingly marginal. The decline of mass membership was also a key background feature of Katz and Mair's "cartel-party" (1995). Political parties, no longer able to survive on members' contributions, increasingly found financial security in the resources of the state via party funding. This "interpenetration of party and state" (p.17) was then defended by the established parties colluding together against the threat from political newcomers.

The development of these system level ideal-types illustrates an important fact in understanding parties and change. While the central functions of political parties do not necessarily remain the same, parties have, with a few notable exceptions, demonstrated a remarkable ability to survive (Mair 1994). In explaining the survival of parties, the issue of organisation, namely the changing nature of linkage between voter, member and party elite, seems crucial. However, party ideology is bound up in this transformation. The party's historical political identity is, after all, a critical part of the link between voter/adherent/member and party and in each of the system-level models highlighted above, traditional party goals are de-emphasised. If the party leadership attempt to project as broad an appeal as possible (catch-all) or prioritise electoral goals over all others (electoral-professional), the ideological component of the party is diluted or diminished in importance. Even in the cartel party model, the party's historic beliefs are less significant as the representative functions of the party wither.

Consequently, the question of change and adaptation also has an ideological dimension: to what extent do parties retain their expressive and representative functions? This question has been analysed both at the level of party system and individual parties. For example, Thomas (1980) and Volkens and Klingemann (2002) analyse whether European political parties have converged. Similarly, single parties or party families can be evaluated for signs of ideological drifting (Volkens 2001; Jahn 2001). As yet, no research has used similar techniques to study parties of the centre-right. This is not especially unexpected. In comparison to parties of the left, it is harder to identify a consistent dogma guiding the actions of centre-right parties. As numerous writers have observed, pragmatism rather than idealism appears as a fundamental characteristic of right wing politics (e.g. Leyton-Henry 1982:17). Christian Democracy as a phenomenon which is from its inception "elusive and shifting" (Hanley 1994:2) is harder to trace than one where, in theory at least, a clear model of party ideology existed. Nonetheless as the preceding account of the development of Christian Democratic thought demonstrated, it is possible to identify the core identity of these parties in programmatic and policy

terms. Therefore, one of the aims of this study is to chart the political and programmatic development of the CDU, ÖVP and CDA, examining whether the expressive and representative function of these parties has changed and if so, in what direction.

The question remains: why should we expect political parties to change? Organisational theory suggests that parties as organisations will have an in-built preference for stasis, yet this to some extent runs counter to our expectations. Parties are organs of representation whose responsiveness is democratically tested at regular intervals and as such they are presumed to be sensitive to changes in the external environment. Scholars of parties have tended to focus on socio-economic developments as a leading explanatory factor in accounting for party change<sup>23</sup>. Alterations in class structures (e.g. relative decline of the working class and the growth of the tertiary sector) shape voting alignments (e.g. the falling value of class as a predictor of voting behaviour) resulting in a less partisan, more volatile electorate. This trend has been reinforced by the higher levels of education, greater affluence and individualism in modern electorates. A number of recent studies point to a widespread decline of parties in the electorate in advanced industrial democracies (Webb 2002; Dalton 2000; Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). It has frequently been argued that faced by this more uncertain electoral environment parties are compelled to moderate their political appeal and seek out voters from beyond their traditional clientele. Although this approach is more commonly associated with studies of Social Democracy, it is one which can be equally applied to their Christian Democratic counterparts for the traditional social milieux of these parties are also contracting. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the decline of core Christian Democrat-supporting social groups has been mirrored in falling rates of Christian Democratic partisanship and party membership in the electorate. Therefore, from this perspective, Christian Democratic parties must also broaden their electoral appeal to attract new groups.

The concentration on abstract socio-economic forces of change has been criticised as too reductionist by Wilson (1988, 1994; see also Harmel 2002). In his study of French parties under pressure and repeated in his cross-national comparison of French, British, Spanish and German Social Democratic parties, Wilson sketches a model of party change containing four inter-connected variables influencing the behaviour of parties: socio-economic setting, political culture, political institutions and competitive situation. Within this model, the role of the socio-economic variable is lessened. It is not that economic and social developments are unimportant; rather that

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<sup>23</sup> A classic example of this approach is Przeworski and Sprague (1986).

they are filtered through a variety of intermediary influences. Instead of simply describing the processes that alter voter alignments, it is necessary to analyse how such changes find expression in the competitive structures and institutions of the nation being studied. Moreover, even where such changes do produce a pressure for adaptation, a party may sometimes resist this. For Wilson, this variation is crucial and can only be explained by the role of individual leaders. Hence,

The notion that parties are transformed by unseen socioeconomic, cultural or political forces while their leaders remain unaware is misleading. Parties change primarily because their leaders and members see the need to change and work within parties to change them (Wilson 1994:280).

Wilson's argument provides a cautionary reminder not to neglect internal organisation when considering party adaptations. Parties are not just passive institutions which inevitably respond to environmental pressure. This is a particularly pertinent consideration as the organisational capacity of parties is not in decline: contemporary parties have greater financial and personnel resources than ever before (Webb 2002:442-4; see also Mair 1994). Furthermore, broadly similar socio-economic trends affect most of Western Europe but their translation into the political arena is far from uniform. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of the critical role of internal organisation and leadership and developments in these areas will be covered in Chapters 2-3 and 5-7.

Another theoretical justification for our expectation of change is based on Harmel and Janda's theory of party change (1994) which introduces both a conceptual vocabulary and a series of testable propositions. The conceptual framework distinguishes change as resulting from a number of possible external and internal factors (e.g. change in factional power or leadership renewal) but the most far-reaching and striking transformations are prompted by external shocks. Similar to the Müller and Strøm typology, the authors argue that different parties hold different ultimate aims. The nature and extent of the external shock depends on the goal priority of the affected party. For parties that are primarily vote seekers, the collapse of electoral support would be a serious shock while the loss of participation in government would have a similar effect on office-seekers. Parties whose principle aim is ideological would receive an external shock through changes which undermine this credo. An external shock is, therefore, "an external stimulus so directly related to performance consideration on a party's 'primary goal' that it causes the party's decision-makers (perhaps through the pressure of others within the party) to undertake a fundamental reevaluation of the party's effectiveness on that goal dimension" (pp.267-9).

The framework adopted has been influenced by the literature on party change discussed above in a number of ways. First, although Chapter 4 will link the contraction of Christian Democratic milieux to party decline, the case studies will avoid the reductionism of concentrating exclusively on social and economic change by looking at the other important contextual factors which will be carried out in the detailed case studies of the parties in the 1990s. Second, Harmel and Janda's theory provides a theoretical justification for the focus on the three parties in the 1990s. As office-seekers, Christian Democratic parties would be profoundly affected by the move into opposition although a significant loss of votes might also be sufficient to bring about party change. The case studies (Chapters 5-7) will look at whether the external shocks endured by the ÖVP (electoral collapse) and the CDA (electoral collapse and loss of office) caused a significant change within each party and how this compared to the reaction of the CDU to its more gradual decline. Third, following Wilson's approach, particular attention will be given to leadership changes. The stimuli for adaptation will often come from outside the party but adaptation itself can only come about through party actors. Therefore, the case studies will also look at leadership changes to investigate whether personnel renewal brought about party change. Finally, no study of parties can ignore the role of organisation even though the focus here is predominantly on ideology and party identity. As the earlier discussion of system-level ideal types showed, changes in party organisation have ideological implications. This is especially pertinent to Christian Democratic parties. In accordance with their people's party (*Volkspartei*) image, Christian Democratic parties frequently have very diffuse, federal structures encompassing a broad range of social interests. These pluralistic party structures were not just instrumental in the development of a catch-all appeal but also reflected core Christian Democratic principles of integration and accommodation. If changes in the structure of the party threaten its diversity, the integrative capacity of Christian Democracy might be badly undermined. Therefore, within Chapters 2, 3 and 5-7, organisational developments will also be taken into account.

## **VI. Structure**

The structure of the thesis will be as follows: Chapter 2 will cover the formative period of the Christian democratic parties in West Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. The political and electoral development of the CDU, ÖVP and the Dutch confessionals will be examined as will the programmatic profile of these parties. This will reveal the growing coherence of Christian Democratic thought as central themes found expression in the initial platforms of the parties although it is vital to acknowledge the

exceptionalism of the Dutch parties. As was shown earlier, questions of party organisation are also important and the structure of the various parties will also be examined, showing similarities and divergences in their organisational format. These themes will be carried on into the third chapter which will analyse the parties after the halcyon days had come to an end. This section, then, will investigate the reaction of the parties to their first 'external shock' (loss of office in the case of the CDU and ÖVP; the dramatic collapse of the KVP's vote). In the Dutch case, this primarily brought monumental organisational change whereas for the ÖVP, programmatic reform was paramount as attempts to alter fundamentally the party's structure ran into great resistance. The CDU was able to achieve both organisational and ideological reforms although the former was more significant

As the global economic climate deteriorated and "old certainties such as belief in the efficacy of Keynesianism, economic planning and social engineering through welfare programs were all undermined" (Wilson 1999:259), Christian Democratic parties were well-positioned to take advantage. Yet while Christian Democratic parties strengthened their electoral and governmental power, their condition was not as secure as in the earlier golden age. In part, this was a consequence of the difficulty in adapting the programmatic profile of the various parties to the new economic circumstances. The social Catholic heritage of the parties prevented a full scale conversion to neoliberalism, evident in the dissent which market-centred programmatic reforms provoked within each party. Therefore, as Chapter 3 will show, Christian Democrats sought their own accommodation with the neoliberal agenda. The consolidation of the parties in the 1980s varied in success. The CDA established a seemingly invulnerable position in the centre of the party system and the CDU also became the dominant party of government once more although not without difficulties. The ÖVP's position was least secure, trapped in an unfavourable strategic alliance with the Socialists. Regardless of this variation, Chapter 4 will highlight the essential similarity in the Christian Democratic electorate and membership in the three countries. In each country, though, the core electorate of the Christian Democrats is in decline, posing a major threat to the future of each party.

The greater insecurity of Christian Democratic parties even when in government was fully exposed in the 1990s. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will present case studies of the three parties in this decade. In this period the CDA and the ÖVP endured further external shocks, causing internal reassessments of party priorities and strategies. In comparison, the CDU's predicament was less acute but by 1998, it found itself out of office and recovering from its second worst result in the history of the FRG. These chapters will

examine the causes for the decline of the parties, analysing the extent to which the loss of votes can be traced to contextual factors and deeper structural problems. In addition, the case studies will investigate whether this has brought about a response from the parties. In contrast to the qualitative analysis of party documents undertaken in Chapters 2 and 3 and 5 to 7, Chapter 8 will instead utilise a more quantitative form of investigation into electoral programmes based on the Comparative Manifestos Project data. The approach adopted here will be broadly similar to studies of Social Democratic parties; however, it will be argued that the left-right scale used by Budge and Laver (1990) and Budge and Klingemann (2001) does not fully capture the change in Christian Democratic manifestos and in its place, a model based on the relative balance of market liberal, social interventionist and cultural traditionalism will be proposed. Finally, Chapter 9 will endeavour to draw together the evidence presented and in reference to recent events, venture some conclusions on the prospects for and nature of Christian Democracy at the start of a new century.

## Chapter 2. The Golden Age of Christian Democracy 1945-70

### I. Introduction

As was shown in Chapter 1, the Christian Democratic parties that emerged in the years following the end of the war were a new phenomenon, bringing together the ideas of social Catholicism, a deeply felt commitment to democracy and a belief in the social market. Once founded, these parties rose astoundingly quickly to political pre-eminence, shaping the post-war political order in highly significant ways. The Dutch case constitutes an anomaly here as the end of the war did not bring about a transformation of the political system and the three main religious parties retained their separate confessional identities. Nonetheless, gradually, the parties drew closer to each other and to the Christian Democracy found elsewhere. This chapter will examine the origins and development of the CDU, ÖVP and Dutch confessionals in their golden age from 1945-70. By the end of this period, this stage had unmistakably come to an end: the German and Austrian parties were in opposition and the Dutch Catholic party had suffered a dramatic loss of support. Section I will consider the major political and electoral developments for the parties in this period.

Having quickly assumed governmental responsibility, Christian Democrats showed little interest in programmatic discussion which could potentially open dangerous divisions between the different factions included in these umbrella parties. Nonetheless, slowly the CDU and ÖVP began to refine their programmatic identity and Section II will analyse these early documents, tracing how the ideas sketched in Chapter 1 were expressed and developed by the individual parties. Again, the Dutch parties highlight the divergence between the beliefs of the confessionals and Christian Democrats and will be examined separately. As Chapter 1 demonstrated, organisation is a crucial aspect of the study of parties and for Christian Democratic parties, the question of suitable organisation is particularly relevant. As *Volksparteien*, they encompassed a potentially unstable plurality of diverse ideas and interests. The task for Christian Democratic parties was to create a party structure which balanced breadth of opinion and interest representation with party cohesion. This undertaking was further complicated by the strong emphasis on federalism present in Christian Democratic thought which bred a strong resistance to efforts to create powerful, centralised party organs. Section III will examine how Christian Democratic parties initially organised and the subsequent demands for reform.

## **II. Political and electoral developments**

### **Christian Democratic Union (CDU)**

Less than two months after the end of WWII, two branches of what was to become the CDU had already been formed in Berlin and Cologne. Yet despite this early start, the party structure remained extremely loose and the Federal Party was not founded until 1950. From the outset, the Union was a party of regional associations, each arising autonomously and with its own identity and interests. Geographical diversity was accompanied by political variation and different regions were associated with certain political tendencies. For example, whereas in the Rhineland the overwhelmingly Catholic CDU was interested in cultural policy, the Berlin group was more inclined toward social concern. To a large extent, the success of the various Länder parties reflected their ability to tap into local political traditions (Bösch 2002:14). Thus even in the Protestant North, the position of the new party was far from hopeless as long as it was able to project a more middle class, business-orientated image although in most regions the membership was predominantly Catholic (Haungs 1992:173). In Bavaria, however, the CSU was formed which remained separate from the CDU even though the two parties eventually formed one group in parliament.

The CDU therefore brought together a collection of different regional, social and economic interests under one political roof. It was “a completely new type of party...bringing together Catholics and Protestants, former members of the Zentrum and of the Liberal and Conservative parties, trade unionists and businessmen” (Irving 1979:16). That its unity withstood the tests of its formative years was in no small measure due to the leadership of Konrad Adenauer (Padgett 1994b:51). Adenauer enjoyed a fortuitous advantage over other political rivals in the formative stage due to the early licensing of parties in the British-occupied zone. This presented him with the opportunity to establish a power base within the new party while rivals elsewhere were hamstrung by the restrictions of the occupying forces, most obviously Jakob Kaiser and the other Christian Socialists in Berlin<sup>1</sup>, and in February 1946, Adenauer was elected the chairman of the CDU zonal committee. The Ahlen programme the following year was an important step in the consolidation of Adenauer’s power, securing the support of many Catholic workers in North Rhine Westphalia while paying lip service to the demands of employees, the British and the Social Democrats (Bösch 2002:18; Haungs 1992:183). Eventually, Adenauer’s preference for more economically conservative

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<sup>1</sup> Eventually Kaiser fled to the West but by this point, Adenauer’s position was too firmly entrenched for Kaiser to challenge him.

policies became clear but this was always balanced with symbolic concessions to the left of the party<sup>2</sup> (Oppelland 1996:79).

Of more long-term significance was the Düsseldorf Programme of 1949 which served as a manifesto for the first federal election. Contained within this programme was the first mention of the key Christian Democratic concept of the social market economy<sup>3</sup>. From this point on, the party would lean towards a more business-centred policy although without losing its social Catholicism (Smith 1979:89). Throughout the various Land elections before 1949, the Union established itself as a major political force and in the first Bundestag election of 1949, the CDU became the largest party and formed a coalition government with its Bavarian sister party, the CSU and the liberal FDP. However, its permanence was by no means guaranteed. The party faced numerous challengers on the right and the unity of the party was fragile. However, Adenauer managed to bind the party together, steering it away from dangerous programmatic debate which could expose internal divisions. Instead, the CDU built its political identity around Adenauer's leadership, foreign policy, in particular anti-communism, and the 'economic miracle'.

Throughout the following decade, the CDU, in conjunction with the CSU and a variety of coalition partners<sup>4</sup>, established and consolidated its political power. This strength was primarily founded upon the Chancellor's widespread popularity as "elections in the 1950s were Adenauer-elections" (Kleinmann 1993:132). The Bundestag election of 1953 was particularly significant. Despite the challenge of a relatively large number of right-wing competitors, the Christian Democrats dramatically improved upon their 1949 result. This was mainly achieved through attracting votes from supporters of other right wing rivals such as the Refugee party (GB-BHE), the German Party (DP) and the reformed *Zentrum*. The CDU responded to the problems of the refugees through the *Lastenausgleich* law<sup>5</sup> and played upon the divisions within the GB-BHE and DP by inviting them into government (Lee 1999). The reformed *Zentrum* faded away quickly as the CDU tightened its grip on Catholic voters while the DP was effectively swallowed by the Union over the course of the decade and the GB-BHE split.

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<sup>2</sup> The fact that during his final years as Chancellor, Adenauer continued to receive the support of the social wing of the party against the more liberal Erhard demonstrated his skill in binding the party together (Kleinmann 1993:186)

<sup>3</sup> See section III.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix for details.

<sup>5</sup> Again, Adenauer's sense for social spending when required was evident as he pressed for this law, allocating funding to the refugees, against his more cautious Minister of Finance, Schäffer (Oppelland 1996:85).

Contributing to Adenauer's hold on the party during the period of CDU/CSU ascendancy was the decidedly undeveloped party organisation<sup>6</sup>: membership figures were very low and the decision-making infrastructure was weak, providing little means of restricting Adenauer's power. Even the parliamentary party (*Fraktion*) was not a serious constraint on the Chancellor's power (Pridham 1977:69-75) and the party as a whole appeared little more than an organisation for the re-election of Adenauer, a *Kanzlerwahlverein* (Irving 1978:127). Stirrings of rebellion within the party against their ageing leader, however, were visible towards the end of the 1950s. The public quarrel over the selection of the CDU candidate for the Federal Presidency in 1959 highlighted the party's succession quandary. Adenauer resisted going peacefully into retirement and wanted to handpick his heir<sup>7</sup>. While the *Fraktion* backed down, relations between the parliamentary party and the chancellor remained cool. Nevertheless, Adenauer stood one more time as Chancellor candidate in 1961, as the party lacked both the organisational structures and the political will to force their distinguished leader out. However in this election, the CDU/CSU lost 5%<sup>8</sup>. The Union parties also lost their absolute majority resulting in a new coalition with the FDP despite the Liberals' earlier explicit rejection of another Adenauer-led cabinet. The growing desire of the CDU for leadership renewal was finally satisfied when, after great indecision, Adenauer was finally persuaded in the aftermath of the *Spiegel* affair<sup>9</sup> to set a date for his retirement and relinquish the chancellery in 1963. Informal consultations between central office and Land party executives suggested that Erhard was the consensus choice and despite Adenauer's dissatisfaction, Erhard became Chancellor in 1963.

Erhard's initial popularity with the electorate as the father of the economic miracle could not hide the extent of Christian Democratic problems in the 1960s. Shorn of its father-figure, divided on foreign policy matters between Gaullists and Atlanticists and lacking a proper organisational base in the electorate, the party also faced a stronger challenge from the SPD. The decade marked a period of transition for the Union (Haungs 1992:175). Erhard remained distant and detached from party affairs and had no real power base within the party (Padgett 1994:52-54). Indeed, until 1966, Adenauer remained party chairman, undermining his successor on a number of occasions. Erhard's later ascent to party chairman after the resignation of Adenauer was a futile, overdue

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<sup>6</sup> This will be covered in more detail in section III.

<sup>7</sup> This meant obstructing the obvious choice Ludwig Erhard who enjoyed a great deal of public popularity due to his economic reforms. See Kleinmann (1993:174-6).

<sup>8</sup> According to Kleinmann (1993:185) nearly a quarter of the CDU's previous 1957 voters deserted the party.

attempt to counteract his weakness within the Union. After the successful 1965 election (47.6%, +2.3%), he formed a new coalition with the FDP but faced mounting internal dissent. The party had successfully emancipated itself from Adenauer's authoritarian style but this had released more internal conflict. After a poor showing in the 1966 North Rhine Westphalia Land election and coalition budgetary disagreements exacerbated by an economic downturn, Erhard's cabinet collapsed. Kurt-Georg Kiesinger was the favoured choice of the *Fraktion* for the new leader and following negotiations with the SPD, a CDU/CSU-SPD Coalition was formed with Kiesinger as Chancellor.

Initially, the Christian Democrats benefited from the creation of the Grand Coalition. The SPD had difficulties justifying the alliance to its voters while the Union performed much better in the Land elections of 1967. This upswing, however, proved to be only of short term significance. Sharing power with the Social Democrats required adaptations to the CDU's governing style. The government authority which it had long used as part of its appeal was now also claimed by the SPD, which had the key economics and foreign affairs ministries. The divisions within the CDU and CSU towards the alliance were aggravated by the personal tensions between Kiesinger, CSU chairman Strauss and Schroder (Pridham 1977:180-1). Moreover, the emergence of the extra-parliamentary opposition and the 1968 movement added to the general impression that the CDU had not kept pace with social developments. The swing between the coalition partners was modest but the slight drop in support for CDU/CSU (-1.5%) and rise for the SPD (+3.4%) in 1969 appeared to confirm the growing momentum behind the SPD and critically, opened up the possibility of a SPD-FDP alliance. Repeating the success of SPD-FDP co-operation in electing Heinemann (ironically an ex-Christian Democrat) as Federal President earlier in the year, a Social-Liberal coalition was formed pushing the Christian Democrats into opposition for the first time. Kiesinger remained party chairman but in the year following the election, the party remained in a state of shock as it struggled to adapt to its new situation.

### **Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)**

The history of the Austrian People's Party stretches back to before the end of WWII. The idea of a new party of social integration was born in the Dachau camps where numerous major political figures, many from the old Christian Social party, were imprisoned. Prisoners of all political hues agreed on the underlying causes for the failure of Austrian democracy: an unwillingness amongst the political elite to co-operate and

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<sup>9</sup> A number of members of *der Spiegel's* editorial team were arrested after the magazine had published an article on the government's defence policy.

compromise, the lack of an Austrian nation consciousness and a failure throughout the nation to identify with the state as whole (Kriechbaumer 1995:13). In contrast to the Christian Socials, the new party was to be democratic, loyal to the Austrian nation and more distant to the Catholic Church (Reichhold 1975:62-3). It is important, however, to stress the strong elements of continuity with the pre-war party, particularly in terms of personnel and the social basis of support (Müller 1997:265). Upon release, figures like Felix Hurdes made contact with business and farmers' leaders and trade unionists with a view to winning their support for a new political grouping. In view of the advance of Soviet troops towards Vienna in April 1945, the foundation of the ÖVP proceeded swiftly in order to establish some political stability and prevent the possible dissolution of the network of ties that had been built up.

The Soviet-zone provisional government headed by the socialist Renner included the newly founded ÖVP along with the Socialist SPÖ and the Communist KPÖ. The party's representative in the cabinet was Leopold Figl and he became party chairman in September of that year as other potential candidates declined on health grounds. A crucial decision with far-reaching consequences was made when it was agreed that the internal interest groups, the Business, Farmers' and Workers and Employees' Leagues, should be the constituent elements of the party<sup>10</sup>. Largely due to the enforced absence of competitors on the right<sup>11</sup>, the ÖVP managed to win an absolute majority of seats in the first election to parliament (*Nationalrat*) in November 1945 and formed a national government with the SPÖ and initially the KPÖ<sup>12</sup> with Figl assuming the chancellorship. Even while Figl was still chairman of the party, a change in the balance of power could already be detected. The leaders of the Land parties were becoming increasingly influential, particularly Julius Raab, the chairman of the Lower Austrian Party. Additionally, the Business and Farmers' Leagues were growing in power with the Workers and Employees' League hampered by its lack of standing in the Chamber of Labour and the Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) (Kriechbaumer 1995:29). The model for the party was no longer the left-of-centre French MRP and increasingly, the Austrian Christian Democrats looked across at their West German neighbour for inspiration.

Through co-operation in government and the structures of the social partnership, old enmities were if not completely forgotten, then at least put to one side in order to

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<sup>10</sup> See Section IV.

<sup>11</sup> The Allies were unwilling to license any party to the right of the People's Party.

<sup>12</sup> The KPÖ left in 1947 in protest against the currency reform and the proposed Marshall plan.

tackle the nation's problems under the shackles of occupation (Rauchensteiner 1997). Some difficulties arose over the nationalisation of industries in the 1945-6 period but due to the threat of Soviet intervention in their occupation zone, a compromise was swiftly worked out. Despite this co-operation, the SPÖ argued for the admittance of another party onto the political stage, hoping this would split the right wing vote. Granted the approval of the Allied Council, the League of Independents (VdU)<sup>13</sup>, did indeed take votes from the ÖVP in the 1949 election but another coalition with the SPÖ was formed. The renewal of the Grand Coalition was not without controversy<sup>14</sup> and a growing feeling of discontent about the extent of compromises being made to the Social Democrats was brought to a crisis by the loss of the first ever presidential election in 1951 (Sully 1981:71) and consequently, Figl was replaced as party chairman by Raab in 1952.

Initially, Figl remained Chancellor but in 1953, Raab replaced him in this post as well. The leadership changeover signalled a new era in the ÖVP. Heralded as the 'Raab-Kamitz course', the party embarked upon a more market-centred approach. Kamitz, the new Finance Minister, was the most prominent advocate of the social market concept within the ÖVP while Raab was perceived as a defender of the 'small man' (Reichhold 1975:229). Together they crafted an economic policy based on stable financial policy, increasing incentives for individual private enterprise and a trade-oriented growth strategy (Lauber 1996:129). The new business-centred approach of the ÖVP complicated its relationship with the SPÖ<sup>15</sup> but did not endanger the Grand Coalition. The continuation of the system of governmental co-operation between the parties was now understood as self-evident (Kriechbaumer 1995:41) and was institutionalised on a number of levels, from the party-saturated environs of the social partnership<sup>16</sup> to the proportional division of posts throughout the public service and nationalised industries and the constitutionally required proportionality in many Land governments.

Raab's leadership was based on a personal, paternal style of governing and after his successful negotiations with the occupying powers led to the signing of the State Treaty in 1955, he cemented his sizeable reputation throughout Austria. The 1956

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<sup>13</sup> The VdU only contested one election and as the representative of the German nationalist-liberal bloc was succeeded by the Freedom Party (FPÖ).

<sup>14</sup> To the consternation of many in the People's Party, the SPÖ received the Justice Ministry and a state secretary for infrastructure and the nationalised industries.

<sup>15</sup> For example, differing budgetary priorities led to early elections in 1956.

election brought an electoral reward (48.3%, +2.9%) while the challenge of the VdU's successor, the Freedom Party, seemed to be declining. This, though, proved to be the highpoint of the Raab era. After suffering ill-health in 1957, he then lost his accustomed counterpart in the SPÖ when Schärff was elected as President. The new leader of the SPÖ, Pittermann, was a more adversarial figure and made frequent use of *Junktim* deals<sup>17</sup> (Kriechbaumer 1995:43). The endless delays this caused to the implementation of the government's programme resulted in new elections in 1959. The drop of 1.8% suffered by the ÖVP in this election brought about a crisis in the party. The leadership style and policies of Raab were subject to criticism from a new generation of ÖVP politicians (e.g. Klaus, Gorbach) as demand for a fundamental reform of the party fermented (Sully 1981:71). This disquiet was intensified by Raab's negotiations for the resumption of the coalition<sup>18</sup>. Soon after, Raab made way as party chairman for Gorbach and eventually, Gorbach took over the chancellorship after Raab resigned for health reasons.

Gorbach's accession to Chancellor brought a comprehensive reshuffle of the cabinet introducing a number of young modernisers more inclined to value economic growth as their top priority. Growth rates were dipping and many critics bemoaned the tendency towards paralysis in Grand Coalition government. As a result, the ÖVP fought a more aggressive campaign in 1962 and reclaimed some of its lost votes (+1.2%). This success was short-lived as Klaus left the cabinet in protest at the outcome of the coalition negotiations while another reformer Withalm was also scathing about the party's failure. A split between the generation ensconced in Grand Coalition politics and the reformers developed (Hanisch 1994:449). The Habsburg scandal<sup>19</sup> was another blow to Gorbach's leadership and when Klaus and Withalm became party chairman and general secretary respectively, a confrontation could not be avoided. After failing to win the unconditional backing of the parliamentary *Klub* for the rest of the legislative period, Gorbach resigned in April 1964 and was replaced as Chancellor by Klaus.

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<sup>16</sup> For more on the Social Partnership, see Pelinka and Rosenberger (2002:167-182) and Lauber (1992).; *Proporz system Luther* (1992).

<sup>17</sup> This is the process of log-rolling two unrelated policy ideas as a means of achieving compromise.

<sup>18</sup> Klaus, for instance, was in favour of an alliance with the FPÖ while Raab's initial offer of the Finance Ministry to the SPÖ had been withdrawn after sizeable resistance from within the People's Party.

<sup>19</sup> Habsburg wanted to return to Austria, a move opposed by the SPÖ and the FPÖ regardless of Habsburg's willingness to sign the legally-required declaration of loyalty to the Republic. The ÖVP was more divided on the issue.

The changes in the ÖVP leadership foreshadowed the end of the coalition in 1966. Mounting popular dissatisfaction with the incessant postponement of difficult decisions had already been evident for some time and this together with the SPÖ's internal problems<sup>20</sup> gave the ÖVP its second absolute majority. SPÖ leader Kreisky managed to convince his party's executive board of the benefits of opposition (Müller 1999b) and the first single party government in the history of the Second Republic was formed. In many ways, this did not amount to as consequential a change as had been envisaged as Austrian politics remained highly consensual with both parties unwilling to disturb the post-war political formula too greatly. The SPÖ, for instance, still remained highly involved in decision making indirectly through the social partnership and through Land governments. Even in parliament, only 62 of the 515 laws passed in the 1966-70 period were enacted with only ÖVP support (Sully 1981:72).

The four year period of ÖVP single party government did not herald a decisive realignment within Austrian politics. Instead, it was to be the electoral high-water mark for the People's Party. In government alone, it had sole responsibility for tackling sensitive issues deferred in the years of coalition. This was further complicated by an economic slowdown which necessitated tax rises and state cutbacks. At the same time, the composition of the party increasingly appeared out of step with Austrian society as a whole. Two vital segments of the party's electorate and membership, farmers and the self-employed, were in decline and the façade of a modern, reformist party projected in the 1966 election was quickly shattered (Müller 1988:97). The government was also hampered by a lack of discipline: battles between members of the cabinet over the allocation of the budget were waged via the press and an air of indecision hung over the cabinet as Klaus failed to impose his authority. Following a string of defeats in Land elections, the party lost its absolute majority in the 1970 Nationalrat election, falling behind the SPÖ. Kreisky's strategy following the election clearly aimed at the creation of a SPÖ minority government (Müller 2000b:97) and this was successfully achieved when the People's Party unsurprisingly rejected his derisory offer of cabinet seats, choosing, instead, to go into opposition for the first time.

### **The Dutch Confessional Parties**

No cross-denominational party emerged in the Netherlands in the immediate post-war period as the Dutch religious parties were able to reform virtually unaltered. This lack of

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<sup>20</sup> The party was caught up in a web of scandals and its stance on several issues appeared dogmatic. The departure of Olah and his subsequent formation of a new left wing party was a further blow to the SPÖ.

change was due to a number of factors: the Dutch system of subcultural pillarisation had resisted the challenge of anti-system parties before the Nazi invasion. Dutch pillarisation was still entrenched and there seemed little need for fundamental reform of it. Furthermore, many of the pre-war politicians re-emerged as leading political figures and most preferred the preservation of separate party identities. Our survey of Christian Democracy in the Netherlands must, therefore, begin in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with the formation of the Anti-Revolutionaries.

The Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) was not just the first religious party to organise in the Netherlands, it was the earliest of all parties<sup>21</sup>. After 1848, Dutch politics was dominated by the liberals who were as yet without a party organisation. Formed in 1879, the ARP was the first challenger to this supremacy. The party primarily represented members of the dissident orthodox Calvinist groups (after 1892, the different secessionists came together to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken*) who had split from the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*)<sup>22</sup> in 1843 and 1886. The main political controversy mobilising the founders of the ARP was the issue of public education. The secular liberals were adamant that public schools should be devoid of sectarian content and that religious schools should not be state financed. This was strongly opposed by the *gereformeerde*. As their name suggests, the Anti-Revolutionary Party also rejected the values of the French revolution, as Groen van Prinsterer put it “Against the Revolution, the Gospels” (Irwin 1998:143). Particularly offensive to the Anti-Revolutionaries was the idea that sovereignty was vested in the people. Yet despite this disdain for democracy, there was a general acceptance within the ARP of the political arrangements which granted a voice to the ‘smaller people’ of clerks, farmers and shopkeepers<sup>23</sup>. The party was bolstered through the dynamic and charismatic leadership of Abraham Kuyper who was instrumental in both the construction of the party and the creation of a tight, unified *gereformeerde* subculture. “Kuyper organised a daily newspaper, an Anti-School Law League, a mass political movement against the Liberal school law, the first national political party- the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP), the Free University in Amsterdam and a separate church organisation” (Irwin 1980:168). This organisational network mushroomed in subsequent years to include trade unions, health care organisations and a variety of different leisure groups.

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<sup>21</sup> This early formation of cross-class mass based party helps, together with late industrialisation, to explain the relative weakness of socialist parties in the Netherlands.

<sup>22</sup> As both *gereformeerde* and *hervormde* translate as ‘reformed’, *gereformeerde* will be used throughout the thesis to avoid confusion.

<sup>23</sup> For an interesting exploration of Kuyper’s ambivalence towards democracy and his other beliefs, see Heslam (2002).

The Anti-Revolutionaries' network was part of a broader system of subcultural pillarisation (*verzuiling*) which came to international prominence in the 1960s primarily due to Lijphart (1968) and Daalder (1955; 1966). Dutch consociationalism, according to Lijphart, undermined the argument that deeply divided societies could not support stable functioning democracies. Lijphart demonstrated that such deep-rooted cleavages<sup>24</sup> could be bridged by elite co-operation. The divisions between the different religious traditions in the Netherlands were historically rooted: Catholics had for a long time effectively been second class citizens and the southern predominantly Catholic provinces treated almost as colonies. Even after the centralisation of government under French occupation and later Willem I, the different religious communities remained self-contained leading to an exceptionally segmented nation in which individuals could live almost entirely within their own homogenous subculture. The diffuse subcultural network of Dutch Catholics mirrored the associations of the orthodox Calvinist world. Whereas the *gereformeerde* pillar was actively created by political leaders, Catholic subculture evolved more slowly, orchestrated by the bishops. No Catholic political party existed until the 1920s with the diverse group of Catholic deputies in parliament frequently divided. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however, the Catholic members of parliament were beginning to unite with their Calvinist counterparts over the religious schools issue. This cross-denomination co-ordination marked the transcendence of a long history of intolerance but elite accommodation did not herald a dissolution of subcultural boundaries. Indeed, the divisions between the *gereformeerde* and the Dutch Reformed members in the ARP could not be overcome and as a result of the formers dominance within the ARP, several prominent figures left the party. This dissident group created a separate party which became the Christian Historical Union (CHU) in 1908. Unlike the ARP, the party was opposed to further extensions of the franchise and attracted a more upper-middle and upper class electorate (Irving 1979:198). Dutch Reformed subculture lagged far behind its Catholic and *gereformeerde* equivalents in terms of its reach and density and similarly, the CHU lacked the organisational infrastructure of the ARP and remained more of a cadre party (Andeweg and Irwin 1993:51). The loyalty of members of the Dutch Reformed Church to the CHU was never as overwhelming as the support of Catholics and orthodox Calvinists for their respective parties. Sizeable numbers were always willing to vote for the ARP, liberals or socialists (Koole 1996:116).

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<sup>24</sup> The depth of these cleavages has been questioned. Kieve (1981) believed that Lijphart over-emphasised the degree of societal division and that the pillars were instead constructed by elites

The most divisive issues of the period (education, franchise extension, social welfare) remained unresolved until 1917 when the 'pacification' settlement reached agreements acceptable to all the major political groupings (Gladdish 1991:25-26). The resolution of these controversies through a new constitution, though, did not herald the end for the confessionals. These parties no longer understood themselves as emancipation movements seeking to free their communities from the interference of the state but as defenders of the system (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:128) and they played the pre-eminent role in government formation throughout the inter-war period. The Roman Catholic State Party (RKSP) was finally established in 1926, greatly enhancing the political influence of Dutch Catholics by minimising factionalism. Bakvis (1981) has convincingly demonstrated that the incredible loyalty of the Catholic electorate, first to the RKSP and then post-1946 to the Catholic People's Party (KVP), was not due to strong identification with the party itself but was founded upon the discipline exercised by the Catholic church hierarchy. Despite their original misgivings, the bishops routinely insisted on the need for Catholic political unity following the RKSP's establishment, a coded way of imploring Catholics to vote for it. These pronouncements, together with the punishments for those Catholics joining the Socialist party, trade union etc, were sufficient to fortify the party's electoral position. Furthermore, the Catholic party was crucial to the formation of any new cabinet due to its position in the middle of the political spectrum (Zwart 1993:28).

After WWII, the parties had little difficulty in re-establishing themselves. The efforts of activists, predominantly leftists, to explode the pillarised system with the aim of creating two large parties failed as did the attempt to form a new Christian People's Party from a merger of the ARP and CHU. Subcultural networks remained tight and there was no great enthusiasm for change within the various party hierarchies nor amongst the grassroots. The pre-Occupation party system was not restored unmodified: the newly named KVP attempted to project a broader, more inclusive appeal emphasising its commitment to socially progressive ideals in order to attract non-Catholics (Bakvis 1981:67-8). Yet the party remained rooted in the Catholic community as the hierarchy of the Church explicitly favoured the creation of separate confessional organisations including an exclusively Catholic political party, thwarting any attempt to establish a cross-denominational party (Koole 1996. p.165). Although unable to escape the Catholic ghetto, the KVP's new programmatic priorities did pave the way for a phase of close collaboration with the Labour party (PvdA) in a series of 'Roman-red'

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acting in their own interests i.e. to divide the working class. See Andeweg and Irwin (2002:17-34) and Daalder (1989) for a comprehensive overview of the pillarisation debate.

coalitions from 1946 until 1958<sup>25</sup>. During this period, both the KVP and CHU votes remained very stable although the ARP suffered some losses<sup>26</sup>. For many foreign observers, the extraordinary stability of this period came to be synonymous with the Dutch consociational system<sup>27</sup>. Ironically, just as international academic awareness of Dutch accommodationist politics began to increase, the political system increasingly revealed signs of strain.

Towards the end of the Roman-Red period, sections of the PvdA became increasingly frustrated with the limitations of co-operation with the Catholics. Discontent was also rife in the KVP and the party edged towards the right. The confessional parties continued to work together but after 1958, increasingly in conjunction with the liberal VVD. This was broken by the short-lived Cals cabinet between April 1965 and November 1966 which brought the PvdA together with the KVP and ARP. The optimism felt within the PvdA upon its return to government was quickly extinguished by KVP parliamentary leader Schmelzer who brought the government down. The acrimonious break-up of the government influenced Dutch politics decisively, nurturing a strong anti-confessional sentiment in the PvdA. The incident also demonstrated the disarray of the KVP (Koole 1996:172) and support dropped 5.4% in the 1967 election. Faced with an increasingly independent electorate and a Church now unwilling to enforce political discipline, KVP leaders increasingly began to push for more cross-confessional co-operation.

While the process of depillarisation was most clear in the Catholic subculture, its effects were felt throughout Dutch society. Other parties were also struggling to maintain their grip on their electorate as the lines between communities became more permeable. Support for the CHU remained relatively stable but the party's position was threatened by falling religious orthodoxy and the erosion of the link between active membership of the Dutch Reformed Church and CHU support (Andeweg 1982). In contrast, the ARP's hold on orthodox Calvinists endured and orthodox Calvinist religious participation remained relatively high (Gladdish 1991:47). While the ARP had re-styled itself as a "progressive party, deeply suspicious of capitalism" (Kennedy 2002:51), its relative success in the later half of the 1960s seemed less due to this

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<sup>25</sup> For more detail on post-war cabinets, see Appendix.

<sup>26</sup> The ARP was at this time caught between its (post-1952) participation in a social welfare-expanding government and its own Kuyper-inspired aversion to state intervention (Kennedy 2002:50)

programmatic shift as to the popularity of its leader Zijlstra<sup>28</sup> (Koole 1996:110). In any case, the ARP could not ignore the predicament of the KVP and CHU as their difficulties destabilised the political system and jeopardised the confessionals' strong position within it. By the end of the decade, the confessionals all accepted the need for closer co-operation<sup>29</sup> but divisions between them still prevented a merger despite the increasing precariousness of their position.

### III. Christian Democratic ideology

#### CDU and ÖVP

The earliest programmes of the two parties reflect clearly the strong influence of the respective social wings at that time. The CDU's Ahlen programme (1947), an outline of the economic and political ideas of British zone CDU, is quite striking for the aversion to the unrestricted free market. Its opening paragraphs made clear that the economic and social order to be established must avoid the "accumulation of economic power in the hands of individuals, companies, private and public organisations" (section 'Ziel aller Wirtschaft ist die Bedarfsdeckung des Volkes'<sup>30</sup>) which was a threat to the freedom of the individual. Although property rights, competition and private enterprise were accepted, those features of capitalism thought unsuitable for the German people were to be reformed, especially the concentration of power in individual enterprises. Moreover, the programme sought the socialisation of the mining and iron industries. However, state socialism was explicitly rejected, underlining that the CDU was attempting to establish a new form of economic system. This new system was to be based on inclusion: in large firms, participation boards for workers and employees were to be created.

The social Christian vision was also instrumental in shaping the ÖVP's earliest statement of principles (Müller 1997:278). The *Programmatische Leitsätze* (Programmatic Principles) (1945) reflected the early dominance of the Workers and Employees League in the ÖVP. Amongst the guiding principles was social justice (Article 1) and as in the Ahlen document, a limited measure of nationalisation was also proposed. Moreover, the party desired a "genuine social state....a state with exemplary

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<sup>27</sup> While it has been pointed out that this era was exceptional (Kieve 1981), it can certainly be argued that a number of trends (elite co-operation, building of subcultural pillars) that had been evident since the later stages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century reached their zenith during this time.

<sup>28</sup> Zijlstra had led the rump cabinet after the fall of the Cals government and was widely admired for his pragmatism.

<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, differences existed between the three parties. Following ARP chairman Berhuis' call in 1967 for closer collaboration, a working group comprised of representatives from the three parties was established to examine questions of ideology, strategy and organisation.

<sup>30</sup> References to party programmes will generally refer to articles. When the section cited has no article reference, the section name will be given.

social legislation and model social institutions” (Article 15). The content of the document, though, was also influenced by the haste with which the programme was drawn up. Some of the classic hallmarks of Christian Democracy are missing. There was no direct mention of a Christian image of man nor is there a great deal of emphasis on the key elements of personalism and solidarity (Kriechbaumer 1995b:109). Despite this, it contained a far fuller agenda than the Ahlen programme. The overcoming of past mistakes was clear in the acceptance of co-operation between all democratic parties and the ÖVP’s ardent support for the Austrian nation. This new national consciousness infused every part of the programme, signalling the definitive break from the formerly dominant concept of the second German state. Additionally, the commitment to democracy and personal and cultural freedoms was strongly emphasised throughout (Articles 1,6). The economic ideas of the party remained imprecise but the achievement principle was central as were the rights to private property and a working wage. State intervention was acceptable only where it was more suitable for a particular good or service than private enterprise (Article 11).

In the following years, both West German and Austrian parties moved rightwards. Despite its subsequent symbolic value as a rallying point for the social wing and an irritant for the business wing, the Ahlen programme’s contemporary significance was limited as the ideas expressed in it were quickly toned down as Adenauer established his grip on the party. This is not to suggest that the ideas of the document were discarded entirely: the search for a new way between unregulated capitalism and collectivism remained a trademark of Christian Democratic thought as did the goal of social integration. Nonetheless, the *Düsseldorfer Leitsätze* programme (1949), a year after the currency reform, contained greater acceptance of market forces, a stronger stress on private property and introduced the social market economy model. Throughout the brief document, the emphasis was on the conditions necessary for the social market: private property, lowering of prices rather than wage increases, freedom of profession, central supervision of monetary system, protection of currency, freedom of entrance into the market, tax reform and independent control of monopolies. The planned economy was rejected but economic policy making was to play a key role in serving the welfare of the nation. The contrast with the Ahlen programme was unmistakable. At this juncture, control of monopolies was the main social component of the social market economy (Leaman 1988:52) and the fading influence of the social reformist wing of the party was clear. Yet the identity of the CDU in this phase, nor indeed in subsequent periods, could be reduced to its policy documents. The concept of the social market economy developed beyond the specifications of the *Düsseldorfer Leitsätze* under the

demands of CDU voters. For example in 1951, Adenauer pushed ahead with co-determination in the coal and steel industries, securing support among the unions and the Social Committees (Bösch 2002:21). Despite this, the balance between the social elements and the market components of CDU's programme by this stage was heavily tipped towards the latter.

A similar transition took place in Austria where the movement of the ÖVP from a centre-left position to a centre-right one under the chairmanship of Raab was echoed in party programmes (Kriechbaumer 1995:112). The structure of the "Alles für Österreich" programme of 1952 was identical to that of the 1945 document but a new tone was discernible. The most significant divergence with the earlier programme was in socio-economic principles. Emphasis was more firmly placed on the limitation of the state's involvement in the economy. Whereas the *Programmatische Leitsätze* foresaw some nationalisation, the 1952 document was more reserved. The transfer of industries or services to the public sector was to be rejected unless there was an economic advantage. The "Alles für Österreich" document also mentioned the damage done by bureaucratisation and stated that budgetary policy should be guided by frugality. The social component of the programme replicates much of the earlier 1946 plan yet crucially, small adjustments have been made. Unemployment was to be countered through increases in production, wage increases could only be afforded if they were economically justified (Article 25) and the right to strike must never be used for political purposes.

Aside from the socio-economic aspects of the programme, the document was again notable for its more fully-fledged expression of Christian Democratic ideas in comparison to the CDU. Solidarity and federalism had become key principles of the party in addition to freedom (Article 3) and democracy (Article 2)<sup>31</sup>. Solidarity was based on the understanding that mankind forms a family and that everyone is dependent on others. From this, it followed that the interests of the individual can only be protected if he or she acts in the interests of the whole which in turn takes their interests into account. This philosophical backing for the ÖVP's ideas, however brief, underpinned the rest of the party's principles. The section on cultural policy restated much of the earlier "Programmatische Leitsätze": Austrian national consciousness was to be protected and bolstered, the educational rights of the parent were to be guaranteed and

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<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, the programme also gives some support for the instruments of direct democracy, a theme that only recurred in public discourse much later and one that is not typically Christian Democratic.

furthered through funding for private religious schools and education should contain a Christian element. However, there were also some new developments. While the ÖVP endorsed the influence of Christianity on society and its historical traditions, the party was not bound to any one denomination, exemplifying one of the crucial differences between Christian Democracy and the pre-war confessional parties.

The next significant statement of the CDU's aims was the Hamburg Programme (1953). It was a measure of the party's lack of programmatic interest that this was actually the first binding programme for the whole federal party. Even then, though, its primary function was as a quasi-manifesto with a clear focus on contemporary issues and a summation of the party's achievements in government. Despite this, the Hamburg programme remained the only statement of programmatic aims for the CDU for fifteen years and was closer to a fully developed basic programme than previous efforts. It gave the first indirect mention of subsidiarity in its opening section recognising the rights of the individual, the family and free social organisations. The authority of the state was only to be involved when self-administration was inadequate for the task in hand (Section I). Additionally, more detail on the social side of the social market economy concept was presented. "We approve of the systematic influencing of the economy by market-orientated means, the legal protection of competition and the fulfilment of the social responsibilities given to us" (Section III). Furthermore, social policy was "not an appendage of the social market economy, rather it is its goal". The earlier desire to prevent cartels and monopolies was again an important focal point but unemployment was also to be fought with all available means, including, if necessary, active employment policy. Financial assistance for the family through tax relief, subsidies and insurance and help for war victims and their families and the introduction of a clear pension law were further elements of the programme's social agenda.

The Hamburg programme also voiced the Union's foreign policy priorities for the first time. The CDU's strong anti-Communist stance was expressed in the final part of the document. Although the party aimed for reunification, a united Germany must be free and respect human rights. At the same time, the CDU also expressed its endorsement for European co-operation through the Coal and Steel Community and NATO. This marked the first occasion where these foreign policy goals were explicitly connected in a party programme. Contrary to the arguments of the socialists, the way towards German unification could only be achieved through Western alliances which would guarantee that unified Germany would be democratic and free from Soviet influence.

In many respects the Hamburg programme dealt with practical questions<sup>32</sup> but certain key Christian Democratic principles could be discerned: market ideals balanced by social concern, an emphasis on the family as the foundation of the social order, anti-Communism and a strong commitment to West European alliances and an inclination towards self-administration where possible. The longevity of the programme, however, was less to do with its value as a summary of Christian Democratic ideas than to the general lack of ideological discussion during the Adenauer era and the undeveloped structures of the party itself.

In contrast to the lack of programmatic activity within the CDU, the ÖVP continued to refine its ideological platform with “Was wir wollen” (1958). That this was necessary was not due solely to internal party pressure. Coalition disagreements over economic policy were becoming increasingly common and the SPÖ had itself brought out a new policy platform<sup>33</sup>. Much of the document repeated earlier themes: freedom, democracy, education, support for private property, the importance of the family. The theme of subsidiarity was more explicitly defined than in previous statements. “Fundamentally, the larger community should always only assume responsibility from smaller ones when the smaller communities are unable to bear this responsibility” (section ‘Echte Demokratie duldet keine Machtzusammenballung’). In accordance with this principle, extensive autonomy was to be guaranteed for both the Länder and professional bodies. Despite the reiteration of established themes, there was also clearly an attempt to update the image of the party for the ‘nuclear age’, that the party’s “eternally valid values” continued to be essential “at this turning point in history” (section ‘Der Mensch in unserer Zeit’). The chief threat to modern man came from the growing power of the state. Against this, the party declared itself willing to fight collectivism and to preserve the personal sphere of individual influence. Additionally, in order to prevent people from becoming slaves of technology, it was necessary to give people freedom and the chance to shape their own life. Another fresh development was the support given to the unification of Europe and to peaceful European co-operation, a typical Christian Democratic theme as shown in Chapter 1. Yet with the signing of the State Treaty three years previously, the party also introduced the principle of Austrian

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<sup>32</sup> For example, in the sections on the programme’s support for the expellees, refugees and victims of the war, the concern for the support of important professions and the building of housing.

<sup>33</sup> Confirmation that “Was wir wollen” was partly a response to the SPÖ’s actions comes from the explicit references to the Social Democrats’ new programmatic statement in the Christian Democrats platform.

neutrality and as a result of the perceived incompatibility of this and EEC membership, the ÖVP refrained from seeking Austrian membership.

The two programmes of the 1950s caused some irritation within the party. The focus on bureaucratisation and the socialist threat to freedom reduced the significance of the social Catholic influence on the party. Many of the programmatic formulations of 1945 remained in place but more space was devoted to recognising the limits of state intervention. The growing focus on the principles of the market economy, indicative of a general trend within the party, triggered discontent within the ÖAAB (Österreichischer Arbeiter- und Angestelltenbund) as it saw its influence dwindle (Kriechbaumer 1995b:116). Despite the two programmatic revisions of the fifties, clamour for more change was still evident. After the loss of votes in 1959, a growing band of reformers represented by Klaus and Withalm called for a new objective style of politics where rational calculation and technical expertise would play a leading role (Sully 1981:90). In addition to this technocratic vision, a more value-based form of reform was sought by education minister Dimmel (Kriechbaumer 1995b:119). The two strands of reform brought about a new programme introduced at the party conference in Klagenfurt in 1963. While the Klagenfurt manifesto does reaffirm the party's religious inspiration (i.e. its basis on a Christian image of man and society) in line with Drimmel's wishes, it is principally a restatement and refinement of previously expressed ideas (i.e. subsidiarity, solidarity, social market economy, family as the nucleus of society). Compared to "Was wir wollen", there is a greater stress on the social Catholic-inspired elements of Christian Democratic thought such as personalism and solidarity but the programme was more noteworthy for its clear assertion of fundamental Christian Democratic ideas than for its innovation and did not constitute a massive transformation of the party's programmatic profile.

### **Dutch confessional parties**

The programmatic ideas expressed by the Dutch confessional parties contrasts quite sharply with the documents of the CDU and ÖVP, highlighting again that the West German and Austrian Christian Democratic parties were indeed a new phenomenon. For the reasons suggested earlier, no Christian Democratic party emerged in the Netherlands at this point and the essential continuity of the Dutch parties is illustrated by the fact that the ARP's programme, first created in 1878, was only revised, not rewritten, in 1916, 1934 and 1961 while the CHU's initial programme was formulated in 1908 with revisions in 1917, 1928, 1938 and 1951. Even the change from the RKSP to the KVP was small compared to the ideological rupture experienced elsewhere. The section will

examine the last programmes of the confessionals, in the process contrasting the different role of religion, the lack of democratic conviction and the strong concern for public morality with those of the CDU and ÖVP examined earlier.

Although the ARP in practice was the more dogmatic party, programmatically the ARP and CHU share a number of common ideas<sup>34</sup>. In the programmes of both, religion was still absolutely central to the parties' identity. The ARP's "point of departure is the confession that God is the absolute Sovereign" (Preamble). The first five articles then outlined general principles concerning the application of the commandments of God on the state. The CHU also contended that certain lines of conduct drawn from the Holy Scripture, the Church and God's Authority must be observed. The KVP, by contrast, was far less emphatic in detailing the importance of religion to the state and in theory at least less closed. Certainly, the state was called on to recognise and serve God (Article 2) but less space was accorded to the nature of the state's relationship with God. The most obvious difference was the KVP's attempt to escape from the confessional ghetto and this was evident in party's self-description "The Catholic People's Party is an organisation which is open to all Dutch people and whose task is to support general welfare in the Dutch kingdom through participation in government life" (Section 'Wezen en doel van de KVP'). Although the opening to society effectively failed, it did mark an important step towards genuine Christian Democracy.

A certain ambivalence towards democracy was obvious in all three parties. Neither the ARP nor the CHU believed that the people are sovereign; rather they believed that, as Article 2 of the CHU programme states, the "government is in such a manner God's servant and is in principle solely responsible to him" and that therefore government is "neither an organ of the people nor a representative of the people"<sup>35</sup> while the ARP refused to specify "any single form of government as the only acceptable one" (Article 5). The KVP also stopped short of endorsing one form of government, arguing instead that the structure of government ought to be in accordance with the nature, history and development of the nation (Article 4). Nonetheless compared to the ARP and the CHU, there was a greater emphasis on individual rights, especially the right to property, a critical feature of Christian Democratic programmes, in the KVP programme (Article 5).

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<sup>34</sup> This echoes Daalder's well-known remark about the problems of explaining the distinction between the Protestant parties to a foreigner (Daalder 1955:3) although there is a certain amount of divergence in economic policy.

In addition to the endorsement given to the traditional Dutch institutions (monarchy, constitution, Church, colonial system) the critical role of education<sup>36</sup> in the formation of the parties was still apparent. Although only calling for uniform handling of both types of education, the ARP believed religious schools should be the dominant form of schooling (Article 11). This is also repeated in the KVP programme (Articles 17,18) and the CHU's programme (Articles 14, 15). The latter further stated that any school failing to uphold traditional morality should have its government assistance withdrawn. This concern in the defence of moral standards in education was part of a wider Protestant interest in public morality and the religious character of Dutch life. For example, the ARP argued that the government should do all it possibly "can within the bounds of its authority that the people live according to the demands of the law of God" (Article 5). Public efforts to combat blasphemy, prostitution, gambling and excessive drinking were to be assisted. The CHU stated that the government has a duty to protect public morality from anything which is considered contrary to God's will and law (Article 13) and called for the protection of the nation's cultural and spiritual goods.

It must be conceded that this section has presented a rather static picture of their programmatic identity of the Dutch confessionals in the post-war period, focusing solely on the last *Beginselprogramma* of the three parties. While these programmes displayed relatively little change, important ideological developments were taking place. Zwart (1993) has argued that after 1955 political leaders from each of the three parties increasingly accepted that God's will was not objectively demonstrable in the political sphere. Religion was no longer seen as a direct guide for policy making, rather it was now viewed as "a source of inspiration" (p.32). Furthermore, the ARP in the 1960s moved to a much more radical standpoint and even the CHU shifted leftwards. This necessarily brief survey of the programmes of the Dutch confessionals has highlighted the contrasts between these parties and the development of the Christian Democratic thought in West Germany and the Netherlands. However, the changes which Zwart depicts brought all three parties closer to the identity of Christian Democratic parties in neighbouring countries as well as to each other. The actual explicit creation of this programmatic synthesis of the ARP, CHU and KVP, however, was not attempted until the 1970s.

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<sup>35</sup> See also ARP Article 3.

<sup>36</sup> See earlier.

### **Tentative Beginnings: Programmatic First Steps**

Neither the CDU nor the ÖVP were programmatic parties: the CDU did not pass a basic programme (*Grundsatzprogramm*) in this period while the ÖVP's documents were also adjudged to fall short of a long-term statement of fundamental principles (Müller 1997:277). Little attention was given to explaining the parties' understanding of humanity and their underlying principles. Nonetheless, the emergent ideology of Christian Democracy began to find fuller expression as the parties developed and it is still possible to delineate the contours of Christian Democratic thought amid the more immediate concerns. This is especially the case with the ÖVP whose programmes came much closer to encapsulating the political identity of Christian Democracy than its German equivalent. Such was Adenauer's dominance within the CDU throughout the 1950s, he and the policies of his governments were almost a substitute for a proper programme (Kleinmann 1993:203).

After early left-leaning programmes, the parties adopted the model of the social market economy as the prevailing guideline for policy. Demands for nationalisation were soon watered down or dropped entirely in favour of a greater stress on private enterprise. Yet despite the growing influence of the business wing within the parties, solidarity remained an essential part of their ideological identity and the parties balanced their belief in freedom and the market with an element of social concern. This was to be directed according to the principle of subsidiarity, a key element of social Catholic thought as shown in Chapter 1. Central government was, in theory at least, the last resort for solving social or economic problems. The family also emerged as an integral part of the Christian Democratic vision of society and was given strong support. Furthermore, both parties began to advocate the process of European integration although Austrian neutrality prevented the ÖVP from seeking Austrian entry.

While the hallmarks of Christian Democratic thought can be uncovered in the programmatic documents, it must be reiterated that philosophical self-reflection was of marginal importance to the CDU. Indeed, speaking at the 1962 party conference, business manager Dufhues declared that programmes were "a requisite for ideological parties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century", not for the CDU (quoted in Bösch 2002:27). As suggested by its greater output, the ÖVP showed more interest in programmatic questions. Nonetheless, by 1970, Christian Democracy faced a new era in which more extensive programmatic efforts appeared unavoidable. In one respect, it was necessary as public interest in ideological questions had increased. Moreover, as both parties were out of

government, the production of party programmes could play a vital role in maintaining party unity and mobilising grassroots supporters yet such work also threatened to trigger more intra-party disputes.

The main distinctions between the Dutch parties and Christian Democrats elsewhere were the weaker commitment to democracy and individual rights and the far greater concentration on religious belief in the programmes of the former. The confessionals remained fundamentally bound to their religious communities. Government was responsible only to God and had to ensure that its authority was exercised in harmony with God's will. This stronger stance was accompanied by a closed attitude towards the rest of society and a more rigid moral outlook. However, these beliefs were already beginning to shift in the 1960s as the confessional parties moved closer to a Christian Democratic identity.

#### **IV. Party Organisation**

##### **CDU**

The federal CDU party only came into existence in 1950, one year after Adenauer had become Chancellor. Throughout the following decade, Adenauer's influence on the nascent party was extremely strong. Centralised party organs were created but they never played the role ascribed to them. The Federal Executive (*Bundesvorstand*) was nominally supposed to be the leading controlling organ but due to its size and the infrequency of its meetings, it was unable to fulfil this role (Irving 1979:124)<sup>37</sup>. The Federal Party Committee (*Bundesausschuss*) was also outsized (213 members by 1959) and of little significance in directing party affairs (Bösch 2002:82). The Committee was intended as the primary communication link between the work of the party's central headquarters and the party in the Länder and accordingly, the Land party associations were heavily represented. While the Committee wielded little real authority, this did not mean that the Land parties were powerless for as long as they did not stray from the central tenets of Adenauer's policy, they had considerable autonomy, if insufficient financial and organisational resources.

The party as a whole remained undeveloped, almost half-formed in its organisation exemplified by the very low level of membership. Until 1967, the party had no General Secretary after Adenauer's early attempts to create the post had been

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<sup>37</sup> During Adenauer's chairmanship, the number of members of the Executive continually increased until it eventually encompassed the party chairman and his deputies, the leader and

rebuffed by the Land organisations. Furthermore, the positions of the federal business manager (*Bundesgeschäftsführer*) and the federal business office were very weak, primarily limited to promotional material and party events. Adenauer's style of leadership and decision-making was based on informal discussions involving his advisers and some of the leading figures in the party, effectively bypassing the proper party organs. Even the parliamentary party, which theoretically was in a stronger position to influence policymaking, was largely compliant to the Chancellor's wishes. Admittedly, the CDU *Fraktion* showed less voting discipline than their equivalents in the SPD but this did was down to regional interests, personal rivalries and even tension between the denominations rather than the *Fraktion* developing a shared will to assert itself in decision-making. Its weakness in the Adenauer-era was fully exposed by its inability to force Adenauer from his post before 1963 despite the questions about his political judgement and his physical fragility.

The patriarchal, authoritarian style of Adenauer did not mean that his power was unconstrained nor that the party exerted no influence. The plurality of different social groups within the party required that the Chancellor take account of their concerns. A number of auxiliary organisations existed within the structures of the Union to give a voice to different social groups. The Social Committees<sup>38</sup> were formed in 1945 as an amalgamation of Christian trade unionists from the Weimar Republic. It represented the Union's workers and employees wing and was primarily concerned with social issues. The Business Association (*Wirtschaftsvereinigung*) by contrast stood for the interests of business and industry. Although not formed until 1956, MIT, the artisans and small business representatives (*Mittelstandsvereinigung*), quickly became another influential internal pressure group. The youth section of the party, Junge Union, was formed in 1947 and the association for Christian Democratic women, Frauen Union, followed a year later. The expellee and refugee association (*Union der Vertriebenen und Flüchtlinge*) was a further strong lobby group within the CDU. The final auxiliary association was the local government association (*Kommunalpolitische Vereinigung*) which sought to help small KPVs achieve the aims of Christian Democracy in their

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deputy leader of the parliamentary group, the eleven chairmen of the Land parties, the treasurer and the chairmen of the party's auxiliary organisations

<sup>38</sup> Also known as the CDA (Christlich-Demokratische Arbeitnehmerschaft). To avoid confusion with the Dutch party, the term Social Committees will be used throughout the thesis.

locality. In addition to the auxiliary organisations, there was also a number of special organisations whose influence was not great<sup>39</sup>.

Adenauer was able to sustain the broad mixture of ideas and backgrounds in the union through the force of his own personality and through symbolic compromises to the different interest groups but even before the end of Adenauer's chancellorship, some members of the party recognised the need to bolster the Unions' weak structures<sup>40</sup>. Finally, moves were made in 1962 to imbue the federal party with an independent life. Dufhues became the party's first business chairman (*geschäftsführende Vorsitzender*) and a praesidium was formed consisting of the leading figures in the party. The praesidium proved a much more effective body at steering the daily life of the party and through Dufhues' work, the organisation acquired a new professionalism. Ironically, while the reforms produced a more transparent structure, the new-found independence of the party undermined the leadership of Adenauer's successor, Erhard<sup>41</sup>.

During the years of the Grand Coalition, party reform continued apace fuelled by generational change in the CDU, the need to come to internal agreements before cabinet talks and the introduction of the new party law (Bösch 2002:95-97). The party's constitution was revised and Bruno Heck was elected as the party's first General Secretary with a wide array of competencies<sup>42</sup>. The reform of the CDU in the 1960s made the party a more modern, democratic and transparent organisation less based on charismatic leadership and personality. However, arguably this made the party even harder to govern. Even when in office, CDU leaders faced the taxing challenge of integrating the range of different interests while concurrently giving the party clear leadership.

## ÖVP

The rapid growth of the People's Party in the immediate post-war period was mainly due to its use of social and political networks that actually predated the party. Priority was initially accorded to rebuilding the structures of farmers, business and Christian trade

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Protestant Working Group (*Evangelischer Arbeitskreis der CDU/CSU*) representing the special interests of Evangelic members of the Union and the Student Union (RCDS, *Ring Christlich-Demokratischer Studenten*).

<sup>40</sup> The earliest calls for reform of the party came at the 1958 conference.

<sup>41</sup> See Section II.

<sup>42</sup> The General Secretary was responsible for the co-ordination of all party work from the local organisations to the associations and special organisations (Kleinmann 1993: 265).

unionist associations, rather than forming the actual party<sup>43</sup>. In September 1945, it was agreed to base the party on the Farmers' League, Business League and Workers and Employees' League (Ableitinger 1995:147-8). All members to the party were first and foremost members of one of the leagues. The leagues were to be financially independent and stood for election in their respective Chamber (i.e. the Business League in the Chamber of Commerce, the Farmers' League in the Chambers of Agriculture and the Workers' and Employees' League in the Chamber of Labour). Furthermore, they had independent control over the collection of members' fees, the power of appointment over most party positions, the selection of candidates for elections and exerted crucial influence on party policy (Müller and Steininger 1994b:12-13). While the League structure allowed the ÖVP to capture a broad spectrum of voters and members, the potential for divisive disputes was great, particularly as each league was separately represented in the nine Bundesländer. This could produce a plurality of interests and identities standing in the way of party unity. In addition to the three main leagues, the party also had three other sub-organisations (the youth party, the women's movement and the union of senior citizen) and numerous auxiliary organisations with weaker links to the main party.

The party's central organs were its conference, the party executive (*Vorstand*), the party directorate and the party council. The major task of the conference was the election of the party chairman, general secretary and his deputy and the financial manager who were important figures in the executive. In practice, the executive was the principal decision-making body, meeting several times a month (Steiner 1972:150). Also included in the *Vorstand* were the Chancellor (if this was not the chairman), the ÖVP President of the *Nationalrat*, the chairmen and general secretaries of the Leagues, the parliamentary leader (*Klubobmann*) and a couple of representatives from ÖVP Governors (*Landeshauptmänner*). The party council only met sporadically and was given specified tasks while the party directorate, composed of roughly fifty members, including all of the party executive, every Land party chairman and leading figures in both houses of parliament, was given a policy-shaping and co-ordination role (Steiner 1972:148-9). However, the directorate often faced hostility from the Land parties and the leagues and its power was limited. Overall, the central party organs were comparatively not particularly strong. Divisions within the central leadership could also hamper the effective use of this authority as, for example, when the posts of Chancellor and party chairman were not held by one man.

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<sup>43</sup> For example, the formation of the ÖAAB, Austrian Workers and Employees League, preceded the creation of the People's Party.

While the League structure of the People's Party could never be expected to produce a strongly centralist party, the strength of central party organs was further weakened by the considerable autonomy of the provincial parties. Especially where the party supplied the governor, there was a tendency for Land parties to develop separate identities and pursue regional interests not in line with the national party. Moreover, there was always a degree of tension between the Lower Austrian and Viennese parties who supplied many of the leading politicians in the 1945-60 period and those from the southern and western Länder. Consequently, in addition to the struggle for power between the constituent interest groups, there was also conflict between different regional groups.

The effect of the party's structure was that "of all West European parties, the ÖVP is probably the most shaped by factionalism" (Müller and Steininger 1994b:2). Nonetheless as long as the party still held office, there appeared little need for reform. This began to change as the party lost its position of superiority over the Socialists within the Grand Coalition. In 1959, several proposals to increase centralisation and reduce the power of the leagues were made<sup>44</sup>, (Müller and Steininger 1994b:14). These were rejected although central organisation was bolstered in the 1960s by the recruitment of more personnel to the party's central headquarters and the collection of membership dues by the leagues at the federal level, rather than the Land level as had previously been the case. Provincial decline in the late 1960s prompted more debate about party reform. Among the proposals were an increase in the strength of the ÖAAB in party organisations, an age limit on office-holding and the introduction of primary elections to select candidates. Few of the proposals succeeded and none of these challenged the power of the leagues within the party. It was clear to a number of party politicians that the structure of the party was impeding strong central leadership and fuelling factional disputes. Additionally, the party's organisation which mirrored the social character of the party at the time of its formation increasingly appeared out of step with Austrian society and hence a possible electoral liability. Yet these reformers were still unable to alter fundamentally the balance of the party while the ÖVP was still in government.

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<sup>44</sup> These included restricting the right of the leagues to nominate candidates and the collection of party dues by the central office.

## **Dutch Confessional Parties**

After WWII, the Dutch confessional parties did not face the same taxing questions of organisation as the Christian Democrats in Germany and Austria. There was little pressure to reform the structures of the ARP and CHU. With the immediate success of these parties in re-establishing their ties with their old electorate, there was little incentive to change. The ARP had been the first mass party in the Netherlands and had a large number of local associations in addition to the larger 18 national constituency associations. However the decision-making apparatus was fairly centralised and hierarchical. While the local and constituency associations sent representatives to a national congress which elected half the members of a national council, power was concentrated mainly in the party's executive committee and its praesidium which were responsible for the day-to-day steering of the party (Irving 1977:198). Like the CDU and the ÖVP, a number of auxiliary organisations representing specific interests existed within the party but these were not especially influential. In comparison, the CHU had a very weak organisation and there was a great deal of resistance to the structures of the mass party. Little centralised structure existed in the CHU and the party was essentially based on constituency-level electoral committees. As the Protestant parties remained closed to other denominations, there was less tension between different interests within the parties.

The situation of the KVP was more akin to the problems faced by the German and Austrian Christian Democrats. Although the party was not confronted with the same degree of organisational plurality within its own structures, it still represented a diverse range of groups. The founding of the RKSP took place after the establishment of numerous Catholic social groups and "generally the Catholic party lagged behind the Catholic organisations in institutional development" (Bakvis 1981:65). The political party was the political instrument of the Catholic subculture rather than its master and accordingly, the General Assembly of the RKSP had been less a conventional party conference than a "mini-parliament of the Catholic world" (Irving 1977:200). When the Catholic People's Party was formed after the war, it attempted to limit the diffusion of power. Realising that the representation of a plurality of different social groups without strong leadership could hamper the party, post-war leaders sought to give more power to the party's central organisation, removing the final decision on party lists from local parties and placing it under the authority of a central electoral council. In addition, the party created a new national congress. An important difference with the fledgling Christian Democratic parties elsewhere was that the party's links with interest representation groups remained outside the organisation of the party. None of the

various Catholic groups (e.g. the Catholic Farmers' Association, Catholic Workers' Movement) were actually incorporated into the party's structure. This became crucial when the link between the party and the Church was severed. If the party had been based on an Austrian-style model of interest incorporation, it might have been possible for the KVP to retain a greater number of its electorate. However when the bishops retracted their automatic support for the KVP in the 1960s, this effectively kicked away the party's electoral crutch.

## V. Conclusion

The rise of Christian Democratic parties in West Germany and Austria was staggeringly swift. Within two decades, the CDU and ÖVP had assumed and consolidated a powerful position in their respective political systems. With the brief exception of Renner in Austria, chief executives in West Germany and Austria were exclusively Christian Democrats between 1945-69. In government, Christian Democrats presided over a period of substantial economic growth as West Germany and Austria were reconstructed with American help. Moreover, a number of important reforms such as the pension reform in the FRG went some way to meeting the immediate social needs of the age. Christian Democratic electoral success was founded on the *Volksparteien* status of the parties. Both attracted a broad, cross-class electorate integrating the traditional right with social Catholics and liberals. Ideological questions were downplayed as the parties concentrated on government business. Nonetheless, programmatic documents began to articulate the fundamental features of Christian Democratic ideology (social market economy, freedom balanced by responsibility, solidarity, subsidiarity, family policy, European integration) identified in Chapter 1. As the influence of the social wing in each party waned, programmes edged to the right through the inclusion of a stronger market component.

The rapid growth of Christian Democratic parties required the swift construction of an organisational framework. Decisions made at this early stage were to have significant ramifications later on. The CDU developed with two central features: a loose, decentralised structure and the dominance of Adenauer over the central party. Additionally, different interests were given a voice in the party through the auxiliary organisations requiring the party leader to maintain a balance. The ÖVP also developed a broad structure with in-built representation of diverse interests. The Leagues, however, wielded significantly more power than the CDU's auxiliary organisations: all members of the party were first and foremost members of a League and leading party positions were carved up between the three organisations. Like the German party, though, the

Austrian central party apparatus was weak. Although strong central party organs were eschewed in favour of loose federalised party networks, the potential for a form of “organised anarchy” (Wiesendahl 1999:109) was constrained in the 1950s by a strong leader widely popular in the electorate. While Raab’s scope for central leadership was limited by the power of the Leagues, Adenauer was able to guide the CDU relatively unencumbered by formal decision-making bodies.

In the altered electoral and social circumstances of the following decade, the leadership style, programmatic neglect and organisational deficiencies of the parties were viewed more critically. The era of the patriarchal leader was over as Raab and Adenauer were eventually forced out from their positions. There were the first signs of economic difficulty while the growth of the extra-parliamentary opposition and the student movement highlighted that the Christian Democratic emphasis on stability and continuity was increasingly at variance with the beliefs of younger generations. Christian Democratic pre-eminence was under challenge from the invigorated parties of the centre-left. The loss of their charismatic leaders released pent-up tension within the CDU and the ÖVP with younger politicians demanding fundamental reforms of both programme and party structure. Although some efforts in this direction were made, while the Christian Democrats hung on to power, self-examination could be postponed. Programmatic adaptation was thwarted and organisational changes failed to address the critical problem for each party. The CDU had yet to find a balance between strong leadership and an independent federal party whereas the power of the ÖVP’s central leadership remained critically circumscribed by the Leagues and the provincial parties. Therefore, both the CDU and ÖVP entered the new decade facing major challenges.

The influence of national contextual factors prevented the formation of a unified Christian Democratic party in the Netherlands in this period. Although the experiences of the war did generate several groups whose aim was to reshape the party system, their efforts floundered on the still powerful unity within the religious pillars. The separate confessional parties re-established themselves and played an integral role in the politics of the 1945-65 period, especially the KVP which was never out of national office. The programmatic identity of the confessionals differed in a number of crucial respects from the German and Austrian Christian Democrats. Unlike the Christian Democrats, the Dutch parties believed there was a direct link between the Bible and party policy and the emphasis on religion in each of the programmes was striking, also visible in their espousal of a much stronger moral agenda. Another contrast was the lack of a firm commitment to democracy and freedom in the confessionals’

platforms. Section III also highlighted that the confessionals with the exception of the KVP did not face the same problems of organisation as the CDU and the ÖVP. By the late 1960s, it was nonetheless clear that the confessionals were not immune from the political change infecting Western Europe. Electoral decline was evident but more worrying was the mounting friction within the parties and the gradual breakdown of the pillarised system. Again, though, obstacles to change were substantial. Movement towards a common Christian Democratic party was still blocked by the gulf between the religious communities and their respective parties and by 1970 it was far from certain that the distance between the parties could be spanned.

## Chapter 3. Beyond Halcyon Days:1970-1989

### I. Introduction

By 1970 the golden years of Christian Democracy were unambiguously at an end. The political hegemony of the CDU and the ÖVP was shattered as Social Democratic-led administrations took office, pushing the CDU and ÖVP into opposition. This development challenged Christian Democratic self-identity and its integrative capacity. As parties knowing nothing other than governmental status, opposition required a complete rethink of strategy. The loss of office, however, threatened to unleash the loosely bound plurality of opinions and interests integrated within the parties. Although still in government, the Dutch confessional parties also faced serious difficulties as support for the KVP and to a lesser extent the CHU subsided dramatically as voters lost their political moorings.

How the parties responded to these developments is the subject of this chapter. Section I will review political and electoral developments in this period, highlighting the struggle of the CDU and the ÖVP to adapt as well examining the torturously slow merger negotiations of the Dutch confessionals. Both the CDU and the ÖVP turned to the “old remedy of conservative parties: leadership change” (Müller 1988:103) without success. By the next decade, the political and economic conditions were more favourable as incumbent centre-left governments struggled with the crisis of the welfare state and their dwindling political legitimacy as “a neo-Liberal wind began to blow across the Channel and the Atlantic” (Dumoulin 1997:372). During the 1980s, the CDU, ÖVP and CDA (re)established their credentials as government parties but as will be shown, the health of each party varied. Although leadership change was often the first solution considered, Christian Democratic parties also increased their programmatic work. Section II will consider the nature of the ideological revisions undertaken and appraise the role of Christian Democratic programmatic work in opposition and in government. The final aspect of the Christian Democratic reaction was organisational modification which will be covered in Section III. The specificities of the change vary according to national context but at the centre of the organisational dilemma was the tension between party cohesion and the integration of diverse interests and viewpoints within the structures of the party.

## II. Political and electoral developments

### CDU

Having lost its accustomed place in government, the CDU was initially very slow to adjust to the role of opposition. There was a feeling that the party's natural right to govern had been taken away. "Possession of the Chancellorship had for too long been the basis of the CDU/CSU's 'way of life', so that the sudden loss of this advantage produced a feeling of profound desperation" (Pridham 1977:190). The loss of power fundamentally challenged the successful earlier practices of the CDU. Previous neglect of organisation and programme could no longer be sustained and the party required a clearer programmatic basis and further organisational reform. Change also took place at the top of the party. Parliamentary leader Barzel replaced Kiesinger as party chairman after a contest in 1971 with Rhineland-Pfalz minister-president Kohl.

It is important not to overstate the enthusiasm for reform. The party's overall stance was one of intransigent opposition. The SPD-FDP government was viewed as almost illegitimate and treated accordingly, especially during the *Ostpolitik* debate (Irving 1979:136). *Ostpolitik* caused the Union considerable difficulties with deep divisions between different factions<sup>1</sup>. This was highlighted by the ratification debates of May where Union parliamentarians rebuffed their leader's negotiated settlement with the government, ensuring that the unity of the *Fraktion* could only be upheld through abstention on the crucial vote<sup>2</sup>. The atmosphere of polarisation peaked with the attempt to unseat Chancellor Brandt through a constructive vote of no-confidence in 1972. This failed but the continuing inflexibility of the Union prompted Brandt to force an early election in the same year by orchestrating his own defeat in a motion of confidence.

The Union's strategy in the 1969-72 period had largely focused on blocking the government but had done little to revitalise the party's appeal. Barzel was an unpopular chancellor candidate with little power basis outside the *Fraktion*<sup>3</sup> (Kleinmann 1993:321) and the Union was not in tune with the widespread public approval of *Ostpolitik*. Furthermore, the divergence of the increasingly self-confident CSU was problematic with its leader Strauß a consistently vehement critic of *Ostpolitik*. Therefore, despite favourable background

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive analysis of CDU/CSU policy on *Ostpolitik* see Clemens (1989).

<sup>2</sup> See Pridham (1977:202-3) for further details.

<sup>3</sup> He was neither the chairman of a *Land* association nor of an auxiliary organisation.

conditions for an opposition party (falling growth, inflation, terrorist activity), the 1972 election brought a resounding defeat for the Union as the SPD became the largest party for the first time, condemning the Union to another four years in opposition. Barzel was not replaced immediately but in the face of mounting pressure, he resigned as both *Fraktion* leader and party chairman in May 1973. He was replaced by Carstens in the former post and Kohl in the latter. Kohl's election coupled with the naming of Biedenkopf as General Secretary brought a new reformist impulse to the head of the party<sup>4</sup>.

Under Kohl's leadership, the CDU began to adjust to being out of power. The earlier hard-line attitude was abandoned in favour of a more constructive strategy, organisational and programmatic work. Yet while the extra-parliamentary party was able to assert an authority and independence it had previously lacked, Kohl was not universally accepted as leader. More conservative members of the CDU thought him too left-wing, an opinion shared by the CSU which regarded the CDU programmatic renewal with suspicion (Mintzel 1992:202-3). Even among those Union members more receptive to his ideas, Kohl was seen as lacking oratory skills and electoral allure. The selection of the CDU/CSU candidate for the 1976 Bundestag election was, therefore, by no means certain with Strauß eager to challenge the CDU Chairman. Kohl did manage to secure the candidature of the Union parties in 1975 due to his wider popular appeal and the CDU's distrust of Strauß but his triumph poisoned relations with the CSU.

The 1976 election brought mixed success for the Union: it was restored as the largest party following a confrontational campaign ('Freedom instead of Socialism'), achieving its second best result but it still remained in the wilderness of opposition. The CDU thus stood before the once unthinkable prospect of a third term out of national office. Although Kohl had managed to hold the CDU together during this difficult phase, his authority remained in question. The tension between the CDU and the CSU resulted in a temporary break-up of the common parliamentary group at the end of 1976. Friction between Kohl and Biedenkopf was also evident and following the latter's entry into the Bundestag, the post of General Secretary was filled by the provocative Heiner Geißler. Many in the CDU shared Biedenkopf's doubts about Kohl's ability to lead the party back into government. The *Fraktion* regarded the chairman as too ready to compromise and weak (Bösch 2002:115) and the Union was still failing to make a clear impact upon the SPD and

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<sup>4</sup> See Huneus (1996) for more detail on CDU reforms under Kohl's leadership.

its popular Chancellor Schmidt (Padgett and Burkett 1986:133). The question of the Chancellor candidate for the 1980 election was still unresolved. Recognising the weakness of his own position, Kohl sought alternatives to Strauß such as Albrecht. For the CSU, the whole alliance was at stake: either Strauß was candidate for the union parties or the Bavarian party would go its own way. The latter option was averted when Strauß was chosen as the candidate after a vote by the CDU/CSU *Fraktion* in 1979. This was a setback for both the CDU's organisational reformers and its social wing who were now expected to close ranks behind the arch-conservative Strauß even as it quickly became apparent that Strauß had little chance of ousting Schmidt from the Chancellory (Mintzel 1982:151).

Strauß's lack of appeal outside his Bavarian heartland was confirmed with crushing defeat in 1980 where the Union received its worst vote since 1949. Kohl's willingness to bide his time during Strauß's ascendancy paid off as Strauß accepted that Kohl would be the next *Kanzlerkandidat*. Kohl's performance was not without criticism within the party but with the social-liberal coalition plagued by internal disputes and a poor economic record, a swift return to power looked secure. Following the sole successful constructive vote of no-confidence in the FRG's history, Kohl's long-cherished dream of a CDU/CSU-FDP government under his chancellorship was finally realised and the new government received electoral legitimisation through its success in the early elections called in 1983<sup>5</sup>.

Upon becoming chancellor, Kohl promised a turning point (*Wende*) against a backdrop of a spiritual-moral crisis of fear, flight from reality and helplessness. This predicament also had an economic dimension and the main pledges of the new government promised an austerity programme of state cutbacks to restore health to an ailing economy. The increasingly influential economically liberal wing of the party were now steering programmatic innovation. A number of economic reforms were passed in the early days of the new government which indicated a more market-centred approach<sup>6</sup>. Yet the *Wende* did not entail a radical change of course for the CDU as a whole. The social Catholic roots of the party were not entirely abandoned and the social committees continued to battle against cuts in social spending (Zöhlhofer 1999; Webber 1992). Zealously pushing through radical reforms to free market forces was inimical to Kohl's style of political management which

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<sup>5</sup> Kohl used the same tactic to stimulate an early election as Brandt had done in 1972.

<sup>6</sup> These included a reduction of tax on property and business and cutbacks in the budget of the Federal Institute for Work.

was essentially based on consensus (Clemens 1994; Huneus 1996). Change throughout the 1980s remained piecemeal and no attempt was made to restructure fundamentally the welfare state. Social expenditure stabilised in the mid-1980s (Seeleib-Kaiser 2001:111) and a number of expansionary measures were enacted<sup>7</sup>.

The return to economic and social stability in the 1980s in the FRG was sufficient to guarantee the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition re-election in the 1987 Bundestag election. While polls showed SPD candidate Rau more popular than Kohl, the Social Democrats still lost votes and lacked coalition options. Therefore, despite the inability of the Union to honour its 1983 pledge to create more jobs and the damage of scandals<sup>8</sup>, the Christian Democrats held on to office despite a drop of 4.5%. Growing disillusionment with Kohl's leadership was evident both in the public and within the party. Echoing the rise of the NPD in the 1960s, the formation of the radical right Republikaner demonstrated that the integrative capacity of the Union on the right was waning but equally, Kohl's lack of a clear agenda also frustrated the Union's social wing. By 1989, the situation had become more critical. The CDU's vote had slumped in a number of Land elections while the Republikaner won seats in the European Parliament and the Berlin parliament. The coalition's achievements since 1982 and the adaptation to being in government had disappointed many recently-joined members of the party (Haungs 1992:177). Kohl's replacement of Geißler as General Secretary by the less independent Rühle spurred on rebellion. Leading party members openly discussed the possibility of Baden-Württemberg minister-president Späth challenging Kohl as chairman at the Bremen party conference. The attempt failed and although countless conference speakers were critical of Kohl's leadership, the Chancellor survived the abortive 'putsch'. The Bremen conference had significant repercussions: Späth returned to Land politics while the main rebels Geißler and Süßmuth were henceforth sidelined as Kohl established a much stronger grip on the party (Conradt 1993:73)). As the movement toward German unification gathered momentum, doubts within the Union about their leader evaporated as Kohl seized the initiative.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the duration of unemployment benefit was lengthened and housing benefit was raised (Schmid 1998)

<sup>8</sup> Most notably, the Flick scandal but also the Barschel affair.

## ÖVP

The path of the Austrian Christian Democrats into opposition a year later than their German counterparts was also accompanied by considerable internal turbulence. Klaus was succeeded in 1970 by his General Secretary Wilhalm while Schleinzer took over this latter post. Many young reformers such as Mock and Neisser stressed the need for the party to carry out a thorough programmatic and organisational renovation but the new leadership team proved incapable of achieving this, instead blaming the electorate for their loss of office (Müller 1988:103). The lack of adaptation to the party's new situation caused Wilhalm to resign in 1971. Schleinzer was elected new party chairman and soon faced an early election brought about by Chancellor Kreisky. The new ÖVP chairman decided on a strategic gamble: the People's Party would seek the votes of a number of Freedom Party supporters by consciously moving to the right. This gambit failed badly, however, as the SPÖ gained an absolute majority and formed a single party government. After this setback, the ÖVP spent the following years searching for a viable identity in opposition. Fresh ideas were discussed and incorporated into the party programme<sup>9</sup> as the party faced new issues and the decline of its core electorate. During this period, murmurs of discontent emanated from a number of sources. The Styrian Land party and the Business League expressed their reservations about the leadership and even the party executive rebelled against Schleinzer's choice of candidate for the 1974 Presidential election<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless, until his death in 1975, Schleinzer managed to retain the chairmanship of the party, achieving some unity through a more "liberal-conservative position" (Kriechbaumer 1995:58)

After the unfortunate death of Schleinzer in the middle of the 1975 campaign, Josef Taus was elected as chairman with Busek his General Secretary. Despite the ÖVP's programmatic renewal, it was still unable to break the SPÖ's electoral stranglehold and the Socialists were again able to form a single party government. The SPÖ's success was founded upon Kreisky's wide appeal to all sectors of the Austrian electorate<sup>11</sup>. Even after Kreisky had suffered defeat in the Zwentendorf nuclear power plant referendum in November 1978, his standing in the electorate remained largely undiminished. The People's Party was unable to make political capital from the popular rejection of the plant in spite of

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<sup>9</sup> See section III.

<sup>10</sup> See Kriechbaumer (1995:57).

<sup>11</sup> Throughout the 1970s, Kreisky's approval ratings in polls dwarfed those of his 'black' opponents. Kreisky was even positively evaluated among Christian democrat and Freedom Party voters. In

its more nuanced position<sup>12</sup>. The unnaturalness of opposition for the ÖVP continued to work against the leadership of the party. While the party criticised the budgetary policies of the SPÖ government, it was itself tied into the Austrian system of political-economic decision-making through the social partnership and its provincial strength (Sully 1981:96). Another demoralising defeat in the 1979 election prompted Taus to bemoan bitterly the lack of support he had received during the campaign from the party. His discontent led him to propose a far-reaching programme of organisational reforms designed to increase the power of central leadership. His suggestions, though, provoked an outcry from many sections of the party and intensified criticism of his leadership (Müller 1988:108). Eventually, Taus resigned and was replaced by the chairman of the ÖAAB and Klubobmann Alois Mock. Mock, too, signalled a desire to tackle the structural deficiencies of the party albeit less confrontationally<sup>13</sup>.

The early years of Mock's leadership seemed to point to a brighter future for the People's Party. The party had altered its political profile to appear more relevant and was now offering a clear alternative to the policies of the socialist government. With growing pressure on the Austrian economy and the gradual breakdown of Austro-Keynesianism, Kreisky's public image was finally tarnished. In the 1983 *Nationalrat* election, the ÖVP was the only party to gain votes, bringing the period of SPÖ single party government to an end. Although Kreisky stepped down as Chancellor, his influence on the SPÖ could still be discerned in its choice of coalition partner. The formation of an SPÖ-FPÖ government under Socialist Chancellor Sinowatz was the logical result of Kreisky's long-term strategy of splitting the bourgeois block by drawing the FPÖ into a more centrist position (Fitzmaurice 1990:106). Nonetheless, the Christian Democrats' position in opposition was not disadvantageous. In conditions of growing unemployment, an expanding state deficit and SPÖ divisions, the ÖVP was at last able to play a more effective role, untouched by the scandals accumulating around the SPÖ and the crisis of the state industries. Emboldened by its gathering momentum in opinion polls, the ÖVP managed to break the Socialist dominance of the presidency in 1986. While Kurt Waldheim was actually an independent candidate, the ÖVP had broken the original plan for him to be a joint SPÖ-ÖVP candidate,

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addition, the SPÖ under Kreisky gained in previously distant voter groups (e.g. the highly educated, women) (Rathkolb 1997:313)

<sup>12</sup> At various points in the discussion process, leading members of the party including Taus had expressed significant doubts as to the safety of the plan.

<sup>13</sup> See section IV.

resulting in the Socialists into putting up their own candidate. However, the election campaign unleashed a storm of controversy over Waldheim's wartime past, sharply polarising the political climate. The aftermath was equally unsettled: Sinowatz stood down as Chancellor and SPÖ leader in favour of former Finance Minister Franz Vranitzky. The mounting turmoil in the FPÖ culminated in the election of Haider as leader in September 1986 and brought about the collapse of the coalition.

The People's Party appeared well-positioned to profit from the government's difficulties: untainted by the economic failure and political scandals of the SPÖ, it had formulated a coherent response to the SPÖ's platform. Moreover, its greater emphasis on the market in the direction of privatisation and cutbacks in state expenditure seemed prescient in the wake of the troubles in the state industries. However, the 1986 election was a disappointment for the Christian Democrats. While the Socialists suffered badly at the polls dropping 4.6%, the ÖVP also lost votes. Before the election, Vranitzky indicated that a new Grand Coalition was his preferred outcome and throughout the campaign, the Christian Democrats were treated almost as government party which undermined their capacity to damage the outgoing administration (Müller 1988:114). Some observers pinpointed its failure of nerve as a cause of its relative lack of success in 1986. After the ÖAAB and even Business League voiced concern about the use of neoliberal themes, the People's Party backed away from a thematic campaign in favour of a personalised battle in spite of Vranitzky's greater popularity (Sully 1990:54-55). Thirdly, the FPÖ's rebirth under Haider immediately caused problems for the ÖVP. Haider used many 'black' themes (privatisation, freedom) in a much more populist way and through his condemnation of the corrupt political elite, associated the ÖVP with the scandals of the SPÖ. After the result, some elements within the ÖVP argued for a small coalition with the FPÖ but such views were only held by a minority and the expected Grand Coalition was formed. The Business League, in particular, believed that the difficult tasks the government faced required consensus and argued strongly for an alliance with the SPÖ which would help to smooth the transition to less state involvement in the economy and ensure the smooth working of the social partnership.

For the ÖVP, the coalition was soon wrought with problems, not least its continued electoral erosion. This was especially demoralising in view of the ÖVP's success in realising aspects of its agenda (i.e. privatisation, state retrenchment, tax reform, EEC application).

The SPÖ had already absorbed many of its ideas and Chancellor Vranitzky received the acclamation for any successes of the administration (Sully 1990:59). The ÖVP lost its thematic pre-eminence and through its participation in government became caught up in the growing public debate about corruption among the political class. The party was also split between different factions: the ÖAAB and the Lower Austrian Land party favoured concentration on core supporters while the Styrian party and Viennese party chairman Busek called for an extensive rethink of Christian Democratic values and a renewal of the party's personnel to halt the decline of the party. The threat to the party caused by the erosion of its core electorate, the new challenge of the FPÖ and the growing public disquiet with the established parties was very real and after the disastrous Land elections in Carinthia, Salzburg and Tirol in 1989, the question of the party's leadership arose again. Mock clung on to his post as foreign secretary in government and became honorary chairman but was forced to hand over the actual leadership to Josef Riegler, the Agriculture Minister, in May 1989.

Riegler initially enjoyed some success in opinion polls but developments in Carinthia and Vienna highlighted the strategic dilemma faced by the ÖVP. In Carinthia, the party fell into third place and subsequently, helped to elect Haider as governor. Repeating this tactic at federal level was still too risky for most Christian Democrats, including Riegler. However, an alternative strategy employed by Busek in Vienna was also hazardous. Busek had attempted to create a more modern, open and liberal ÖVP in favour of greater public participation in politics. Initially, the party made significant electoral progress in the capital, reversing years of decline. Busek's efforts, however, came up against the resistance of the party's grassroots which snubbed his attempt to transform the party's identity and as a consequence, by 1987 the Viennese ÖVP was badly divided and losing votes (Köhler 1995:482-483). The party was thus stuck in a strategic impasse and by the end of the decade, Riegler was struggling to retain his grip on the party as it passed from one defeat to another.

## **CDA**

The problem confronting the confessional parties was not adaptation to opposition; rather their very existence seemed in doubt despite continued participation in government. Their response was slow but inexorable movement towards unity. Co-operation between the parties which had already begun towards the end of the previous decade was given further

momentum by the elections in 1971 and 1972. For the KVP and the CHU, the results were disastrous, the KVP, in particular, losing 8.8% over the course of the two elections. The 1972 result brought about the progressive den Uyl cabinet bringing together the PvdA with the KVP and the ARP but excluding the CHU. Despite the split between the three parties over government participation<sup>14</sup>, preparation continued towards a common platform and list for the 1977 election and the Christian Democratic Appeal was established as a federation in 1975. Nonetheless, the task of reconciling the different conceptions of the new alliance was onerous. The principle division was between the open *volkspartij* model favoured by the KRP and the CHU and the Aantjes wing of the ARP which insisted upon the primacy of the Bible and Christian revelation. The progressive current in the ARP had brought the party closer to the KVP, especially following the departure of rightist members to form the RPF<sup>15</sup> in 1975, and even the CHU had moved in this direction after the resignation of its conservative chairman Beernink in 1966 (Koole 1996:124). The stumbling block, therefore, was less a progressive-conservative divide but whether members, functionaries and representatives should be required to recognise the Christian foundation of the new party. Eventually, a compromise was formulated whereby membership of the fledgling party was open to all but representatives and functionaries were obliged to represent the Christian principles of the CDA (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:148).

Anti-Revolutionary reluctance still impeded further co-operation, putting the goal of a common list and platform for 1977 in doubt. However, it appeared that the hard-line of the ARP leadership was not shared by its grassroots. Many ARP members, together with their KVP and CHU counterparts, signed a petition in 1976 demanding more integration (Koole 1996:192). By the close of the year, the ARP's leadership had dropped their objections and a party list headed by KVP leader van Agt had been drawn up. An improved showing for the unified confessionals in the 1977 election was also interpreted as a mass endorsement of the alliance. The CDA had not stated a preference for any future coalition partner but after long negotiations with the PvdA finally broke down, the CDA instead formed a government with the liberal VVD with van Agt as Prime Minister<sup>16</sup>. This constellation and its concentration on budgetary austerity did not meet with the approval of everyone on the list and led to

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<sup>14</sup> Even with this hinderance, the three parties formed a working group in the parliament (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:147).

<sup>15</sup> Reformed Political Federation.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed account of the negotiations see Zonnenveld (1993).

seven parliamentarians<sup>17</sup>, including Aantjes, rejecting the coalition agreement although pledging their loyalty to the administration. This potential schism was papered over by the election of Aantjes to the post of parliamentary leader. This helped to bind the dissenters to the nascent party and until he was succeeded by Ruud Lubbers in 1978, Aantje put aside his personal misgivings and helped unite the parliamentary party (*fractie*).

Following further success in the EP elections, the final hurdle was the fusion of the party. Yet again, parts of the ARP remained lukewarm. For instance, Goudzwaard strongly criticised the drift toward conservatism and the lack of Christian social principles (Nieboer and Lucardie 1992). Such opposition made the last stages awkward but could not prevent the final union taking place on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 1980. The settlement agreed upon stated that policy should be in harmony with the Bible but not directly guided by it while the principles of the party were to be justice, spread responsibility, solidarity and stewardship<sup>18</sup>. The most problematic issue facing the party in government was the stationing of medium-range nuclear weapons on Dutch soil following the NATO 'double track' decision. A large majority of the Dutch population, the PvdA, D66 and the small left wing parties were against the weapons but the CDA was divided (Andeweg and Irwin 2002, pp.196-7). As the churches were opposed to the missiles, the CDA was vulnerable to accusations that it had already abandoned its religious origins were it to accept the missiles. To preserve intra-party harmony, van Agt and Lubbers' formulated their own 'double strategy': the missiles were accepted in theory and the party portrayed itself as a reliable NATO partner but the signing of the treaty with the US was delayed and hence the stationing postponed.

The CDA's first election competing as a unified single party took place in 1981. The missiles issue was the dominant campaign theme but the PvdA avoided a fiercely polarised campaign in order to preserve their own coalition options (Gladdish 1991:61). In the face of massive opposition to the missiles and the deteriorating economic situation, both government parties lost votes but the CDA still finished as the largest party. After protracted negotiations between the parties, a new administration was formed under van Agt's leadership with the PvdA and D66 joining the CDA. This uneasy combination of Christian Democratic, Social Democrats and progressive liberals proved highly unstable with unworkable animosity between van Agt and PvdA leader den Uyl. Just over a month

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<sup>17</sup> Unsurprisingly, the 'loyalisten' comprised mainly ARP deputies with 1 KVP politician.

<sup>18</sup> See section III.

after the government had been formed, the PvdA cabinet members walked out following a budget dispute. Differences were temporarily patched up but the coalition collapsed again in 1982 producing new elections<sup>19</sup>. Although the CDA were unable to profit from the coalition's demise, the large gains made by the VVD did permit a centre-right coalition with Lubbers following van Agt as Prime Minister. The new 'no-nonsense' coalition agreed to a detailed agreement outlining the need to make cutbacks (e.g. civil service salary cuts, welfare freezes) (Wolinetz 1989:91). Despite this retrenchment, discord within the CDA *fractie* was more muted than previously. Fewer of the ARP hard-liners had been elected, some progressives had left for other parties<sup>20</sup> and Lubbers established a good working relationship with his successor as parliamentary leader, Bert de Vries.

Throughout the Lubbers era, the party's programmatic work was secondary to the practical business of government<sup>21</sup>. Lubbers became the dominant figure in Dutch politics, achieving a pre-eminence rarely found in Dutch politics. His popularity undoubtedly played an important role in integrating the still youthful party through electoral success. Voters in the 1986 election campaign were asked to "let Lubbers finish his job". Where the prime minister was seen as modern and business-like, his PvdA opponent den Uyl was a throwback to the style and solutions of the previous decade. Even the unresolved problem of unemployment, which had crept up to 15%<sup>22</sup>, could not damage Lubbers. The Wassenaar accord between the unions and employers based on wage restraint and labour time reduction agreed in 1982 prevented serious industrial unrest and more new measures to combat the problem were announced before the election. This helped to blunt the PvdA's attack and throughout the campaign, the PvdA's prior advantage in polls slipped away. The CDA eventually gained 5.3% with a notable share of non-religious voters, helping to offset the losses suffered by the VVD. The Christian-Liberal centre-right alliance was resumed post-election on more favourable terms to the CDA and progressed along the lines of the previous administration with a strong market emphasis. While the CDA managed to maintain a reasonably harmonious accord between its members in cabinet and its *fractie*, the

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<sup>19</sup> See Hillebrand and Irwin (1999:119-123) for more details.

<sup>20</sup> The EVP was formed in 1981 from those leaving the CDA while two of the most outspoken critics on the left of the party, Scholten and Dijkman, eventually left the parliamentary group to join the PvdA and the PPR respectively.

<sup>21</sup> See Section III.

<sup>22</sup> This figure almost certainly underestimated the number out of work in the Netherlands. Many firms shed much of their workforce through releasing employees who were able to claim a particularly generous incapacity benefit

VVD's intensifying problems in this regard caused friction within the government. The new VVD parliamentary leader Voorhoeve demonstrated on numerous occasions his independence from the cabinet, at times contradicting party leader and environment minister Nijpels.

The CDA in Lubbers II seemed to have demonstrated its integration and viability. Elements within the party could indulge in self-critical analysis without imperilling the CDA's existence. For example, de Vries adopted a more social agenda while the Scientific Institute worried about the dangers of the party becoming too technocratic and pragmatic (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:201-3). To address fears that the party was becoming too neoliberal through its concentration on retrenchment, the CDA's programmatic work stressed the role of the 'societal middle field' (Koole 1997:151-2). However, with the government focused almost exclusively on day-to-day administration, a gap emerged between the programmes drafted by the extra-parliamentary party and the CDA members of cabinet

In 1989, the turbulence in the VVD brought about the end of the coalition and new elections. The CDA campaign was uncontroversial with Lubbers again the centrepiece and the party registered a rise in support while the VVD and the PvdA suffered electoral losses. Changes in the PvdA, specifically the replacement of den Uyl with Wim Kok and their subsequently more centrist position<sup>23</sup>, enabled a far broader range of coalition options. Lubbers decided upon a coalition with the PvdA, reflecting the feeling among the Christian Democratic leadership that the VVD was no longer a reliable partner (Gladdish 1991:69). At the same time as the centre-left government was formed, however, the parliamentary party was shifting towards the right. Elco Brinkman became the leader of the *fractie*, signalling a greater acceptance of privatisation, deregulation and the further reshaping of the welfare state.

Thus by the end of the decade, the CDA appeared to have inherited the political flexibility of its confessional forerunners, encompassing a broad range of opinion under one political roof. It had concurrently stabilised the confessional vote and attracted a greater number of voters distant from the church. Dangerous obstacles like the Cruise missile issue

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<sup>23</sup> For more detail on changes in the PvdA see Wolinetz (1996); Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen (2002).

had been defused and as the dominant party in government, the CDA had helped to initiate a number of important economic reforms. Overall, the degree of unity displayed by the newly fused party was remarkable. Splinter parties had been formed but the absence of major splits particularly after the troubled and prolonged merger was testament to the success of the party.

### **III. Programmatic development of Christian Democratic parties**

The step into opposition by the German and Austrian Christian Democrats brought into question their role in their respective political systems. Holding national office had been crucial to the integrative powers of each party. Deprived of this, the parties turned toward programmatic work to bolster internal unity. However, the process of ideological renewal was also aimed externally. The allure of both parties had fallen in the previous decade as they failed to keep pace with social changes and remained wedded to the ideas of the 1950s. Reformers in both parties recognised that Christian Democratic identity was increasingly viewed as archaic and attempted to incorporate new political, economic and social demands into the parties' programmes in order to broaden the party's appeal. Evidence of this motivation can be found in many of the programmes: for instance, the Mannheim Declaration's preamble outlined "the far-reaching changes in the political and economic situation", the Salzburg programme mentioned the increased dynamism in all areas of life and the growing influence of science on society as factors influencing the composition of the document (Article 1.3) while the CDA's basic programme offered answers to "a transitional phase" marked by despondency and scepticism (Chapter 1).

These two aims of programmatic activity, inner cohesion and adaptation, were often incompatible and the resultant tension was a recurring feature of intra-party debate which persisted even after the parties had returned to office. This section will analyse the major developments thematically to highlight innovation and continuity, cross-national similarities and variation. The Dutch party will again be treated separately on account of the exceptional circumstances surrounding its creation. The ideological dilemma for the Dutch confessional parties was more complicated than those faced by the CDU and ÖVP. Certainly, electoral decline necessitated a re-evaluation of traditional party principles and adaptation to changing social issues and demands. The confessionals had already moved leftwards in accordance with the general trend in Dutch public debate but fresh issues such as environmentalism were arising which required a response from the parties. The critical

difference was that this adaptation was occurring simultaneously with the uniting of the separate confessional ideologies. Following this, the conclusion will summarise these trends and consider the significance of programmatic work in this period.

## CDU and ÖVP

### Principles and self-identity

Throughout the 1970-89 period, the CDU and ÖVP continued to assert the fundamental staples of Christian Democratic thought although the Austrian party's programmatic experimentation in the 1970s was greater. The Christian image of man remained the basis for the political ideas of both parties<sup>24</sup> and has consistently led to a strong concern for the rights of the unborn child. It has also forced Christian Democrats to address new scientific technologies and possibilities. A major part of the CDU's "Politics on the Basis of a Christian Image of Man" (1988) concerns such scientific procedures, at times giving quite detailed responses<sup>25</sup>. For example, the use of stem cells from a third party in infertility treatment was rejected (Article 6). Although the parties continued to base their policies on this Christian view of humanity, religion was not a direct guide. A classic expression of the place of religion in Christian Democracy is given in Article 5 of the CDU's *Grundsatzprogramm* which rejects a direct link between religious belief and policy. Instead, religious convictions give "an ethical basis for responsible politics". Furthermore, a greater openness towards all of society, religious and non-religious alike, was obvious. The ÖVP in its Salzburger Programm declared its readiness to accept non-Christians who support the party's principles (Article 2.5).

Each party continued to see themselves as a *Volkspartei* open to all classes and social groups<sup>26</sup>. In this respect, the ÖVP's adaptation went much further as influenced by of reformers, many from the left wing of the CV<sup>27</sup> (Kriechbaumer 1990:429), it defined itself in the Salzburg Programme as a "party of the progressive middle" and of social integration (Article 2.4). This self-definition was controversial, however, and was not repeated in the later *Zukunftsmanifest*. While both parties continued to subscribe to core Christian Democratic ideas, some divergence was noticeable. In the Mannheim Declaration, the CDU

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<sup>24</sup> See Salzburger Programm, Article 3.1.1; Zukunftsmanifest, Article 2.1; Grundsatzprogramm Article 1.

<sup>25</sup> See also Zukunftsmanifest Article 1.7.

<sup>26</sup> See Grundsatzprogramm Article 1.

stressed its basic values of freedom, justice and solidarity which have been maintained in subsequent programmes. These values would enable the free development of personality in society in line with social Christian teaching<sup>28</sup>. The *Grundsatzprogramm* three years later expanded on these principles. Freedom was recognised as being rooted in social life: the freedom of the individual was determined and circumscribed by the freedom of others while the idea of free development in the community, subsidiarity, and responsibility for oneself and others were further aspects of the Christian Democratic understanding of freedom. The principle of solidarity is the CDU's answer to the errors of individualism and collectivism. The individual deserved the help of the community but (s)he also carried a responsibility towards it. Justice is based on the equality of all people regardless of "power, achievement or failure" (Article 26). The conception of justice outlined by the CDU is not a justice of outcomes but a "justice of chances" where "everyone is given the possibility to develop themselves differently in equal freedom" (Article 28).

The more radical Salzburg Programme was slightly different. Certainly, the principles of freedom (Article 3.2), personalism (Article 3.1), solidarity (Article 1.2) and subsidiarity (Article 3.6.5) were present but where the CDU only spoke of justice<sup>29</sup>, the ÖVP openly proclaimed equality as a goal. This did not mean uniformity as the People's Party emphasised equality of essence and dignity, responsibilities and possibilities. The inclusion of equality as a basic principle was an innovative step for the ÖVP but by the following decade, it had fallen from the party's agenda<sup>30</sup>. Another innovative principle, participation, was to have a more long-lasting impact. The party now stressed that more public involvement in politics was desirable (Article 3.7.1) to be channelled not just through established social institutions and organisations but also through "spontaneous groups" (Article 3.7.5). The ÖVP also recognised the idea of a dynamic democracy in which the potential for participation in decision-making is expanded through parliament, party, social

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<sup>27</sup> *Cartell-Verband der Katholischen Österreichischen Studentenverbindungen*- Austrian Catholic Students Association.

<sup>28</sup> See the section on Politische Aufgabe.

<sup>29</sup> Even in its discussion of opportunities, the CDU only mentions 'justice of chances' after all references to 'equality of chances' were removed (Kriechbaumer 1990:517).

<sup>30</sup> Even though the *Zukunftsmanifest* was structured quite differently and was not intended as a new basic programme, the complete omission of equality within it was indicative of the direction of the party since the late 1970s.

organisations and perhaps most interestingly, direct democracy (Article 4.10.1). This interest was retained by the party in later programmes<sup>31</sup>.

### **Economic and Social Policy**

The economic model of the CDU and the ÖVP remained the social market economy. This concept based on “achievement and social justice, competition and solidarity, self-responsibility and social protection” (CDU *Grundsatzprogramm*, Article 66) still decisively shaped Christian Democratic economic thinking but subtle shifts in the relative emphases accorded to its social and market aspects were evident. In the CDU’s *Grundsatzprogramm*, there is a strong stress on the role of the market after nine years of social-liberal government (Kleinmann 1993:69). An increasingly competitive market and structural change require greater efficiency and competition (Article 70), more private initiative (Article 75), less state involvement (Article 94), tackling the growing budget deficit (Article 93) and cutbacks to a swelling bureaucracy (Article 94) . By 1984, the emphasis on market liberalisation had become even more pronounced. The recession of the early 1980s gave economic liberals like Lower Saxony minister-president Albrecht the upper hand. This new mood shaped the *Stuttgarter Leitsätze* which argued for the reduction of subsidies (Article 27), tax decreases (Article 28), more flexible working hours (Article 46), a reduction of non-wage labour costs (Article 43) and privatisation (Article 34). The later ‘Politics on the Basis of a Christian Image of Man’ did not deviate significantly from this agenda<sup>32</sup>.

The ÖVP’s move towards greater economic liberalism was also reflected in its programmatic output. There is a marked contrast between the *Salzburger Programm* of 1972 and the later *Zukunftsmantel*. In the former, the social market economy was affirmed<sup>33</sup> (Article 4.4) but far less space is dedicated to economic goals and policy than previous programmes. By 1985, the growing problems of the Austrian economy and especially the nationalised industries could not be ignored. Privatisation and a far-reaching consideration of the economic role of the state was demanded by the ÖVP (Articles 9.5, 9.6) as well as an end to the overburdening of business and private enterprise through bureaucratic regulations and excessively high tax (Article 6.3, Article 6.6). Choice emerged as a new People’s Party theme in the 1980s: in services and goods (Article 8.5), in the media (Article 8.3) and in

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<sup>31</sup> For example, see *Zukunftsmantel* Articles 7.1, 7.2.

<sup>32</sup> See Articles 27-9.

<sup>33</sup> For example, the programme mentioned private property, currency stability, economic growth, full employment and the preservation of economic incentives as economic goals.

working hours. The proposals stopped short of a neoliberal makeover but still signified an important shift in the party's identity.

Although the CDU and ÖVP moved towards a more market-centred vision in the 1980s, this was not an abandonment of their middle way and social concern remained a component of Christian Democratic thinking. However, in programmatic terms there is quite a clear distinction between the initial opposition years and later. Within the CDU, reformers in the 1970s attempted to combat the CDU's image as the party of business through extending worker participation and through the 'New Social Question'. In each case, the ideas aroused considerable intra-party debate. The question of worker participation could not be settled until 1974 and the passage of a compromise resolution at the party conference<sup>34</sup>. Formulated by Geißler and featured prominently in the Mannheim Declaration, the New Social Question identified a new source of social conflict in the growing divide between organised interests and those lacking representation through trade unions and interest groups. The real weak in society did not belong to any one class (e.g. working mothers, guest workers and the disabled), were marginalised and without a political voice. The New Social Question was a bold attempt to restate the social credentials of the Union but it was viewed with displeasure by business representatives. It had already decreased in significance by the time of the *Grundsatzprogramm* but the social aspect of Christian Democracy was not neglected. Full employment through social partnership co-operation was still a goal (Article 50) while it was imperative that working conditions remained humane through plentiful social contact and fewer unsociable working hours. In social policy, the party championed protection from poverty and need, safeguards for individuals against changes in their circumstances and the gradual improvement of living conditions. Even after the *Wende*, the social profile of the CDU was not lost<sup>35</sup>. For example, the social side of the *Stuttgarter Leitsätze* was expanded after the intervention of the Social Committees (Bösch 2002:46)<sup>36</sup> and the 1988 programme dedicated a considerable amount of text to "Solidarity with the unemployed"<sup>37</sup>. However, compared to the previous decade, the social wing's interventions were primarily defensive, revealing the altered balance of power within the party.

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<sup>34</sup> This granted parity to shareholders and workers on the board but in situations of stalemate gave the board chairmen the casting vote (Pridham 1977)

<sup>35</sup> This is particularly the case for family policy which is examined later.

<sup>36</sup> Article 10 concerned youth unemployment while Article 11 argued for the preservation of the social consensus, worker participation and for adaptation from *both* sides of industry.

A clear shift in the ÖVP's attitude to social expenditure took place between the Salzburg Programme and the *Zukunftsmanifest*. Article 4.6.6 of the former showed some concern that increased social expenditure could have negative repercussions but by the *Zukunftsmanifest*, the ÖVP stated plainly that the social state had exceeded the limits of sustainability and borrowing to finance expansionist social policy had to come to an end (Article 5.4). Even though work was recognised as integral to humanity, jobs in uncompetitive industries could not be protected (Article 2.4). Although intriguingly there was a hint of the New Social Question in Article 6.2 which mentioned "new poverty" among the disabled and large families, the emphasis in the programme was on ways to prevent the "explosive growth of costs of social insurance" through prevention of waste and more self-provision in insurance (Article 6.9). Therefore, while the ÖVP's *Zukunftsmanifest* may have been an moderate "Austrianized" version of a neo-liberal agenda (Müller 1988:111), the shift from the Salzburg Programme was still apparent.

### **Foreign Policy**

The chief innovation in foreign policy for the CDU was the "ambivalent adaptation" (Clemens 1989) to Brandt's Ostpolitik. The revised Berlin programme (1971) reaffirmed the CDU's commitment to unification through the overcoming of Europe's division (Article 7) but the stance adopted was slightly less hard-line than previously: there is a declared willingness to engage in negotiations and agreements which would make life easier in the divided land (Article 8). This incremental change continued into the Mannheim Declaration where the Union accepted treaties which had already been passed (Article 1.1). In addition to the acceptance of Ostpolitik, further novel elements of the Mannheim Declaration were the interest in development policy and the stress on European integration, neither of which had featured heavily in past Union documents. The *Grundsatzprogramm* mainly repeated the foreign policy section of the earlier Mannheim programme although there is a much bolder declaration of the eventual goal of unification as a part of the political union of a federal Europe (Articles 137-139). Later programmes (until 1989) added little to Union foreign policy which remained tied to the Western alliance and European integration. For the ÖVP, foreign policy was less of a concern. Nonetheless, the *Salzburger Programm* did promote the moral responsibility of Austria to provide developmental aid (Article 4.1.10)<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> See Articles 36-43.

<sup>38</sup> See also Article 10.9 in the *Zukunftsmanifest*.

While the People's Party continued to support European integration, it still remained hesitant on Austrian accession, failing to declare clearly the party's position in either the Salzburger Programm or the *Zukunftsmanifest*<sup>39</sup>.

### **Family Policy and the Role of Women**

Family policy has always been an essential component part of Christian Democratic programmes and this was maintained throughout the 1970-89 period. For example, the CDU's *Grundsatzprogramm* reaffirmed its support for the family as the foundation of society with extra state assistance for large families and those with disabled children (Article 37-38) in addition to the normal compensation for families (Article 98)<sup>40</sup>. For the ÖVP, too, the family is the most natural form of co-habitation. As such, the Salzburg programme and the *Zukunftsmanifest* made a number of proposals made to bolster it, from the right of every child to a Kindergarten place (*Salzburger Programm*, Article 5.3.5) to the introduction of a form of child benefit for mothers staying at home and family-friendly tax laws (*Zukunftsmanifest* Article 9.2).

However, Christian Democratic programmes have since the 1970s attempted to balance this traditionalism with a recognition of changing gender roles. The CDU's Berlin programme, for example, supported equal chances for men and women in education and promotion and demanded that both sides of industry ensure that women receive equal pay (Articles 93-94). The ÖVP, too, had responded to social developments. Women must be recognised as equal partners with a new understanding of gender roles. Their equality in education, professional position and wages must be guaranteed (Salzburg Programme Articles 5.2.2, 5.2.3). The adaptation to changing social norms, though, did not come easily to Christian Democrats. All mention of single parents in the CDU's *Grundsatzprogramm* were removed from the final document (Bösch 2002:39). Nevertheless, by the 1980s the CDU and ÖVP acknowledged the changing shape of family life. The People's Party in its *Zukunftmanifest* accepted that the need for realism about the family and that single parent families, for instance, were also worthy of financial assistance (Article 9.2). Following the CDU's 1985 conference on the theme of "a new partnership between man and woman", the Union advocated a greater male role in domestic labour and urged solidarity with single

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<sup>39</sup> See Article 12.4 in the *Zukunftsmanifest*; Article 4.11.6 in the *Salzburger Programme*.

<sup>40</sup> Other examples include Article 48 of the Stuttgarter Leitsätze which proposed a reform of the child benefit law. See also Articles 61-69 in *Politik auf der Grundlage des christlichen Menschenbildes*.

parents<sup>41</sup>. There was no question that Christian Democrats were keen to see more women staying within the home but this was increasingly phrased in terms of giving women greater choice between career and family and an enhanced appraisal of domestic labour. Therefore, the CDU and the ÖVP sought to combine their traditional family-centred policies with the an increased sensitivity to gender equality and the diversity of family life.

### **Environmentalism**

The growth of environmentalism began to influence the programmes of both parties from the 1970s onwards. The CDU's Berlin Programme introduces the idea of qualitative economic growth which does not threaten the environment (Article 69) while environmental conservation was included as a goal although the actual instruments the CDU proposes to use to this end are unclear (Articles 84, 87 and 89). The 'greening' of the Union continued in the 1980s<sup>42</sup> but this trend had limits. In contrast to the technological pessimism rife among environmental activists, the Union was a convinced advocate of the merits of technological developments (Stuttgarter Leitsätze Article 12) and favoured the use of nuclear power (Article 19).

In comparison, environmental themes were taken much further by the ÖVP. As part of the new interest in 'quality of life' themes, the Salzburg Programme stressed environmental protection. Environmental damage was to be combated through international treaties, legal authority, circumspect use of public expenditure, tax relief and cheaper credit (Article 4.8). This adoption of green themes was continued in the *Zukunftsmanifest* where environmental protection saturated the document. Conservation of the natural world was "an essential priority of future policy" (Article 3.5), indeed the "social question of our time". Government policy had to recognise that raw materials and energy sources were not inexhaustible and the development of renewable energy sources was necessary. However, the green tinge of the original proposals had faded somewhat by the final document. It was clear that the ÖVP's environmental strategy involved little government interference. Essentially, the ÖVP still believed that the solution lay in the social market economy (Article 5.3, Article 4.2). Competition and innovation of the market can be harnessed towards eco-friendly production and consumption. The incorporation of green themes was,

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<sup>41</sup> See Article 68 of *Politik auf der Grundlage des christlichen Menschenbildes* which promised greater support for single parents.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Articles 41, 42 in the Stuttgarter Leitsätze

therefore, dictated by “the limits of economic feasibility” (Müller 1988:110). However, the stronger green credentials of the ÖVP were still evident later in the decade as party leader Riegler promoted the new eco-social market concept.

## **CDA**

The movement towards closer confessional co-operation had begun in the latter half of the 1960s but a number of fundamental problems were unsolved. The fact that the parties no longer believed that God’s will was objectively demonstrable in politics removed one obstacle (Zwart 1993:32) but the ARP’s hard-line stance persistently hindered discussions. For the Aantjes wing of the Anti-Revolutionaries<sup>43</sup>, the Bible and the revelation remained the touchstone for the party’s identity. This religious dimension was complicated by the fact that many of the so-called loyalists in the Aantje group were also on the left of the party (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:150). Such resistance to a unified party waned only gradually.

The first common programme was produced by the CDA in 1975 after the Federation Congress but it was not until 1978 that work began on a programme of principles that would serve as the foundation for the party. Baron van Verschuer (CHU) put forward a report on principles and political business and a year later, a new commission was established to create the Programme of Points of Departure (*Program van Uitgangspunten*). A group formed borrowing their name from the title of the 1977 CDA election programme “Not Through Bread Alone” with the intention of re-establishing the validity of the aforementioned programme against the parliamentary grouping. The NBBA dissidents, led by Goudzwaard, opposed what they saw as the rightward drift of the CDA (e.g. in the nuclear weapons debate) and argued for a coalition with the PvdA (Nieboer and Lucardie 1992:149-167). Although some concessions were made to the left of the ARP, the final programme drew extensively on the earlier Verschuer documents (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:152).

## **Principles and self-identity**

The Programme of Points of Departure (1980) relied on the compromise formula created earlier. The appeal to the Bible remains important for the new party but it is stressed that it is an appeal rather than a guide for policy (Chapter I). The party does not seek to impose a set of beliefs on society but rather desires that the path to serving God and the world is open.

The emphasis on the Bible and indeed the religious component of the programme in general is still stronger than the CDA's continental cousins<sup>44</sup> but the programme marks a reduction of Dutch singularity. Although the Bible remained a reference point, an important step towards a more orthodox Christian Democracy is taken with the statement that the pledge that the CDA was not subordinate to any church authority (Chapter I). The guiding principles were to be justice, spread responsibility, solidarity and stewardship, all recognisably Christian Democratic albeit with a Dutch flavour. Justice was not simply a question of distribution; instead, it entailed the creation of conditions which allow for the individual to take on responsibility. Spread responsibility has often been described as a fusion of the Calvinist notion of sovereignty in one's own circle with the Catholic idea of subsidiarity. The core of the concept is that government cannot nor should not be responsible for solving all social problems. Other social institutions from the family to the church have a vital role in assuming responsibilities. As part of this, diversity was vital and must be protected from the threat of commerce, majorities, professionals and technocrats. The influence of personalism was clear in the CDA's explanation of solidarity. People "find their purpose and fulfilment" in each other which produces reciprocated concern and help. Solidarity was, thus, understood as mutual connectedness and was not to be confused with the search for equality (Chapter V). The final foundation of the Dutch Christian Democrats is stewardship, reflecting the Dutch Protestant tradition of viewing the government as a servant of God. The task of the government was analogous to the role of man as an administrator and steward of God's creation (Lucardie 1993:49).

### **Economic and Social Policy**

Like the programmes of the confessionals, the CDA did not dwell on the details of economic policy making and proposals were quite vague. Nonetheless, the programme announced a shift away from then-current direction of economic policy which was orientated to solving the problems of the 1950s and 1960s. In order to combat inflation, unemployment, unjust income distribution and stimulate economic growth, social economic questions must be tackled at a lower level than central government with greater involvement at regional levels and within branches of industry on questions like investment and work conditions income. The dispersal of responsibility was not just about unburdening central government; the CDA also wanted more employees and workers involvement in decision-making.

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<sup>43</sup> See Section II this chapter.

<sup>44</sup> See for example Articles 1-3.

Change in the organisation of the welfare state was also imperative. Social security had developed an expansionist dynamic that political parties eager to satisfy the demands of their electorate had fuelled. Despite ever increasing expenditure, the social policy of the 1970s was no closer to solving society's problems. Indeed, more people than ever suffered from isolation and loneliness. The Christian Democratic answer to this predicament was a reorientation of policy according to the guideline of solidarity, shifting away from anonymous, collective organisation to more locally based or industry-specific provision. Adjustment was also critical in labour policy. The importance of work for personal development and society was acknowledged but the CDA stressed that the chief means for combating unemployment was flexibility in working hours and practices, income and training. To some extent, then, the stress on adaptation in the Programme of Points of Departure anticipated the direction of social and economic policymaking under the Lubbers government.

### **Foreign Policy**

The CDU and ÖVP's discovery of developmental aid and international solidarity was more than matched by the CDA, reflected in the long passage on international solidarity which emphasised the need for respect of fundamental human rights, for a new international economic order, more help from the developed nations to the poorer states, a revision of the global monetary system and a further reduction of protective tariffs in the developed nations. In addition, the CDA argued for a global redistribution of welfare, a task that the West bears a special responsibility for. The strong concern for ethics within foreign policy did not extend to nuclear weapons despite the admission that they are fundamentally unethical as disarmament could only be multilateral. Foreign policy remained orientated to NATO and the EEC although the tone concerning Europe was more probing and critical than the CDU<sup>45</sup>.

### **Family policy and the role of women**

Marriage and the family still retains special significance in the Christian Democratic approach (Chapter IIIc). However, even by 1980 the CDA had accepted that other forms of communal life also require comparable legal protection if based on enduring relationships

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<sup>45</sup> For example, the party sought more democracy within European institutions and warned against Europe turning its back on the rest of the world (Chapter IIIId).

and mutual responsibility. This adaptation is far more radical than the CDU and ÖVP's acceptance of increasingly diverse patterns of domestic life. On the role of women, the CDA pledged to ensure equal treatment of all citizens and to remove legal and social barriers preventing equality.

### **Environmentalism**

In common with the CDU and the ÖVP, the CDA took up green themes. The principle of stewardship was invoked to call for a more responsible attitude to natural resources. The government could no longer be solely concerned with growth at any cost. Furthermore, new energy sources and more conservation were essential and there was an explicit rejection of an expansion of nuclear power. Aside from energy use, however, the programme devoted little attention to environmental issues.

### **Christian Democratic Programmes: unobtrusive accompaniment music?**

The 1970s marked a transitional phase in Christian Democracy in each of the three countries and this was manifested in party programmes. The assimilation of new ideas into Christian Democratic thinking was by no means uncontroversial. There was resistance to the more radical formulations and even by the end of the decade, some of the more divisive innovations had been dropped or lost significance. Furthermore, the main tenets of Christian Democracy remained in place: key ideas such as the Christian conception of humanity, solidarity, subsidiarity, freedom and justice continued to be the guidelines for Christian Democratic ideology; the social market economy with support for the family and a pro-European, anti-Communist foreign policy the distinctive features of policy. Nonetheless, Christian Democrats developed a green tinge, accepted to a limited extent the changing shape of family life and began to focus on correcting excessive state involvement in the economy, trends which became even clearer in the 1980s. In some cases, the changes introduced resembled superficial grafts of contemporary relevance (e.g. the CDU's environmentalism) but undoubtedly, programmatic consideration did acquire a new relevance for the various parties. The drafting process involved extensive consultation with a wide variety of social groups as well as with each party's grassroots. The net effect was a mixture of cohesion-centred continuity with a limited ideological adjustment. Accordingly, Bösch's (2002:41) evaluation of the CDU's *Grundsatzprogramm* ("it was not a 'Godesberg'") is valid for each of the programmes although the ÖVP's swing from a social reformist agenda to a neo-liberal influenced perspective was more striking. The CDA's

Programme of Points of Departure was much more of a decisive step, establishing the party's Christian Democratic foundation but also, like the other parties, addressing emerging problems (nuclear weapons, green issues, developmental policy, social atomism).

In all three parties, the enhanced role of programmatic work of the 1970s was lost in the following decade. For the CDU and the CDA, this was the result of a focus on government activity. Party programmes were still produced on a regular basis and generally included a stronger free market component but such documents had lost their impact. Under Lubbers' no-nonsense government, self-examination of CDA ideology dwindled in importance frustrating the more programmatically inclined party members<sup>46</sup>. During the 1982-9 period, the growing distance between the CDU reformers and the party in government was symbolised by the increasingly chilly relations between Kohl and Geißler (Clemens 1998:6). Geißler's thematic leadership<sup>47</sup> could not hide the increasing irrelevance of CDU programmes to the party in government, mere "accompaniment music" to "the laborious compromises of a coalition government" (Haungs 1992:190). The ÖVP's programmatic identity in the 1980s was more clearly delineated. The party had moved from what Busek had mockingly described as "socialism minus 20% but with a one year delay" (quoted in Kohlmaier 1999:43) to demanding a *Kurswechsel* (change of course). However, participation in government served to blunt the party's programmatic profile. The SPÖ absorbed much of the ÖVP's economic rhetoric, the theme of participation was increasingly the preserve of the Greens and the FPÖ while even Austrian membership of the European Community caused deep divisions within the party. Therefore by the end of the decade, the party had lost its thematic leadership (Kriechbaumer 1995b:129) and programmatic concerns were increasingly overshadowed by strategic ones, i.e. the question of co-operation with the FPÖ. By the end of the 1980s, then, programmatic work had undoubtedly slipped to the fringes of party activity in each case.

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<sup>46</sup> For instance the leader of the CDA scientific institute Arie Oostlander warned that concentration on the technical, day-to-day running of the country could reduce the party's Christian Democratic values (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:201).

<sup>47</sup> For example, through his forceful interjections in various public debates (e.g. the legitimacy of the Greens) and his adoption of new issues (e.g. promoting the state financing of women's refuges)

## IV. Party organisation

### CDU

Analogous to the programmatic task facing the Union in opposition, there was also a need for the CDU to develop a stronger organisational framework to consolidate and strengthen its position. Neglected in the Adenauer era, the central party apparatus had acquired more power since the mid-1960s yet the Union remained a relatively undeveloped structure<sup>48</sup>. With the loss of the chancellorship, it was clear that in order to avoid the mire of factional squabbles, reform was imperative. However, the party's initial organisational reforms stalled. Fundamentally, many Christian Democrats did not believe they would be out of office for long and resisted change. Following the election defeat of 1972 and the election of Kohl as chairman the following year, reform was once more on the agenda. Kohl had overseen the rapid growth of the Rhineland-Palatinate CDU in the 1960s and as federal chairman, he encouraged a similar expansion of the party at the national level. Membership had remained under 300,000 throughout the 1960s but by 1976, the Union included 652,000 members<sup>49</sup> bringing a new youthfulness to the party. Under the less ambitious leadership of Carstens, the influence of the *Fraktion* waned while the Federal party executive assumed a new significance (Langguth 2001:49). The post of General Secretary also acquired a new centrality. Biedenkopf and later Geißler provided the party with thematic leadership, stimulating debate in the Union and the wider public. This together with the increased personnel and financial resources of the federal business office and its resultant professionalisation helped to remedy the former weaknesses of the central party (Korte 2000:712). This helped ensure that stripped of government participation, the party did not dissolve into internal dissension.

The CDU's reforms were far-reaching and transformed the party but it would be a mistake to overstate the degree of centralisation in the Union. The organisational and opinion pluralism within the CDU still restricted the power of the central party. Kohl managed to retain the chair of the party throughout the 1970s but his authority was circumscribed by the multifarious interests and organisations that constitute the party. "Such heterogeneity in structure, interests and ideas mitigated against rigidly hierarchical leadership" (Clemens 1998b:96). Complaints about Kohl's weak leadership came from numerous sources: the *Fraktion*, Junge Union and the social committees. Former allies

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<sup>48</sup> See chapter 2, section III.

<sup>49</sup> See chapter 4, section IV.

frequently turned against him. Biedenkopf and Geißler's independence as General Secretaries and their different political perspectives undermined their relationships with Kohl leading to their eventual departures. A constant thorn in the side of the CDU throughout the 1970s was the CSU under the leadership of Strauß. The CSU had little cause for programmatic or indeed organisational re-examination as it continued to dominate the Bavarian political landscape. The innovations of CDU programmes were viewed as dangerous concessions to the left. The fractious and fraught relationship of the sister parties was another limitation on the power of the party chairman. In addition, Kohl had to take the opinions of the regional parties and the auxiliary organisations into consideration.

Kohl's skill was the ability to maintain a network of contacts spread throughout the organisation of the party. He effectively placed himself between the various competing regional, factional and interest groups. However, although he had presided over many of the organisational reforms in the Union, Kohl's commitment to continuing this process, for example by further bolstering the decision-making power of the federal party, shrivelled the longer he remained in office. After 1982, both the *Fraktion* and the structures of the federal party lost importance. The chancellor's office became the centre of decision-making with many of the Chancellor's closest advisors coming from outside the party leadership. Kohl's style of governing shunned established institutions of decision-making in favour of the informal discussions with individual ministers and members of the *Fraktion*. Both the Praesidium and the party executive met less often than in opposition (Bösch 2002:125). The *Fraktion* enjoyed a good relationship with the Chancellor but was increasingly bypassed, often "reduced to merely ratifying coalition agreements" (Clemens 1999:101). Parliamentary leader Dregger was a Kohl loyalist and the parliamentary group showed remarkably little dissent in Bundestag votes. By 1987, the golden age of party reform of the 1970s seemed a distant memory. The CDU once more appeared outdated and remote from society. A Geißler-initiated reform commission uncovered a widespread loss of motivation amongst functionaries in local parties and a gross under-representation of women but these findings were toned down when Kohl himself took over the chairmanship of the committee. This suppression of self-criticism within the party could not hide the crisis signs in the party and in Kohl's leadership. The abortive 'putsch' at the 1989 Bremen party conference revealed that discontent with Kohl and concern about the state of the party were present in the CDU but most delegates were unwilling to risk the momentous consequences of unseating their leader.

## ÖVP

After the loss of the 1970 election, many young Christian Democrats demanded reform and modernisation of the party. Reorganisation of the party's structure had taken place in the 1960s but had stalled<sup>50</sup>. Under the new General Secretary Schleinzer, a shadow cabinet was established and the General Secretary's office was modernised and professionalised (Kriechbaumer 1995:55). This work, however, was overshadowed by the infighting which consumed the party and it was not until the party suffered a further defeat in 1971 that work on party restructuring began in earnest. In 1972 the youth party and the women's organisation were given the same formal status as the Leagues<sup>51</sup> and officially designated as constituent organisations. This alteration did not have the desired effect and did not seriously diminish the power of the Leagues (Müller and Steininger 1994:88). Amongst other changes, each Land party was to produce a list of members and each League to keep the local party informed of its membership (Müller and Steininger 1994b:19). The net effect of the reforms, however, failed to fundamentally redress the overwhelming power of the Leagues who continued to assert their independence from the central party. Some of the new rules were not fully observed and the new statute that "the interests of the federal party takes precedence over those of the sub-organisations" sounded hollow given the established might of the vested interests (Sully 1981:78).

The issue of party organisation refused to go away as the ÖVP continued to languish in opposition throughout the 1970s. The dispute over the vacant parliamentary leader post in 1978 revealed the continuing dominance of the Leagues and the difficulty of the party in finding a unified line. Taus initially wanted the post in order to combine the roles of party chairman and Klubobmann but this was opposed by the Leagues and it was eventually ÖAAB leader Mock who was elected as the new Klubobmann (Kriechbaumer 1995:61). This highlighted both the weakness of the central party and its chairman and the deep factionalism which pervaded the party. After the third successive defeat in 1979, Taus seized the initiative and campaigned within the party for a far-reaching restructuring of the party. The chairman's suggestions were indeed radical, for instance a reduction of the Leagues' status to working groups (*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*) whose central operation was to be the choosing of candidates for chambers elections in which they would campaign under

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter II, section IIIb.

<sup>51</sup> A sixth Teilorganisation was created in 1977 with the addition of the Pensioner's League.

the ÖVP party label<sup>52</sup> (Kriechbaumer 1995:64). The proposals, if implemented, would have reigned in the powers of the Leagues, asserting the primacy of party. The chairman's ideas were rejected by the party executive, the Leagues and even by other reform oriented party members leading to the resignation of Taus.

The actual reforms introduced by Taus' successor Mock were a greatly diluted version of the original suggestions (Ableitinger 1995:160). No fundamental reorganisation of the Leagues' structure took place. The chairmen of the Leagues were no longer automatically deputy chairmen; they were now elected by the conference. The party council was also abolished and a new praesidium was created consisting of the chairman, general secretary, parliamentary leader and the three deputy chairmen (Sully 1981:80). Although members were now de jure party members first and League members secondly, most dealings with members were still the preserve of the Leagues. Furthermore, the central party apparatus was accorded only 10% of candidate nomination and most senior party positions were allocated proportionately between the Leagues. The central party had been bolstered but in comparative perspective, the ÖVP was still an exceptionally divided and factional party in which the Leagues were the leading intra-party actors.

Throughout the 1980s, the ÖVP tried to furnish its federal party with a modern apparatus, for example, with the introduction of survey research and public relations agencies (Müller, Plasser and Ulram, forthcoming). Nonetheless without tackling the power of the Leagues, this was little more than window-dressing. The more favourable political context of the 1980s allowed the Christian Democrats to claw back some of its lost support and helped push party reform back off the agenda. In addition to the unsolved dilemma of the Leagues, the federal basis of the party was becoming increasingly problematic in the 1970-89 period. With the national party out of office for much of this period, Land parties, particularly those in Land government, grew in influence and autonomy. For example, the Styrian party has long been a troublesome local party, resisting policies agreed by the federal party such as the stationing of new jets at Styrian air bases<sup>53</sup>. This trend was reinforced by the greater personalisation of politics. Land governors became central figures in regional and national politics. Where the Landeshauptmann was a Christian Democrat,

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<sup>52</sup> Other suggestions were introducing exclusively direct membership of the party and a far greater role for party conferences in selecting leadership posts.

<sup>53</sup> See Binder (1995).

this was a further restriction on central authority. As the decade drew to a close, it was increasingly clear that the ÖVP had not solved its organisational difficulties. Despite the party's gains in policy terms, it could not make electoral capital from this. Instead, its image was of an outdated, paralysed party trapped in factional disputes and leadership turmoil.

## **CDA**

As explained in chapter II, party organisation was a less influential factor in shaping the fortunes of the Dutch confessionals and this was also true of the newly merged Christian Democrats. As a firmly hierarchical mass party, the CDA most resembled the organisation of the ARP (Koole 1997:145). The absence of federalism in the Netherlands has typically meant that Dutch parties do not face the same degree of geographically-centred dissent as their German or Austrian counterparts. Accordingly, the CDA's organisation did not grant a great deal of autonomy to its grassroots structures. The lowest regional organisation is the municipal section whose principal task was the preparation of campaigns for communal elections. They also have a role in the construction of electoral programmes but Krouwel (1993:71-2) found that in comparison with other Dutch parties, the CDA municipal organisations had less influence due to proscribed limits existing on which aspects of the programme can be revised. Initially, candidate selection was according to the 'bloed-groepen' principle, that is the central party ensured an equal distribution between the three confessional parties. After 1980, selection was altered and responsibility for candidate selection was formally given to municipal organisations. Nonetheless, considerable opportunity exists for the party executive to steer this process (Krouwel 1993:72). At the next level are the regional organisations which are largely administrative with marginal political significance (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:157).

At the national level, the main organs of the party are the party council, the executive and congress. According to the statute, the latter is the highest decision making within the party yet in operation, the council<sup>54</sup> is the body with the greatest significance with a decisive role in the preparation of election programmes and the list of candidates. The congress<sup>55</sup> must meet at least every two years and has quite narrowly delineated powers. It

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<sup>54</sup> The council is made up of delegates from the regional organs, the party executive, leading figures in the special party organisations and commissions.

<sup>55</sup> The congress is mainly composed of representatives from the municipal sections, members of the council and the executive members of the auxiliary associations as well as members without voting rights such as parliamentarians from both chambers and members of commissions.

can approve or reject council or executive resolutions, elects only the chairman of the party council and in exceptional circumstances alter an already prepared candidate list (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:159). The party executive, composed of the chairman, two deputies, a group of members selected by the party council and others by regional and auxiliary groups, is supposed to give leadership to all political and organisational activities of the CDA. The day-to-day running of the party is in the hands of a smaller business executive.

Despite its formal importance, the executive is not viewed as important by the Dutch public and its activities receive little media coverage. The incompatibility of post-holding within the party with membership of either chamber of parliament or ministerial office relegates the party's administration to a side role in its internal life. The dominant person within the party is not the chairman but rather the prime minister (if (s)he is from the CDA) or the leader of the CDA parliamentary group in the Tweede Kamer. The weak position of the CDA chairman was exemplified in the figure of Wim van Velzen who became party chairman in 1987. Van Velzen saw the party as being antiquated, rewarding loyalty rather than ability and in desperate need of modernisation. His attempted recruitment of non-party business people and scientists caused substantial anger particularly among former ARP members who decried the newcomers as 'yuppies' and 'careerists'<sup>56</sup>. Van Velzen's campaign of modernisation subsequently floundered on his lack of power within the CDA and he restricted himself to a less public role.

Centralised power, then, is not in the hands of the chairman but organisational plurality was not the limiting factor that it was in other Christian Democratic parties. Direct party organisations<sup>57</sup> do not unduly limit the power of the party leader. Auxiliary party organisations such as the Scientific Institute, Woman's Association and the youth party, do play more of a role in internal political debates, intervening in the internal discussion process, developing policy ideas and stimulating debate<sup>58</sup>. However, it is significant that these auxiliary organisations do not include representatives of business or trade unions. Without direct ties to these groups, the CDA has greater scope for action than, for example, the ÖVP. This is not to deny that the CDA continued to have strong links with particular

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<sup>56</sup> See Metzke (1995:128-156) for a full account of van Velzen's problems.

<sup>57</sup> Such as the political instruction institute (*Steenkamp Instituut*) or the foreign commission (*Buitenlandcommissie*).

<sup>58</sup> For example see the clashes between the Vrouwenberaad and the party about the discussion of the theme of emancipation and individualism (van de Streek 1993:202-4).

social groups (e.g. agrarian interests) with many parliamentarians having a background in such organisations (Woldendorp 1993:154). What had changed was the nature of the relationship between the societal middle field and the party. The CDA was now in a stronger position to assert the primacy of politics, a position far removed from its Austrian counterpart.

While the CDA was less encumbered by problems resulting from the dominance of interest incorporation, the powers of the leadership were significantly circumscribed by another Dutch political feature: the separation between cabinet office holding and parliamentary representation. The complete separation of cabinet and parliament produces an inherent tension for all government parties. Parliamentary parties will frequently deviate politically from the representatives of the party in government, particularly if the government is carrying out unpopular policies (Daalder 1987:236). During the 1980s, the relationship between the CDA in government and the parliamentary *fractie* was not without tension. Parliamentary leader de Vries was often uncomfortable with the social implications of the Lubbers government's cost-cutting measures and at times expressed this openly (Metze 1995:99-101). The relationship between the party in executive and the party in the legislature must be taken into consideration at all times by the prime minister. Admittedly, the ability of Tweede Kamer *fractie* leader to play a quasi-oppositional role may assume a constructive function within the internal dynamics of the party by allowing for a certain level of criticism. Yet as Dutch political history testifies, this is a delicate balance to maintain.

## **V. Conclusion**

### **Christian Democracy in the 1970s and 1980s : Tempora Mutantur, Nos Et Mutamur In Illis?**

Post-1970, Christian Democratic parties entered into a new phase. Parties that had politically matured in office lost this orientation and were consequently thrown into disorder. The initial impulse of the CDU and ÖVP was to see their problems as short-term and correctible through leadership change. When this brought neither electoral reward nor silenced internal dissension, the parties turned to programmatic and organisational renewal. As office-inclined parties, this reluctance to consider more far-reaching change was not surprising<sup>59</sup> but successive electoral defeats and the extended sojourn in opposition were enough of a

shock to stimulate reform. For the Dutch confessionals, the merger of the parties was caused by electoral losses and resulted in organisational and ideological transformation.

Reform was not straightforward: programmatic change aimed at both inner party harmony and adaptation. The ÖVP's reforms went further but both parties assimilated a range of new concerns into their programmes, signifying an opening to and engagement with new social concerns and demands. Admittedly, adaptation did not fundamentally alter the profile of the parties. The pillars of Christian Democratic identity remained untouched and programmatic work aimed more for internal unity than radical reconsideration. Nonetheless, the new-found programmatic zest of Christian Democrats did lend the parties a fresh relevance. The extent to which this contributed to the Christian Democratic resurgence is questionable but the involvement in programmatic work did help preserve intra-party unity. As Social Democratic-led governments experienced mounting economic problems in the 1980s, Christian Democratic thinking again demonstrated its malleability through an increasing emphasis on free market policies. The barriers to programmatic change for the CDA were even larger but the eventual modification was momentous, overcoming historically-based religious divisions and bringing the party into line with other Christian Democratic parties in terms of its basic principles and its response to the challenges of environmentalism, feminism, third world development and the crisis of the welfare state.

Organisational reform was also awkward as entrenched interests existed in both parties, blocking the empowerment of a central party able to co-ordinate opposition to the government. What was necessary in opposition was a greater degree of centralised co-ordination of the organisational pluralism inherent in the *Volkspartei* model. The CDU was more successful in this respect, breathing more life into its central organisation and greatly expanding its mass membership. Due to its greater degree of inveterate factionalism, the ÖVP never solved the difficulties caused by its structure and the central party continued to be restricted by the degree of independence enjoyed by its sub-units. For both parties, however, the social breadth and autonomy of party sub-units continued to narrow the options of the leadership. The CDA's leadership, though not free of organisational diversity, faced considerably less restrictions on its independence.

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<sup>59</sup> See Chapter 1 Section V.

In government all three parties attempted welfare retrenchment and market liberalisation as the social wing of Christian Democracy found itself on the defensive. This trend was mirrored in party programmes, especially the CDU and ÖVP's. However, in all three parties, the spirit of renovation and innovation wilted the longer the party spent in government. In the second half of the 1980s, programmatic work continued but was of marginal significance and there were few significant organisational reforms. By 1989, the state of the parties varied quite markedly. The ÖVP's situation was most grave: faced by the moderate Social Democracy espoused by Vranitzky and the populism of the FPÖ, it stagnated in its position as junior coalition partner. The CDU was in a more favourable position but even it had appeared on the brink of a crisis until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 eased its difficulties. In contrast, the CDA seemed robust and revitalised. Despite some tensions over the growing irrelevance of programmatic work, Lubbers' popular authority was still unchallenged and the party was central to the formation of any coalition. Yet such national dissimilarities, however, concealed common trends in the electoral support of Christian Democratic parties. As was shown in Table 1.1 (p.2), the parties only managed to consolidate their vote in the 1980s; in no country did the average result actually improve. One explanation for this was that Christian Democratic parties were still reliant on the electoral support of key social constituencies. This electoral core had, however, been shrinking for a number of years and therefore regardless of the apparent rejuvenation of Christian Democracy in the 1980s, there had been no return to the golden age of the 1950s.

## **Chapter 4. The Draining Reservoir of Christian Democratic Support**

### **I. Introduction**

Chapter 3 revealed the problems of Christian Democratic parties as their political dominance began to slip. In the foreign environs of opposition, the CDU and ÖVP struggled to come to terms with their new roles. Despite remaining in office (except in the case of the CHU), rapid electoral decline convinced the Dutch confessionals to put aside historical differences and merge. Yet in each of the three countries, Christian Democrats were able to re-establish themselves in government and consolidate their electoral support in the 1980s. While the parties themselves contributed to this through their programmatic and organisational adaptation in the 1970s, the swing to the Christian Democrats reflected the “mood of pessimism [which] prevailed at the beginning of the 1980s” in which “it became possible publicly to articulate conservative ideology” (Girvin 1994:208-209). In addition, a policy consensus emerged “based on neo-liberal and monetarist views of economic management” (Chandler 2002:7). Thus, at both electoral and policy levels, the 1980s appeared to be “a decade of conservative dominance” (Girvin 1988:1).

The return of the centre-right to power in Germany and Austria and the consolidation of the newly created CDA in the Netherlands did not signal, though, a return to the golden-age of earlier decades. The foundations of this success did not have the same solidity as previously. This vulnerability of the Christian Democratic renewal derived in part from the difficulty of reconciling the broad social basis of Christian Democracy with programmatic initiatives requiring austerity and cutbacks. However, a further complication was that key social constituencies comprising the core of the Christian Democratic electorate were in long-term decline. There is no automatic relationship between socio-structural, demographic and attitudinal transformation and the electoral success of political parties. The loss of core support groups need not sound the death knell for a political party. Indeed, political parties across large parts of Western Europe have demonstrated remarkable resilience. Few of the largest parties have ‘failed’ and indeed Yanai (1999) inverted Lawson and Merkl’s question (1988) to ask “why do political parties survive?” Nevertheless, it is assumed here that if a party’s core electorate is decreasing, the party faces a major problem. As Wilson (1994:270) notes, not all parties will respond but for office and vote-seekers, such as Christian Democrats, the logic of electoral competition is inescapable and requires action.

Chapters 5-7 will analyse the nature of the adaptation of the CDU, ÖVP and CDA by analysing party developments in the 1990s. The aim of this chapter, then, is first to illustrate the common features of the Christian Democratic electorate and membership in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. This will be followed by an overview of the most relevant social and economic changes in the three countries. Finally, indicators of the decomposition of the Christian Democratic core (partisanship, membership) will be considered. As chapters 5-7 will make clear, there is no simple correspondence between social and economic changes and the decline in the Christian Democratic vote and contextual short-term influences have influenced the fortunes of the CDU, ÖVP and CDA in the 1990s to a considerable extent. Yet the erosion of the most reliable groups of Christian Democratic voters cannot be ignored as an important factor. Chandler's warning (2002:21) against viewing structural change as having "systematically disadvantaged one side of the political spectrum" is justified and indeed, the social and economic transformations affecting the Christian Democratic electorate have to be viewed against the broader picture of entire electorates increasingly devoid of strong affective party ties. The hitherto enduring bond between voters and the established parties has weakened as socio-economic change, rising educational levels and living standards and the more powerful role of the mass media have brought about a process of partisan dealignment (Dalton, Beck and Flanagan 1984; Dalton 2000). Nonetheless, the consequences of this have often been examined solely for the centre-left or in terms of new parties. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to explore the implications of such change for Christian Democrats.

## **II. The Christian Democratic Electorate**

### **Religiosity**

One of the most characteristic features of the archetypal Christian Democratic voter across all of Western Europe is his/her strong link to a church. Where membership of the church remains prevalent in the whole population (e.g. Austria), the outstanding feature of the Christian Democratic electorate is their behavioural religiosity. Additionally, in countries where church membership itself has substantially decreased (e.g. the Netherlands), there is also a link between membership of a denomination and voting for a Christian Democratic party. The religious dimension of Christian Democratic support will be examined in each of the three countries under study, illustrating that this powerful bond between religion and Christian Democratic voting persists into the present day.

Table 4.1 shows that the traditionally strong association between German Catholicism and Christian Democracy is still evident (e.g. 47% of Catholics supported the CDU/CSU in 1998 compared to 35% in the total electorate). However, the statistics also reveal that regardless of denomination, CDU/CSU support is higher among the religiously active. Those Catholics and Protestants whose church membership has ceased to be anything other than nominal were far less inclined to vote Christian Democratic. Conversely, it can also be seen that the CDU/CSU is distinctly under-represented among the un- or dechurched segment of the population with only 22% of such voters backing the party in 1998. Some evidence that the relationship between church attendance and CDU/CSU voting is fading can be found. In 1976 81% of regular Catholic church-attenders voted CDU/CSU as did 65% of Protestant regular attenders (Conner 1991:87) compared to 70% and 48% respectively in 1998. Nonetheless, this decline has been gradual and has not eroded the enduring association between behavioural religiosity and CDU/CSU voting.

Table 4.1 CDU/CSU support by denomination and church attendance

	1994	1998
<i>Total CDU/CSU vote</i>	41.5	35.1
<i>Catholic: all</i>	52	47
<i>Catholic: frequent attendance</i>	74	70
<i>Catholic: occasional attendance</i>	54	50
<i>Catholic: non-attendance</i>	37	35
<i>Protestant</i>	37	32
<i>Protestant: frequent attendance</i>	47	48
<i>Protestant: occasional attendance</i>	42	36
<i>Protestant: non-attendance</i>	32	29
<i>No religion</i>	28	22

Source: Politbarometer statistics, adapted from Gibowski (1999:30).

Austria lacks Germany's religious heterogeneity. Catholics account for nearly 80% of the population while the Protestant minority is only 4.7% of the population (Austrian census 2001). Nonetheless, a broadly similar pattern can be discerned. The Austrian statistics are less detailed than the German equivalents with studies tending to divide the electorate into Catholics close to the church (i.e. weekly attendance), less religiously active Catholics (i.e. rare or non-attendance) and those who profess no denominational allegiance. As can be seen from table 4.2, the percentage of regular churchgoers voting ÖVP has remained steady throughout the 1990s. The party is also far less popular among

those more distant from the church with only 20% of irregular churchgoers and a mere 6% of those entirely without church ties voting for the ÖVP in 1999 (Plasser, Seeber and Ulram 2000:16). Again, the degree of behavioural religiosity is a more reliable indicator of willingness to vote Christian Democratic than church affiliation alone. Further proof of this is the strong support given to the SPÖ by those religiously inactive Catholics. In 1990 almost every second voter in this group voted for the SPÖ (Plasser, Ulram and Grausgruber 1992:33).

Table 4.2 ÖVP support among churchgoers

	<i>Regular churchgoers</i>	<i>Total ÖVP support (%)</i>
<b>1990</b>	60	32.1
<b>1994</b>	59	27.7
<b>1995</b>	59	28.3
<b>1999</b>	59	26.9

Source: Fessel-GfK exit polls cited in Plasser, Ulram and Sommer (2000:75)

Table 4.3 CDA support by denomination and attendance

	<b>1994</b>	<b>1998</b>
<i>Total CDA vote</i>	22.2	18.4
<i>Catholics: all</i>	40	34.2
<i>Catholics: weekly churchgoers</i>	65	69.4
<i>Dutch Reformed: all</i>	30	28.5
<i>Dutch Reformed: weekly churchgoers</i>	54	49.0
<i>Gereformeerde: all</i>	50	41.9
<i>Gereformeerde: weekly churchgoers</i>	50	42.3
<i>No religious affiliation</i>	7	2.6

Source: 1994 DNES figures taken from Lepszy and Koecke (2000:184-6) and Irwin and van Holsteyn (2000:87); 1998 DNES, Steinmetz Archive.

Three features of Table 4.3, which breaks down CDA support according to denomination and church attendance, are quite striking. While support for the CDA is higher among members of the different religious groups than in the general population, this is far less than in the past. For example, in 1966, 81% of all Catholics intended to vote for the KVP and 74% of *gereformeerde* for the ARP (Middendorp 1991:303). The linkage between the religious denominations and the separate parties weakened in the following decade but even in 1981 after the formation of the CDA, 55% of Catholics

and 68% of *gereformeerde* supported the Christian Democrats (Middendorp 1991: 307). The subsequent period has seen the progressive erosion of this bond. Admittedly, a greater proportion of Catholics, Dutch Reformed and *gereformeerde* vote CDA than in the whole population yet by 1998, the CDA is no longer supported by an absolute majority within any religious group. The second prominent aspect of the table is that in the case of Catholics and Dutch Reformed members, the relationship between weekly church-attendance and CDA voting is much stronger. This has not changed drastically in the last two decades. For example, in 1985 72% of Catholics, 52% of Dutch Reformed members and 70% of *gereformeerde* attending church on a weekly basis voted CDA (Middendorp 1991:310). Behavioural religiosity is therefore becoming a more reliable guide to CDA voting than church-membership alone. The final feature of the table to stand out is the dismally low support for the CDA among those without any religious ties. This has varied since the formation of the CDA. In 1981, support was 5% but the success of Lubbers drew extra secular voters to the party, peaking at 12% in 1986 (Middendorp 1991:308) but by 1998, this had fallen to a dismal 2.8%.

### **Occupational characteristics**

Despite Christian Democratic parties' ambitions to represent all segments of the population, certain trends in the composition of Christian Democratic electorate in terms of occupation are also clear. Typically, such parties draw many votes from farmers, the self-employed and civil servants but are less successful with blue-collar voters. Support from white-collar employees is less easy to generalise with more national and temporal variation.

The structure of the vote according to occupation in Germany has been complicated by unification. While clear trends existed beforehand, these were to some extent blurred by voting behaviour in the East. This can be seen by comparing pre-1990 statistics with those following German unity.

Table 4.4 CDU/CSU support by occupation

	1990		1994		1998	
	West	East	West	East	West	East
<i>Total CDU/CSU</i>	44.3	41.8	42.1	38.5	37.0	27.3
<i>Blue-collar workers</i>	39	49	35	41	31	27
<i>White-collar employees</i>	43	36	40	32	34	24
<i>Civil servants</i>	*	*	44	30	41	34
<i>Self-employed</i>	57	48	53	48	46	43
<i>Farmers</i>	*	*	65	59	75	43

\* not asked in 1990

Source: Gibowski (1996:46); Gibowski (2000:210).

The Union parties have consistently been the electoral choice of a majority of farmers (e.g. in 1969 the difference between the CDU/CSU and the SPD was 68) and the self-employed. Although the CDU/CSU has always received some blue-collar votes, the Union parties lag behind the SPD (e.g. in 1980 the CDU/CSU only received 30% of blue-collar votes, Conner 1991:94). Competition with the SPD for white-collar employees and civil servants is more intense but the Union parties are still typically the most supported party amongst these groups. Treating civil servants and white-collar employees as one group, there were only three elections before 1990 when the SPD outperformed the union amongst this group (Conner 1991:95). For both white-collar employees and blue-collar workers, trade union membership is a further useful explanatory variable with non-union members in both groups giving far greater support to the CDU/CSU. For example, in 1998 only 23% of trade union members voted CDU/CSU compared to 40% of non-unionised workers and employees (Gibowski 1999:28). Eastern voting patterns initially reversed the pattern of party support in the west with the Union stronger among blue-collar workers and the SPD the most popular party for white-collar employees and civil servants. Over the decade, however, there were some signs of convergence in the voting behaviour of occupational groups as the gap between blue collar workers in east and west narrowed.

Table 4.5 ÖVP support by occupation

	1986	1990	1994	1995	1999
<i>Total ÖVP</i>	41.3	32.1	27.7	28.3	26.9
<i>Blue-collar workers</i>	27	19	15	13	12
<i>White-collar workers</i>	36	27	25	28	23
<i>Civil servants</i>	33	30	23	20	30
<i>Self-employed</i>	60	51	40	39	41
<i>Farmers</i>	93	85	73	72	87

Source: Fessel-GfK Institut data cited in Plasser, Ulram and Sommer (2000:67) for 1999; Luther (1998:140-1) for 1995; Plasser and Ulram (1995:356) for 1994, 1990 and 1986.

Similar trends in Austria can be detected in Table 4.5. The proportion of farmers voting ÖVP is even higher and the party is strong among self-employed voters. On the other hand, after 1986 the party lost votes among the self-employed who are increasingly drawn to the FPÖ. While the ÖVP's share of civil servants has remained steady, the party faces strong competition from the SPÖ and the Greens for the votes of both this group and those of white-collar employees. The ÖVP could not claim that it was *the* party of civil servants or white-collar employees. In each election between 1986 and 1999, the Christian Democrats lagged behind the SPÖ in these two groups (Plasser, Ulram and Sommer 2000:69,72). Whether white or blue collar, trade union membership shapes the ÖVP vote. While only 19% of all union members voted for the People's Party in 1999, the party was the joint most popular party with the FPÖ among non-members, taking 30% of the vote.

Dutch election surveys pay less attention to the varieties of employment and more to subjective feelings of class. Moreover, occupations are categorized differently to the German/Austrian divisions and in any case the importance of occupational classifications in structuring the vote has generally not been rated as significant. This is particularly the case in regard to the Christian Democrats where "apart from their religion and church attendance, CDA voters differ little from the average Dutch voter" (Lucardie and ten Napel 1994:60). For example, in the 1998 election, the CDA won a fairly even spread of voters across all classes. In contrast to the VVD who won negligible support from the working class (6.1%) and the PvdA whose success in the upper class was very limited (9.1%), support for the Christian Democrats never falls

below 13.1% nor exceeds 22.7% in any one class. This can also be analysed by looking at the composition of the party's electorate against that of the population as a whole.

Table 4.6 The class structure of CDA support

	CDA 1986	Total electorate 1986	CDA 1998	Total electorate 1998
<i>Upper and upper-middle class</i>	15	15	15	18
<i>Middle class</i>	53	49	61	57
<i>Upper-working class</i>	10	11	7	7
<i>Working class</i>	23	24	18	18
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100

Source: 1986 DNES cited in Daalder (1987:226-7) and 1998 DNES.

Table 4.6 confirms the remarkable resemblance between the class balance within the Christian Democratic electorate and in the population as a whole. Nevertheless, CDA voters do share some characteristics with other Christian Democratic electorates around Europe. Self-employed voters account for 19.5% of the total CDA electorate, a proportion well beyond that in the whole population. In addition, the party retains a connection to self-employed farmers although as shown by the very small numbers in the survey<sup>1</sup> this group is of marginal electoral importance. The majority of Christian Democratic voters are employees despite the party's lack of consistent success in this group. In 1998 the party came fourth in this group behind the PvdA, VVD and D66. Table 4.7 splits the middle class by union membership which reaffirms the general tendency of Christian Democrats to be more popular among non-union members although caution must be taken when interpreting the results as the vast majority of those polled are either not active or non-members.

Table 4.7 CDA middle class vote by union membership

	<i>Middle class</i>			
Union membership	<i>Very active</i>	<i>Reasonably active</i>	<i>Not active</i>	<i>Not member</i>
CDA vote 1998	0	10	17	18

Source: 1998 DNES, Steinmetz Archive

## Demographic characteristics

A further core element of Christian Democratic support has come from pensioners and older voters in general. This continues to be the case and Christian Democratic parties are badly underrepresented among younger voters. In the past these parties also attracted a disproportionate amount of support from women. However, as will be shown here, this trend is less evident in contemporary elections and Christian Democratic voters are more evenly drawn from the sexes.

Table 4.8 CDU/CSU support by age group

	1990		1994		1998	
	West	East	West	East	West	East
<i>Total</i>	44.3	41.8	42.1	38.5	37.0	27.3
<i>18-24</i>	36	33	35	29	35	20
<i>25-34</i>	34	37	33	31	30	25
<i>35-44</i>	38	40	37	36	32	25
<i>45-59</i>	48	43	46	41	38	28
<i>60+</i>	53	47	50	46	45	35

Source: adapted from Gibowski (1996:40-41) and Gibowski (2000:24-5).

Table 4.9 CDU/CSU support by gender

	1990		1994		1998	
	West	East	West	East	West	East
<i>Men</i>	40	39	42	37	37	27
<i>Women</i>	44	43	43	40	37	27

Source: adapted from Gibowski (1996:40-41) and Gibowski (2000:24-5).

Table 4.8 clearly shows that the German Christian Democrats have been strongly supported by older voters throughout the 1990s. With the exception of the 25-34 bracket in the West in 1994 and 1998, the proportion of CDU/CSU voters increases as the age group rises. Interestingly though, the age gap within the CDU/CSU electorate may be diminishing as in the west at least, Christian Democratic support among the youngest age group has remained steady in comparison to CDU/CSU losses among older voters. The elections since unification have also witnessed increasing congruence between male and female Christian Democratic voting patterns. Apart from the election of 1980, women have always been more likely to vote for the CDU/CSU than their male

<sup>1</sup> N=22, almost half of whom voted CDA.

counterparts but the gender gap since the 1970s has been far less pronounced (Connor 1991:112) and this trend towards increasingly uniform electoral behaviour was continued in elections in the 1990s.

Electoral backing for the Austrian Christian Democrats is also stronger in older age groups. In contrast to the CDU/CSU, however, the ÖVP's main losses have been in the youngest two age ranges while the proportion of older Austrians voting for the party has been more stable. Therefore, there has been no sign that the age gap in ÖVP support has disappeared although the People's Party vote has become more evenly balanced between male and female voters in the 1990s as Table 4.11 shows.

Table 4.10 ÖVP support by age group

	1990	1994	1995	1999
<i>Total</i>	32.1	27.7	28.3	26.9
<i>18-29</i>	24	19	18	17
<i>30-44</i>	32	26	25	23
<i>45-59</i>	34	30	33	32
<i>60-69<sup>2</sup></i>	34	33	36	35
<i>70+</i>			32	31

Source: Fessel-Gfk Institut data cited in Plasser, Ullrich and Sommer (2000:67) for 1999, Luther (1998:140-1) for 1995, Plasser and Ullrich (1995:356) for 1994 and 1990.

Table 4.11 ÖVP support by gender.

	1990	1994	1995	1999
<i>Men</i>	29	25	26	26
<i>Women</i>	33	30	29	27

Source: Fessel-Gfk Institut data cited in Plasser, Ullrich and Sommer (2000:67) for 1999, Luther (1998:140-1) for 1995, Plasser and Ullrich (1995:356) for 1994 and 1990.

The statistics for the CDA in table 4.12 confirm the same general trend with a marked difference between the voting behaviour of the youngest and eldest cohort. This was evident in 1994 as the party sustained a severe loss of support (-18%) in the youngest age group with a less damaging decline in the 65+ range (-9%) despite the party's hastily amended promise to freeze the basic pension. This disturbing trend intensified in 1998 as the party fell to the fifth most popular party in the two youngest age groups while continuing to poll heavily among elderly voters. The disproportionately high level of female voters in the CDA's electorate seems to be dropping. In 1994 56% of the CDA's

voters were female (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:184) while in 1998 the balance between women and men was almost exactly 50-50.

Table 4.12 CDA support by age group

	1994	1998
<i>Total</i>	22.2	18.4
<i>18-24</i>	16	9
<i>25-34</i>	20	9
<i>35-49</i>	17	12
<i>50-64</i>	27	21
<i>65+</i>	34	43

Source: 1994 figures taken from Lepszy and Koecke (2000:184) and 1998 DNES, Steinmetz Archive.

The preceding section has shown that clear trends in the Christian Democratic electorate can be detected in all three countries. Core Christian Democratic voters are the religiously active, the self-employed, farmers and older voters. The gender make-up of the parties' support has become less female in recent elections with men and women voting Christian Democrat in almost equal proportions. Nonetheless, trends in Christian Democratic support in the 1990s do show some variety. A perceptible weakening of the relationship between church attendance and Christian Democratic voting has taken place in all three countries but the CDU/CSU and the CDA are better supported by churchgoing and non-churchgoing Catholics than the ÖVP. The CDU/CSU is by far the most successful in attracting voters without church links with both the ÖVP and the CDA worryingly weak among secular voters. All three parties are also popular among white-collar employees and civil servants but the support of these occupational groups has not been consistent over time and across countries. For example, the CDU/CSU despite fluctuations in its support among these groups has been far more successful in attracting the votes of civil servants and employees than the ÖVP. The Union parties support is also based on a more significant blue-collar element than the Austrian Christian Democrats. A direct comparison of vote by occupation was not possible in the case of the Netherlands but analysis of the class structure of the CDA votes suggested that irrespective of the party's very serious electoral problems, it was at least able to maintain a broad cross-class appeal. Christian Democrats have always drawn support from older voters but demographic divergence was also noticeable in the 1990s. Whereas the CDU/CSU remains able to attract about a third of young voters, the ÖVP

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<sup>2</sup> For 1990 and 1994, the oldest category of voter is 60+.

and the CDA have haemorrhaged voters in the youngest segment of the electorate with the result that the electorate of both parties was increasingly elderly by the late 1990s.

### III. Membership

Some of the same trends in Christian Democratic support are visible in the make-up of the various parties' membership. There have not been many detailed studies of membership characteristics and it is not always asked in political surveys<sup>3</sup>. Here, data from Bösch (2002) and Müller, Plasser and Ulram (1995) will be employed for the CDU and the ÖVP respectively while statistics from the 1998 DNES supply the basis for the analysis of the CDA. Unfortunately, this does not give a completely comparable list of demographic and social variables and there is the recurring problem of small N<sup>4</sup>. Nonetheless, such figures do at least give an impression of the structure of the Christian Democratic membership.

Table 4.13 Structure of CDU Membership

		1969	1985	1996
<i>Gender</i>	Men	86.9	78.0	75.1
	Women	13.1	22.0	24.9
<i>Religion</i>	Catholic	73.6	58.8	52.7
	Protestant	23.0	34.5	35.9
	None/other	3.4	6.7	11.4
<i>Occupation</i>	Workers	12.1	10.0	9.9
	Employees	23.4	28.0	28.7
	Civil Servants	13.3	12.5	11.4
	Self Employed	30.3	24.4	21.6
<i>Age</i>	Under 30	-	8.3	4.9
	30-59	-	68.5	58.8
	60+	-	23.2	36.3

Source: Bösch (2002:215).

<sup>3</sup> For example, the Politbarometer series do not ask whether respondents are members of parties.

Table 4.14 Structure of ÖVP membership

		1976	1985	1993
<i>Gender</i>	Men	66	57	69
	Women	34	43	31
<i>Occupation</i>	Worker	-	9	7
	Employee/Civil Servant	-	27	22
	Self Employed	-	8	5
	Farmer	-	17	20
	Housewife	-	16	17
<i>Age</i>	Pensioner/not employed	-	24	28
	Under 30	28	21	18
	30-44	29	29	30
	45-59	26	29	20
	60+	17	23	32

Source: Müller, Plasser and Ulram (1995:189).

Table 4.15 Structure of CDA membership

		1998
<i>Gender</i>	Men	62.5
	Women	37.5
<i>Religion</i>	Catholic	42.2
	Dutch Reformed	18.8
	Gereformeerde	26.6
	No religion	3.1
<i>Class self-image</i>	upper	1.6
	upper-middle	14.3
	middle	71.4
	upper-working	4.8
	working	7.9
<i>Age</i>	18-24	0
	25-34	3.1
	35-49	18.8
	50-64	40.6
	65+	37.5

<sup>4</sup> Including former members of the CDA, the sub-sample of CDA members in the 1998 DNES was only 64 respondents which severely restricts the conclusions which can be drawn. Even in Müller, Plasser and Ulram's study, N was still less than 200.

Common features of the parties are the pronounced over-representation of men and older segments of the population. However, while for the CDU at least, the gender gap seems to have narrowed over time, Christian Democratic party membership has become even more based on the elderly. Roughly a third or over of members are older than sixty while the number of members under thirty is minute. The CDA suffer most acutely from this with nearly 80% of members over fifty. This would suggest a stagnation of Christian Democratic recruitment<sup>5</sup> which receives more support from the continued over-representation of certain occupational groups, i.e. the self-employed in the CDU, farmers in the ÖVP. Certainly, employees constitute the largest group in both parties but membership is still disproportionately drawn from the traditional bases of Christian Democratic electoral support. This is also the case in terms of religion. The CDU has undergone a process of Protestantisation and has additionally become less religious but members are still predominantly Catholic. The ties of the CDA to religious communities are even closer and there are few non-religious members<sup>6</sup>. Again, small N alerts us to the hazard of drawing strong conclusions from this but the results do correspond to prior expectations.

#### **IV. Social and economic change**

Parts I and II of this chapter have shown that both the electoral and membership bases of the CDU, ÖVP and CDA have a distinct social and demographic profile. This section will investigate the long-term disintegration of this foundation.

##### **Religious change**

While secularisation is far from an uncontroversial concept, the impact of religious institutions on daily life has unquestionably dropped. There has been no widespread shift towards atheism but “the overwhelming evidence of the last thirty years is that fewer and fewer people are attending church, that respect for Church traditions and norms has declined rapidly and that even amongst the remaining ‘faithful’, the motivations for and justifications of ‘religious behaviour’ are often mixed and blurred” (Broughton and ten Napel 2000:2). Membership of a church, however nominal, does remain high in a number of countries but as shown in the previous section, behavioural religiosity is more closely linked to Christian Democratic voting and this is dropping almost everywhere.

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<sup>5</sup> Absolute membership figures will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly, this was also the case in the past. Not a single delegate at the 1979 CDA conference responding to a questionnaire described himself or herself as non-religious (Hajema, van Schurr and Voerman 1993:101).

With the exceptions of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Italy, frequent churchgoers now constitute a minority of the population throughout Western Europe (Girvin 2000:22).

Between 1960 and 1980, church membership remained relatively stable in West Germany. Some decline, particularly among Protestants, was evident but as Table 4.16 demonstrates, it is only in recent years that the numbers have begun to slide more drastically undoubtedly fuelled by unification. The incorporation of the former GDR expanded the ranks of the unchurched within Germany massively. In 1990, only 36% of easterners described themselves as Protestants with 5% Catholic. This can be seen from Table 4.17 which tracks the development of non-confessional respondents in Politbarometer surveys. Roughly two-thirds of eastern voters are entirely without church ties. However, the increasing willingness of westerners to opt out of the church (and with that the paying of the church tax) is also apparent.

Table 4.16. Denominational membership in Germany 1980-1996 (%).

	1960	1970	1980	1989	1990	1994	1996
<i>Catholics</i>	44.3	44.6	43.3	42.7	35.4	34.3	33.6
<i>Protestants</i>	51.6 <sup>7</sup>	46.7	42.3	40.1	36.4 <sup>8</sup>	34.6	33.7

Source: Church membership statistics from Statistisches Bundesamt<sup>9</sup> and population figures from Ministry of Health and Social Security<sup>10</sup>.

Table 4.17 Non-church members in Germany 1980-1998

	1980	1984	1990	1994	1998
<i>West</i>	5.3	6.0	10.8	13.6	16.2
<i>East</i>	-	-	57.9	66.9	65.8

Source: Politbarometer Surveys 1980-1998, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen.

Undoubtedly, weekly church attendance has dropped in the post-war period. Where 18% of Protestants and 61% of Catholics regularly went to church in 1953, the equivalent figures for 1976 were 5% and 40% respectively (Connor 1991:90). More recent decline can be illustrated using the Forschungsgruppe statistics covering the 1977-1999 period. Table 4.18 illustrates that the numbers of very or quite regular Catholic attenders has diminished further while interestingly, Protestant attendance has been steadier, actually rising in the 1990s. However, this does not obscure the overall trend which is clearer by

<sup>7</sup> The first membership figure is actually from 1963.

<sup>8</sup> Figure is for 1991.

<sup>9</sup> [www.gesis.org/Dauerbeobachtung/Sozialindikatoren/Publikationen/Datenreport/pdf\\_files/1-07.pdf](http://www.gesis.org/Dauerbeobachtung/Sozialindikatoren/Publikationen/Datenreport/pdf_files/1-07.pdf) accessed 15/05/03.

looking at all voters. By 1998, a majority of the electorate were at the most rarely in church while actual weekly attendance was 13% for Catholics and 3% for Protestants. As with church membership, unification has therefore accelerated an already existing trend. Protestant church attendance has been low throughout the post-war period while the decline in Catholic regular attendance was also already underway.

Table 4.18 Frequency of church attendance in Germany 1980-1998 (%)

	1980	1983	1987	1990 <sup>11</sup>	1994 <sup>12</sup>	1998
<b>Catholics</b>						
<i>(Almost)Every Sunday</i>	35.0	36.3	33.1	29.1	27.3 (29.2)	25.5
<i>Now and then/ Once a year</i>	40.6	41.3	43.5	42.0	44.6 (37.1)	45.7
<i>(Almost) Never</i>	24.2	22.2	23.4	28.5	27.8 (32.5)	28.2
<b>Protestants</b>						
<i>(Almost)Every Sunday</i>	6.8	7.0	7.1	7.9	8.9 (8.2)	9.0
<i>Now and then/ Once a year</i>	43.6	46.5	48.7	52.9	52.9 (48.5)	53
<i>(Almost)Never</i>	49.3	46.3	44.0	39.0	38.1 (42.8)	37.5
<b>All voters</b>						
<i>(Almost)Every Sunday</i>	19.4	19.8	19.0	16.6	15.8 (4.6)	12.9
<i>Now and then/ Once a year</i>	39.7	41.5	42.9	42.2	41.6 (15)	36.1
<i>(Almost)Never<sup>13</sup></i>	40.6	38.4	37.9	40.9	41.8 (80.1)	50.3

Source: Politbarometer, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen 1980-1998.

Although church membership rates remain higher in Austria than Germany, a similar contraction of the faithful is taking place. Since 1981, the proportion of the population without religious ties has doubled. As in Germany, the number of people formally leaving the church has increased in the 1990s. In 1995 alone, 43,527 members left the

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.bmgs.bund.de/download/statistiken/stattb2002/01/1.01.pdf> accessed 15/06/03.

<sup>11</sup> Separate surveys were carried out in the east and west in 1990 and 1994. Eastern respondents were not asked about church attendance in 1990.

<sup>12</sup> First number is for old Länder only. The second figure in brackets is for the former GDR.

<sup>13</sup> Those not asked the question after indicating they were not a member of any denomination have been added to the 'rarely/never' category. In this way, a more accurate estimate of the percentages of each category in the total population can be achieved.

Catholic church<sup>14</sup>. Nonetheless, in terms of identification with religion, Austria remains a strongly Catholic country. A recent survey found that 75% of Austrians regarded themselves as religious, compared to 18% declaring themselves irreligious and 2% as committed atheists (Europäische Wertestudie 1999, Österreich<sup>15</sup>). This firm Catholic identity has not prevented the decline of regular church attendance which continued apace during the 1990s and with a mere 9% of Austrian youth attending church on a regular basis<sup>16</sup>, the prospects for a reversal of this trend appear slim. In view of the ÖVP's weakness among inactive Catholics and the non-religious, this decline of churchgoing was a serious threat to the party's electoral base.

Table 4.19 Denominational membership in Austria 1971-2001

	1971	1981	1991	2001
<i>Catholic</i>	87.4	84.3	78.0	73.6
<i>Protestant</i>	6.0	5.6	5.0	4.7
<i>No religion</i>	4.3	6.0	8.6	12.0

Source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA.

Table 4.20 Weekly Church attendance in Austria 1950-98

	1950	1970	1990	1995	1998
<i>% attending church weekly</i>	40	25	21	19	16

Source: 1950 and 1990 figures from Müller and Steininger (1994:94); 1970 from die Presse (9/10/1999); 1995 and 1998 from Österreichischen Katholischen Presseagentur<sup>17</sup>.

The two tables below (4.21 and 4.22) show the percentages of church membership and attendance in the Netherlands. The first illustrates clearly the continuing fall in membership across all religions (with the exception of "Other" which is almost certainly the result of immigration) and throughout the period covered by the Dutch election studies. Especially noteworthy is the substantial rise in the proportion declaring no religion. It is also important to bear in mind that the process of depillarisation had started prior to 1971 so the statistics may not even fully represent the scale of the trend. This is confirmed by Table 4.22 which uses figures quoted by Middendorp (1991:25) on frequency of church attendance. The fall between 1966 and

<sup>14</sup> *Kirchenaustritte* figures from <http://www.kathpress.at/infozone> accessed 02/06/03.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.univie.ac.at/pastoraltheologie/studien/werte-data/pdf/frage28.pdf> accessed 14/02/02

<sup>16</sup> [http://religion.orf.at/tv/news/ne010625\\_wertestudie.htm](http://religion.orf.at/tv/news/ne010625_wertestudie.htm)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.kathpress.at/infozone/index.php?zg=stat95a> and

<http://www.kathpress.at/infozone/index.php?zg=stat98a> accessed 15/02/02

1986 is extremely striking<sup>18</sup>, especially amongst Roman Catholics and members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Table 4.21 Denominational membership in the Netherlands 1971-98 (%)

	1971	1972	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	35.5	34.0	33.9	35.7	34.1	31.0	29.1	25.2	27.7
<i>Dutch Reformed</i>	21.2	22.4	20.0	17.4	16.2	14.4	14.5	14.4	10.9
<i>Gereformeerde</i>	9.1	10.3	9.0	8.9	7.9	5.8	8.2	5.8	6.8
<i>Other</i>	4.5	3.5	2.4	3.2	4.9	4.2	5.4	3.7	7.2
<i>No Religion</i>	29.4	29.6	33.8	34.4	36.6	44.2	42.7	50.4	47.2

Source: DNES codebooks 1971-98.

Table 4.22 Weekly attendance at church 1966-86 (%)

	1966	1971	1972	1977	1981	1982	1986
<i>All religions</i>	88	63	50	41	38	32	33
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	93	70	53	42	32	28	28
<i>Dutch Reformed</i>	67	39	29	23	25	25	32
<i>Gereformeerde</i>	96	86	81	76	81	70	63

Source: 1966 *Godsdienst in Nederland Study*; 1971-86 DNES quoted in (Mittendorf 1991:25)

It could be argued that Table 4.22 only measures the attendance of the very active church members and that this possibly obscures the persistence of less frequent attendance. Data, though, from the most recent Dutch election survey from 1998 would suggest that this is not the case, i.e. that church attendance as a whole has fallen to very low levels. Moreover, the difference between 1986 and 1998 indicates that the decline has not yet come to an end.

<sup>18</sup> Even though the 1966 figure was taken from a different survey, there is no reason to question its accuracy as between then and the 1970s was precisely the period in which momentous change began to occur.

Table 4.23 Church attendance in the Netherlands 1998 (%)

	At least once a Week	2 or 3 times a month	Once a month	Several times a year	(almost) never
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	13.6	8.9	14.6	41.9	21.1
<i>Dutch Reformed</i>	26.5	13.9	6.1	17.8	35.7
<i>Gereformeerde</i>	59.4	8.4	7.0	10.5	14.7
<i>Total (religious &amp; non-religious)</i>	13.8	5.2	6.3	21.6	53.1

Source: 1998 DNES, Steinmetz Archive.

Calculating the percentage of the entire electorate regularly attending church, it can clearly be seen that the religiously active now constitute a small minority of the Dutch population. Less than a fifth now attend church at least two or three times a month while a majority virtually never attends. This clearly represents a serious problem for the CDA which is confronted by a largely dechurched society.

### **Socio-economic change**

The dynamic industrial growth of the post-war period in Western Europe brought about far-reaching change to previously rigid class structures. Associated with this transformation was a change in the relative balance of economic sectors. Initially, there was a swing away from the agrarian sector towards the industrial and then, starting from roughly the 1960s, a decline in the industrial sector in favour of the tertiary sector. The implications of this development and its translation into the political realm remain highly contentious within sociology and political science. However before the problematic issue of the continuing relevance of class structures is addressed, it is worth considering the less controversial consequences of the contraction of the agricultural sector.

As shown earlier, a second bastion of Christian Democratic support has been farmers. While even before the early post-war period there was an unmistakable shrinkage of agriculture, this drift has carried on to the point where the rural economy is of peripheral economic importance in most Western European economies even if agrarian activity maintains a symbolic importance in a number of countries. The table below shows that although the nations did not have comparable rates of employment in

the agrarian sector in 1950 (Austria still having a comparatively large primary sector), the shift away from rural work has affected the three countries in a similar way.

Table 4.24. Employment Structure in Austria, West Germany and the Netherlands

I= Agriculture II= Industry III= Services

	1950			1960			1970		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
<i>Austria</i>	34.0	35.4	30.6	24.2	39.7	36.1	18.8	40.3	40.9
<i>West Germany</i>	22.2	43.0	34.8	13.8	48.2	38.0	8.5	48.4	43.1
<i>Netherlands</i>	13.9	40.2	45.9	11.1	39.1	49.8	7.0	37.7	55.3

Source: Kirby (1999:83).

Kirby (1999:84) also quotes more recent statistics which highlight that the transition of the economy is still in progress. By 1991, agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing was responsible for only 7.4% of all employment in Austria, 3.3% in unified Germany and 4.6% in the Netherlands. From these figures, it is apparent that the farmers are now of marginal importance electorate as a whole. This has important consequences for Christian democratic parties: not only do they face an erosion of a social group which has traditionally been a source of loyal supporters, but in some cases, they must also address this group's continuing disproportionate influence within the party. The ÖVP's dilemma in this regard is greatest, as the party structure continues to support the incommensurate power of the party's Farmer's League (ÖBB). At the opposite end of the scale is the CDA whose centralised structure was created long after the agrarian sector had shrunk into insignificance. Yet even in the Dutch context, representation of farmers and gardeners interests is still taken seriously by some members of the party<sup>19</sup>.

A further important aspect of socio-economic change connected with the post-war transformation of Western European economies has been the diminution of the proportion of the workforce self-employed. As the section I demonstrated, the electoral behaviour of this segment of the electorate consistently leaned towards Christian Democracy<sup>20</sup>. While the quotient of salaried white-collar workers rose dramatically, there was a corresponding decrease in the percentage self-employed. In Austria this group represented 35% of all employed Austrians in 1951 but thirty years later, this had declined to 14% (Plasser, Ulram and Grausgruber 1992:20). In Germany, the proportion

<sup>19</sup> For example, Agriculture minister Bukman's attempts to shield farmers and gardeners from a rise in the price of natural gas in 1994.

<sup>20</sup> The connection with the small, self-employed businessman was especially important in the formation and appeal of the first modern Dutch political party, the Anti-Revolutionaries.

of the working population self-employed fell from 28.3% in 1950 to 11.8% in 1985 (Connor 1991:94) although the Politbarometer data indicates the number has not continued to decline. The proportion of self-employed people has been even smaller in the Netherlands since the 1970s and by 1998, stood at 7.6% (DNES 1971-98). In all three nations, then, the electoral significance of the self-employed has faded.

While the effect of the decline of the primary sector and the proportion of the working population self-employed on Christian Democratic support is unambiguous, the influence of other social structural changes is not so easily summarised. For some observers, the shifting structure of the advanced industrial democracies had created a post-industrial society (Bell 1974), undermining in the process the basis of the class cleavage. It was argued that the expansion of the service sector had created a new group of well-educated, socially mobile, salaried white-collar workers, a 'new middle class'. This concept was devised to take account of the different work experiences, attitudinal characteristics and most contentiously, political behaviour of this group. The political sympathies of the new middle class have been identified with the New Left (e.g. Dalton, Beck & Flanagan 1984:5; Kriesi 1993) or post-materialist politics (e.g. Voerman 1995:120-121) yet at the same time, the votes of this segment tend to be split between a number of parties, both materialist and post-materialist, left and right.

The lack of a consistent political profile of the new middle class suggests two possible explanations. The salaried middle class might be particularly volatile and more likely to be floating voters or alternatively, the concept is, as Kitschelt (1994:25-6) believes, "deeply flawed, because it subsumes heterogeneous experiences under a single category" and as such is unlikely to produce a category with distinctive political preferences. Evidence can be found to support both interpretations. For example, in the 1999 Austrian election, a disproportionate number of voters changing parties were employees<sup>21</sup>. On the other hand, it was shown earlier that the voting behaviour of white-collar employees became more predictable if trade union membership was included. It is not within the scope of this work to analyse the persuasiveness of the new middle class concept as an analytical tool and regardless of which explanation one favours, it can still be accepted that for Christian Democratic parties, the rise of a salaried middle class was neither universally advantageous nor disadvantageous. In Germany, the CDU/CSU has often been the most supported party among this group but this advantage has neither been sizeable nor consistent (Connor 1991:100). Competing in the more fragmented

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<sup>21</sup> 38% of vote-shifters were employees while they made up only 31% of the whole electorate (Plasser, Ullram and Sommer 2000:56).

party systems of Austria and the Netherlands, the ÖVP and CDA face stiff challenges from the left and right for the votes of this group. The ÖVP's exile in opposition in the 1970s was in part attributable to the success of the SPÖ under Kreisky in attracting the votes of the new middle class (Pelinka 1989:31). Since then, however, the SPÖ and ÖVP had to compete against an increasing number of rivals. Challenges have come from both the left (Greens), the right through Haider's populist rejuvenation of the FPÖ and briefly, the centre (LiF). In the Netherlands, the growth of the new middle class has been major factor in the increasing popularity and influence of the liberal-conservative VVD (Rochun 1999:103) but such voters are also drawn towards the PvdA, D66 and Green Left<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, white-collar employees have not shunned centre-right parties but neither could Christian Democrats claim to be monopolise their support in the manner of earlier core groups.

### Demographic Change

Whereas the effects of the social and economic change outlined here for Christian Democrats are either ambiguous (rise of salaried middle class) or threatening (decline of religiosity, self-employed, farmers), demographic developments, at least, seem to be more favourable for these parties. Across Western Europe, declining birth rates and advances in medical science have contributed to an ageing of populations.

Table 4.25 Demographic Balance in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands 1960-99

	Under 15		15-64		65+	
	1960	1999	1960	1990	1960	1999
<i>Germany</i>	21.3	15.5	67.8	67.8	10.8	16.7
<i>Austria</i>	22.0	17.1	65.8	67.5	12.2	15.4
<i>Netherlands</i>	30.0	18.4	61.0	68.2	9.0	13.4

Source: OECD in Figures (2001).

The table above illustrates clearly the shifting demographic balance within Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. This development has important electoral consequences: older voters, who are more likely to turn out at elections anyway, acquire a greater significance. The greater weight of the 'grey vote' in contemporary elections offers an opportunity for Christian Democrats to offset the loss of other core social constituencies. However, it must be questioned whether the traditional link between Christian Democratic voting and old age is the result of a life-cycle or cohort effect, that is

<sup>22</sup> In the 1998 DNES, middle class voters with a university education supported each of these parties in almost equal number.

whether voters switch to parties of the centre-right in later life or whether the over-representation of the elderly in Christian Democratic electorates is down to the collective experiences of certain generations producing a distinct party identity. Again, limitations of space prevent anything other a brief consideration of this question. Detailed analysis would require panel surveys to assess whether voters shifted their political preference as they age but tables 4.26, 4.27 and 4.28 do show that the support of the second (third in Austria) oldest age group has waned markedly in recent years, exceeding the decline in the electorate as a whole. Without more comprehensive statistics, it is difficult to draw any categorical conclusions from this but it does seem likely that this trend is due to generational replacement to some extent. As voters socialised in a later era move into this age range, it seems plausible to suggest that they bring with them different patterns of political behaviour. If this is the case, the ageing of society may not produce the expected benefits for Christian Democrats. Their grip on older voters has already begun to loosen and in the future might possibly slip away altogether.

Table 4.26 CDU/CSU support among older voters (west only)

	1983	1990	1998	Change
<i>Total CDU/CSU</i>	48.8	44.3	37.0	-11.8
<i>45-59</i>	50.1	47.6	38	-12.1
<i>60+</i>	52.6	53.1	45	-7.6

Source: Gibowski (1996:40-41) and Gibowski (2000:24-5).

Table 4.27 ÖVP support among older voters

	1986	1995	1999	Change
<i>Total ÖVP</i>	41.3	28.3	26.9	-14.4
<i>45-59</i>	48	36	32	-16
<i>60-69</i>	44	32	35	-9
<i>70+</i>	43	32	31	-12

Source: Fessel-GfK Institut data cited in Plasser, Ulram and Sommer (2000:67) for 1999; Luther (1998:140-1) for 1986 1995.

Table 4.28 CDA support among older voters

	1989	1994	1998	Change
<i>Total CDA</i>	35.3	22.2	18.1	-17.2
<i>50-64</i>	40	27	21	-19
<i>65+</i>	43	34	43	0

Source: 1989,1994 figures taken from Lepszy and Koecke (2000:184) and 1998 DNES, Steinmetz Archive.

This section has demonstrated that key social constituencies of Christian Democracy have declined in size through the post-war period. Social and economic change has reduced the significance of active churchgoers, farmers and the self-employed in the electorate and has forced the CDU, CDA and ÖVP to appeal beyond these networks of partisans. The scale of this transformation might not be uniform across each of the three countries but the direction of change is unmistakable. The expansion of the group of salaried white-collar workers has complicated the task of these parties. While the validity of the new middle class concept is not incontestable, what is clear is that the political loyalties of this amorphous new group are flimsy and inconsistent.

The CDU/CSU's greater success with such voters is an intriguing aspect of the comparison. Clearly, the character of the German party system has been more conducive to the Christian Democratic attempt to win over the new middle class. The dominance of the CDU/CSU on the centre-right contrasts favourably with the additional competition confronting the ÖVP and the CDA. The Austrian Christian Democrats faced the further difficulty of a party organisation which cemented the powerful position of agrarian interests impeding in the process efforts to open the party up to new social groups. Though the CDA did not suffer from this organisational rigidity, the party's reliable core vote was essentially still founded on religious networks. The party under Lubbers successfully appealed beyond this core support, hiding the still shrinking size of this electoral nucleus. Following the departure of Lubbers from national politics, however, the threadbare remains of these networks were exposed. The shifting demographic balance towards increasingly elderly populations helped to counteract the attenuation of the Christian Democratic electorate yet continued disproportionate support in older age groups can no longer be counted upon. Voters in the 45-59 age range proved to be no more loyal than the rest of the population in recent elections and it remains to be seen whether this marks the beginning of a generational change reconfiguring the pattern of party preferences in older age groups.

In interpreting the data presented above, caution is needed. One hazard of a study of party change which stresses social and economic factors as independent variables is that we risk reducing the study of politics to what Sartori (1969) called “the sociology of politics”, implying that we see political changes, in this case the fortunes of parties, as merely dependent variables shaped by social forces beyond anyone’s control. As shown by their longevity, parties have the capacity to adapt to altered circumstances. We should, therefore, be wary of reading socio-economic change as inevitably entailing political transformation. As will be stressed in chapters 5-7, the contraction of the Christian Democratic core support was certainly a factor in their electoral problems in the 1990s but contemporary policy dilemmas, circumstantial political events and leadership instability were also significant influences. Before these chapters party identification and party membership statistics will be examined. Even bearing the aforementioned caveats in mind, if we are correct in identifying erosion at the core of Christian Democratic support, then this should be discernible in non-electoral indicators of partisanship.

## **V. Political change**

It has been argued that the decline of the agrarian sector, the diminishing proportion of the working population self-employed and the decomposition of religious sub-cultures have weakened the foundations of Christian Democratic support. Moreover, Christian Democrats, in common with all other parties, are confronted by a more sceptical, independent electorate lacking the strong affective political attachments of the past. In part, the new behavioural and attitudinal characteristics of West European electorates can be traced to the socio-structural change that was discussed earlier although increasing educational levels and the greater role of the mass media have also brought about this change. Old party allegiances based on membership of a sub-cultural world have been increasingly superseded and as a result, a greater proportion of the electorate are potentially available. Accordingly, we should be able to see evidence of a decline in the established parties ‘on the ground’. In this section, evidence of political change both at the level of the respective Christian democratic parties in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands level and of the party system will be considered.

### **Party Identification.**

A frequent tool used by political scientists to measure political change is party identification. The concept, transplanted from its original American environment (Campbell et al 1980), is used to evaluate the strength of the ties that bind voters to parties. Its application in the West European context, though, has frequently been

dismissed as inappropriate. It has been argued that even though the concept was useful in the United States to show deep-rooted, long term political sympathies which survive a short term vote transfer, the idea of party identification had less meaning in Western European elections, for if a voter switched parties at an election, their party political identification tended to follow accordingly. These objections have not prevented the further use of the concept<sup>23</sup> and despite the criticism, figures of party identification will also be used here. The concept may have greater limitations in a West European political environment but it could still be of value in conveying changes within the electorate. For example, if the proportion of strong party identifiers is continuously decreasing, this might provide some support for theories of political change. It was argued in Section III that an erosion of distinctive Christian Democratic milieux has taken place. From this, we would expect a corresponding drop in Christian Democratic party identification, regardless of the party's electoral strength. All three parties have had some success in balancing out unfavourable social and economic trends by drawing in new middle class and secular voters but as was shown earlier, this support is frequently transient and inconsistent. It would seem unlikely, therefore, that many of these voters would declare strong party ties.

The greater success of the CDU/CSU in securing the votes of white collar employees, non-religious voters and the young (see Section I) would suggest that the Christian Democratic party identifiers might remain more prevalent than elsewhere. These expectations are borne out to a large extent by the table below. Over the 1977 to 1999 timeframe, a decrease in the proportion of CDU/CSU identifiers is perceptible but inconsistent. If 1990 is ignored due to its exceptional status, then there does seem to be decline in "very strong" and "quite strong" CDU/CSU identifiers with moderate identifiers more stable pointing to the plausible conclusion that a growing distance has emerged between electorate and party even if the suspicion remains that current voting preference is not unconnected to current partisanship.

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<sup>23</sup> Party identification questions are asked at election studies in each of the three countries here and analysed in much of the literature drawing from such quantitative work.

Table 4.29 CDU/CSU party identifiers 1977-99.

	<i>Total CDU/CSU identifiers<sup>24</sup> (%)</i>	<i>V.strong CDU/CSU identifiers (%)</i>	<i>Q. Strong CDU/CSU identifiers (%)</i>	<i>Moderate CDU/CSU identifiers (%)</i>
<b>1977</b>	28.8	4.0	12.2	11.0
<b>1980</b>	25.1	4.4	10.7	8.7
<b>1983</b>	27.0	3.7	11.3	10.3
<b>1987</b>	24.9	2.7	10.2	10.5
<b>1990</b>	26.6	4.2	10.1	11.6
<b>1994<sup>25</sup></b>	22.4	2.8	7.6	10.9
<b>1998</b>	20.5	2.7	6.9	10.0
<b>Change</b>	-8.3	-1.3	-5.3	-1

Source: Politbarometer 1977-99, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen.

Identification with the ÖVP appears to have been more stable at least until 1986. After this point, the disintegration of partisan milieux coupled with the rising tide of political disillusionment have had an impact upon identification with all parties suffering. While 60% of respondents identified with a party, by 1999 this had fallen to 51%. The effect of this development can be seen clearly in the drop from 28% to 17% for the ÖVP.

Table 4.30 ÖVP party identifiers 1976-94.

	<i>ÖVP Identifiers</i>
<b>1976</b>	28
<b>1984</b>	28
<b>1986</b>	28
<b>1990</b>	17
<b>1994</b>	17
<b>Change</b>	-11

Source: Fessel + GfK-Institut statistics quoted in Müller, Plasser and Ulram (1995:169)

In the case of the CDA, party adherents have declined in number almost continuously since 1971 notwithstanding small rises in 1982 and 1989 and by 1998, the number of party adherents was very small (7.8%). The proportion of people attracted to the CDA follows a similar trend since 1989. Although Table 4.31 conforms to our expectations about the withering of the Christian Democratic core, it is necessary to

<sup>24</sup> Voters were offered the choice between identification with the CDU or with the CDU/CSU. As more than half of those choosing the latter were from *outside* Bavaria, the two figures have been combined here.

introduce a note of caution. Analysis of party identification covering the entire electorate has indicated that the concept was not particularly effective in the Dutch context (see Thomassen 1976; van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983) and the statistics for the CDA do nothing to dispel this suspicion as the patterns of party adherence and attraction mirror closely the electoral support for the party i.e. when voters change parties, their party identification follows suit.

Table 4.31 CDA party identification 1971-98

	<i>Party Adherent</i>	<i>Attracted to party</i>	<i>Total</i>
1971	16.9	10.6	27.5
1972	14.6	9.8	24.4
1977	12.1	11.5	23.6
1982	14.1	7.1	21.2
1986	10.9	10.9	21.8
1989	11.1	11	22.1
1994	9.3	7.3	16.6
1998	7.8	6.3	14.1
Change	-9.1	-4.3	-13.4

Source: DNES 1971-98<sup>26</sup>. Pre-CDA figures calculated by adding the totals for ARP, CHU and KVP.

In each of the three countries studied, the proportion of Christian Democratic partisans has declined in the electorate over the past two decades. This drop does point towards a shrinkage of the core Christian Democratic vote as we would expect from Sections II and III. However, in view of the limitations of party identification in the Netherlands and to some extent Germany, the findings can only be accepted with reservations.

### **Party Membership**

Although party membership statistics are being used here as an indicator of the declining Christian Democratic core, it is important to realise that membership decline can occur for reasons other than social-structural changes in the electorate. As Müller (1994:68) argues, parties have contributed to their own decay through scandal or their lack of responsiveness. In any case, parties may be less interested in maintaining their mass basis given the costs it involves (Scarrow, 2000). Nevertheless, membership figures provide another means of gauging Christian Democratic strength in the citizenry. The ageing of the CDU, ÖVP and CDA membership highlighted in section III was

<sup>25</sup> 1990 and 1994 figures for the western Länder only.

suggestive of declining recruitment and Tables 4.32, 4.33 and 4.34 confirm that membership has dropped. As shown in Chapter 3, the CDU was a late developer in building a mass membership and this is clear from Table 4.33 where the peak in absolute numbers is not reached until the early 1980s (excluding the effects of unification). Since then, the party has lost members fairly rapidly. Membership of the ÖVP was stable for a twenty year period between the 1960s and 1980s but has subsequently started to drop. In contrast, membership decay set in much earlier for the Dutch confessionals and their merger has not prevented a further shrivelling of the mass basis. Christian Democratic parties are, of course, not alone in enduring this loss of members but the decline still points to the erosion of key social milieux.

Table 4.32 CDU Membership 1955-98

<i>Year</i>	<i>CDU Membership</i>	<i>M/V<sup>1</sup></i>
1955	197,142	2.0
1958	234,725	2.0
1964	279,770	2.3
1969	303,532	2.5
1972	422,968	3.2
1976	652,010	4.5
1980	693,320	5.3
1983	734,555	4.9
1987	705,821	5.4
1990	784,656 (129,556) <sup>27</sup>	4.6
1994	671,890 (78,193)	4.2
1998	626,257 (60,839)	4.5

*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> The M/E column is a standardized figure representing the number of members as a percentage of the CDU electorate in the respective year or closest election year. Where the data does not correspond to an election year (i.e. 1955, 1958, 1964), the closest election has been chosen (i.e. 1953, 1957, 1965).

*Source:* adapted from Bösch (2002:214); electoral figures from <http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/ergeb.htm>.

The standardized M/V ratio measures how successful parties are at incorporating their supporters (Scarrow 2000:87). For example, Table 4.33 illustrates the incredible degree of organisation of the ÖVP where well over a quarter of its voters were also party

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<sup>26</sup> In 1981 the question wording was changed and it has therefore not been included.

members. However, in the case of membership *and* electoral decline as in the Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s, the ratio has an additional meaning. Where the M/V ratio rises despite absolute membership loss (as it does for the ÖVP and the CDA), this suggests that the party is not just suffering from a contraction of its core clientele, it is also seriously failing to appeal to voters outside these groups. This results in critical strategic questions concerning the extent to which the party opens up to other groups and the continued focus on a declining section of the electorate. As chapters 5, 6 and 7 will show, this has been a key intra-party debate for the ÖVP and the CDA in the 1990s.

Table 4.33 ÖVP Membership 1949-94

Year	ÖVP Membership	ÖVP Membership	M/V
	(Max.) <sup>28</sup>	(Min.)	Max Min
1949	485,000	439,000	26.3 (23.8)
1953	505,000	441,000	28.3 (24.8)
1956	565,000	498,000	28.3 (24.9)
1959	590,000	509,000	30.6 (26.4)
1962	655,000	532,000	32.4 (26.3)
1966	700,000	543,000	31.9 (24.8)
1970	720,000	561,000	35.1 (27.4)
1971	715,000	564,000	36.4 (28.7)
1975	715,000	562,000	36.1 (28.4)
1979	720,000	560,000	36.3 (28.3)
1983	720,000	552,000	34.3 (26.3)
1986	695,000	528,000	34.7 (26.4)
1990	670,000	488,000	44.4 (32.3)
1994	579,000	433,000	45.2 (33.8)

Sources: Müller (1992:40-49), Luther (1998:127), Plasser and Ulram (2000:198).

<sup>27</sup> Figures in brackets represent the number of members in the five new Länder, which are also included in the first figure.

<sup>28</sup> As the ÖVP is still largely a party of indirect membership, the party membership statistics are not judged to be particularly accurate. Consequently Müller's figures (1992) which provide a range between maximum and minimum number of members have been repeated here

Table 4.34 Membership of the ARP, CHU, KVP and the CDA 1950-98

Year	Membership of confessional parties				M/V <sup>1</sup>
	ARP	CHU	KVP	CDA	
1950	102,737	50,000 <sup>29</sup>	319,419		17.9
1960	97,980	48,000	385,500		18.0
1970	80,695	28,900	97,300		8.9
1980	54,500	26,000	49,353	143,000 <sup>30</sup>	5.3
1982				152,885	6.3
1986				127,849	4.0
1989				122,486	3.9
1994				107,000	5.4
1998				89,000	5.6

Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Where the data does not correspond to an election year (i.e. 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980), the closest election has been chosen (i.e. 1948, 1959, 1971, 1981). Before 1982 the membership figures and electoral results for the three formerly separate parties have been added together to produce one statistic.

Source: Membership Figures from Daalder (1987:234) and DNPP <http://www.rug.nl/dnpp/themas/ledentallen/perpartij/cda-lt> Electoral statistics from Mackie and Rose (1991:336), Mackie (1991:160) and Lucardie and Voerman (1995:428).

## VI. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated that the core electorate and membership of the German, Austrian and Dutch Christian Democrats share certain social, occupational and demographic characteristics. The religiously active, self-employed, farmers and elderly have habitually offered strong support to the Christian Democrats. As Section IV made clear, however, three of these groups are in long term decline and are therefore of diminishing electoral relevance. Even among older voters, there are signs that Christian Democratic parties have lost their distinct advantage. The growth of a salaried middle class does in certain contexts help to balance these losses but where the party system is more crowded, Christian Democratic success amongst this group has been limited. The effect of falling church membership and attendance is less ambiguous. Remaining

<sup>29</sup> There is some confusion about CHU membership figures in the early post-war period. The 1950 figure actually represents 1947 and is quoted from the DNPP <http://www.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/polpart/cda/ltchu.html> accessed 15/04/02.

dependent on the church faithful for the bulk of their vote, Christian Democratic parties draw little support from the unchurched or religiously inactive.

As a result of these changes, the Christian Democratic support is increasingly unrepresentative of the shape of the electorate as a whole. This generates the dilemma which lay the heart of Christian Democratic strategic discussions in the 1990s: should the parties concentrate their efforts on the numerically declining group of core partisans or should it appeal beyond this 'natural' constituency. Yet the latter option offered no obvious means of achieving this and asked searching questions about the nature of Christian Democracy. How, for example, were Christian Democratic parties to address their chronic weakness among the non-religious or youthful voters? Discarding their religiously inspired ideological baggage would surely undermine the basis of their distinctiveness and jeopardise the support of the core supporters. Regardless of this ongoing intra-party debate, Section V showed that Christian Democratic partisanship and membership has receded in the past two decades although influences other than socio-economic change cannot be ruled out as contributory factors.

The lack of temporal correspondence between the onset of socio-economic and cultural change and developments in the electoral arena warns us that a mechanistic understandings of politics as a function of sociological change is of little value. Social changes are filtered through political structures and parties as actors are able to counteract unfavourable social developments. Established parties of government have a distinct advantage in this respect, with the ability to act as a cartel excluding new competitors (Katz and Mair 1995). Political and electoral stability need not be undermined by social change. This account of the Christian Democratic electorate, therefore, has explained only that change was possible but not why the CDU, ÖVP and CDA were unable to respond successfully to the challenges they faced in the 1990s. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will explore precisely this question through detailed case studies of these parties in the 1990-9 period.

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<sup>30</sup> The 1980 CDA membership figure includes the membership tallies of the ARP, CHU and the KVP as well as those members who had already joined the newly united party.

## Chapter 5. The Christian Democratic Union 1990-8

### I. Introduction

The internal discord mounting within the CDU in 1989 which culminated in the abortive putsch against Kohl at the Bremen party conference was rapidly overshadowed by the chain of events in the GDR later that year. As the legitimacy and stability of the Communist regime crumbled in the face of popular opposition, unification suddenly became a realistic possibility. After initial hesitation, Kohl took charge of the process, removing international obstacles through effective diplomacy whilst limiting the involvement of alternative domestic viewpoints by restricting decision-making to small, informal groups of key players. Kohl's dominant role in unification boosted his popularity immensely and internal criticism within the Union was silenced. Many of his most prominent critics now found themselves on the fringes of the party. Amongst the electorate, too, Kohl assumed a new standing as *the* unification chancellor, a historic title which to some extent veiled his past unpopularity and provincial image. However, the CDU's previous difficulties had not disappeared; in fact as will be shown in this chapter, rapid unification brought with it new challenges as well as exacerbating older ones. Over the course of decade, the CDU in government had increasing difficulty reconciling its response to these developments with the preservation of its *Volkspartei* identity. This chapter will explore three dimensions of the party's reaction to the altered circumstances it found itself in: policy response, programmatic change and organisational developments.

Section II of this chapter will examine political and electoral developments affecting the Union in the 1990-1998 period. While the electoral decline of the German Christian Democrats was less severe than its Austrian and Dutch counterparts, this chapter will show that the CDU's *Volkspartei* identity was nonetheless under considerable strain in the decade. This will be done through an examination of certain key events as well as electoral analysis. It will be contended that the economic pressure on *Modell Deutschland* brought about significant changes in the Union's social-economic priorities and that the reform programme attempted in the final years of the Kohl government marked a shift from the more cautious agenda of the previous decade. Traces of continuity should not be ignored nor should the extent of the change be dramatised. The CDU remained firmly within the boundaries of the European Christian Democratic party family. Nevertheless, the tension within the party was

unmistakeable. Furthermore, this reform programme was not popular amongst the electorate. The CDU was identified as lacking social compassion and it will be argued here that in addition to more short-term influences this was a key reason for its remarkable electoral defeat in 1998, the sole example of a governing coalition losing office as the result of a Bundestag election.

Section III will scrutinise programmatic developments in the 1990s, primarily focusing on the content of the new *Grundsatzprogramm* of 1994 and the *Zukunftsprogramm* four years later. The decline of the Communist bloc prompted the reworking of the party's *Grundsatzprogramm* but as will be shown here, continuity remained the thread which bound the programme together and apart from the addition of a green tinge, revisions remained modest. In contrast, the *Zukunftsprogramm* sought to answer the challenges of unification and globalisation and included a number of novel features. It did not mark a radical departure but in its omissions and altered emphases, it signalled one possible programmatic path for the party at the end of the Kohl-era.

Section IV will consider the impact of organisational changes on the CDU's ability to integrate a diverse array of social interests within the party. Though the party has not reverted to a *Kanzlerwahlverein*, the central apparatus of the party did decline in significance throughout the 1990s and the party's internal life tended to be overshadowed by the government-Fraktion nexus. This subservience to the government and parliamentary group occurred, however, at the same time as the Union's identity was fragmented further by unification. The incorporation of the five new eastern Länder into the FRG entailed that the CDU build the party in the east upon the rather shaky foundations of the old bloc party. An additional problem concerned the changing balance of the auxiliary organisations where current trends, if continued, threatened the organisational basis of the Union's *Volkspartei* identity.

## **II. Political and Electoral Developments**

### **1990 Bundestag Election**

The unpredicted and swift progress towards unification averted a possible leadership battle and helped resuscitate the CDU's electoral prospects. Nonetheless, the impact of unification was felt comparatively late in the run-up to the first ever all-German elections in December 1990. Land election results at the beginning of the year had not been particularly encouraging and even after the CDU had unexpectedly won a clear victory in the March Volkskammer election, Lafontaine maintained a lead over Kohl until June (Norporth and Roth 1993:218-9). After Kohl had secured Gorbachev's approval over unification, however, public opinion swung decisively towards Kohl and the Union parties.

The dominance of the unification theme in 1990 relegated previously salient issues like unemployment, health and pensions policy to the margins. Indeed, in the run-up to the election, the CDU/CSU experienced a unification bonus as voters began to evaluate the Union's competence more favourably across a wide variety of issues (Norporth and Roth 1993:217). In view of his successful international diplomacy, Kohl's reputation was transformed almost overnight. The CDU was able to capitalise on this new mood through a highly personalised election campaign in which Kohl personified the issue of unification (Conradt 1993:68). In contrast, the SPD's greater reservations on unity and in particular the ambivalence of its leading candidate Lafontaine was also advantageous for the Union. Lafontaine had favoured a slower pace for unification and did not share popular enthusiasm for the process<sup>1</sup> while the SPD's campaign was badly misjudged and centred on post-materialist social and ecological themes (Roberts 1997:115-6). In addition, a number of senior party figures were explicitly critical of Lafontaine.

By election day, the result was not in doubt and the Union parties triumphed comfortably despite a small drop in support since 1987. The Union preserved its strength in the east although its electorate there was significantly more blue-collar. Even in the west, though, the CDU made notable gains among workers, even those in trade unions. The exceptional nature of the election was also emphasised in the FDP's best result since 1961

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<sup>1</sup> For example, it was noticeable that SPD campaign material did not use the national colours, the national anthem was not sung at rallies and Lafontaine disliked the use of the word 'Fatherland' (Conradt 1993:70).

as it benefited from the wide popularity of Foreign Minister Genscher. Those parties more sceptical towards unification, on the other hand, suffered catastrophic results. The SPD dropped to its lowest level since 1957 while the West German Greens, internally split between fundamentalist and realist wings, failed to return to parliament. The influence of unification on the election had revived the fortunes of the coalition which had more than trebled its parliamentary majority. However, as the initial exhilaration of unification faded and the extent of the task became clear, the government faced serious difficulties.

### **The Costs of Unification**

The nature and subsequent implications of German unification have been extensively examined in the academic literature and so the consideration of its impact here will therefore be fairly brief. The highly optimistic view of unification taken by Kohl and the government in general was punctured swiftly by the extreme problems encountered by the former East in the transition to a market economy. Currency union at a 1:1 conversion rate for wages and prices and for savings up to 4000 Ost Marks massively overvalued the GDR's currency and, along with the loss of trade with the Soviet bloc and the preference of eastern consumers for Western goods, immediately put pressure on the east's economy. With the collapse of large amounts of eastern industry, official unemployment stood at 16% in the new Länder by 1992 with unofficial figures including short-term workers and recipients of public subsidies more than twice as high (Seibel 1993:119). The government's dilemma was multifaceted: the east required a large amount of investment in infrastructure in order to increase its attractiveness as an economic location (Padgett 1992:197) thus necessitating considerable government involvement; the pressure to push for wage equality for political reasons and to prevent massive migration to the west was near irresistible despite its detrimental effect on investment (Czada 1999); similarly, the extension of the West German welfare system into the east had been politically unavoidable but financially costly, particularly with the rapid growth of unemployment; and finally, unemployment quickly reached such levels that the government was compelled to act.

Less than a decade after the promises of a balanced budget and state cutbacks promised in 1983, the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition thus found itself embroiled in a process which required a large amount of state involvement. Transfer payments from West to East totalling on average 4.5% of West German GDP were used to improve the East's infrastructure and government expenditure as a percentage of GDP which had dropped from

49.8% in 1982 to 45.3% in 1989 had risen to 50.6% by 1993 (Czada 2002:221). Increased government outlay was financed primarily through a mixture of public sector borrowing and increased social security contributions<sup>2</sup> although the Solidarity Tax was also introduced as temporary measure. Unification therefore upset the previous direction of government policy and signalled the commencement of the “second phase” of the Kohl era (Schmid 1998:96). Policy solutions resulted not from party programmes but were rather the outcome of a largely improvised strategy which reflected West German behavioural norms fundamentally rooted in consensus politics. Consequently, the previous decade’s cuts in social spending were entirely reversed so that by 1995 social expenditure as a percentage of GDP had risen back to the level of 1975 (Seelcib-Kaiser 2002:28-29). Equally, labour market policy was developing in a way which contrasted sharply with the previous approach of the Kohl government. Already by 1992 a more active labour market strategy was being adopted. Expenditure on active measures rose from 1.04% of GDP in 1990 to 1.69% of GDP two years later (OECD data cited in Schmid 1998b:142) and by this point some 388,000 easterners were involved in job creation schemes with a further 489,000 being trained<sup>3</sup>.

Nonetheless, previous policy commitments were not completely dropped in this period. The use of active labour market policy fell away as its results seemed ambiguous at best while the problem of the mounting budget deficit forced a certain amount of consolidation, notably in the freezing of civil service wages. Moreover, the CDU/CSU-FDP government was able to pass some further elements of privatisation e.g. the railway reform of 1993 (Knill and Lehmkuhl 2000) and the division of Bundespost into three independent joint-stock companies in 1994 (Zohlnhöfer 2001).

### **1994 Bundestag Election**

Unification had given a short-term fillip to the Union with the 1990 election. Even Wolfgang Schäuble, the leader of the parliamentary party from 1991, admitted later that unification was responsible for prolonging the CDU’s stay in office (cited in Langguth 2001:142). However, as economic problems increased, the popularity of the government parties withered. This was especially marked in the east where Kohl’s promises now

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<sup>2</sup> For example, unemployment insurance contribution rate was raised by 2.5% in 1991 (Manow and Seils 2000:153)

sounded empty and where the Union was now in disarray (Clemens 1993; see also section III) but even in the west the CDU was now left in only one Land government, Baden-Württemberg, and even here its vote share dropped nearly 10% between 1988 and 1992.

As the leading party in government the Union suffered particularly acutely from the mounting “crisis of trust in politics” (Heiner Geißler quoted in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 9/04/1992) which was aggravated by “the so-called ‘tax lie’..., the treatment of asylum seekers, insurance against invalidity in old age, the deployment of German troops outside the NATO area and the seemingly inexorable rise in crime” (Roberts 1996:10). A symptom of this was the disturbing rise of extreme right parties in the 1991-2 period. While extremist parties floundered on their inability to unite and the lack of protest potential on asylum issues after the 1993 constitutional revision, the prospects for the CDU still looked shaky approaching *Superwahljahr*<sup>4</sup> of 1994<sup>5</sup>. At the beginning of 1994, Forschungsgruppe Wahlen polls suggested that SPD candidate Scharping held a sizeable advantage over Kohl in both east and west and that public expectations about the economy were still very pessimistic (Gibowski 1996:32-34).

Throughout the election year, both Kohl and the CDU/CSU began to overhaul Scharping and the SPD’s lead in the polls. Through a highly candidate-centred campaign, the Union parties managed to re-establish Kohl’s reputation based on his professional qualities and experience (Zelle 1996:71) but the Christian Democrats also benefited from signs of economic improvement. The economic upswing seemed crucial to the Union’s success: as economic indicators improved, so too did the CDU’s standing in the polls (Gibowski 1996:36). The CDU also utilised events in the east to boost their support. After the decision of the SPD in Saxony-Anhalt to form a minority red-green Land government reliant on the PDS in July, General Secretary Peter Hintze found an ingenious way to compensate for the loss of the former integrative force of anti-communism. The ‘red socks’ campaign attempted to taint the Social Democrats with the state socialism of the GDR,

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<sup>3</sup> OECD figures from [http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/148/Getting\\_Germany\\_back\\_to\\_work.html](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/148/Getting_Germany_back_to_work.html) (accessed 13/02/03).

<sup>4</sup> 1994 was to contain an unprecedented 18 different elections within unified Germany.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (6/12/1993) which portrays a nervous “run-down party” on the eve of the election year exhibiting “the classic signs of an exhausted government after 10 years of consuming power, the pressures of a coalition in which compromises become ever harder because they blur what little image remains”.

suggesting that the SPD could not be trusted due to their link with the former communists. While controversial, leading figures in the party undoubtedly believed it to have been a success<sup>6</sup>.

The final result demonstrated that Kohl's Unity Chancellor status had not yet been electorally exhausted. The CDU/CSU's share of the vote dropped from 43.8% to 41.5% but in view of the severity of the economic problems and the general mood of political disenchantment, this was a success. In particular, the Union's support in the east held up remarkably (-3.3%) given the economic and social devastation wrought by unification. However, the strong gains made by the PDS in the east and the large number of easterners who saw little wrong in a normal role for the ex-communists<sup>7</sup> indicated that the CDU's denunciations of the PDS risked alienating eastern voters .

Overall, the state of the party after the 1994 election was healthier than in the previous couple of years. A new *Grundsatzprogramm* had been passed at the Hamburg party conference at the beginning of the year and while offering little innovation<sup>8</sup>, it did manage to bring about a reconciliation of the various factions within the party (Bösch 2002:61). In addition to the 2.5% drop in national support, the Union had lost in virtually all Land elections<sup>9</sup> in 1994 but these were less severe than expected and with the economic forecast appearing brighter, the party and population in general seemed to be emerging from the pessimism of the 1991-3 period (e.g. 71% of Germans rated 1994 as a good year personally, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 17/12/1994)<sup>10</sup>. While Kohl was re-elected as party chairman with 94.4% of the votes in the Bonn party conference in November 1994, he seemed to have confirmed during the final stages of the campaign that the election would be his last as Chancellor (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 5/10/1994), finally offering the chance for leadership

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Deutschlandfunk's interview with Angela Merkl in 1998 at <http://www.dradio.de/cgi-bin/es/neu-interviewwoche/46.html> (accessed 10.03.03)

<sup>7</sup> According to the Politbarometer surveys, 57% were in favour of the PDS being represented in the Bundestag, 62% felt that PDS success in the east would have no impact on investment by businesses and 43% approved of a SPD minority government with PDS support at *federal level*. Politbarometer Ost Wahlstudie ZA 2559 available at <http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/data/politbarometer/codebuch/s2559cb.pdf> (accessed 13.03.03)

<sup>8</sup> See Section III.

<sup>9</sup> The CDU's share of the vote only increased in the Landtag elections in Saxony and the Saarland.

<sup>10</sup> The election analysis of the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen spoke of the "end of dissatisfaction" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 18/10/1994). In the months following the election, the Union improved its poll results although a growing distinction between trends in the west and east was also noticeable (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 17/12/1994).

change. The party's *Bundestagsfraktion* now included a number of younger members<sup>11</sup> and Junge Union called for radical renewal within the party immediately after the election (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 25/10/1994). However, such hopes about both party and economy were quickly extinguished. The stormy reception given to Frauen-Union leader Rita Süßmuth as she called for the party to introduce quotas for women at the party conferences in 1994 illustrated that many functionaries would resist fiercely any attempts to reform the party<sup>12</sup> and Kohl subsequently made ambiguous remarks about staying in office beyond 1998. Furthermore, the expectation that Germany was now emerging from the economic difficulties was crushed as the nation's economic situation became ever more parlous from 1995 onwards.

### **The *Standort Deutschland* Debate**

The first references to the *Standort* debate or question appeared in the early 1990s when it became apparent that the transition difficulties surrounding unification were far deeper than anticipated<sup>13</sup>. The *Standort Deutschland* debate essentially centred around Germany's attractiveness as a business location but by extension also questioned the sustainability of the German welfare state. While the discussion was undoubtedly brought to public consciousness through the widespread unemployment induced by unification, Germany's predicament was also closely linked to increased competition resulting from globalisation (see Harding 1999; Seeleib-Kaiser 2001 2002). Unification, according to Czada (1999:8), was not the sole source of the problems, but "reduced the ability (of the government) to solve any of them". A growing number of German companies were investing abroad rather than domestically and with its high labour costs, Germany was thought to be an unappealing location for foreign investment<sup>14</sup>. A major part of the problem was that successive governments since the 1970s had progressively shifted the burden for the social budget on to insurance contributors, a trend exacerbated by unification. Non-wage labour costs were consequently very high in Germany and were a disincentive to the creation of low wage employment (Manow and Seils 2000).

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<sup>11</sup> 15 of the CDU/CSU Fraktion were now under 35 including a number of former Junge Union chairmen, such as Gröhe, Klaeden and Pofalla (Wagner 1998:31).

<sup>12</sup> See Section IV.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, CSU parliamentary leader Michael Glos's comments in 1991 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 3/01/1992); president of the Association of German Chambers of Commerce (DIHT) Hans Peter Stihl in the following year (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 18/02/1993)

<sup>14</sup> A report published in *Die Welt* (19/08/1996) stated that labour costs were 80% higher than in the US and more than 50% higher than those in Britain.

Unification initially stimulated a fairly broad consensus amongst and within the parties on the appropriate response to the problems faced. However, as the budget deficit spiralled to new heights, unemployment continued to rise and GDP growth became more sluggish in the years following the 1994 election (Bundesbank data cited in Silvia 2000:1-5), agreement began to erode. In its place developed conflict between the social partners and the parties over the extent of Germany's difficulties and how best to tackle the employment crisis. The *Standort* debate was of particular significance for the CDU: the party in government began to push for more reform of the welfare state but this exposed the diminishing influence of the social wing of the party and its champion in government, minister for employment Norbert Blüm. In addition to the factional imbalance within the party, a more market-orientated Union risked the displeasure of voters. The reforms the coalition embarked upon in "Phase III" of the Kohl era<sup>15</sup> (Jochem 1999) lacked widespread public support. Politbarometer data showed 50% in favour of more social security with only 22% for more free competition (Süddeutsche Zeitung 17/12/1994). At the same time, the measures undertaken did not go far enough to satisfy increasingly vociferous business groups. The CDU's attempts to play the role of a *Volkspartei* of the middle therefore came under increasing strain as the political environment became more polarised. Furthermore, the growth of the public debt was particularly concerning in view of the Maastricht convergence criteria, possibly jeopardising Kohl's cherished project of European monetary union.

As mentioned earlier, the expansion of active labour market policy was a temporary response by the government to the pressures on *Standort Deutschland* but in 1993, severe cuts in the budget of the Federal Labour Office were announced. Two laws on "Savings, Consolidation and Growth" that year further signalled the government's intention to combat unemployment through cost-cutting. These reduced the maximum duration of unemployment assistance (*Arbeitslosenhilfe*) for previous non-contributors to a year while the amount received was also cut (Süddeutsche Zeitung 30/06/1993). However, the *Standort* debate did not really commence until the economic optimism of the 1994 election campaign had been fully eradicated in the following year. From 1995 onwards, the government's

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<sup>15</sup> Even when confirming the continued German commitment to the middle way, Schmidt (2001:8) states that "there was also a remarkable discontinuity in fiscal policy and social policy in the second half of the 'Kohl era' from 1990 to 1998".

social and economic policies were increasingly dominated by cost-cutting and the trend towards organising work for the unemployed.

### **Welfare Retrenchment and Alliance for Jobs (Bündnis für Arbeit)**

Increasing fears about Germany's competitive economic position and the expansion of unemployment since unification stimulated a number of proposals to counter these problems. While many centred on market liberalisation, the idea of a tripartite agreement to aid the creation of jobs was also suggested. This developed from an offer made by Klaus Zwickel, leader of IG Metall, at the end of November 1995. Zwickel proposed that through an Alliance for Jobs trade unions would moderate their wage claims in return for a commitment from the government to abandon cuts in social spending and a pledge from employers to create over 100,000 jobs. Signals from the CDU were generally positive if slightly mixed. While Blüm and Schäuble greeted the idea enthusiastically<sup>16</sup>, Kohl pledged merely to examine all sensible ideas about employment and the business wing was reserved. Talks did take place in the first couple of months of 1996 with some progress made in certain areas such as the agreement on a replacement of the expensive early retirement scheme. However, the rather limited co-operation of the coalition was evident in its continued attempt to push welfare reform through the Bundestag regardless of the outcome of the negotiations. The government's production of a fifty point programme for employment hastened the end of the Alliance. The package, denounced by the SPD parliamentary leader Scharping as "socially obscene" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 27/04/1996), was introduced in April and showed that the government was unwilling to comply with Zwickel's request to refrain from further cutbacks. This effectively ended the talks and further appeals to the trade unions later in the year to participate in discussions were greeted with derision by the unions.

The fifty point programme developed into 'The promotion of growth and employment law' and 'the reform of unemployment assistance' of 1996. These introduced a spate of new measures including easing regulations about short-term work<sup>17</sup>, limitation of

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<sup>16</sup> Blüm indicated that he was prepared to negotiate about reductions in social policy (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 25/11/1995) while Schäuble praised the initiative at the Baden-Württemberg Land party conference (*Die Welt* 27/11/1995).

<sup>17</sup> The maximum length of these contracts was doubled to two years.

protection against dismissal<sup>18</sup> and the reduction of sick pay from 100% of prior wage to 80% (Jochem 1999:32-34, 45). The onrush of austerity measures stood in contrast to the more tepid reforms of the 1983-89 period. Unlike this earlier period, reform proposals were not subject to a revision process dictated by consensus. To a large extent, the expansion of the reform agenda of the Christian-Liberal coalition was shaped by circumstance. By the start of 1996, the government faced the worst employment crisis of the Federal Republic's history with over 4 million unemployed and at least a further million in hidden unemployment (Die Welt 07/03/1996). Clearly, such a scenario could not continue and as the CDU's support in polls slumped, the electoral pressure to act intensified. Nonetheless, it is highly significant that the reforms were passed in a very different way to the negotiated compromises of the previous decade.

One crucial difference was the hardline adopted by the FDP (Søe 2000:66-68). It had failed to capitalise on its initial success in the new Länder, losing votes in the 1994 Bundestag election and speculation mounted as to its future as it dropped closer to the 5% threshold in opinion polls. A series of unpromising Landtag elections loomed in which the Liberals faced the loss of regional parliamentary representation. Research suggested that one cause of their difficulties was the lack of a clear political profile (Die Welt 11/03/1996), an ever-present danger for a junior coalition party. The employment crisis offered a clear opportunity for the FDP to shape government policy according to its own agenda and press its coalition partner for a strongly market orientated reform: there was a lack of coherent alternative strategies and the party was emboldened by the increasingly firm attitude of the leading figures of employers' associations<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, the FDP had been bolstered by unexpectedly good results in Landtag elections in March (Bösch 2002:64) and were more antipathetic to compromise than in the past.

The Union, by contrast, was more divided on the legislative package. The business wing naturally was wholly in favour of the package. They received the crucial support of parliamentary leader Schäuble who, according to Langguth (2001:136), was instrumental in

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<sup>18</sup> The law now only applied to firms employing more than ten employees rather than the five required previously. According to OECD figures, this increased the number of enterprises falling outside the law by 15%.

<sup>19</sup> While divisions between employers were present (chiefly between the far more neo-liberal BDI and the more consensual BDA) (Streeck and Hassel 2003:8), the increasingly strident tone of the BDI was also quite apparent.

persuading Kohl to proceed with the 50 point programme. As in the previous decade, the social wing were far from enthusiastic about the proposed cutbacks. Admittedly, the Social Committees had revised its position on the utility of short-term contracts in combating unemployment but it retained its scepticism towards reducing protection against dismissal and cuts in sick pay<sup>20</sup> (Zohlnhöfer 2001b:11-13). Such critical attitudes could not, however, significantly alter the content of the legislation. Personnel and organisational changes in the party as a whole had altered the balance of power between the auxiliary associations<sup>21</sup>. Under these new conditions and in perilous times of record unemployment, the inexperienced Social Committees leadership, unlike their precursors the previous decade, was unable to wield an effective veto on governmental policy. One sign of its weakness was its reluctance to criticise the Union in government explicitly, choosing instead to vent its displeasure at the FDP and business groups and employers associations<sup>22</sup>. Minister of Labour Norbert Blüm, in particular, was in an awkward position as the one remaining representative of the social wing in a leading position. Blüm, who since the end of 1995 had come under increasing pressure from the FDP, the CSU and the business wing of his own party<sup>23</sup> to improve the employment situation, supported his Chancellor and fully endorsed the package. Similarly, other members of the Social Committees felt uneasy about the reforms but refrained from directly criticising them. First deputy chairman of the Social Committees, Josef Arentz, warned of the dangers of the “naked market” and emphasised that social partnership and social peace were important prerequisites in German economic success (Die Welt 16/10/1996) but the eventual support of the Social Committees’s chairman Eppelmann for the measures was indicative of the weak position of the social wing.

### **The Aftermath of the Failure of Bündnis für Arbeit**

Although Geißler and Langguth both trace the CDU’s electoral problems of 1998 back to the failure of the Alliance for Jobs, neither takes into account both the inability of the

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Social Committees chairman Eppelmann’s comments in *Berliner Zeitung* (22/08/1995); vice chairman Link in *Die Welt* (15/05/1996).

<sup>21</sup> See Section IV.

<sup>22</sup> Social Committees economics expert Wolfgang Vogt published a paper in which he affirmed the Social Committees’s determination to resist the attempt by the FDP and business groups to lead Germany on a market radical course (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 10/04/1996).

<sup>23</sup> For example, see the comments of von Voss (the main chairman of the Economic Council within the CDU), CSU General Secretary Protzner and CDU parliamentarian Haungs (*Berliner Zeitung*

representatives of employers to compel firms to create work and the difficulty of coordinating social policies and wage bargaining in the German constitutional framework of free collective bargaining (Hassel 1999:71). Whether negotiations could have achieved results even with more enthusiasm from government is therefore debatable. Nevertheless, the government's behaviour did create the impression of intransigence and fatally damaged relations with the trade unions. 350,000 protestors demonstrated against the government in June, the largest demonstration in the history of the FRG and more mass rallies against the austerity package were organised later in the year. While the government pressed ahead with its plans, the trade union federation's strategy now switched to uncompromising opposition, actively campaigning for a change in government.

The proposed law also brought the government into conflict with the churches. The two churches had already been sufficiently concerned by the direction of government policy in 1994 to publish a joint paper which warned against a 'winners and losers' society and expressed disquiet about mass unemployment. The conflict escalated when a number of leading CDU members responded with counter-attacks. Although efforts were made to repair the damage, the problematic relationship continued after the failure of Alliance for Jobs. The churches offered their support to the trade unionists and to an extent also backed the social charter published by the DGB and the social associations (Die Welt 09/05/1996). Moreover, in the following year the churches once more joined together to issue a joint statement on economic and social policy ("For a Future in Solidarity and Justice") (Süddeutsche Zeitung 01/03/1997) which again caused consternation amongst CDU politicians<sup>24</sup>.

The pressure on the social wing of the party did not abate in 1997. The Social Committees again were unable to block the pension reform of that year. In addition to general pressure to reform to secure *Standort Deutschland* and the exhaustion of all pension reserves following unification, demographic changes also compounded the demand for change. The law, intended to come into force in 1999, introduced a drop<sup>25</sup> in the replacement rate for the standard pension from 70 to 64 %, a change which would have

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11/12/1995) and the criticism of Blüm by Julius Louven, the chairman of the Fraktion's social-political working group (Der Spiegel 8/04/1996).

<sup>24</sup> The chairman of the CDU's EAK (Protestant Working Group) and Bundestag member Jochen Bochert lamented the churches' lack of consideration of business interests (Die Welt 01/03/1997).

increased the number of pensioners reliant on means tested social benefits (Seeleib-Kaiser 2002:31; 2001:111; Jochem 1999:34). While Blüm and the Social Committees were able to resist the demands of Health Minister Seehofer (CSU) and the FDP that contribution increases be shouldered solely by employees, they also fundamentally accepted that reforms were necessary. This was also true of the failed tax reform of 1997: whereas the social wing of the party had previously spoken out against further reductions of the top level of tax, by the time of the unsuccessful 1997 plan the social wing of the Social Committees accepted that tax decreases were essential in order to encourage investment (Zohlnhöfer 2001b:11).

The German government, then, carried out an array of cost-cutting measures in social and economic policy in the post-1994 period. The legislation embraced the Christian Democratic/Liberal themes of the previous decade but crucially went much further in adapting the German model. The extent of the change has been contested by a number of welfare state specialists<sup>26</sup>. Schmidt (2001) concludes that Germany's political economy is still on the "middle way" in the new century while Schmid (1998) argues that the socio-political balance of the Kohl government can best be summarised as ambivalent, containing elements of continuity, expansion as well as contraction. While Alber's (2000) rejection of the more extreme theories of "a conservative transformation of the welfare state" seems justified, such debates need not be dwelt upon here. In terms of the CDU, what is critical is that the party's social profile faded noticeably in the last third of the Kohl era. Policy initiatives emanated from the business wing of the party, the FDP and the CSU. In view of the serious economic difficulties experienced by Germany, this was not especially surprising. However, the social wing of the party were manifestly unable to prevent or significantly weaken such proposals. The 'social motor' of the CDU was now being towed by the rest of the coalition. Blüm's efforts to protect the 'ordinary man' from the 'economic Rambos' present amongst government ranks struck some observers as increasingly token<sup>27</sup> and his closeness to Kohl offered little in the way of protection as the chancellor mainly delegated responsibility for the domestic agenda to Schäuble.

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<sup>25</sup> The Schröder government postponed the implementation of this law upon assuming office in 1998.

<sup>26</sup> See Alber (2000) for a review of the different interpretations of the social policy of the Kohl era.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Pragal's critical commentary on Blüm's role in the coalition in *Berliner Zeitung* 21/12/1996.

There was a risk that the party as a whole might be seen to have transformed “from the party of social market economy into the party of social coldness making ever new concessions to business” (Bösch 2002:65). However, amongst the signs of change were important elements of continuity in the government’s social policy. For example, a number of legal changes improved the position of the family and took greater account of time spent raising children in pension assessments, building upon the measures enacted by the government in the previous decade. Most notably, compulsory nursing care insurance for anyone who has health insurance was introduced in 1994<sup>28</sup>, a highly important policy for the CDU and especially its social wing. It expanded the welfare state to provide extra care for the elderly and as such demonstrated that the party retained a Christian Democratic social conscience. Even here, though, controversy arose over the financing of the scheme and in order to pacify irate employers who were displeased about being required to contribute to such a scheme, the government agreed to the cancellation of the only officially recognised Protestant holiday, the day of prayer and penance (Buß- und Betttag)<sup>29</sup>. This was a particularly bitter pill for many in the party to swallow and led to protests across the country, contributing to the general decline in the relations between the CDU and the churches.

### **1998 Bundestag Election**

By 1997, then, the Union was in serious difficulties. Unemployment continued to dominate the political agenda but no consensus existed on fighting it. The gap between the opinions of the trade unions on one side and the representatives of employers on the other seemed unbridgeable. The CDU in government leaned more toward the position of the latter but in assuming such a stance, the Christian Democrats risked alienating the blue collar element of their electorate, which after all accounted for a third of their voters. In addition, the party’s relationship with the churches was more volatile than ever. Thus, two elements of its successful formula (its broad, socially inclusive *Volkspartei* nature and its political philosophy drawn from religious inspiration) were under more pressure than ever before. Additionally, the CDU/CSU-FDP coalition found its opportunities circumscribed by an intransigent SPD majority in the Bundesrat, a by-product of the CDU’s dismal run in Land

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<sup>28</sup> Those in need of nursing care now receive cash and non cash benefits while the insurance position of carers was also improved.

<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, Saxony refused to cancel the holiday and as a result only employees pay into the nursing care insurance.

elections. The failure of the Bundesrat to pass the government's tax reform created the impression of *Reformstau* (reform jam), further denting public perception of the government's competence and adding to the general mood of political disaffection<sup>30</sup>. Yet following Kohl's decision to stand again in April 1997, the party clung to the hope that their long-standing leader could once more defy predictions of his political demise and preserve his already record-breaking stay in the Chancellor's office. Kohl's rather autocratic announcement was not without criticism yet once he had expressed it publicly after minimal consultation with his party, the CDU had little alternative but to unite behind him despite his dire poll ratings (Gibowski 2000:19-22).

With Kohl as chancellor candidate, the party's coalition options were very restricted. The alliance with the FDP had been one of Kohl's chief aims when assuming the chairmanship in the 1973 and he remained devoutly faithful to the liberals, refusing to embrace or even tacitly encourage speculation about other post-election possibilities. The flirtation of younger CDU politicians with the Greens whether in the Bundestag<sup>31</sup> or in the Länder (such as von Beust and Müller) was not encouraged by the chancellor nor party chairman Hintze and the common enthusiasm for citizenship reform and an eco-tax discovered by the younger CDU and Green politicians was certainly not shared by more senior Union figures<sup>32</sup>. Moreover, Kohl refused to countenance any possibility of a Grand Coalition with the SPD despite Schäuble's enthusiasm. This not only tied the CDU to the current unpopular coalition but also more or less ruled out any attempt to forge a broad consensual alliance to pass painful social-economic reforms. An election triumph for the government parties promised further reforms and further polarisation with serious implications for the CDU's social profile.

The government continued to wish for the signs of economic recovery which had resurrected the 1994 campaign yet these hopes were to be unfulfilled. Even had such an

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<sup>30</sup> Throughout 1997, satisfaction with government lagged far behind satisfaction with the SPD, the CDU/CSU dipped below the SPD in polls and Kohl's approval ratings remained poor (Gibowski 2000:14-19). Public perception of the nation's economic prospects were much more pessimistic than in 1994 and the numbers suffering from Politik- and Systemverdrossenheit were substantial (see statistics in Stöss and Neugebauer 1998:13)

<sup>31</sup> The so-called Pizza Connection was a short-lived series of informal meetings between young Green and CDU members (Wagner 1998).

<sup>32</sup> The eco-tax did have its advocates in the upper reaches of the federal party, such as Schäuble and Merkel.

upswing materialised in time, the government's credibility in economic problem-solving was in question. Maier and Rattinger (2000:38-9) suggest that this was less due to an erosion of perceived CDU ability in economic affairs than to the greatly improved image of the SPD in this regard. Nonetheless, the government had lost its advantage in this area and whether a clearer economic upturn could have saved it is doubtful. Once more, the CDU/CSU ran a very personalised campaign concentrating on Kohl but where this had been an advantage in 1994, the incumbent chancellor now faced a very different opponent in Gerhard Schröder. Schröder's modest policy ideas, skilled use of the media and professional campaign capitalised on the atmosphere of discontent without alienating centrist voters. Schröder was able to maintain a wide lead over Kohl throughout the campaign. Kohl had finally lost his unique 'unification chancellor bonus' and even as Schröder's advantage decreased in the final weeks of the campaign, a clear gap between the two candidates remained.

The boost that the CDU received in the final weeks of campaigning was not sufficient to prevent a thorough defeat for the party. In an election of unprecedented political change in the FRG, the SPD overtook the CDU/CSU for only the second time, outpolling the Union parties by 5.8%. The losses were sustained disproportionately by the CDU: the CSU slipped 0.5% whereas the CDU dropped 5.8% (over two million votes). The result was the second worst for the combined sister parties in the history of the FRG. The Christian Democratic share of the vote in the east was particularly bad, illustrating both the problems of rebuilding the region and the difficulties experienced by the CDU in the new Länder. The CDU/CSU lost disproportionately high support from trade unionists (both white and blue collar) in the west, from blue collar workers in general in the east and from the self-employed in the west. In both regions, support dropped noticeably amongst older age groups<sup>33</sup> (Gibowski 2000:24-30).

Many explanations of the election focused on the candidates<sup>34</sup>: Schröder's youth, greater charisma and promise of a fresh approach was thought to have been crucial to the SPD's success. Some commentators speculated whether Schäuble, whose popularity ratings were roughly on a par with Schröder's, would have been able to defeat the SPD challenger. While undoubtedly the SPD ran a better, more disciplined campaign than previously,

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<sup>33</sup> See Chapter 4 for more detailed statistics.

especially in comparison to the jumbled chaos of the Union's effort, such analysis neglects deeper causes of the CDU's failure. The cutbacks in virtually all aspects of social spending, the piecemeal but frequent reforms of the welfare state and the alterations to the pension system in the 1994-1998 period had eroded a great deal of public trust in the CDU's management of the German social welfare system (Bösch 2000:19). Moreover, there was little sign of the promised economic benefits of such changes. There was a clear drop in assessments of the government competence in solving social problems: between 1994 and 1998 evaluations of the government's ability to solve unemployment dropped 18 points behind the opposition while the opposition was also rated more highly on pension problems (figures from Wüst 2003:29).

Eith (2002) argues that in part the SPD's success in 1998 derived from the high value placed on social justice by German voters<sup>35</sup>. According to one poll, 40% of western and 64% of eastern SPD voters in 1998 based their decision on their desire for more social justice (p.11). Eith also points to the significance of research on favoured models of the welfare state. A 'Christian Democratic' model based on state responsibility for protection against the risks of old age and illness and for ensuring equality of opportunity was the favoured model for only 15% of the west Germans asked in 1996 (admittedly this was an increase of 5% from 1985) but the dominant preference (57%) was for a 'Social Democratic' model including not just the provisions of the Christian Democratic ideal but also full employment and equality of result. In contrast, the east Germans questioned were far more in favour (68%) of a Socialist welfare state with additional state intervention, for example in wage controls with only 27% and 4% in favour of Social Democratic and Christian Democratic models respectively (p.13). These figures suggests that in attempting to carry out its reform agenda, the Christian-Liberal coalition contradicted the wishes of the majority of the electorate.

Both the CSU and the FDP were relatively insulated against an electoral backlash. The CSU remained the dominant party in Bavaria with a strong connection to a broad section of voters while FDP voters would rarely be in favour of an expansive welfare state.

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<sup>34</sup> For example see Jung and Roth (1998); Gabriel and Brettschneider (1998).

<sup>35</sup> He does not deny the importance of the leadership pairing of Schröder, the innovative force of the 'new middle', and Lafontaine, the guarantee against a neo-liberal course, in appealing to a wide spectrum of voters.

For the CDU, however, the risk of losing its social appeal was great. As Walter and Bösch (1998:55) state “Christian Democrats need the settled lower middle class, they need the social Catholics, they need the pensioners, the local dignitaries in order not to lose a large part of their electorate. Supporters of a radical economic reform are not to be found in these *juste milieu*”. The difficulties in preserving this broad spectrum of support while carrying out a programme of social cutbacks were exemplified by the CDU’s problems in the 1998 election. The CDU/CSU’s losses among trade unionists, blue collar workers and older voters would seem to indicate that the CDU in 1998 suffered at least in part due to the policies it had pursued in the previous legislative period.

### III. Programmatic development (1990-98)

The steady production of programmatic documents in the first part of the Kohl era continued after unification. The platform “Ja zu Deutschland – Ja zur Zukunft” was passed at the 1990 Hamburg conference when east and west parties were formally merged. This document, however, was less a real programme than an election manifesto and signalled no major change of direction with even the rebuilding process in the east not meriting a great deal of attention (Schmid 1994:7). A further document, the *Dresdner Manifest*, was produced the following year but again, it included little innovation. The Dresden paper offered an invitation to activists and members of the party in the new Länder to bring their own experiences and perspectives into the construction of the *Grundsatzprogramm* (Schoch 1996:5) but as Bösch notes (2002:57), in practice, the *Dresdner Manifest* ignored a number of themes (e.g. abortion) important to easterners. Analogous to the course of unification as a whole, the content and programme of the unified Christian Democrats seemed to be dominated by western ideas. In one area, though, the western elite was happy to delegate responsibility to the new members in the east. Previous members of the bloc party in the GDR were encouraged to question their behaviour in the old regime but there was to be no western-led ‘decontamination’ of old GDR loyalists. Apart from this attempt to conclude the debate about the incorporation of the former bloc party members, the one major development in the programme was the express support for a tightening of the constitutional right to asylum which was subsequently carried out in 1993.

Of more long-term significance to the party was the work of the new *Grundsatzprogramm* commission. The creation of the 1994 document differed in a number

of key respects from the earlier composition process. Firstly, it was not motivated by the loss of office. Kohl's decision to install the commission was impelled by massive changes external to the party, primarily unification and the collapse of communism. Undoubtedly, this constrained the commission's freedom from the start. While in opposition previously marginal voices were heard, participation in government constrained the work of the commission. Kohl had always prioritised government business far ahead of party programmes and although he initiated the process, he also sought to steer the discussions more than he had in the 1970s. Secondly, the Union leadership now lacked intellectuals comparable to the likes of Biedenkopf and Geißler. Many of the most prominent figures, such as Süßmuth, had been damaged by the failed attempt to unseat Kohl. Neither the General Secretary at the time of unification, Volker Rühe, nor his replacement when he became defence minister in 1993, Peter Hintze, attained the stature of their predecessors in the job and were criticised for their lack of autonomy from the party in government and parliament<sup>36</sup>. Thirdly, the commission set up in 1990 never managed to establish its independence fully. The original chairman, Lothar de Maizière, had initially attempted to introduce some novel topics into the discussion but following allegations concerning his links with the Stasi, de Maizière stood down. His successor, Reinhard Göhner, was not an experienced politician at the federal level and his surprise nomination by Kohl fuelled complaints that the chancellor was seeking to control the design of the programme. Accordingly, the new *Grundsatzprogramm* was characterised by continuity with little innovation. Nonetheless, the process of the *Grundsatzprogramm*'s creation was not without controversy. Göhner, for example, sparked a vigorous debate with his proposal that equality be added to the three key values of freedom, solidarity and justice. Not surprisingly, this suggestion was eventually rejected. The Social Committees were also disgruntled by the initial draft which they considered to be too market dominated. For many of the newer eastern members, the programme's statements on the former bloc party were far too forgiving<sup>37</sup>.

As well as the new *Grundsatzprogramm*, this section will also analyse 1998's *Zukunftsprogramme*. The hints of change present in the 1994 document were clearer by the later document which adopted a theme of change albeit still within a broadly Christian

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<sup>36</sup> Hintze was himself a Bundestag member.

<sup>37</sup> Article 5 granted that "many members (of the bloc party) were able to retain their integrity and independence despite the discrimination and personal risks which this involved".

Democratic framework. The *Zukunftsprogramme*, written by a commission headed by Schäuble, was neither an electoral platform nor a replacement basic programme. It was intended to serve as the basis for a shorter electoral manifesto and enunciate the party's aims for the next four years in government but at the same time it included an analysis of globalisation and of contemporary social, economic and cultural trends. The fears of one time CDU advisor Wanfried Dettling that the CDU was drifting rightwards have so far not been borne out (Schmid 1994) but it will be shown here that the party's self-description as *Volkspartei* of the middle has come under strain programmatically in the 1990s.

### **Principles and self-identity**

The opening section of the *Grundsatzprogramm* was very similar to the preamble and opening articles of the 1978 programme, reaffirming the Christian roots as the "ethical basis for responsible policies" (Article 2). A subtle refinement came with a greater openness to "all who affirm the dignity and freedom of mankind and support the basic beliefs which we derive from these for our policies" (Article 2) but it was clear from the programme's numerous religious references<sup>38</sup> that the CDU continued to abide by their religious image of man. An obvious illustration of this was the party's insistence that the dignity of the unborn child was inviolable (Article 46) and the programme also repeated earlier concerns about genetic manipulation (Article 147)<sup>39</sup>. The principles of freedom, solidarity and justice remained the basis of the party's beliefs and their definition was virtually unaltered from 1978 although the concept of solidarity was extended to relations between old and new Länder and between current and future generations in terms of the environment. Furthermore, the CDU still stressed its role as a *Volkspartei* open to all regardless of class.

The *Zukunftsprogramm* asserted the continuing validity of the *Grundsatzprogramm* and its values and so gave little attention to questions of principles. Spektrum (p.13, Nr.16 15/04/1998), a Protestant news magazine, noticed that the CDU's standard description of their policies as being "based on the Christian understanding of Man and his responsibility before God" (Article 1 *Grundsatzprogramm*) was shortened to just "the Christian understanding of Man" and responsibility before God was only mentioned in the closing paragraph. This cut, it was argued, was symptomatic of the reduced role of religious values

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<sup>38</sup> Even excluding the opening section, references to Christianity are scattered throughout the text (see Articles 34, 38, 53, 58, 63, 67, 70, 96, 105, 106, 119, 120, 121, 141, 143, 144, 147, 154, 161 and 162)

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter 3, section II.

in the programme and in the political thought of Wolfgang Schäuble. Admittedly, such a critique may be overstated yet it did highlight that as the relationship with the churches declined in the 1990s, the continued claim of the CDU to religious values was increasingly in question.

### **Economic and social policy**

The *Grundsatzprogramm* introduced the eco-social market economy as the fundamental concept of the CDU. The 'eco' appendage did signify an increased interest in green issues (see later section) but did not alter the essential shape of the social market based on competition, private property and social justice. Nonetheless while the challenges facing newly unified Germany were to be addressed using "tried and tested principles" (Article 32), German unification still offered an opportunity for the party to correct some of the "wrong turnings of the past" (Article 35) and "return to the virtues and values" of the past (Article 37). These malformations were excessive bureaucracy and regulation, an overly large public sector and unreasonable tax burden (Articles 73-76). The CDU, therefore, strongly advocated deregulation, privatisation, cuts in state subsidies and tax reform to facilitate the regeneration of the east and face the challenge of globalisation (Article 72). In addition, the programme contained numerous references to encouraging private health and social insurance schemes in order to promote self-responsibility and to relieve the onus on the state.

Although the influence of the *Standort* debate on the programme is noticeable in such statements, it is clear that these reforms were not intended to alter the basic foundation of CDU economic and social policy. Indeed, the Union had pledged more deregulation, privatisation and less tax in the 1978 programme and the 1994 document did not differ greatly in this regard from the programmes of the 1980s<sup>40</sup>. Moreover, the social component of policy remained vital as "the market alone cannot create social justice. The performance-related justice of the market is not the same thing as social justice" (Article 68). However, while the state had "to protect and ensure the rights of the powerlessness and the minorities in our society in the battle for access to material and immaterial resources" (Article 91), the programme also advocated a restructuring of the social state to concentrate benefits on the needy (Article 92). The distance between Christian Democracy and a purely market-based

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 3, section III.

philosophy was also illustrated by other commitments to extend the social state, notably through the introduction of nursing care insurance (Article 104), family policy (see later section), the goal of full employment (Article 94) and co-determination (Article 96).

The later *Zukunftsprogramm* emphasised the need for greater adaptation due to social, economic and technological changes which would “not leave our society and economy unaltered”. The party still remained wedded to the concept of the eco-social market economy but sought a “new confidence in the effectiveness of competition and the market principle” in order to cope with the challenges to *Standort Deutschland*. The government’s policies since 1994 were praised for encouraging greater self-responsibility and subsidiarity, reducing bureaucracy and decreasing state spending as percentage of GDP but further action was still necessary. After the tax reform debacle of 1997, the CDU firmly stated its intention to carry the “Petersberger Model”<sup>41</sup> out successfully in the next legislative period, pointing to the economic success brought by similar tax reductions to the USA, the UK and the Netherlands (Article B2). The level of state expenditure also had to be reduced to encourage private initiative (Article B9) with the aim of creating “a lean state” (Article B23). The Union’s welfare state policy still aimed at providing social security against illness, unemployment and poverty in old age but the *Zukunftsprogramme* stressed more firmly the need for the system to be restructured in order to secure its stability. The growth of social insurance contributions must be reversed (Article B18) while more encouragement of private insurance and pensions was also necessary.

Drawing on a suggestion made at a conference of the Social Committees the previous year, the *Zukunftsprogramm* also attempted to redefine the social question. As unemployment among those willing to work was “a great social injustice”, measures which create employment must be considered “social” (Article B11). By this means, the Union attempted to defuse criticism of its austerity policies since 1994 and to justify further cutbacks in state spending. Regardless of the party’s success in achieving this<sup>42</sup>, there was, nonetheless, a marked change in the party’s rhetoric concerning employment. Where the *Grundsatzprogramm* stated that “we are in favour of having full employment as an

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<sup>41</sup> Entry level taxation would drop from 25.9% to 15% with the highest tax band at 39% instead of 53%.

<sup>42</sup> As was argued in section II, the 1998 election result suggested that government explanations were not accepted by many voters.

economic and social objective which the state...management and unions have a particular responsibility to achieve" (Article 94), the *Zukunftsprogramm* proposed only that "an acceptable chance of employment must be open to everyone" (Article B11). This shift was in part a reflection of changed economic realities but together with the markedly smaller social element of the programme, it hinted that a deeper change in Christian Democratic beliefs could be approaching.

### **Foreign policy**

German unification may have removed one of the planks of CDU foreign policy but it did not diminish the party's commitment to European integration. The *Grundsatzprogramme* sought further integration towards a federal Europe based on subsidiarity (Article 124) with monetary union and a common foreign and security policy (Article 126) although it also desired greater democracy within European institutions (Article 125). In addition, German ties to NATO, the US and the UN were reaffirmed (Articles 132-133). The CDU's role as "the party of European integration and Atlantic solidarity" (Article 25) remained a vital element of the *Zukunftsprogramm*. Further European initiatives to fight crime, protect the environment and develop common security policy were required while the party gave support to the expansion of the EU.

### **Family policy and the role of women**

Support for the family was still a key concern for the Union and the *Grundsatzprogramm* mentioned a variety of measures to improve its status, for example making child's allowance index-linked, giving tax breaks to families with children and offering the legal entitlement to a kindergarten place (Article 46). Many of the ideas devised in the 1980s were also integrated into the programme, such as greater job flexibility for men and women for increased compatibility between career and child-raising (Articles 48-49). Limited adaptation was evident in the fact that the Union explicitly mentioned respect for unmarried couples (even if denying them equivalent legal status) (Article 44) and equal rights for children born outside marriage (Article 45). The greater concern for women's rights since the 1985 commitment to "A New Partnership between Men and Women" was visible in the addition of a brief pledge on free development of personality for both sexes and Articles 40-42 which concern sexual equality. However, the contemporary intra-party discussion of quotas was circumvented through an inconclusive assurance that "we Christian Democrats

are in favour of women being permanently involved at all levels within our party” (Article 41). The 1998 programme added little to the Union’s policy, praising past achievements but seeking more compatibility between family life and employment.

### **Environmentalism**

The CDU’s adoption of environmental themes carried on into the *Grundsatzprogramm* with an entire chapter devoted to “Creation and its Preservation” and its rejection of “living at the expense of nature” (Article 143). Most symbolically of all, though, the CDU developed the idea of an ecological and social market economy (Article 70) in which pollution caused by production or consumption is punished chiefly through market means thus bringing about “a synthesis of economy, social justice and economy”. Effective environmental legislation was necessary (Article 142) but where possible, the Union wanted market solutions (Article 153). Furthermore, the adoption of green themes did not stop the CDU from advocating the responsible use of nuclear power (Article 86). The same approach of eco-protection through primarily market means was also the basis of the Union’s environmental policy in the *Zukunftsprogramm*. Instead of state interference, the value of voluntary agreements was emphasised while the international dimension of environmental protection was heavily stressed. Schäuble had initially attempted to include an eco-tax in the programme but business representatives and the CSU were very unhappy at this and only Kohl’s intervention helped restore some inner harmony. The Chancellor categorically rejected the introduction of an eco-tax at the national level and instead, his proposal that such an additional charge could only be introduced at the European level was accepted.

### **Crime and Security**

An increasingly salient theme in the 1990s was crime and security. In previous programmes, this had not been a particularly prominent topic. This received some attention in the *Grundsatzprogramm* which in the face of new challenges like international crime and increased drug use, advocated modern methods of fighting crime (Article 111) and the value of prevention (Article 112). However by 1998, security issues received far more attention with an extended section dedicated to crime-fighting. The CDU slated SPD and Green calls for decriminalisation of pretty offences and instead, argued for stronger measures to prevent alcoholism, drug use, graffiti and vandalism. After the success of the far-right DVU in the Saxony-Anhalt election in April, the rhetoric of the programme on crime was hardened,

even going so far as to adopt a CSU slogan “Zero tolerance for law-breakers and violent criminals” (Article B22). This hard-line stance was also evident in concerns about the number of foreign criminals and the promise to deport those foreigners found guilty of illegality. The adoption of such rhetoric in the *Zukunftsprogramm* was a striking addition to the CDU’s programmatic profile.

### **Programmatic continuity and change: Und weiter so?**

Reaction to the *Grundsatzprogramm* when it was passed at the 1994 Hamburg party conference was largely negative. For many, the CDU had “few innovative answers to the current challenges like mass unemployment, the crisis of the social state, the completion of German unity...it depended too much on the status quo and the motto: something for everyone” (Jox and Schmid 2002:8). To some extent, much of the criticism was based on an unrealistic vision of party programmes where such documents offer coherent and novel solutions to contemporary problems. However, in essence, the 1994 programme differed little from the earlier *Grundsatzprogramm* despite the massive domestic and global changes since 1989.. The party’s image of humanity and its fundamental principles remained unchanged. The party continued to push for deeper European integration. Limited policy adaptation to changing gender roles and family situations had taken place and there was a stronger element of free market thinking but these changes were already visible in the previous decade’s documents. One of the few innovations, the addition of the ‘eco’ to the social market economy, was not welcomed by either the business wing or the Social Committees while for many younger party members, the green dimension was not extensive enough<sup>43</sup>. Nonetheless despite the conflict caused by its creation, the programme eventually did have an integrative effect within the party (Bösch 2002:61).

Although the *Zukunftsprogramm* was ridiculed by SPD Bundesgeschäftsführer Müntefering as yet another “Weiter So Programm”, this description was to some extent inaccurate. This strong emphasis on change and the need for social and economic adaptation at the beginning of the programme heralded quite a significant deviation from the structure of standard CDU platforms. While the programme added little to CDU thinking about its

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<sup>43</sup> A comparison of the federal party’s *Grundsatzprogramm* with that of Junge Union passed the following year reveals a discernibly stronger stress on environmental issues (for instance, Article 19 of the latter states that “protection of the environment must be accorded an accentuated significance compared to other goals in political decision-making”).

principles nor to foreign or family policy, the emphasis on the market, the reduction of bureaucracy and welfare state reform was conspicuously enhanced. Furthermore, the theme of crime and security was a novel ingredient in CDU programmes and together with the greater market liberalism suggested a movement to the right. The production of the *Zukunftsprogramm* in an election year helped to minimise internal disagreements about its content although the eco-tax debate did cause considerable rancour. von Beust, chairman of the Hamburg CDU Fraktion, was not alone in his assessment of Schäuble's original suggestion as a tactical mistake (Die Welt 16/04/1998) restricting the ability of the Union to play upon fears of the Greens in government and contradicting Hintze's attempt to portray the party as a *Tankstellen-Partei* (gas-pump party)<sup>44</sup>. Perhaps of more significance was the virtual silence of the social wing about the programme despite the apparent shift rightwards. Facing a choice between an unabashed market liberal party and a more social Union based on traditional values (Gauland 1999), the apparent embrace of globalisation and the greater stress on the market within *Zukunftsprogramm* could be interpreted as one step in the direction of the former option. The social wing having lost ground throughout the decade put up little resistance to the new programme. However, a less social version of Christian Democracy would call in question the party's *Volkspartei* identity and there was little indication that such a move would be popular. The sober, technocratic analysis offered by Schäuble at the party conference of 1998 met with applause borne more from duty than enthusiasm (Die Welt 20/5/1998) and as shown in Section II, such a strategy could also have dangerous electoral implications.

#### **IV. Organisational Developments**

During the last decade of Kohl's chancellorship, the party appeared to be regressing as an organisation. A number of commentators argued that the party was once more a simple 'Kanzlerwahlverein'<sup>45</sup>. Such a description, however, cannot be justified. The CDU was still a dense, pluralist organisation weakly controlled by centralised structures. Competition between "regional organisations and interest groups, parliamentary parties and members of governments, working groups and bodies of experts, political groupings and wings" (Lösche 1998:75) remained a critical organisational feature. Yet although the CDU was more than just a vehicle for their chancellor, a number of organisational changes and trends can be identified which have endangered the integrative capacity of the Union.

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<sup>44</sup> See for example *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 14/03/1998.

The integration of the eastern party brought a number of GDR-era politicians, functionaries and members into the CDU with tarnished personal histories together with a younger generation actively seeking renewal and self-scrutiny. In addition to the problematic history of many eastern CDU politicians, adaptation to the rules of political life of the FRG also caused problems. Both of these difficulties were apparent in the flurry of resignations which afflicted the eastern party organisations<sup>46</sup> (Clemens 1993). The new Länder also brought further diversity to the party. The party in the east drew far more support from workers and lower-middle employees and the eastern party organisations developed a more liberal social profile (e.g. on abortion) than their western equivalents. This liberalism did not extend into the economic domain where the eastern Christian Democrats were more committed to state intervention, favouring subsidies and price controls. Therefore, a by-product of unification for the CDU was greater internal complexity. The independent identity of the eastern CDU branches developed further following the government's package of social cutbacks and the failure to reduce unemployment, not helped by the renewed attacks against the PDS in the 1998 campaign in the 'red hands' billboard poster and western indifference to eastern attempts to stimulate debate about the inner-party relationship between east and west<sup>47</sup>.

The internal balance of power within the CDU as a whole was not just affected by the addition of the Eastern bloc party. The string of poor Christian Democratic Landtag results diminished the power of the Land parties and contributed to the "worst leadership crisis of their history" (Bösch 2002:138). This position of weakness limited their ability to provide a counterweight to the influence of the chancellor. Nonetheless, from the middle of the decade onwards, a number of younger Union politicians came to the fore in the Länder, the so-called "Young Wild Ones" (Junge Wilde)<sup>48</sup>. This group, whose contact with one another remained informal, primarily comprised Koch, Wulff, Müller, Böhr, von Beust and Oettinger. While many were willing to criticise Kohl publicly, their influence was limited. There was no suggestion that they sought Kohl's removal and apart from hunger for power,

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<sup>45</sup> For example, see Prigel's comments in *Berliner Zeitung* (28/06/1995).

<sup>46</sup> For instance, Brandenburg alone lost a party chairman (de Maizièrè), a deputy chairman (Häßler) a parliamentary leader (Diestel) and a General Secretary (Klein) due to scandals.

<sup>47</sup> See for example the efforts of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania parliamentary leader Rehberg in 1996 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 9/2/1996).

they did not develop a common political line<sup>49</sup> nor did they share a vision of the party after Kohl.

A more significant organisational development was the shift in the relative weight of the auxiliary organisations. As shown earlier, the Social Committees were on the defensive throughout the decade, unable to block the reforms demanded by the business wing, the FDP and the CSU. After Blüm's resignation as chairman in 1987, successive leaders of the Social Committees struggled to assert any independent authority. His immediate successor, Fink, was a critic of Kohl but he polarised opinion within the Social Committees and in a break from past custom, he was not elected onto the CDU executive. Dissatisfaction with Fink led to his replacement by Schreiber whose chairmanship was cut short through a scandal which also cost him his job as Saxony-Anhalt social minister. Although this leadership crisis was brought to an end with the election of Rainer Eppelmann, he was unable to reverse the declining influence of the Social Committees. Already close to Kohl, Eppelmann's autonomy was compromised further by the government's narrow majority after 1994 which potentially raised every issue into a vote of confidence thus limiting the freedom of Bundestag member Eppelmann to voice opposition to government plans. However, as Schroeder (1998) has argued, the Social Committees had deeper problems as well. Membership declined faster than membership of the whole party. Between 1980 to 1997, it had nearly halved in absolute numbers despite unification (p.183) highlighting the failure of the Social Committees to establish itself in the new Länder. Another crucial factor was that the parameters of Christian Democratic discussions of reform were no longer determined by the social wing. Instead, the concept of reform became synonymous with the agenda of the market liberal elements within the party (p.182). The alliance with Junge Union also shattered as the youth party adopted a more market-orientated, liberal line under Klaus Escher (Monath 1998:28). JU now became a partner for the business wing, pushing for a more thorough reconstruction of the welfare state.

In April 1995, the representatives of small businesses and artisans (MIT) and the Business Association merged to form the Association for Medium Sized Firms and Business

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<sup>48</sup> As Lösche (1998:77) sardonically notes, the group seems neither especially young nor wild and *der Spiegel* (20/10/1997) mocked their contribution to the 1997 party conference as the "Junge Milde".

<sup>49</sup> Müller, for example, was one of the foremost advocates of black-green coalitions whereas Koch's chief interest was in tax reform.

(Mittelstands- und Wirtschaftsvereinigung). The fusion, which was strongly supported by Schäuble, consolidated the strength of the business wing within the CDU. The new MIT now had nearly double the membership of the Social Committees (Zohlhöfer 2001b:12). Although the newly unified association was swiftly plunged into disarray following a damaging financial scandal<sup>50</sup>, long-term damage to MIT was limited and stability was restored initially by Doss and then Rau as chairmen. As very few detailed examinations of the role of the business association in the CDU exist, it is difficult to ascertain how influential it is or the extent to which it functions as a unified quasi-pressure group. Nonetheless, reform as a concept was now in the hands of the party's business wing and many of the young politicians in the Union had links to MIT.

A further change in the strength of the various auxiliary organisations was the growing prominence of the Women's Union (FU) under the leadership of Rita Süßmuth. The more assertive mood within the FU challenged the unity of the CDU as debates on abortion and the adoption of a quota within the party caused considerable turbulence. On the first issue, the FU was itself split. Some (such as Süßmuth) advocated the adoption of a new law on abortion which balanced the FRG's guidelines with the more liberal GDR position but others continued to back the FRG's mixture of prohibition in theory and limited toleration in practice. The issue was finally resolved in 1992 when the Bundestag passed a law for the whole country which allowed for abortion within the first twelve weeks of pregnancy but only after taking obligatory advice<sup>51</sup>. The controversy was indicative of the new problems the Union faced in accommodating women's interests while at the same time upholding its socially traditionalist beliefs. This was also evident in the discussion of quotas which followed in 1993. Here the FU was united and received the support of Geißler and General Secretary Hintze but faced opposition from a large proportion of the male members of the party as well as those female politicians such as Merkel and Nolte whose political rise had been achieved without such help. Discontent about the idea was very obvious at the 1994 party conference and at the conference the following year the proposed introduction of a quorum requiring a third of all posts to be reserved for women failed. Although the

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<sup>50</sup> This forced the resignations of chairman Bregger and the main business leader Helmes.

<sup>51</sup> After a decision by the Constitutional Court, this was later modified to ensure that abortion remained illegal but with no threat of prosecution if advice is received by the woman in question.

quorum was eventually passed in 1996, the regulation had been watered down<sup>52</sup>. The consternation among sections of the party over the quota issue again demonstrates the taxing task of reconciling traditional Christian Democratic beliefs with growing demands for greater representation for women and for women's issues.

The CDU's organisational dilemma in the latter part of the Kohl era then was threefold. The party was faced by a succession crisis. Kohl had effectively named Schäuble as his chosen heir yet this *de facto* enthronement was greeted with dismay by reformers who felt it illustrated the lack of democracy within the party. Moreover, Schäuble was not universally popular. Kohl's strength lay in his ability to act as a mediator between the different groups and factions yet Schäuble was arguably too close to the views of the business wing to play this role, for example in his belief that adaptation to international competition should take priority over questions of distributive justice within Germany<sup>53</sup>. His lack of strong religious connections also concerned those party members with strong ties to social Catholicism and his relationship with the CSU was quite volatile. Nonetheless, the blossoming of a number of young CDU politicians in the Länder ensured that the Union would not be short of future politicians of stature even if there was no real shared vision of the party. The CDU's problems in this regard were thus largely short-term.

More serious to the party's future was the falling level of participation at all levels. Membership of the party continued to fall steadily although especially in the east<sup>54</sup>. Deprived in most cases of office, the predicament of the Land organisations was particularly acute. This stimulated a series of proposals for reform which can be split into three categories: limitation of the resources and power of the party leadership, the introduction of elements of direct democracy; and making the party more open and flexible (Bösch 2002:143; Kießling 2001:32-34). Although various Land organisations experimented with all three options, when suggestions such as a consultative poll of members on factual issues were put to a vote at federal party congresses they were rejected. Implementation of innovative schemes to encourage greater popular involvement was therefore problematic

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<sup>52</sup> As well as only applying for a five year time period, it also stipulated that on those party bodies where female representation did not reach the required level, a second vote would be necessary in which the required representation could be lower (Bösch 2002:259).

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* (15/05/1998).

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter 4, Table 4.32.

and in any case there was no guarantee they would successfully reverse the stagnation of participation.

Perhaps the most dangerous trend was the increasing strain on the party's ability to integrate a diverse range of social groups into its organisation. The account of the auxiliary organisations above illustrated the divergent tendencies of the associations. The strain on the CDU's *Volkspartei* image undoubtedly increased in the 1990s as JU and MIT clamoured for more radical market reforms, FU pushed for greater representation of women and the Social Committees struggled in vain against its internal problems and against the direction of government policy. By 1998, even Kohl, the master of intra-party compromise, could no longer obscure the increasing power of the market liberal faction. The vulnerability of the CDU in this situation was shown by the extent of the party's loss. In attempting to balance the demands of different groups yet still pushing ahead with its programme, the chancellor and his government had alienated many and satisfied few.

## **V. Conclusion**

The devastating election defeat of 1998 brought the Kohl era to an end. The loss of office and the end of Kohl's chairmanship of the party ensured that discussions about the party's identity and direction which had long been postponed could no longer be avoided. This process of self-examination, however, threatened to unleash pent-up centrifugal forces which could undermine the coherence of the party. While the Union had always been "a pragmatic polyarchy" (Clemens 2000:117), it nonetheless required a skilful leader at the helm to tender and preserve the party's multifarious identity. Kohl's ability in this was unquestioned, putting himself at the centre of a network of personal relationships stretching across all wings of the party and down to the most local level. Regardless of their other personal characteristics, neither Schäuble nor any of the young pretenders could claim a similar ability but this was not just a question of personal qualities. Managing the diverse interests within the party and balancing the different viewpoints became trickier in the 1990s. Admittedly, compared to the predicament of other Christian Democratic parties around Western Europe, the CDU's position was not perilous. There was no threat of disintegration and the open factional battles evident in other such parties were not present during the Kohl era. The Union's losses were less severe than other Christian Democratic parties and as Chapter 4 illustrated, it was more successful at attracting voters from outside

its core support. Nonetheless, the preceding account of political and electoral developments has shown that the fate of a Christian Democratic *Volkspartei* became less certain in 1990s Germany.

Section I demonstrated that through the reform programme of the final years of the Kohl era, the Union in government moved clearer to the right of centre. Yet with the balance between 'social' and 'market' increasingly weighted in favour of the latter, the CDU was out of step with the electorate. This, it was argued, was an underlying cause for the CDU's unprecedented defeat in 1998 although short-term factors should not be overlooked. In programmatic terms, less change was obvious at first. Key elements of Christian Democratic self-understanding (principles of freedom, responsibility and justice; Christian image of man; social market economy; European integration; subsidiarity; support for the family) were still at the heart of the CDU's new *Grundsatzprogramm*. Greater recognition of changing gender roles and the adoption of the 'eco' prefix to the social market economy were the main developments since the 1978 *Grundsatzprogramm*. However, even these alterations were effectively just adopting themes explored in the previous decade into the basic programme. The slight shift towards more market-orientated thinking became clearer by the time of the next election. Schäuble's *Zukunftsprogramme* offered a more technocratic vision of the party's ideas with a firmer stress on adaptation and change. As was shown earlier, this did not entail the party jettisoning its Christian Democratic baggage entirely but it is far from certain that such an approach carried further is a suitable ideological foundation to support a *Volkspartei*. Finally, Section III argued that the incorporation of an array of socially diverse interests within the party was complicated by unification, economic developments and changes within the auxiliary organisations themselves. Increasing divergence within its constituent organisations threatened party cohesion and the danger existed that the internal balance between the various interests would disappear resulting in the loss of the Union's social integration capabilities. Embarking upon life in opposition, the post-Kohl era for the CDU, then, offered the opportunity of reconstruction but also the threat of uncertainty.

## Chapter 6. The Austrian People's Party 1990-9

### I. Introduction

The development of Austrian politics in the 1990s was undoubtedly dominated by the rise of the Freedom Party. The rebirth of the party under Haider had begun in 1986 but its maturation into an equivalent electoral force to the two major parties accelerated as it promoted and capitalised on the prevailing mood of political disquiet. Despite relative economic prosperity and successful entry into the EU, growing frustration with elements of Austria's consociational system was clear. The extensive penetration of interest groups, the bureaucracy, the media and the economy by political parties was called into question as numerous instances of corruption were exposed, more independent media outlets developed and popular opinion turned against formerly dominant behavioural patterns (Luther 1999:131). However, the growth of the FPÖ was also at least in part a consequence of the failing integrative power of the ÖVP and the SPÖ. This chapter will concentrate on the difficulties of the Christian Democrats.

The ÖVP, caught in a whirlpool of electoral decline, faced the actual possibility of disintegration. Its predicament led to a change in the strategy of the party's federal leadership, eventually resulting in the ground-breaking 'black-blue' coalition in 2000. The actual coalition negotiations of 1999-2000 will not be covered in any depth here<sup>1</sup> but this chapter will explore why the party was willing to engage in such a risky gambit through an account of the party's difficulties throughout the decade. Contrary to the claims of the opposition, the decision was not based purely on the desire for power of its leader, Schüssel, but rather on the impasse within the Grand Coalition, the ÖVP's electoral malaise and the growing congruence of ÖVP and FPÖ ideas. Accordingly, the Section I will look at the three elections between 1990 and 1995, the resultant leadership instability and the decade-long flirtation with a small 'bourgeois' coalition. During the 1995-99 period, the party's strategy under Schüssel and parliamentary leader Khol brought a coalition with the FPÖ closer. Differences with the FPÖ were narrowed and the Grand Coalition became increasingly unworkable due to the chronic conflict within the coalition. The main elements of the Schüssel-Khol course will therefore be analysed before a consideration of the 1999 election. In electoral terms, the pay-off of the new ÖVP strategy was ambivalent. The party consolidated its core support but failed to increase its share of the vote and fell into third place. However, Schüssel's leadership

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<sup>1</sup> See Böhm and Lahodynsky (2001), Sperl (2000) and Welan (2000) for detailed accounts of the opening 'sounding-out' talks, the failed attempt to reconstruct the SPÖ-ÖVP government and the swift ÖVP-FPÖ negotiations which led to the 'black-blue' government with Schüssel as chancellor.

did allow the party to finally recover the chancellorship in early 2000, a development crucial for generating greater inner party unity.

Section II will look at the programmatic profile of the ÖVP in the 1990s. As with the CDU, the fall of Communism and the collapse of the USSR prompted a revision of the party's *Grundsatzprogramm*. The programme updated and adapted the Salzburg programme to take account of environmentalism, Austrian accession to the EU and growing public anxieties about security. The blend of economic and social liberalism, traditionalism and Catholic social concern, however, was unenthusiastically received and was to have little impact on the party's ideological direction. More important were the ideas of Khol, once dubbed the Austrian Newt Gingrich (Profil Nr.12, 1995), whose belief in a Christian Democracy with conservative values was increasingly influential.

The continuing attempts to reform the organisational structure of the ÖVP will be the focus of Section III. As in the 1970s, the party's structure was once again the subject of internal scrutiny and debate although this time the party remained in office. The reforms which have been introduced have produced a slightly stronger central party, especially once Khol as parliamentary leader instilled a more disciplined line in the ÖVP *Klub*. Nonetheless, the central party's ability to act freely was still strongly circumscribed by the power of the Leagues and the auxiliary organisations. Not only did this continually threaten the party's unity but the balance between the Leagues (i.e. the over-representation of farmers and business interests) also remained problematic in view of the ÖVP's *Volkspartei* self-image. The question of how to remodel the party's structure without alienating traditional voter groups essentially remained unresolved.

## II. Political and Electoral Developments

### 1990 Nationalrat Election

Despite an impressive economic record, the Grand Coalition parties did not enter the 1990 election campaign in especially strong positions. Persistent squabbling between the SPÖ and the ÖVP undermined any attempt to promote their achievements (reduction of the budget deficit, improved growth rates and productivity, falling unemployment, tax reform and a substantial restructuring of the state economies) to the electorate. In addition, the lingering cloud of political scandal refused to clear<sup>2</sup>. Although the Socialists were primarily affected, the People's Party were also tarnished, both through association and some embarrassments of their own. Party leader Riegler's reputation, for example, was sullied by a revelation about his earlier illegal receipt of a severance payment.

Early polls suggested that both the major parties would lose support to the Freedom Party and the Greens (Sully 1991:77). The ÖVP tried to counter this through an aggressive campaign depicting the party as the policy innovator of the coalition frustrated by the SPÖ's unwillingness to reform. The party's scope for action, though, was limited. First, Riegler was firmly against any coalition with the FPÖ under Haider. Without changes in the leadership of either the FPÖ or the ÖVP itself, the party, in spite of its divisions on the matter, was effectively committed to a continuation of the Grand Coalition despite its flaws (Kriechbaumer 1995:79). Second, its own policy competencies were neutralised by Vranitzky's use of many of the same issues. The Chancellor, for instance, firmly emphasised the need for further privatisation, tighter monetary and fiscal measures and an far-reaching pension reform (Financial Times 04/10/1990). Furthermore, the SPÖ's campaign strategy turned the election into a plebiscite on Vranitzky's rule. Perhaps unwisely, the ÖVP tried to counter this with their own personality-based campaign. Riegler's unassuming, provincial image failed to excite voters when pitted against the more urbane and statesmanlike Vranitzky on one side and the aggressive populism of Haider on the other.

The result of the election was disastrous for the ÖVP as it fell to just 32% (-9.2%) while despite its tribulations, the SPÖ lost less than a percentage (-0.3%). The chief beneficiary was the Freedom Party which achieved its best ever result with 16.6% (+7%) and 33 seats. Support for the ÖVP fell in virtually all segments of society but particularly heavy losses were sustained amongst housewives, the age group between

45-59, lower employees and those with Fachschule or Berufsschule education (Plasser and Ulram 1995:356). Although traditional core supporters of the ÖVP (active Catholics, farmers) were more loyal, this was of little comfort to the party after its worst ever electoral performance. Indeed, as the social bases of ÖVP support were in long term decline<sup>3</sup>, the party was in danger of becoming more unrepresentative of society.

### **Leadership Instability and Party Reform**

Although the Grand Coalition was increasingly detrimental for the ÖVP, the “constellation of policy, parties and people” (Welan 1994:20) prevented any escape to an ÖVP-FPÖ coalition. After Vranitzky had been handed the task of forming a government, a resumption of the SPÖ-ÖVP coalition was inevitable. Riegler’s position was now very weak<sup>4</sup> and amidst a period of deep party soul-searching, the ÖVP’s predilection for leadership change once again surfaced. Riegler resigned in May accompanied by General Secretary Solonar. Unusually for Austrian parties, an open contest for the party chairmanships developed (Müller and Meth-Cohen 1991) after all efforts to avoid a divisive battle failed.

The internal friction crystallised around the candidacies of Bernhard Görg and Erhard Busek, the former supported by the powerful Lower Austrian party and the ÖAAB while Busek was principally promoted by the Styrian organisation. A sign of the party’s predicament was the lack of other party heavyweights willing to put their name forward for the thankless task of rebuilding the party while still ensconced in government. Neisser, Klestil and Pröll all refused to enter the contest and as Görg was a *Quereinsteiger* (a candidate outside the party to be parachuted in), Busek was the only candidate from within the party hierarchy. Busek stood for a more open, liberal party but this stance was resisted by the Lower Austrians and the so-called ‘steel-helmet faction’ who favoured concentrating on core Christian Democratic social groups and themes. At the party’s June 1991 congress, Busek triumphed winning 56% of the vote. This far from resounding success illustrated the polarised reaction Busek produced<sup>5</sup> and his leadership of the party was from the outset hamstrung by these divisions.

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<sup>2</sup> For example the SPÖ lost two central secretaries, Heinrich Keller and Günther Sallaberger, after revelations about their dubious financial practices as well as their Minister of the Interior Karl Blecha (Sully 1990:136-140).

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> This was apparent in his inability to control a rebellion by the party executive over the SPÖ’s proposed justice minister (see Kriechbaumer 1995:81-2).

<sup>5</sup> The book by Kohlmaier (former ÖVP General Secretary, ÖAAB chairman and parliamentarian) on the problems of the ÖVP contains a fairly cutting portrait of “the most problematic leader of the ÖVP” whose aloof manner alienated many (1999:48-50).

As the quick progression from Mock to Riegler to Busek demonstrated, managing the ÖVP as junior partners in the coalition was extremely difficult. The strong factionalism rooted in the federal and League-structure of the party<sup>6</sup> undermined party discipline and without the chancellorship the central party apparatus often struggled to harmonise the different regional and social interests. As Vranitzky was accredited for government successes but the coalition partners blamed equally for perceived failures, the Land parties had little reason to put the interests of party unity above their own regional interests. Dissension in the regions was further fanned by the party's relentless drop in popularity<sup>7</sup>. In only one Landtag election (Carinthia) between the 1990 and 1994 federal elections was the ÖVP able to reverse its slide<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, at no point did the party exceed 26% in opinion polls (Ullram and Müller 1995:31). The Viennese election was an ominous sign for Busek's future. He had earlier revived the fortunes of the ÖVP in the capital but his ideas had been divisive and by 1991 the ÖVP fell into third place.

In the wake of the 1990 election defeat, organisational changes were again contemplated. During the conference which elected Busek in 1991, a number of reforms were incorporated into the party statute<sup>9</sup>. However, as with earlier reforms, many of the measures did not contain satisfactory means of enforcement. This together with the inability to halt the gains of the FPÖ ensured that the "overpowering inertia in the catholic-conservative camp" identified by Sully in 1989 (1989:433) persisted under the new leadership. Although Busek was not without a clear vision of the party's direction, his strategy of greater openness and liberalism did not generate internal consensus and was not fully effected. Consequently, the stated aims of the ÖVP during the period of Busek's leadership did not differ fundamentally from its strategy pre-1990 (Ullram and Müller 1995:15).

### **Neither *un cordon sanitaire* nor *blauen Socken*: The ÖVP's relations with the FPÖ**

After a succession of poor Landtag elections, 1992 marked a potential turning point for the ÖVP. For the first time in the history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic, an ÖVP candidate was elected to the presidency<sup>10</sup>. The surprising triumph of Thomas Klestil in defeating SPÖ candidate Streicher suggested that the Christian Democrats were not locked into an irreversible tailspin. However, Klestil's success was based less on party than on his own

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<sup>6</sup> See chapters 2 and 3 and section IV of this chapter.

<sup>7</sup> Already by 1988 the Lower Austrian party executive blamed the party's local electoral problems on the government responsibility of the federal party (Dippelreiter 1995:453)

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix for full details of Land elections in the 1990s.

<sup>9</sup> For more details, see section III.

<sup>10</sup> Kurt Waldheim had been an ÖVP-supported candidate rather than a political figure drawn from the party establishment.

qualities as a presidential candidate (i.e. his diplomatic career, his image of transcending party labels). More significantly, his win in the run-off owed a considerable amount to Haider's endorsement of his candidacy after the FPÖ's Heide Schmidt had been defeated in the first round. This was an early sign that an ÖVP recovery was perhaps only possible through some form of alliance with the Freedom Party.

The prospect of such an alignment polarised opinion within the party. Busek, like Riegler, was hostile towards a 'black-blue' coalition and indeed, since the 1990 election the FPÖ's credentials as a future government party had been further undermined by a number of factors. In 1991, Haider was forced to resign as Carinthian governor after a series of controversial remarks<sup>11</sup>. The FPÖ's xenophobic campaign in the 1991 Viennese election did nothing to assuage ÖVP wariness towards a 'bourgeois' coalition<sup>12</sup>. Recognising public concern over immigration, the government tried to negate the relentless campaigns of the Freedom Party by enacting new measures aimed at curbing illegal immigration. Despite this, the FPÖ still pressed ahead with its "Austria First" people's initiative<sup>13</sup> at the end of 1992 which among other measures envisaged a temporary end to immigration, the immediate deportation of foreigners breaking the law and the introduction of a constitutional provision stating that Austria was not a country of immigration ("Austria First" People's Initiative, reproduced in Sully 1997:87-88). The persistent FPÖ flirtation with xenophobia and anti-Semitism and its unpredictability rendered it a hugely problematic coalition partner. In addition, in February 1993 Schmidt and four other FPÖ parliamentarians left to form Liberal Forum after the introduction of the "Austria First" initiative. Their departure meant that few liberal counterbalances to the right-wing populist element of the FPÖ remained.

The ÖVP was deeply divided over how to handle the FPÖ. For General Secretary Maier, a close confidant of Busek, a black-blue coalition was not an option<sup>14</sup>, a viewpoint repeated by his successor Molterer (1993-4) and Upper Austrian governor

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<sup>11</sup> In September 1990 Haider had addressed the annual Ulrichsberg War Veterans as "Dear friends" and the following year praised Nazi employment policies as sound in a debate in the Carinthian legislature in which he praised Nazi employment policies as sound.

<sup>12</sup> Worries about the FPÖ's connection to extremism were also inflamed by the candidature of Diethmar Sulzberger, a former spokesman for the National Democratic Party in Lower Austria and a writer for the far-right paper "Halt".

<sup>13</sup> The People's Initiative (Volksbegehren) is a constitutional instrument of direct democracy that can be introduced by a specified number of voters or (prior to 1998) federal or regional parliamentary representatives. If 100,000 signatures are collected, the Nationalrat must have a debate on the proposal although this entails no obligation to introduce a law (Müller 1999:304; Pelinka and Rosenberger 2000:70)

<sup>14</sup> He ruled out this out two years in advance of the 1994 Nationalrat election (ÖO Nachrichten 06/08/1992)

Ratzenböck. In contrast, Mock, Hirschmann (managing chairman of the Styrian ÖVP), Kuckaka (ex-General Secretary) and ÖAAB chairman Höchtl all argued for either strategic flexibility or some form of openness to the FPÖ. Although the grouping against a FPÖ coalition held the more important federal party positions, Busek was in no position to end the endless public debate by members of the party given his weakness and the diffusion of power in the party. The choice confronting the ÖVP offered no clear solution: either the party continue to support the Grand Coalition with the risk of further electoral haemorrhage or it could end the FPÖ's ostracism through a black-blue coalition and gamble that the more extreme sections of the FPÖ would be tamed by office. Yet such a choice was fraught with risk as was shown in Carinthia in 1994. It emerged that a secret deal had been struck in which ÖVP governor Zernatto would be re-elected with FPÖ support on the understanding that Haider would be allowed to accede to the position at some future point. The resultant public outcry forced the ÖVP to back out of this deal and Zernatto was only elected with SPÖ support and after lengthy obstruction by the FPÖ (Luther 1995:126).

The option of black-blue became yet more problematic with Austria's move toward EU accession. After an initial two year assessment of Austria's suitability, the European Commission informed the government in 1991 that subject to agreement on the thorny question of neutrality, the application was viewed very favourably. The process proceeded slowly due to the delays within the EU member-states over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and negotiations for Austrian entry did not begin until 1993. By this point, Haider had brought about a striking U-turn in FPÖ European policy. Once the most adamant advocate of Austrian membership of the EU of all Austrian parties<sup>15</sup>, the FPÖ after 1992 opposed accession<sup>16</sup>. The new position of the FPÖ made a black-blue coalition more unlikely. For the ÖVP leadership, discussions with the EU would be jeopardised by an alliance with the Freedom Party. After the negotiations had been concluded in little more than a year, a constitutionally required referendum was due to be held in June 1994. Again, this made any shift in party strategy highly problematic. To seek a 'black-blue' coalition at the same time as presenting a united front with the SPÖ for a 'yes' vote in the referendum might have undermined the pro-

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<sup>15</sup> The FPÖ, for example, had been the first parliamentary party to demand entry negotiations in 1987.

<sup>16</sup> The change only emerged slowly, firstly with increasingly critical remarks by Haider about the possible negative consequences arising from membership (budget problems, agricultural reform, traffic, democratic deficit) and the FPÖ's vote against the EEA treaty in parliament before it was confirmed by General Secretary Meischberger that the FPÖ would resist EU accession at the current time (Kurier 29/08/1992).

EU campaign and would have certainly compromised the party's beliefs at a crucial juncture.

### **1994 Nationalrat Election**

The run-up to the Nationalrat election was filled with mixed signals for the Grand Coalition parties. A number of Landtag elections (Carinthia, Salzburg, Tyrol and Vorarlberg) took place in March. In each election, FPÖ gained support while the SPÖ and ÖVP lost ground everywhere except Carinthia. However, the results for the People's Party were not as disastrous as had been predicted. Whether this relative stabilisation had any meaning outside the regions was unclear. In Tyrol, for example, the ÖVP governor Weingartner had renamed the party the Tyrolean People's Party, stressing the lesser role of the Leagues and advocating policies contrary to the federal party (Gehler 1995:697). If the minimisation of losses resulted from this regional distinctiveness, then the result was little cause for optimism for the federal party. On the other hand, the referendum on EU accession produced an unexpectedly pro-entry result with just under two thirds of voters supporting Austrian membership. The scale of EU-enthusiasm caught most observers by surprise due to the opposition of the FPÖ and the Greens, the fears over environmental standards and the lingering doubts about the compatibility of EU membership and neutrality. The government parties, but especially the ÖVP in view of Foreign Minister Mock's prominent role in the negotiations, hoped that the victory would bring political benefits in the autumn election and that the Haider's rise had finally been stopped.

The ÖVP decided against running another candidate-centred campaign after the ill-fated efforts of 1990 and focused on a thematic campaign focusing on three central ideas: economy, security, homeland (Schaller and Vretscha 1995:172). However, the thematic campaign neither caught the public's attention nor prevented the widespread impression that the party was on the defensive. One problem was that public perception of Christian Democratic problem solving competence had dropped even further. By 1994 the ÖVP was not rated highest in any of the most important policy areas<sup>17</sup> (Ullram and Müller 1995:24). Its attempt, therefore, to base its campaign around these issues was very risky. The party was unable to reverse public perceptions of it and the use of themes specifically chosen to counter the FPÖ (e.g. the pluralistic vision of homeland, *Heimat*, against the xenophobic nationalism of Haider) ultimately failed.

Arguably, the party's greatest difficulty was again its disunity. Statements by ex-general secretary Kuckaka, Styrian party chairman Hirschmann, Bartenstein and ÖAAB leader Höchtl<sup>18</sup> all undermined Busek's authority. Busek had ruled out the option of the small coalition and at the party's congress committed the party to the Grand Coalition "ohne Wenn und Aber" (Kriechbaumer 1995:89) due to the FPÖ's anti-EU agenda and desire for a "Third Republic"<sup>19</sup>. This unambiguous declaration did not end the relentless speculation about a possible ÖVP-FPÖ coalition which the SPÖ was happy to encourage<sup>20</sup>. Although the dissenting members of the party establishment declared themselves loyal to their leader, party members continued to discuss coalition strategy openly<sup>21</sup>. This disarray of the ÖVP campaign was all the more frustrating as Vranitzky now appeared vulnerable. The SPÖ again ran a heavily candidate-centred campaign but its chancellor bonus appeared to be exhausted. However, given its own problems, the People's Party was not in a position to capitalise on this and instead, it was the FPÖ who took advantage, particularly during the innovative televised debates<sup>22</sup>.

The result for the Grand Coalition partners was calamitous. Both the SPÖ and the ÖVP fell to their worst ever results (34.9% and 27.7% respectively) while the Freedom Party made the largest gains (+5.9%, 22.5%) and the Greens also increased their vote. Liberal Forum also easily passed the 4% threshold, securing its existence in the short-term. The result brought unprecedented change to the Austrian political system. Five parties were represented in parliament for the first time and the party system seemed to be gradually shifting towards three medium sized parties with two smaller parties. The coalition also lost the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to

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<sup>17</sup> It was rated second behind the SPÖ on securing pensions and job creation, 2<sup>nd</sup> behind the FPÖ on fighting corruption and only 3<sup>rd</sup> on stopping waste, the foreigner problem and environmental protection.

<sup>18</sup> Kuckaka warned that the reduction of the party's options would reduce the party to its social-Christian core while Hirschmann expressed his preference for an ÖVP-FPÖ coalition if it was mathematically possible. His fellow Styrian Bartenstein believed Haider was capable of learning and would likely act very differently in government than in opposition. Höchtl spoke out against making firm assertions before the election and declared parts of the FPÖ capable of co-operation (Kurier 13/05/1994).

<sup>19</sup> The Third Republic idea was proposed in "Weil das Land sich ändern muß!", a book published by research section of the FPÖ. Among other suggestions it mooted a vastly enhanced role for the federal president. For more details see Sully (1997).

<sup>20</sup> SPÖ Federal Business Manager Josef Cap, for example, argued on many occasions that there was a danger of a black-blue coalition (Schaller and Vretscha 1995:210).

<sup>21</sup> For instance, finance ministry state secretary Johannes Ditz argued that should the ÖVP be under 30% it should refrain from government participation while deputy parliamentary leader Walter Schwimmer ruled out a Grand Coalition if the distance between the two parties increased (ÖÖ Nachrichten 12/09/1994).

<sup>22</sup> Haider's clever use of these slots was highlighted when he took the opportunity to confront Vranitzky live on air with evidence of corruption in the Styrian Chamber of Labour instantly pushing this theme back into public consciousness.

pass constitutional laws<sup>23</sup> while the opposition, if united, could now appeal against legislation to the Constitutional Court (Pelinka 2001:47). For the ÖVP, the fact that the gap between themselves and the SPÖ actually narrowed was of little consolation. The party had failed to achieve its goal of remaining above 30% (Schaller and Vretscha 1995:172).

In addition to falling support among women in employment, younger voters and those in education, pronounced losses were also sustained among core ÖVP groups (farmers, self-employed and free professionals, civil servants)<sup>24</sup>. The loss of key groups caused alarm within party circles and raised major doubts about the wisdom of Busek's strategy. His desired opening to the liberal middle seemed to have alienated traditional party supporters without simultaneously enhancing the party's attractiveness to employees, secular voters or even workers. Most ÖVP voters deserting the party had not been lured to another party but had instead not voted (Neuwirth 1995:461). The party seemed to be confronted by two options: a concentration on core supporters or the modernisation option of appealing to wavering and unaligned voters (Müller, Plasser and Ulram forthcoming). Neither choice was without risk: the former entailed appealing to groups in society whose numbers continued to dwindle while the latter could potentially cause electoral oblivion. The division was exacerbated as advocates of one or other strategy also tended to think similarly about the 'black-blue' question. Traditionalists were more inclined to a small coalition while modernisers were more favourably disposed to any other option. Again, the consequences of such actions were incalculable. An alliance with the FPÖ might return a Christian Democrat to the chancellery but this would contradict the wishes of 65% of the electorate who favoured another Grand Coalition (Ulram and Müller 1995:28). Furthermore, Kriechbaumer (1995:90) attributed the desertion of 74,000 former ÖVP voters to the Greens and the LiF just before the election to the growing fear of an ÖVP-FPÖ alliance. Caught between strategic alternatives with uncertain pay-offs, the party entered into coalition negotiations with the SPÖ in a desperate state.

### **The First Collapse of Grand Coalition government**

The ÖVP-SPÖ government was resumed as anticipated although its creation was protracted and difficult. The Social Democrats were divided over the issue of budget

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<sup>23</sup> This is more significant than may first appear. The Austrian constitution has been subject to an extensive number of amendments (roughly 100, the majority of which have been since 1970), special constitutional laws and constitutional regulations in ordinary law and state treaties (Welan 2001:71). For example, legislation on schools effectively falls under constitutional law and thus requires a two-thirds majority.

cuts and Vranitzky's detachment from party was now a weakness rather than a vote-winner. The ÖVP was equally plagued by difficulties. Always a contentious choice as leader, Busek's position now looked untenable. Leading figures in the party (such as Lower Austrian Landeshauptmann Pröll and the deputy party chairman in Upper Austria, Pühringer) speculated publicly and privately about leadership renewal. Eventually, Pröll was charged with the chairmanship of an internal commission whose task was to investigate leadership options. In the period running up to the party conference, the scene of the decisive vote, three candidates, Schüssel (former General Secretary of the Chamber of Business and Economic Affairs Minister since 1989), Khol (recently named parliamentary leader) and Leitl (the designated Upper Austrian deputy party chairman), were discussed by the commission. Schüssel enjoyed the highest standing in polls (Kriechbaumer 1995:94) and so despite his connection to Busek<sup>25</sup> and the regional and organisational differences his candidacy provoked<sup>26</sup>, he was elected unopposed by the conference in April 1995 following the commission's endorsement. Schüssel's maiden speech in which he declared his determination to become chancellor and to make the ÖVP number one again instilled some hope into the ailing party even if such targets looked unrealistic at a time when the ÖVP had fallen to third place in opinion polls.

The change in leadership initially helped to avert the possible collapse of the government as the new vice-chancellor and Foreign Minister established a reasonable working relationship with Vranitzky and a reshuffle brought fresh faces from both parties into government<sup>27</sup>. Nonetheless, popular dissatisfaction with politics had not disappeared and was given further sustenance through Austrian entry into the EU. The coalition's previous estimates of the costs and benefits of EU entry had been very optimistic. The anticipated price drops failed to materialise and the cost of membership, estimated at 12 billion Schillings in 1994, was roughly four times as much (Rosner, van der Bellen and Winckler 1999:147). This together with the continuing problem of transit led to "an Alpine variety of Euroscepticism" (Sully 1997:107). Moreover, budget problems resulting from the earlier miscalculations also shattered the short-lived harmony of the coalition. Open conflict developed between the SPÖ Finance Minister

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<sup>24</sup> See Table 4.5, Chapter 4.

<sup>25</sup> Of the candidates, he was thought to be closest to Busek in terms of his ideas about policy and the party.

<sup>26</sup> He drew more support from the western and southern Land parties, the Business League and the Farmers' League. The eastern parties and the ÖAAB were split between Leitl and Khol.

<sup>27</sup> On the ÖVP's side both Busek and Mock left cabinet to return to their parliamentary seats while Johannes Ditz took Schüssel's former post as economics minister. Another interesting change was the party's replacement of Maria Rauch-Kallat as ministry of environmental protection by Martin Bartenstein.

Staribacher and the ÖVP-run Economics Ministry over the scale of the budget deficit and over the means to combat this. Since 1993, Austria's compliance with the Maastricht criteria had been in doubt as the budget deficit and state debt increased. In order to conform to EMU's convergence requirements, the ÖVP pushed determinedly for cutbacks in social spending. The SPÖ, though willing in principle to accept some cuts in expenditure, pressed for tax increases to offset the austerity measures and looked to extend cutbacks to ÖVP social constituencies, such as farmers and small businessmen. Bolstered by its encouraging recovery under Schüssel, the People's Party refused to back down and in October 1995, it withdrew from the negotiations, resulting in the dissolution of parliament and new elections scheduled for December.

### **1995 Nationalrat election**

Schüssel's decision to end the life of the government was the first clear sign of his willingness to gamble rather than let the party drift into electoral oblivion as a permanent prop for the SPÖ. The collapse of the government, however, provided further ammunition for Haider's anti-establishment rhetoric. The inability of the government to solve Austria's problems using the same tried and trusted methods and its improbable estimates of the costs of EU accession imparted FPÖ claims with a certain legitimacy. Most predictions therefore envisaged further FPÖ gains. It was also uncertain whether a Grand Coalition could be resurrected after such a loss of trust. The campaign unsurprisingly was quite polarised and focused on the cause of the dissolution of the government. The SPÖ accused the ÖVP of plotting the end of coalition in order to form an alliance with the FPÖ<sup>28</sup> and presented its own "socially just" programme of budget cuts. The ÖVP's campaign centred on its 'Schüssel-Ditz' course<sup>29</sup>, promising extensive cutbacks in order to preserve Austria's competitive situation. Yet declarations about the necessity of change lacked credibility coming from a party which had been in government for eight years (Sully 1996:637). The FPÖ once more constructed its campaign around Haider and the paramount themes of political corruption and privileges. This was less successful than the previous year, however, as the budget issue and questions of social justice and pensions dominated the political agenda. The prevention of waste of public funds did remain an issue (rated third in importance by the electorate) but the foreigners question was no longer as salient. In addition, Haider's Krumpendorf speech to former Waffen SS members once again cast doubt upon the democratic legitimacy of the FPÖ and its leader.

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Vranitzky described every vote for the ÖVP as a vote for the FPÖ.

<sup>29</sup> This was a deliberate echo of the Raab-Kamitz course from the 1950s.

While opinion polls correctly predicted that fewer votes would be exchanged between the parties, the impressive gains of the SPÖ (+3.2%) came as a surprise and despite the dissatisfaction with such an early election, both government parties won votes with the opposition losing ground (FPÖ -0.6%, Greens -2.5%, LiF -0.5%). The ÖVP's modest gains (+0.6%) halted its disturbing descent but were slightly disappointing in view of its aims. As the SPÖ had recovered more of its former supporters, the declared goal of becoming the largest party was even more remote. The party's stronger stance in the budget negotiations did bring the ÖVP some electoral return. Gains were made at the expense of Liberal Forum and the Greens<sup>30</sup> and voting shifts were also registered in analysis by social group. Among white collar workers the ÖVP expanded its voting share although still remaining behind the SPÖ (Plasser and Ulram 2000:24). However, the ÖVP continued to lose favour among women in employment, young voters, civil servants and employees in public service and workers<sup>31</sup>. In view of this decline, it was apparent that the Christian Democrats were still struggling to formulate a broad, socially inclusive appeal.

Although many observers before the election had anticipated a black-blue administration, this coalition option no longer seemed as plausible after the election. Haider's comments in Krumpendorf seemed to confirm his critics' worst fears about the FPÖ's connection to right wing extremism and for a time speculation abounded about his possible prosecution and/or forced resignation from parliament (Sully 1997:129). Again, the ÖVP found itself confronted by the co-operation/exclusion dilemma but this time the mood within the party seemed to be more negative. In one meeting of the party executive before the election four members (Carinthian leader Zernatto, Tirolean chairman Weingartner, Economics Minister Ditz and parliamentary leader Khol) were reported to have registered their unwillingness to take part in any ÖVP-FPÖ coalition (Kurier 18/10/1995). The party as a whole had not discounted a possible black-blue alliance during the campaign but in the summer of 1995, *Klubobmann* Khol imported the concept of the 'constitutional bow' from post-war Italy to explain why he regarded the FPÖ as an unsuitable coalition partner. As the FPÖ, according to its recent policy documents, advocated a 'Third Republic' with an entirely new constitution, it could not be considered a party fit for government (see Sully 1997:143-147). Following the outcry about Krumpendorf, the resumption of the Grand Coalition was virtually unavoidable. Nonetheless, the suspicion that the ÖVP was secretly awaiting the first available opportunity to ally with the FPÖ persisted, especially after the controversial academic

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<sup>30</sup> Analysis of vote shifts between parties at <http://sunsite.univie.ac.at/Austria/elections/nrw95/nrwstr95.html> accessed 09/03/03.

and FPÖ parliamentarian Braunecker was elected as the third president of the Nationalrat with the help of the ÖVP and conversely, the FPÖ helped elect the ÖVP's Waltraud Klasnic as governor of Styria. It was also clear that Khol's model did not rule out co-operation with the FPÖ per se. If the party were to drop its more radical plans, it would once more become an acceptable coalition bedfellow.

Inevitably, the budget plan was the main subject during the SPÖ-ÖVP negotiations. A compromise solution was agreed although it was generally believed that the new budget was closer to Christian Democratic demands. Most of the financial consolidation came from spending cuts with some increased revenue (primarily an energy tax and increases in capital taxation). Cutbacks stretched across almost all areas of government spending, including less access to and reduced unemployment payments, decreased family spending and changes in the pension system. The reforms introduced were successful in consolidating the budget and bringing the country into line with the Maastricht criteria yet as the first election for Austria's European Parliament representatives illustrated, these cost-cutting measures did nothing to endear the coalition to the public.

The EP election in October 1996 was won by the ÖVP with 29.7%, narrowly relegating the SPÖ into second place but the Christian Democratic triumph was overshadowed by the success of the FPÖ which polled 27.5%. The swing to the FPÖ in this election confirmed that the party had overcome the temporary setbacks of the previous year. The drift away from the Grand Coalition parties was once more evident in the Viennese local elections in 1996. In what had always been its traditional stronghold the SPÖ lost 8.7% and the ÖVP fell by 2.8% while the FPÖ gained 5.4% to 27.9%. While locked into an unhappy marriage, the coalition partners could not prevent this trend and signs of tension multiplied. Disputes broke out over the representation of the nation in the EU between Chancellor Vranitzky and Foreign Minister and vice-Chancellor Schüssel, over the introduction of an annual toll for motorways<sup>32</sup>, changes in military service and over the privatisation of the Creditanstalt-Bankverein through its sale to the Bank Austria. The last of these disputes was by far the most serious and threatened to bring down the coalition.

For many years plans had been made to privatise Austria's second largest bank, Creditanstalt, regarded as the 'black' counterpart to the 'red' Bank Austria. However,

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<sup>31</sup> See Tables 4.5, 4.10 Chapter 4.

the scheme caused serious coalition conflict when the socialist-dominated Bank Austria put in the best offer. The ÖVP saw this as an attempt to expand the SPÖ domain rather than genuine privatisation. It initially discussed with the FPÖ a possible alliance to prevent the sale and organised a special sitting of parliament to this end. A parliamentary defeat for the sale of CA engineered through the ÖVP and the FPÖ would effectively have broken the coalition. This was prevented through the intervention of President Klestil who called on the coalition parties to avoid new elections and then through a long coalition committee meeting which sanctioned the sale if specific provisions were met<sup>33</sup>. While the deal enabled a way out of the crisis, it had a number of significant consequences. SPÖ Finance Minister Klima who had played a prominent role in the negotiations now became Chancellor as a wearied-looking Vranitzky stepped down. For the ÖVP, the sale could not be interpreted as anything other than a humiliating defeat and a reminder of the party's weakness while still junior partner to the SPÖ. Although the change at the top of the SPÖ leadership temporarily helped restore some personal trust between the two parties, the affair left a lingering feeling of resentment among Christian Democrats.

### **Schüssel-Khol Course**

The CA fiasco was a demoralising blow to the party and inevitably gave rise to speculation about a possible leadership challenge. Although the party's position in the polls had stabilised to an extent, it was neither able to cut into the SPÖ's lead nor prevent the gains of the FPÖ. Schüssel's position was further undermined later in 1997 when he was reported to have made derogatory remarks about Bundesbank president Tietmeyer and other foreign diplomats at an EU summit. For once, the ÖVP's propensity for leadership renewal was kept in check and Schüssel clung on to both the party chairmanship and the foreign minister's office<sup>34</sup>. To some extent, this was due to the new discipline being exerted in the federal party. Former General Secretary Michael Graff commented that a chairman debate was taking place but not in public as any party members speaking out would find themselves "flattened" (Der Standard 07/07/1997). Crucial to this new central authority was *Klubobmann* Khol. The parliamentary party had become the dominant source of new ideas while the extra-parliamentary national

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<sup>32</sup> This also divided both the parties as well however with a number of regional party leaders seeking exceptions and changes.

<sup>33</sup> The main concessions offered to the ÖVP were the reduction of the Viennese municipalities' share in Bank Austria and guarantees about CA employees' jobs (Der Standard 13/01/1997).

<sup>34</sup> A parliamentary motion of no confidence in Schüssel was defeated with the help of the SPÖ.

party apparatus was now viewed by most as weak<sup>35</sup>. Such was the power of the ÖVP parliamentary leader, it was suggested that Khol did not need to strive for the party chairmanship as he already had it de facto (OÖ Nachrichten 11/12/1997).

The Schüssel-Khol duo was initially assumed to be a marriage of convenience between the liberal and conservative factions. Schüssel represented, in the opinion of most observers, a continuation of Busck's ideas while Khol was renowned as one of the party's foremost traditionalists whose preference was for a 'Christian Democratic Volkspartei with conservative values'. Khol's vision of the party seemed to be an attempt to shift the ÖVP to the right to head off the challenge of the FPÖ. The right-wing tinge to Khol's rhetoric was at times unmistakable. For instance, he criticised the extremist links of the Greens and declared his desire "to get people out of their social hammocks" and into work (Die Presse 07/05/1998) while in his confrontations with the Social Democrats, he frequently resembled an opposition politician. Family policy assumed a vital role within the ÖVP's policies but the party's turn towards populist-laced traditionalism was equally visible in its rejection of a number of SPÖ suggestions (e.g. lowering of the homosexual age of consent, reduction of the legal limit of alcohol for motorists, abolition of blame from divorce cases) and in its push for stronger controls on immigration and asylum. In addition, the ÖVP continued to advocate a more comprehensive privatisation programme on one side and welfare and pension cutbacks on the other. In this respect, the party had not entirely abandoned its market-centred 1995 platform. Indeed, Khol outlined his conception of "Bürgergesellschaft", a version of civil society in which the state's tasks would be further reduced to be replaced by voluntary social engagement (Sperl 2000:166). However, the Bürgergesellschaft debate lacked popular resonance and in any case, economic restructuring was secondary to the new emphasis on traditionalism, much to the irritation of the Business League.

In contrast to Khol's frequent and prominent interjections, Schüssel did not provide the party with strong leadership. Schüssel often preferred to sit out political controversies and as foreign minister was also tied up in EU affairs, particularly during the Austrian EU presidency. Nonetheless, earlier assessments of Schüssel as a typically Austrian consensus-based politician appeared to have underestimated his willingness to gamble and his desire for change (Sperl 2000:16). On this there was broad agreement

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<sup>35</sup> For example, regional parties irritated by the lack of energy and ideas coming from the central apparatus attempted to put pressure on Schüssel to replace the two general secretaries Maria Rauch-Kallat und Othmar Karas (Der Standard 12/02/1997).

between Schüssel and Khol<sup>36</sup>. Contrary to expectations, there was no real *federal* counterbalance to Khol's influence and the party seemed to have embarked upon a more right-wing course. The resignation of Johannes Ditz, one of the most prominent liberals, in 1996 had brought a swift end to the former Schüssel-Ditz course and in its place developed the less liberal, more traditionalist Schüssel-Khol course (Profil Nr.25, 1996). Schüssel himself now described the ÖVP as "a conscious conservative party" which would not "run after any new target groups" (Kurier 09/04/1997).

Khol's desire for a disciplined *Klub* also put strong pressure on parliamentarians to follow the conservative path. Consequently, a number of internal dissenters spoke out against the "new fundamentalism" of the party. The Platform for Open Politics was formed in 1996 as a pressure group seeking more liberalism within the ÖVP and Austrian politics in general<sup>37</sup>. This development was also welcomed by the chairman of the Young People's Party (JVP), Werner Amon, who warned against the ideological constriction of the party in 1996<sup>38</sup>. Such complaints were not totally ignored. For example, Schüssel, responding to the new group, stressed in 1996 that he wanted the ÖVP to present itself as the open middle (Der Standard 23/10/1996) and the following year General Secretary Rauch-Kallat also announced initiatives to enhance the party's appeal to liberal voters (Der Standard 14/04/1997). However, these interjections were greeted with scepticism by the dissident liberals and failed to prevent the widespread impression that the politics of the national party increasingly corresponded to the beliefs of its parliamentary leader. By the start of 1999, the political scientist and occasional ÖVP adviser Fritz Plasser described the ÖVP's policy positions as "arch-conservative" (Profil Nr.3, 1999).

### 1999 Nationalrat Election

Throughout 1998, the FPÖ had been entangled in problems. Its infrastructure spokesman and parliamentary treasurer Rosenstingl fled to Brazil after a financial scandal while the central party eventually had to step in to re-impose order on the fractious Salzburg Land party. The FPÖ's attacks on the EU had not been especially successful and the attempted *Volksbegehren* on keeping the Schilling flopped (Böhm and Lahodynsky 2001:117). Nonetheless, neither of the government parties took the opportunity to benefit from the

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<sup>36</sup> The theme of an unavoidable "Wende" is central in Khol's account of the failure of the Grand Coalition and the shift towards black-blue (Khol 2001).

<sup>37</sup> More about the group's aims can be found at <http://www.plattform.or.at/index2.html> accessed 20/05/03.

<sup>38</sup> Nationalrat president and former ÖVP Klubobmann Neisser's critical comments about a lack of openness and intolerance were also widely interpreted as criticism of Khol's leadership of the parliamentary group although Neisser later denied that this (Der Standard 07/12/1996).

FPÖ's woes. As the elections of 1999 loomed, tensions over issues such as NATO, state-controlled media appointments, the handling of the EU presidency and even the timing of the Nationalrat election were increasingly aired in public. Several observers compared the relationship between the parties to a married couple either rowing in public (Thurnher 2000:20) or immediately before a separation (Böhm and Lahodynsky 2001:109) with the ÖVP the more belligerent of the partners. According to General Secretary Karas, the ÖVP had to portray itself as the only future-orientated party by sharpening its profile (ÖÖ Nachrichten 26/11/1998) but for many the incessant feuding gave the impression that the election campaign had already started.

Although the ÖVP approached 1999 with some trepidation, the state of the party was not as critical as it had been in 1994. Schüssel, as outlined earlier, had not given the party strong direction and had been damaged by earlier scandal but with no apparent alternatives, he was reasonably secure at least until the election. Possible successors such as Agriculture minister Molterer or Khol himself remained loyal to the vice-chancellor. Although in 1998 the EU Commissioner Franz Fischler criticised the reduction of the ÖVP's themes to a "minimal conservatism" based on law and order and the family, there was no indication he wanted to return to national politics. Even the powerful Lower Austria leader Pröll seemed content with provincial politics and despite disagreements with Schüssel refrained from directly undermining him. In most opinion polls the ÖVP had consolidated its strength and was once again above the FPÖ and election results in the provinces in 1998 were moderately encouraging<sup>39</sup>. There was, however, little hope of realising Schüssel's goal of becoming number one. The public relations acumen of Klima and his business manager Rudas appeared to insulate the Social Democrats from the various scandals continuing to surround the party. In addition, the stricter line on asylum taken by Interior Minister Schlögl helped the Social Democrats combat the Haider-factor.

During 1999 the Grand Coalition was again tainted by incessant squabbling. Even though Schüssel had earlier appeared to confirm that a resumption of the Grand Coalition was his preferred choice<sup>40</sup>, growing tension over budgetary policy began to cast doubt upon this outcome. The ÖVP argued for more money to be given to families and for a tax reform, even hinting that a resumption of the coalition might depend on the SPÖ's willingness to concede paid maternity leave for all. SPÖ finance minister

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<sup>39</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>40</sup> For example, early in January he was reported to have said that realistically the FPÖ was not a viable government party due to its anti-Europeanism (Der Standard 07/01/1999).

Edlinger initially resisted the ÖVP's demands but conceded the tax reform in the wake of the Landtag elections in March.

None of the Landtag elections brought much joy to the governing parties but the provincial election with the most national significance took place in Carinthia where the FPÖ dramatically recovered from its difficulties of the previous year to finish first. Despite previous assurances from the Carinthian ÖVP leader that the People's Party would not support Haider's claims to be governor, the ÖVP effectively sealed Haider's election through its refusal to back the SPÖ candidate. This complicity in Haider's success together with the renewed gains of the FPÖ<sup>41</sup> caused further anxiety in the coalition. Rather than compete on Haider's favourite issues, both the ÖVP and the SPÖ now attempted to counter the FPÖ by attacking each other. Thus, in the European election in June, the SPÖ derided Christian Democratic plans to take the country into NATO. The result (SPÖ gains, FPÖ losses) seemed to justify this confrontational strategy and consequently, both parties adopted it for the Nationalrat election<sup>42</sup>. However, in doing so, the already strained relationship between the parties was further soured and many commentators doubted whether a Grand Coalition was now actually feasible<sup>43</sup>.

The ÖVP's campaign reflected many of the programmatic developments of the previous years. The main electoral themes were very much in line with the agenda promoted by *Klubobmann* Khol. Family policy and the demand for paid maternity leave for all was central to the ÖVP's platform but in addition, the party also focused on Austria as an economic location and law and order issues (most notably, in the proposal that repeat sex offenders be treated medically). However, the campaign was dominated by personalities and coalition speculation rather than policy ideas as the SPÖ accused the ÖVP of plotting a black-blue alliance with occasional counter-accusations coming from the Christian Democratic camp about the secret Social Democratic desire for SPÖ-Green, SPÖ-FPÖ or even SPÖ-Green-LiF governments.

Schüssel, in contrast to his predecessors Busek and Riegler, was keen to leave all post-election options open. Not all in the party were as enthusiastic about sharing power with the FPÖ as Martin Bartenstein whose campaign role was diminished after he

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<sup>41</sup> In all three March elections the FPÖ won votes even in Salzburg where the party had been hopelessly divided.

<sup>42</sup> See Der Standard 13/07/1999.

advocated black-blue too strongly. However, many key national figures (e.g. Khol, Gehrler) agreed that the party should remain flexible and while some prominent *Landesfürsten* (regional party barons) were against FPÖ government participation (Pühringer, Görg), there was no provincial consensus as others stressed (Pröll, Sausgruber) that ÖVP could not restrict itself before the election. However, having been relegated to third in polls by the recovery of the FPÖ, Schüssel signalled a strategic rethink by declaring that if the party finished third, it would go into opposition.

Schüssel's declaration did mobilise many voters<sup>44</sup> but was not sufficient to prevent the party from finishing behind the FPÖ by 415 votes. The final result was the worst ever for both the SPÖ (33.2%, -4.8 since 1995) and the ÖVP (26.9%, -1.9) and a new high for the Freedom Party (26.9%, +5). The Greens also gained an unprecedented share of the vote (7.4%, +2.6) while the Liberal Forum fell below the 4% threshold and lost all its seats in parliament. The proportion of people voting for a different party actually fell in comparison to 1995 but this masked the extent of change as a record number of voters abstained which particularly hit the SPÖ. Closer analysis of the ÖVP's support illustrated the ambiguous electoral pay-off of the Schüssel-Khol strategy. The ÖVP recovered much of its former popularity among civil servants and public service workers, narrowing the SPÖ's lead to 3 points (Plasser, Ulram and Sommer 2000:72). Among farmers too, the ÖVP successfully countered the challenge of the FPÖ<sup>45</sup>. Although this is difficult to connect directly to the ÖVP's direction in recent years<sup>46</sup>, it does seem to confirm that the party did manage to consolidate among its traditional core constituencies. On the other hand, the party lost 5% among white collar employees and while its losses among workers were small, it remained very much the minority party in this social group. Indeed among young, male blue collar workers, the party polled a mere 10% (Plasser and Ulram 2000:30).

The shift to the right had not enhanced the party's competence on typical FPÖ issues in the eyes of the electorate. According to polls conducted throughout the 1990s, the ÖVP had not made significant gains by 1999 in assessments of its competence on preventing waste of public funds, fighting corruption and privileges, fighting crime and

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<sup>43</sup> Particularly significant in this respect was the statement by second Nationalrat president Neisser, an ÖVP politician favourably inclined towards the Grand Coalition, that the alliance with the SPÖ had had its day (Der Standard 17/07/1999).

<sup>44</sup> According to Fessel-Institut figures 40% of ÖVP voters included this as a motive for voting for the party (Plasser, Ulram and Sommer 2000:60).

<sup>45</sup> See Table 4.5, Chapter 4.

<sup>46</sup> Among the Fessel-Institut's alternatives for voting motivation is "because (the party) represents my interests best of all, i.e. following tradition" which 69% of ÖVP voters mentioned as a reason (Plasser, Ulram and Sommer 2000:60).

dealing with the issue of foreigners and it trailed the SPÖ and the FPÖ on all four issue areas (Müller 2000:34). In addition to this failure to tackle FPÖ issues successfully, the party's economic competence (securing jobs, securing pensions and reducing the tax burden) declined (Müller 2000:35). Although the Schüssel-Khol course had restored the party's popularity in some of its core social groups, the adoption of a more traditionalist and conservative position had not boosted its general competence ratings. The disproportionately heavy losses among white collar employees also suggested that there was also a risk that such a strategy could antagonise other groups.

### **III. Programmatic Development (1990-99)**

Throughout the decade, the ÖVP made several attempts to re-market its appeal under Busek who demanded a "new formation" of the party and then later Schüssel using the slogan "ÖVP-Neu". In addition to these efforts to freshen the party's image, a new *Grundsatzprogramm* was passed by the 1995 party conference. It will be argued in this section, however, that while the *Grundsatzprogramm* contained some interesting developments and subtle changes, its importance within the party was very limited. From 1995 onwards, the party's ideological identity at the national level was largely determined by *Klubobmann* Khol. As mentioned earlier, the General Secretary position was increasingly bypassed and it was noticeable that few major programmatic initiatives emanated from the federal party apparatus. Instead, the tone was increasingly set by the parliamentary leader. Therefore, this section will initially look at the *Grundsatzprogramm*, comparing it to the earlier Salzburg programme and the *Zukunftsmanifest* before analysing more recent trends.

#### ***Grundsatzprogramm***

In the aftermath of the 1990 defeat, the party initially concentrated on organisational questions<sup>47</sup> but by the autumn of 1993, a new commission was set up under the leadership of defence minister Fasslabend to engage in a dialogue about the future with young people and representatives of Austria's spiritual life. After this a draft programme was discussed by the leaders of the Leagues and provincial leaders and then presented to the party conference. The aim was to incorporate the ideas of the *Zukunftsmanifest* (1985) and the new concept of the eco-social market as well as take account of new social developments. While the stress was on continuity, Fasslabend argued that a change in the hierarchy of values was necessary, for example, through a greater emphasis on security (OÖ Nachrichten 28/07/1993). What, in Fasslabend's view,

remained crucial was that the party remained in the centre. The programme would not herald any “lurch to the right” (Kurier 02/04/1995) and its target audience was the entire population (ÖÖ Nachrichten 14/03/1995).

The writing of the programme caused some problems. Khol wanted the programme to include his description of the party as a Christian Democratic party with conservative values but was resisted by regional leaders. Conversely, Khol did succeed in removing explicit mention of homosexuals from the section on tolerance. The eco-social market model which had almost entirely dropped out of public consciousness was also viewed sceptically by business representatives<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, both the Business League and the ÖAAB were critical of the ambivalent commitment to the social partnership in early draft versions (Kurier 07/01/1995). As well as correcting this, the revision process also significantly enhanced the prominence of ideas about the family within the programme. The debate about the programme, however, was completely overshadowed by the electoral debacle of 1994. With a leadership battle unavoidable, programmatic considerations were largely ignored both in the party and in the wider public but despite this, Viennese party boss Görg’s suggestion to delay the programme to allow for more discussion was rejected.

### **Principles and self-identity**

While the 1995 programme restated many of the established formulas of Christian Democracy (Christian image of man and social justice - Article 1.1; freedom limited by responsibility- Article 1.2; personalism- Article 3.1), subtle changes were also visible. Interestingly, this was the first time that the ÖVP described itself as a Christian Democratic party. Less conspicuous was the change from an “understanding of man and society based on Christianity” (Salzburg Programme 3.1.1) to an image of man based on “Christian-humanistic” ideas (Article 3.1), signalling a further opening to society. The party’s environmentalism was also incorporated into its understanding of humanity: people were a part of creation but also had a responsibility towards it (Article 3.1). In addition, the ÖVP’s Europeanism acquired a new centrality in its thinking. Like the *Zukunftsmanifest*, the programme avoids the “progressive middle” label but the ÖVP still viewed itself as people’s party based on social integration and open to people from different regions, professions and ages (Article 1.5).

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<sup>47</sup> Busek believed that the Salzburg programme (which was still the valid *Grundsatzprogramm*) was fine in terms of contents (ÖÖ Nachrichten 02/07/1991) whereas the organisational condition of the party (both financially and with regard to the distribution of power) was far poorer..

The party's principles were also subject to some revision. Freedom, responsibility, sustainability, justice, achievement, security, partnership, subsidiarity, participation and tolerance were now its basic values. The most significant alterations were the substitution of justice for equality which had never been fully accepted within the party, the incorporation of the green theme of sustainability and the addition of security. The lengthy list of principles<sup>49</sup> illustrated the difficulty in balancing essential Christian Democratic values (freedom, responsibility, subsidiarity) with concessions to liberals (participation, diversity and tolerance) and to traditionalists (security). The growing influence of the last group could also be seen in the programme's concern that society be oriented to durable virtues like "decency, honesty, thriftiness, courage, endeavour, willingness to take responsibility and reliability" (Article 2).

### **Economic and social policy**

Economic policy was to be based on the concept of the eco-social market founded on freedom, achievement, responsibility and solidarity. The principles of the social market model fundamentally remained in place but with an added environmental dimension (see below). The greater stress placed upon market mechanisms in the *Zukunftsmanifest* was maintained in the new *Grundsatzprogramm*. State involvement in the economy was to be limited to a minimum and where a service could be better provided by the private sector, the state should withdraw. Tax revenue must be used in an effective and frugal way (Article 4.1, 5.4) while finance policy was to be guided by fighting inflation, budget consolidation and structural improvements (Article 5.4). There was, however, still a considerable social element to the ÖVP's economic thinking. The aim of the government was still full employment and while greater flexibility in work was necessary, employees and workers had to participate in these decisions (Article 5.3). However, like the *Zukunftsmanifest*, there was a stress on the need for adaptation in social policy: ever increasing expenditure could not be sustained, abuse of welfare was to be punished and pension reform was essential (Article 6.7).

### **Foreign Policy**

The chief development in ÖVP foreign policy was its new enthusiasm for European integration. Earlier programmes had backed moves towards closer co-operation but limited by Austrian neutrality, had not actually advocated accession. By 1995, however, the ÖVP had moved to an orthodox Christian Democratic position on EU integration.

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<sup>48</sup> For example, the leader of the Business League, Leopold Maderthaner, argued that environmental controls could only be achieved in international co-operation and the costs of such measures could not be borne solely by business (OÖ Nachrichten 28/07/1993).

<sup>49</sup> The contrast with the CDU is quite striking. See chapter 5, section III.

Pro-Europeanism has become part of its self-identity and the party staked its claim to be the European party in Austria (Article 1.4). Furthermore, it backed moves towards currency and political unity as well as the accession of Austria's eastern neighbours as soon as possible (Article 9.1).

### **Family Policy and the Role of Women**

Family policy continued to play a significant role in Christian Democratic ideology. The ÖVP still promoted the traditional family but with concessions to changed gender roles. Equality for women was vital but so was more appreciation of domestic work (Article 6.2). The two parent family continued to be the ideal which carried out "indispensable tasks" in society. Other forms of co-habitation were recognised and to be supported if necessary but financial support was primarily aimed at traditional families to ensure that raising children was not financially prohibitive (Article 6.3). More flexibility in work and greater childcare facilities were also called for to create a more family-friendly environment. In essence, this limited form of adaptation did not deviate substantially from the earlier *Zukunftsmanifest*.

### **Environmentalism**

The greening of the ÖVP which had begun in the 1970s carries on with the introduction of the eco-social market concept. The addition of the 'eco' prefix entailed recognising the polluter principle, tax policy which took into account limited supplies of raw materials and energy sources, a ban on environmentally polluting products and support for greater use of renewable energy sources (Article 5.1). Environmental protection, furthermore, was to "play a role in every decision" (Article 7.3) and the party clearly rejected nuclear power. The eco-dimension of the programme was not as extensive as the *Zukunftsmanifest* but the party's commitment remained fairly strong.

### **Crime and Security**

As noted earlier, security was included as a principle for the first time and Article 4.6 called for quicker legal proceedings against criminals, for appropriate punishment and for a battle against drug abuse. Moreover, there was also a populist tinge to some sections such as commitment to stamp out abuse of the social system (Article 6.7) and stop illegal immigration (Article 6.6). The amount of space dedicated to such issues was not extensive but it still signalled a new programmatic direction for the ÖVP.

### **A Threadbare Ideological Patchwork?**

Overall, the *Grundsatzprogramm* reflected the different strands of opinion within the party (market liberalism, social Catholicism, cultural traditionalism, cultural liberalism). Earlier programmatic adaptations (environmentalism, more market-centred economic policy, limited acknowledgement of non-traditional families) were repeated with little new innovation. Aside from the party's pro-Europeanism, the most striking feature was the growing influence of Khol and the other traditionalists which could be seen in the inclusion of law and order themes. However, the section on foreigners also upheld the right to asylum and the influence of the liberal wing was also evident in the espousal of tolerance, diversity and the support for young people (Article 6.4). This programmatic balance is not surprising: the primary aim of programmes is internal cohesion<sup>50</sup>. Inevitably, in creating this balance, differences of opinion were underplayed and controversial positions eschewed in the interests of party cohesion (Müller 1997:281). Yet the 1995 document was seen as especially bland and had negligible impact, particularly in comparison to media and popular interest in the revisions of the SPÖ and FPÖ's programmes later in the decade<sup>51</sup>. However, even in terms of intra-party integration, the programme made little contribution as the divisions over the leadership question entirely overshadowed the passing of the *Grundsatzprogramm*. Therefore, during the 1995 party conference celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the ÖVP's existence, hardly any discussion took place about the new programme. As the following section will show, the programme's significance dropped even more in subsequent years.

### **Post-1995 Programmatic Developments**

At roughly the same time as the *Grundsatzprogramm* was going through a final stage of reworking, parliamentary leader Khol chose to outline his ideas to *Profil* (Nr.13, 1995). His vision of the ÖVP does not differ radically from that presented in the *Grundsatzprogramm* yet the tone was more provocative and the assertions more certain. The family based on marriage was "unique", taxes had to be "consistently reduced" and state property and industry had to be privatised. The populist edge was also stronger: illegal immigration was a strong concern; immigrants committing crime were to be consistently deported; scope for police initiative was essential; and drug abuse had to be tackled. Over the following legislative period, it was clear that the party's priorities were being set chiefly by Khol as shown in section II. The reluctance of the party to endorse new legislation on weapons, the obsession with family policy, the heightened interest in law and order issues and the debate about civil society all illustrated the influence of the

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<sup>50</sup> See chapter I.

parliamentary leader. The direction of the ÖVP under the Schüssel-Khol team was seen by some as a loss of orientation and a lack of consistency (e.g. Profil Nr.50, 1997; Business League General Secretary Mitterlehner found the party's embrace of family policy inconsistent with its failure to endorse stricter weapons regulations) while others viewed it as a lurch to the right (e.g. der Standard editor Gerfried Sperl). The latter view was to some extent shared by members of the party, such as JVP leader Werner Amon who feared the ideological constriction of the party could lead to an excessively conservative image.

The relative insignificance of the *Grundsatzprogramm* was exemplified by the fate of the eco-social market concept so central to the party in the early 1990s (Müller 1997:281). The ÖVP's rejection of demands for an eco-tax in 1998 was indicative of the fading green credentials of the party. The Greens had adopted the eco-social economy model and it was revealing that former ÖVP leader and foremost proponent of the model, Riegler, was quite vocal in his praise of Green party leader van der Bellen (der Standard 07/08/1998). The Christian Democratic perspective seemed to be summed up by another former leader, Taus, who believed that environmental themes were not of paramount importance and that contrary to expectations the limits of growth had not been reached (der Standard 28/01/1999). The ÖVP Environment Minister, Bartenstein, was also adjudged to lack both interest in the topic and an appropriate background<sup>52</sup> and was not rated highly by environmental organisations (Profil Nr.47, 1996). Admittedly, the decreased significance of green issues within ÖVP policy and programme in the second half of the decade was not out of step with the Austrian public. After 1995, environmental protection was no longer in the five most important political priorities among the electorate (Müller 2000:38). Nevertheless, the return to 'grey' themes and the downplaying of the eco-social market concept after 1995 did highlight the ÖVP's failure to develop durable programmatic ideas capable of generating consensus. Therefore, only a few years after its publication, the *Grundsatzprogramm* appeared largely irrelevant. Whereas it had woven together the different aspects of the party's identity, under the Schüssel-Khol axis, traditionalist themes were stressed above all else.

#### **IV. Organisational Developments**

The defeat of 1990 prompted the Christian Democrats to enlist a professional company to analyse the party organisation and suggest changes. Many of the proposed ideas were

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<sup>51</sup> Anton Pelinka's assessment of the *Grundsatzprogramm* as "a modest contribution which would excite no-one" (quoted in OÖ Nachrichten 24/03/1995) was not untypical of most evaluations.

<sup>52</sup> Previously employed in the pharmaceutical industry, he had also been industry spokesman for the ÖVP between 1991 and 1994.

incorporated into the party statute in 1991, including an explicit commitment of the Land parties and the Leagues to acknowledge the centrality of the central party, abide by its resolutions and co-operate on election campaigns, the introduction of direct membership (i.e. without affiliation to an auxiliary organisation) and the re-introduction of policy committees. Though the reforms were not entirely ineffectual, as Müller and Steininger (1994:22-23) point out, there was no means of enforcing the new rules about the priority of the central party. Thus, they failed to stop the numerous public squabbles between leading factional and regional party figures which continued unabated.

The most obvious example of an ÖVP Land party failing to put the interests of the central party above its own was in Tirol where the party was now known as the Tyrolean People's Party but other instances abound. Where the party was regionally strong and supplied the governor (e.g. Pröll in Lower Austria, Pühringer in Upper Austria) the leaders tended to have considerable autonomy from the central party. Yet even in those Länder where the party was struggling electorally, the power of the federal party was not much stronger<sup>53</sup>. Not only did Land party organisations zealously guard their own distinct identities, they also meddled in national affairs. Throughout the 1995-9 period, the utterances of the main 'regional barons' were incessantly analysed for implicit or explicit criticism of Schüssel<sup>54</sup>. Although no *Landesfürsten* explicitly called for Schüssel's removal, the position of the vice-chancellor often looked contingent upon the continued support of the regional parties. The unity of the party was also undermined by disputes between the different regions. One of the most fiercely contested internal battles broke out in 1998 between the Lower Austrian party and the Styrian organisation over the Semmering tunnel which linked the two provinces. The controversy was eventually defused by referring the matter to the constitutional court (Fallend 2000) but once again the conflict amply demonstrated the inability of the central party to contain such problems.

The power of the Leagues was also still problematic for the ÖVP in the 1990s with the Business League an especially awkward organisation. On several occasions, threats were made by leading members of the League that if their aims were not met

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<sup>53</sup> Even in Carinthia where the ÖVP had been third party throughout the decade, the central party had little influence and campaigns centred around local issues or candidates such as the popular Landeshauptmann Zernatto

<sup>54</sup> For example, in the wake of Schüssel's alleged criticism of Tietmeyer, Weingartner suggested that Schüssel required a business manager to relieve some of his burdens while Styrian Landeshauptfrau Klasnic rather undiplomatically (Schüssel had always denied making the remarks) observed that Christians were allowed to lie as well.

then they would consider leaving the party<sup>55</sup>. In addition to despair about the general state of the party, there was also concern that the necessary economic reforms were not being undertaken. While these threats were not acted upon, many business representatives became restive with the limitations of Grand Coalition government. The position of the ÖAAB was less powerful and like the Social Committees of the CDU, it was also under pressure through the welfare cutbacks made by the government (Sperl 2000:167). After the resignation of Josef Höchtl<sup>56</sup> (leader of the ÖAAB between 1991 and 1996), the ÖAAB was headed by Defence Minister Fasslabend. Fasslabend's double role was criticised by many in and outside the League. Some felt that, for example in the case of the pension reform, Fasslabend was going through the motions of criticising the government's proposals from an employee and civil servant perspective after having been jointly responsible for drawing up the original plans (see Profil Nr.41/1997). The pension reform put Fasslabend under pressure as many within the ÖAAB were unhappy about the longer period of 'best years' in the calculation of the pension and cuts to early pensions. However, after the reforms were watered down, Fasslabend managed to see out the crisis. The tension, though, was symptomatic of the difficulty of reconciling a commitment to spending cuts with a broad, socially inclusive party structure. The ÖAAB had also lost its reputation as a generator of new ideas as Khol took over the mantle of chief ideologue. While the ÖAAB was instrumental in pushing for greater support for the family, it is questionable whether this policy would have been espoused so fervently by the ÖVP had it not also been part of Khol's agenda. Regardless of its ever shrinking clientele, the Farmers' League remained an effective and well-organised, if less demonstrative, auxiliary organisation whose continued power was evident in the pronounced emphasis on agrarian issues in the *Grundsatzprogramm*.

The party undertook a number of additional organisational reforms yet in each case the impact was limited. The introduction of primary elections for the selection of candidates took place in advance of the 1994 elections but the impact was modest. The ÖVP Klub had a larger intake of new members of parliament as a result of its primaries but in some cases the regional party organisations refused to accept the results and for the most part established party favourites won their contests (Nick 1995:97-100). Irrespective of its limited success, the practice was discontinued in the following year's elections and has not been repeated subsequently.

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<sup>55</sup> The first warnings were made in 1991 by WB leader Maderthaler while in 1995 General Secretary Mitterlehner flirted with the idea of a business-minded interest group which was also represented in parliament (Profil Nr.3, 1995).

<sup>56</sup> Höchtl was found to have drawn a wage for university teaching for twenty years without having actually lectured once (Sully 1997:161-2).

The 1995 *Grundsatzprogramm* also committed the party to the aim of one third of public mandates being held by women. This aim was not, however, written into the party statutes nor was it expressly stated that this level of female representation should also apply to party bodies (Steininger 2000:144). The result has been mixed: representation in parliament has increased but at 19.2% after the 1999 election (23.1% after government ministers had given up their seats), it fell some way short of the goal (Steininger 2000:156) while in the party executive the number of women had increased more dramatically largely due to the earlier chronic under-representation of women. Although the incorporation of an informal quota (albeit one without any sanction against failure) into the party programme did show that the ÖVP was not unresponsive to the changing political demands of female voters, this did increase the strain on the party. The launching of the women's popular initiative which sought "the realization of a comprehensive programme designed to provide equal treatment of the sexes" (Müller 1998:38) and the increasing gender gap in electoral behaviour (Plasser and Ulram 2000:188) illustrated the political potential of gender issues. At the same time, however, the ÖVP was heavily stressing the concept of the traditional family. Although leading female Christian Democratic representatives conceded that the party should do more to implement the quota<sup>57</sup> and Rauch-Kallat campaigned against the under representation of women at the highest management levels (der Standard 04/05/1998), this did not spare the party from fierce criticism from the independent women's forum (UFF), who had launched the popular initiative.

The final significant organisational development was the increased power of the *Klubobmann* vis-à-vis the general secretaries. Khol quickly established his reputation as a strong disciplinarian, reportedly quizzing those ÖVP parliamentarians with poor attendance records and pressurising those Christian Democrats suspected of deviating from the party line<sup>58</sup>. However, in addition to his taskmaster reputation, Khol also developed his programmatic ideas in interviews and through the publication of two books. In contrast to the strong position of Khol, ÖVP General Secretaries struggled throughout the 1990s. Mirroring the instability at the top of the party, the VP had no fewer than 7 General Secretaries in the 1990-9 period although for two periods, 1991-3 (Maier and Korosec) and 1995-9 (Karas and Rauch-Kallat) two General Secretaries were in place. The latter duo failed, however, to stamp their authority upon the party and were

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<sup>57</sup> See interview with Education Minister Elizabeth Gehrler in Der Standard (26/08/1998).

<sup>58</sup> For example, on the vote on lowering the age of consent for homosexuals only one ÖVP representative departed from the party line despite the unease many felt rejecting the law (Profil Nr.51, 1996).

at times fiercely criticised by leading figures within and outside the party<sup>59</sup>, particularly the Land party organisations. According to Profil (Nr.26/1997), the work of the General Secretaries was now closely supervised by Schüssel with all central party initiatives coming under his scrutiny before approval. Further confirmation that the General Secretary's post had lost significance came in 1999 when General Secretary Karas was given the job of election campaign manager but with the media researcher Peter Diem as a "minder". Within the party apparatus at the national level, then, it was clear that the post of parliamentary leader had become more important while the General Secretary post no longer carried the same amount of power as it once had.

The question of the ÖVP's structure was once again very pertinent in the 1990s. Changes made in the aftermath of the 1990 defeat failed to bring about a significant reconfiguration of internal power. Indeed, the weakness of the federal party structure was exacerbated by the continual cycle of defeat as regional leaders increasingly sought to distance themselves from the national party. In view of the its weaknesses, the federal party had become, in the eyes of some critics, a *Briefkastenfirma* (an offshore company with only a postal address) (Profil Nr.1, 1997). Nonetheless, the growing influence of parliamentary leader Khol did at least provide a national counterbalance to the powers of the Leagues and the Land parties. However, Khol not only brought unity but also a strict conservative line to the parliamentary party which strained the party's heterogeneity.

## V. Conclusion

In 1997, Müller (1997:284) sketched three possible scenarios for the ÖVP: stabilisation, decline or disintegration. Two years later the party again lost votes despite consolidation among core groups and the party's fate hung in the balance. Perhaps the party's last chance to avoid further decline or worse still disintegration lay in leaving the Grand Coalition. Yet although Schüssel had stated that the party would go into opposition if it finished third, under pressure from President Klestil and perhaps mindful of previous Christian Democratic experience with being out of government, the ÖVP opened negotiations with the SPÖ in December 1999. The subsequent breakdown of talks was not preordained despite the pre-existing contact between certain members of the ÖVP and the FPÖ (e.g. between Bartenstein of the ÖVP and the FPÖ's leading candidate Prinzhorn). However, the break with the Grand Coalition (and the speed with which the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition agreement was concluded) was made much more likely by the predicament of the ÖVP. Although the party was taking a very large gamble, it was now

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<sup>59</sup> The former General Secretary of the Austrian industrialists association, for example, accused the pair of having gambled away the ÖVP's economic competence (Profil Nr.26, 1997).

one which many were willing to take. Even the Platform for Open Politics was not in principle against a 'black-blue' alliance. As was shown in Section II, the willingness to consider such a risky option was a consequence of the dire state of the party in the 1990s and its lack of strategic options.

During the 1990s, the ÖVP tested a variety of means to escape from its perpetual electoral crisis. Leadership renewal, policy change, less flexible coalition bargaining and organisational innovation were all employed yet as election results through the decade highlighted, none of these methods actually stemmed the flow of voters away from the Christian Democrats. The problems of the ÖVP resulted from social-structural and cultural change, from increased competition and from its unfavourable strategic position. The reservoir of ÖVP supporters was drying up with the contraction of crucial social constituencies. The increasingly congested party system ensured greater competition for the ÖVP. In the centre-ground the SPÖ absorbed many People's Party themes while the LiF briefly threatened the ÖVP's hold on liberal voters. The FPÖ developed into a serious rival on the right and even the Greens were a potential challenge. The functioning of the Grand Coalition became increasingly awkward and brought no reward for the ÖVP yet the party lacked alternatives. The 'black-blue' option polarised opinion within the party and throughout the 1990s, the party's attitude to the Freedom Party was marked by inconsistency and ambiguity, neither systematically excluding the FPÖ nor embracing it.

In addition to outlining the Christian Democrats' electoral problems, Section II also illustrated that the collapse of the Grand Coalition and the formation of the 'black-blue' coalition were linked to the ideological direction of the ÖVP under the Schüssel-Khol leadership team. The Schüssel-Khol course of traditionalism spliced with populist touches and free market liberalism between 1995 and 1999 essentially meant defeat for the liberal Christian Democratic project (personified by Busek) to open the party to society. It was not surprising, then, that election analysis from 1999 demonstrated that the party remained reliant on core supporters. Consolidation amongst declining social groups, however, did not offer a long-term solution to the party's problems. Section III highlighted both the essential continuity of the ÖVP's programmatic work and the marginal relevance of the *Grundsatzprogramm* in defining the party's identity. It was instead chiefly parliamentary leader Khol who determined the ÖVP's priorities in the latter half of the decade. The greater level of discipline and central control exerted by Khol was not necessarily detrimental to a party so torn by factionalism and helped prevent a leadership battle breaking out. Nonetheless, Khol's interpretation of Christian

Democracy was narrow and alienated many party members. For example, Werner Suppan, a member of the Platform for Open Politics, described Khol as representing only one “wheel” of the ÖVP and questioned how long the party could travel on only one wheel (Der Standard 18/05/1998). While the recovery of the chancellorship was likely to curtail intra-party feuding, the coalition with the FPÖ, however, offered no guarantee of recover and so stabilisation, decline or disintegration were still all possible outcomes for the party.

## Chapter 7. The Christian Democratic Appeal 1990-8

### I. Introduction

At the beginning of the decade, the CDA's essential position within the Dutch party system looked unassailable. The party had consolidated its support among the religiously active section of the population and had even made inroads among secular voters. Under the leadership of the widely popular Lubbers, the party in government had effected significant social and economic reforms while the programmatic basis formulated during the merger of the three confessional parties had endured. The unity of the CDA, therefore, now seemed assured. Furthermore, the stability of the Dutch political system appeared to have been re-established, so much so that Lijphardt (1989) reversed his previous prediction of Dutch consociationalism's demise, instead extolling its vitality and continuing relevance. Nonetheless, signs of difficulty were reappearing, most obviously the problem of the mounting disability crisis. Tension between the coalition partners was a constant feature of the CDA-PvdA government. Yet no-one anticipated the scale of the 1994 electoral earthquake which brought about the first Christian Democratic/confessional-free government since the introduction of universal suffrage. For the rest of the decade, the CDA struggled to find its bearings as the main opposition party, suffering from internal divisions over the party's leadership and strategy. A further electoral defeat in 1998 intensified the uncertainty within the party about its identity and future, raising serious questions about the viability of a socially inclusive *Volkspartei* built on Christian Democratic principles.

The political and electoral developments of 1990-8 will be the focus of Section II within this chapter, with specific attention given to the disability crisis, the growing distance between Lubbers and his nominated successor Elco Brinkman, the disastrous 1994 Tweede Kamer election campaign, the CDA's failure to adapt to opposition and the successes of the 'purple' coalition. The traumatic defeat of 1994 stimulated a new debate about the party's identity and especially its social profile, resulting in a substantially different policy stance in 1998 but this failed to resonate with an electorate broadly satisfied with the work of the purple coalition. The credibility of the new party identity was also open to question but stuck in the middle of a contracting political spectrum, the CDA had little opportunity to stake a distinctive appeal, particularly in the strategically unfavourable position of opposition.

Section III will examine the programmatic work of the party in this period. A new Programme of Points of Departure was prepared in the early part of the decade as

the party responded to the fall of Communism. The programme relied in essence upon established Christian Democratic thought with only marginal changes to a programme which was only twelve years old. After the shock of losing office, the party redoubled its programmatic work. Although the title of the 1995 programme 'Nieuwe Wegen, Vaaste Waarden' (New Ways, Firm Values) might indicate yet more continuity, programmatic initiatives in the years following the 1994 defeat did herald a greater adaptation of the party's ideas.

As noted earlier in Chapters 2 and 3, the organisational dimension of Dutch Christian Democracy was less significant in comparison to other members of the party family. As interest groups were not integrated into the party structure, party leaders were less constrained by internal pluralism. The centralised structure of the Netherlands also limited the organisational resources of intra-party geographical interests. Nevertheless, organisational questions were not ignored in the CDA's period of self-examination after 1994 with suggestions made to increase the accountability of the party elite and stimulate greater grassroots participation. More importantly, the CDA's first experience of opposition also encouraged the public airing of divisions and a change in the internal balance of power.

## **II. Political and electoral developments**

### **WAO crisis**

The new coalition brought the PvdA back into office in 1989 after it had renounced the polarisation strategy it had pursued since the early 1970s and toned down its policy demands<sup>1</sup>. However, the new government came into office at an unfavourable time as economic growth had slowed, limiting the scope for government action (Lepszy and Koecke 2001:208). Politically too, within a few months the mood seemed bleaker. With the lowest ever turnout, the March 1990 municipal elections brought losses for the PvdA and gains for the far-right. The following year's provincial elections were not dissimilar as the turnout was again at a historic low, the PvdA dropped to its worst ever result and regional parties and the extreme right Centre Democrats made gains (Lucardie, Nieboer and Noomen 1992:15). This mood of economic uncertainty and political disaffection was compounded by the escalation in the numbers claiming long-term disability benefit, WAO<sup>2</sup>. The extremely generous provisions of the law (80% of former income) and its wide applicability (the law eventually covered stress-related illnesses as well as physical

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the PvdA, see Wolinetz 1996; Pedersen and van Kersbergen 2002; Hillebrand and Irwin 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Wet op de arbeidsongeschiktheidsverzekering.

disabilities and made no distinction between occupational and social causes of disability) made it an attractive option for employers and employees as an alternative to unemployment. An earlier attempt to reform the law dropping the replacement rate to 70% had failed to stem the rising number of claimants as most collective agreements topped this figure up to 80% and beyond in some cases. By 1990 the figure was nearing one million WAO-ers out of a workforce of seven million (Hemerijck 2001:104) and Lubbers himself declared that the country was 'sick'. The coalition had already had difficulty in 1990 on agreeing on the extent of the social cutbacks to be made and cabinet tension was strained further by the WAO crisis.

In the spring of 1991, CDA parliamentary leader Brinkman demanded that action be taken to combat social insurance expenditure and by July, Lubbers and vice-prime minister Kok agreed that benefits for those under fifty would henceforth be for a limited timespan with no compensation for the initial period. The outcry in the trade unions and in the PvdA's grassroots caused the Labour cabinet members to reconsider their support for the measures. Although the CDA accepted an amended version of the reforms whereby the new regulations would only apply to new applicants, this did not satisfy the unions who organised one of the biggest post-war demonstrations in response. The crisis threatened to bring down the government and Kok's position as PvdA leader was seriously threatened. Throughout 1992, the collapse of the government looked imminent, primarily over the WAO question but also through differences in wage and foreign policy. For the government parties, the effect of the WAO crisis was more serious for the PvdA. Polls suggested catastrophic losses in the event of the cabinet falling and membership numbers dropped dramatically (Hillebrand and Irwin 1999:133)<sup>3</sup>. However, the CDA was not unaffected by the issue. Its opinion poll ratings also dropped (Irwin 1995:74) and the WAO question opened up serious divisions in the party.

An earlier sign of internal discord came with the rejection by the First Chamber led by CDA member Kaland<sup>4</sup> of the health reforms named after PvdA state secretary Hans Simons. Members of the Scientific Institute for the CDA evaluated the Simons plan positively as had members of the parliamentary *fractie* initially (Versteegh

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<sup>3</sup> The Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen recorded a loss of nearly 13000 members (or nearly 14% of the membership) in 1991. <http://www.rug.nl/dnpp/politiekePartijen/pvda/documentaireInformatie/pvda-1t> accessed 14/06/2003.

<sup>4</sup> The proposed reform would have introduced a universal insurance scheme incorporating competition between insurers although with the government fixing the basic guidelines.

1999:92). However, press reaction was not so favourable and the CDA senator Ad Kaland introduced a motion which effectively shelved the bill. The WAO crisis brought further CDA disagreements to light. Parliamentary leader Brinkman saw the issue as a 'test-case' for the coalition: if a CDA-PvdA cabinet was unable to solve the problem, then another coalition was preferable. Although open rebellion within the CDA against the reforms was confined at first to the youth organisation (CDJA) and those CDA members (such as senator van der Meulen) with close links to the Christian trade union CNV (Lucardie, Nieboer and Noomen 1992:22), Brinkman's uncompromising attitude was by no means shared by many leading CDA figures. Social minister de Vries shared many of the concerns of his PvdA cabinet colleagues and Lubbers appeared committed to preserving the alliance with the Social Democrats if at all possible. At the beginning of 1993, the WAO question had still not been resolved. The PvdA parliamentary party was not yet willing to accept the cabinet's ideas and facing this continued deadlock, the CDA *fractie* led by Brinkman opened negotiations with the VVD parliamentary party. At the eleventh hour, though, a deal saving the coalition was hammered out<sup>5</sup>. The agreement allowed two bills on the WAO issue to be presented to parliament which were passed later in the year<sup>6</sup> and preserved the coalition for another year but caused great resentment in the VVD who accused the CDA of breaking its word and intensified existing tensions between Lubbers and Brinkman.

### **Lubbers-Brinkman: a strained alliance**

The popularity of Lubbers across almost all groups of Dutch voters was advantageous for the CDA but towards the end of the 1980s, some members of the party worried that the prime minister's success was obscuring latent problems. The party in government seemed divorced from the programmatic basis and distant from the concerns of the grassroots. Even Lubbers later seemed to concur with this judgement, accepting that the 'no-nonsense' programme of the 1980s had led to a certain impersonal style of politics ('Christian-technocratic' as it had been dubbed by critics) and had not strengthened social values<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the party was soon to be confronted with a potentially

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<sup>5</sup> See Metze (1995:11-28) for more details.

<sup>6</sup> These were the Act on the Reduction of Disablement Benefits Claimants and the Disablement Benefit Claims Reduction Act. Although a report by the influential advisory group the Social and Economic Council had advised against the cabinet's proposals, the laws eventually passed contained a number of the original ideas. Amongst the most important changes were the introduction of an obligation for claimants to accept work which was suitable for their current abilities rather than their previous skills, a penalty/reward system for employers which was to encourage the hiring of disabled workers and discourage the transferral of existing employees to disability allowance and the regular examination of those WAO-ers under 50 (van der Veen and Trommel 1999:301).

<sup>7</sup> See his quotes in Versteegh (1999:87).

traumatic succession. Lubbers had backed Brinkman as his preferred choice as successor in 1992 but relations between the two during the Lubbers III cabinet were never easy<sup>8</sup>. Brinkman had been responsible for raising the WAO issue in 1991 and on a number of subsequent occasions he pressed for stronger reforms, most notably in 1993 when he unsuccessfully tried to reopen the disability discussion (Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1994:16).

As the nominated 'crown prince', Brinkman seemed assured of succeeding Lubbers not just as CDA leader but also as prime minister when the latter stood down at the end of the parliamentary term. Yet following the longest serving prime minister since the introduction of parliamentary democracy in 1848 was an arduous task, particularly for the relatively inexperienced Brinkman. Many within the party doubted his ability to unite the party. Despite coming to office promising spending cuts and fiscal responsibility, Lubbers was not completely removed from the social wing of the party. This was apparent in the inclusion of the PvdA in the third Lubbers cabinet as well as the appointment of de Vries as Social Minister. Brinkman, however, was viewed by many as an advocate of unabashed neoliberal policies and frequently attacked the cabinet for not doing enough to counter growing social expenditure. His hard-line in the WAO issue was one example of this but his growing frustration with the compromises of the third Lubbers-led government had been evident before, for example in his declaration that "playtime was over" in February 1992 (Andeweg 1995:164) and his repeated demands that coalition show more energy and decisiveness. Towards the end of 1993, Brinkman again provoked disquiet among the social wing of the party with his proposal that the minimum wage be abolished or at the very least reduced.

In addition to the resistance to Brinkman's policy ideas, his style was controversial in CDA circles. In close collaboration with his adviser Frits Wester, Brinkman developed a media-focused style of presentation which aimed at attracting new, unattached voters (Metze 1995:172). For example, Wester, having observed the 1992 campaign of the British Conservatives, urged Brinkman to use a wireless microphone enabling him to wander across the stage, which resulted in the infamous 'Brinkman shuffle' during the 1994 campaign (Metze 1995:204). Brinkman also gave interviews based on his personal life with popular entertainment magazines and television programmes. Such instances of Wester-inspired image building alienated many within the CDA grassroots and caused annoyance among the party elite (van Praag

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Brinkman, according to reports, found Lubbers' declaration of trust in his abilities

jr 1995:107), particularly when combined with Brinkman's hard-line attitude toward social cutbacks.

The potential awkwardness of the transition from Lubbers to Brinkman had been recognised at an early stage and so in order to put an end to relentless media and intra-party speculation<sup>9</sup> about other possible leading candidates for 1994, the party executive unanimously decided to propose Brinkman as the leading candidate in March 1993. The unusually early decision was confirmed at a meeting of the party council in May leaving only the party congress's formal ratification of Brinkman's list position until January 1994. Brinkman's selection was not universally welcomed at the time, both for the manner of the process and the actual choice of *lijsttrekker*<sup>10</sup>. Yet despite the doubts about Brinkman's leadership capabilities, it appeared that the choice once made would not be reversed. However, Lubbers subsequently revealed that following Brinkman's behaviour and the CDA's poor ratings during 1993, he had attempted to force the *fractie* chairman to renounce any claim to the premiership after the 1994 elections. Instead, according to the Lubbers' plan, Brinkman would remain parliamentary leader, Lubbers would take the chairmanship with either Andriessen (Economic Affairs minister) or Kooijmans (Foreign Affairs minister) becoming prime minister. This was rejected not just by Brinkman but also within the CDA (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman 1996:39). The CDA, thus, entered the election year split by personal antagonisms as well as disputes over the party's direction.

### 1994 Tweede Kamer Election

The CDA's campaign for the 1994 elections was judged by most observers to be nothing short of catastrophic<sup>11</sup>. Questions remained about Brinkman's ability to mobilise the grassroots and there was little sign that any losses there could be equalised through other gains. Brinkman was rated far behind both Kok and D66 leader van Mierlo at the beginning of the year (Irwin 1995:75) and the CDA's poll results were alarming. Moreover, divisions had also already risen over the draft electoral programme "Wat echt telt" (What really counts) presented in August 1993. The three main themes were employment, security and environment but the most controversial proposals were the abolition of the minimum wage and an expansion of the differences between wages and

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surprising and not entirely truthful (Metze 1995:46)

<sup>9</sup> For example, both Justice Minister Hirsch-Ballin and Scientific Institute director Klop expressed misgivings about Brinkman's leadership abilities (Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1993:23).

<sup>10</sup> The CDJA, in particular, were vocal about their doubts about Brinkman (Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1994:26).

social benefits. The former suggestion was resisted by Lubbers, de Vries, the party's women's and youth sections and was eventually dropped in December after a decision by the party executive (Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1995:28).

The draft programme was further revised at the start of the election year as the party leadership responded to the deteriorating economic situation. The party council reluctantly accepted all social benefits (including pensions) and civil service salaries should be frozen. The proposals met with a furious response from pensioners associations such as the Protestant PCOB and the Catholic KBO. Discontent spread beyond those immediately affected, moreover, as one poll showed 72% of CDA supporters were against the plan (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman 1995:35). The idea had an immediate political consequence too as pensioners' parties (AOV and PU55+) competed for the first time in local elections achieving some success. The CDA's losses in these elections further increased the pressure on Brinkman but with the parliamentary *fractie* loyal to their leader, the sole casualty of the pension revolt was party chairman van Velzen, who was replaced in the short-term by Ladders-Elfferich. Although the CDA backtracked somewhat on the original proposals<sup>12</sup>, the affair was undoubtedly damaging to Christian Democratic prospects and caused a rethink on the main themes, i.e. security was dropped (van Praag jr. 1995:108).

The calamitous campaign was further damaged by Lubbers' growing distance from Brinkman<sup>13</sup> and by the scandal erupting a month before the elections over Brinkman's membership of the board of trustees of Arscop, a company under investigation for fraud. Although Brinkman was not held personally responsible, his refusal to leave the board cast further doubt upon his political judgement. Justice Minister Hirsch-Ballin added further confusion to the campaign with his emotive comments about euthanasia policy under a coalition without the CDA, i.e. that a 'purple' PvdA-VVD-D66 coalition would bring about a eugenics-regime (Versteegh 1999:102). The parties under attack reacted bitterly to Hirsch-Ballin's remarks and the relationship between the Christian Democrats and their potential future coalition partners was soured. Hirsch-Ballin's criticism exposed not only the chaos within the CDA campaign but also the growing Christian Democratic fear that the antagonisms between the VVD and the PvdA could be now overcome in a coalition of the 'French Revolution' as it was

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<sup>11</sup> See for example van Praag jr. (1995:105-9); van Kersbergen (1995:92); Andeweg, (1995:164)

<sup>12</sup> The freezing of the pension was compensated to some extent by a reduction in the contributions to long term care insurance (AWBZ).

<sup>13</sup> Lubbers, for example, remarked that PvdA leader Kok would be no worse as Prime Minister.

called by members of the CDA Scientific Institute. Although numerous studies have argued that Dutch politics can only be understood using a two axis model (i.e. a left-right division and a religious-secular dimension), national coalitions had only been formed along a left-right socio-economic axis, that is since 1952 the VVD and the PvdA had not worked together in government. By 1994, however, the move towards the centre by the PvdA under Kok opened up the possibility that local alliances between the PvdA, VVD and D66 (e.g. in Amsterdam, Leiden, Groningen and South Holland) could be repeated in the Hague.

Regardless of the divisions within the CDA over strategy and policy, the election result still came as a shock to the party and most experienced observers of Dutch politics<sup>14</sup>. The CDA fell to 22.2% of the vote, a drop of 13.1% and a record number of seats lost by one party (20). This ensured that the PvdA became the largest party in the Tweede Kamer for the first time since the 1982-6 period despite its own heavy losses (-7.9%). Together the government parties lost more seats than any previous cabinet while D66 gained 7.6% and its largest allocation of seats (24, +11 again a record increase for one party). Turnout fell to the lowest ever level while total volatility reached 20.4. The success of the smaller fringe parties (Centre Democrats, Socialist Party, Union 55+, AOV) also indicated the extent of disillusionment with the government parties and contributed to the rise in the fractionalisation (5.7 effective parties<sup>15</sup>) within the Dutch parliament. This fragmentation fell short of the political instability in the 1967-72 period but still highlighted the degree of change brought by the election.

Irwin and van Holsteyn's analysis (1997) revealed that the structured model of voting behaviour (i.e. active Catholics and Protestants vote CDA, secular workers vote PvdA and secular middle class vote VVD) had lost much of its explanatory power. Whereas in 1968 the structured model still accounted for 60% of all votes, by 1994 this had fallen to 36% (p.95). Even more dramatic figures were discovered if the secular middle class (whose 'pillar'-qualities were always disputed) and older voters were excluded leading Irwin and van Holsteyn to predict the demise of the structured model rather than its decline. The structured model was dying through the relative decline of those social groups at the heart of the pillarised system (i.e. the secular working class, the religiously active) but also as a result of the wavering loyalty of voters. Not only

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<sup>14</sup> For example, Irwin and van Holsteyn (1997) compare the tepid conclusions about political change drawn by a range of authors in 1989 with the far-reaching consequences of the 1994 result

<sup>15</sup> This is using the Laakso and Taagepera (1979) method.

were typical bastions of Christian Democrat support in decline, the party could no longer count as confidently on the support of those remaining within these milieux. For instance, CDA support among Catholics dropped substantially, a trend exemplified by the heavy losses suffered in the southern, largely Catholic provinces of North Brabant and Limburg. Support from church-going Protestants was more stable although still showing decline<sup>16</sup>. Although the CDA electorate remained dominated by older age groups, the pensions controversy and the subsequent success of the pensioners' parties challenged even the CDA's pre-eminence in these groups<sup>17</sup>. Of small consolation to the party was that the class composition of its electorate was still broader than any of its competitors. However, the Lubbers-era advances made among secular voters were lost as only 7% of the electorate without church ties voted CDA.

The 1994 election exposed the flimsy foundations of the success of the Lubbers years and exposed the vulnerability of the CDA in an age of a largely unaffiliated electorate. Not only had the Brinkman strategy aimed at attracting younger, unattached voters failed entirely but the party had also been unable to preserve its strength in its core social constituencies. To some extent, the damage was self-inflicted: an unruly campaign full of mixed messages coupled with an unpopular leading candidate were obvious disadvantages compared to the professional campaign of the PvdA<sup>18</sup> and the wide popularity of Kok and D66 leader van Mierlo. In addition, many voters were clearly punishing the party (and the PvdA) for unpopular policies pursued in office. Only 13.9% evaluated the government's economic record favourably with 32.3% viewing it unfavourably (DNES codebook 1994:41). Employment policy was judged even more damningly with only 8.3% of respondents believing the government to have made a favourable impact in this area compared to 53.9% rating the influence negatively (DNES codebook 1994:41).

In conclusion, then, the CDA's sudden decline could be attributed to both structural and contextual factors (van Kersbergen 1996). Deconfessionalisation increasingly shrank the size of the traditional Christian Democratic core support, but CDA losses were also caused by more short-term factors. While "the social-group logic of religion, class and tradition has been replaced by a logic based on issues and party performance in government" (Rochun 1999:115), this transformation in voting

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<sup>16</sup> See Table 4.3, Chapter 4.

<sup>17</sup> See Table 4.12, Chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> The 'Kies Kok' campaign of the PvdA was, according to van Praag (1995:103), one of the most professional efforts in Dutch electoral history.

motivations need not necessarily result in the erosion of the established parties' support. However, as shown earlier the preceding coalition had been unpopular and robbed of Lubbers' electoral magnetism, the CDA was riven by personal and policy disagreements. Further decline was not inevitable but the trauma of 1994 did not end on election night.

### **The CDA in opposition: Purple Hague- 'lately things just don't seem the same'?**

Although the CDA had lost their position as leading party, their historic exclusion from government was by no means certain. D66 had the strongest desire for a Christian Democrat-free cabinet but the first effort to create a purple coalition of the PvdA, VVD and D66 broke down in late June over disagreements on economic policy. A few members of the CDA openly advocated going into opposition (Kaland, van der Linden) but having won the backing of the parliamentary party, Brinkman sought a coalition with the VVD. This strategy was highly contentious within the CDA. The party executive expressed its unhappiness that Brinkman had effectively ruled out a coalition with the PvdA (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman 1995:40) and interim party chairwoman Lodders-Elffrich increasingly distanced the party apparatus from Brinkman<sup>19</sup>. When Kok was chosen by the Queen as *informateur*, the limitations of Brinkman's strategy were exposed. Kok had previously been open to a possible alliance with the CDA but with Brinkman defiantly clinging to the hope of a CDA-VVD coalition, the Christian Democrats had effectively ruled themselves out of government.

Other factors weighed against the CDA. Each of the three other likely coalition parties nursed resentments against the Christian Democrats. CDA parliamentarian Joost van Iersel's infamous off-the-cuff comment in 1986 that "we run this country" was frequently cited as typifying the party's arrogance in power. For the VVD and D66, this ill-will originated in their treatment during 1989 with the former aggrieved by the break-up of the coalition and the latter irritated by their exclusion from the subsequent negotiations. VVD leader Bolkestein, too, expressed his dissatisfaction with the soft consensualism of Lubbers and the lack of firm principles. On the side of the PvdA, the behaviour of the CDA *fractie*, the failure of the Simons-plan and the manner in which the disability row had been conducted had all annoyed the Social Democrats (Versteegh 1999:100). A further stain on the CDA's credentials as a serious discussion partner was the party's instability and lack of cohesion. Therefore, regardless of the fact that analysis of election programmes suggested that the CDA remained the most likely partner for the

VVD (Thomson 1998:159) and despite the lack of historical precedent, a purple coalition was formed at the second attempt and sworn in on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

The CDA's immediate response to the crushing defeat of 1994 was to initiate a commission (the 'commissie-Gardeniers') to investigate its causes. The report was presented to the executive in July as coalition negotiations were still in progress. The intervening European election had brought the party some relief as its loss of votes had been far less severe yet the results were difficult to compare. Turnout was dismally low for the EP election (which typically boosts the CDA) and the pensioners' parties did not compete. The Gardeniers commission, therefore, was not blinded by this result and was explicitly critical of the CDA's transformation into a "complacent government party", the loss of the party's social profile and the lack of unity within the party. Brinkman was not criticised by name but under increasing pressure from interim chairwoman Lodders-Elfferich and the party executive, he eventually resigned on the 16<sup>th</sup> August. He was replaced as *fractie* leader by Enneüs Heerma who beat Jaap de Hoop Scheffer. Heerma signalled a change in the political mood of the *fractie*, representing the centrist, social wing of the party in contrast to the more conservative line of Brinkman.

Rather than promote Heerma as the sole leader, the party initially decided on a more collective style of leadership comprising the new *fractie* chairman, the party chairman, the leader of the CDA group in the Senate and the leader of the CDA group in the European parliament. The interim party chairwoman Lodders was succeeded by Hans Helgers while former minister Maij-Weggen had been the party's leading candidate in the 1994 EP election. However, the party's experiment with a collegial style was quietly abandoned in 1995. Maij-Weggen's reputation had been damaged by her comments about Bolkestein when she had compared him to the leader of the extremist Vlaams Blok in Belgium after the VVD parliamentary leader had called for a stricter asylum policy, (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman 1996:33). Many in the party found the comparison too much and the results of the provincial elections in which the CDA lost nearly 10% and the VVD became the largest party also indicated that Maij-Weggen's remarks lacked popular resonance. Heerma's relationship with Helgers was also problematic. Helgers had similar political convictions to Heerma<sup>20</sup> but he was also

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<sup>19</sup> Former Prime Minister Biesheuvel and the CDJA also openly showed their dissatisfaction at this decision.

<sup>20</sup> For example, he criticised the Kok government's neoliberal economic delusions at the 1995 party congress

competing for intra-party power and had grave doubts about Heerma's abilities as a prospective leading candidate (see Versteegh 1999:121).

The awkward functioning of the collegial leadership and the mounting dissatisfaction in the parliamentary party and the party's grassroots ensured that the CDA turned towards a clearer *fractie*-based form of opposition in 1995 where Heerma had responsibility for the current policy of the party while Helgers was in charge of mainly organisational affairs. The clarification of responsibilities did not end the problems faced by Heerma though. Dissatisfaction with the party's inability to counter effectively the government's policies grew throughout the parliamentary term. The party's problems stemmed from three factors: ineffectual leadership, the CDA's unfamiliarity with the role of opposition and the success of the 'purple' coalition.

### **The Lack of a Charismatic Leader**

At no point did Heerma appear to have the parliamentary party, much less the whole party, firmly under his control. To some extent, Heerma's misfortunes were the result of his ill-fortune in having to lead the party in its darkest hour. Deeper internal divisions were virtually unavoidable once the party was deprived of national office. For example, Tweede Kamer parliamentarian van der Linden discussed the possibility of a break-up of the CDA if the party did not adopt a more conservative-social position (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman 1996:34). Furthermore, in February 1995 the Catholic Political Party (KPP) was formed by the former CDA EP candidate van Boetzelaer<sup>21</sup>. The new party's success, however, was very limited and like earlier Catholic splinter parties, it failed to make a breakthrough. Some divisions were not unexpected but nonetheless, Heerma's indecisive leadership stimulated internal party discord. Versteegh (1999:118-128) uses Heerma's role in the Article 23 debate to highlight his lack of talent for confrontational politics. After VVD Home Affairs Minister Dijkstal had appeared to question the continuing need for Article 23 of the Constitution (freedom of religious education from governmental interference), Heerma, in an interpellation debate, firstly sternly questioned Dijkstal about his position and then introduced a motion of censure. However, following Dijkstal's fairly clear response, Heerma was forced into a humiliating climb-down after he was informed that the small Protestant parties would not support his motion. This incident was only one of a series of missed opportunities and mistakes in parliament which characterised Heerma's time as *fractie* leader.

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<sup>21</sup> The KPP according to Lucardie (1999:124) did not differ greatly from other Catholic and Christian Democratic parties although it took a firmer stance on cultural-moral issues like abortion, euthanasia and drugs.

The lack of a consistent strategy was also a factor in Heerma's problems. He had first announced that the CDA would follow a "governmental opposition" path (van Kersbergen 1995:92) but this failed to boost the party's poll ratings and was unpopular with grassroots supporters. The parliamentary group had therefore resolved in September 1995 to be more vigorous in drug, social security and income policy (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman 1996:37). Heerma, though, seemed ill at ease in such a role, lacking charisma and confidence in front of the media and many believed him to be nothing more than an stopgap leader. Possible other candidates waited in the wings, such as de Hoop Scheffer, Leers and van der Camp, and Helgers had apparently informed Heerma in August 1995 that he had little chance of being leading candidate in 1998 (Versteegh 1999:121). After Heerma criticised the stream of anonymous critics within the *fractie*, rumours of his impending resignation circulated at the end of 1995. From this point onwards, Heerma looked a 'lame duck'. Lubbers announced in March 1996 that he did not expect Heerma to be leading candidate in 1998 while other CDA politicians sought to force a quick change (Hippe, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1997:28). Eventually in March 1997, the party executive decided to cut short the previously agreed time-scale for the selection of *lijsttrekker* for 1998 and proposed de Hoop Scheffer, upon which Heerma resigned both the *fractie* leadership and his membership of the Tweede Kamer.

De Hoop Scheffer's performance as chairman of the CDA *fractie's* Foreign Affairs commission marked him out as a representative of the right of the party and from previous statements he was expected to lead the party with more vigour and combativeness than Heerma<sup>22</sup>. However, his comments soon after his election indicated broad agreement with the ideas of his predecessor. For example, shortly after becoming parliamentary leader, he spoke out against a reduction of the minimum wage and against introducing too much privatisation into the provision of social welfare (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1998:25). Furthermore, there was no sign that he was any more popular than his uncharismatic predecessor. Rated on a 7 point scale where 0 equals no faith and 7 is a lot of faith, only 9.7% of respondents in the 1998 election survey had a lot of trust in de Hoop Scheffer (i.e. 6 or 7 on the scale) compared to 79.1% for Kok, 23.9% for Bolkestein and 15.1% for D66 leader Borst (DNES 1998). The comparison with Borst illustrated the extent of the Christian Democrats' difficulties in opposition. Els Borst had only recently become D66 leader, lacked the wide appeal of

her predecessor van Mierlo and had the difficult task of leading the progressives' list as the party's popularity waned<sup>23</sup>. Despite this, she was still rated above de Hoop Scheffer.

### **The CDA's unfamiliarity in opposition**

The ill-fated governmental opposition strategy and its subsequent abandonment reflected the difficulty of the Christian Democrats in adapting to its new role of opposition. Since the merger of the confessionals, the party had been in office continuously<sup>24</sup>. The purple coalition forced the CDA into an almost totally unfamiliar environment. The initial response of governmental opposition can be seen as the continuation of ingrained behavioural habits: the party effectively carried on as if it were still in office. Yet even when the party's slump in the polls and the poor results in local and provincial elections forced a re-evaluation of the approach, a sharper critique of government policy did not come easily to many Christian Democrats.

One problem was that the parliamentary party had become less influential in the 1980s, becoming what Hans Hillen called the party's 'B-team' (quoted in Versteegh 1999:135). The problem was not necessarily that the quality of the parliamentarians was poor but that *fractie*-culture now centred around defending government, rather than questioning and attacking it. In addition, there was a strong tradition in Dutch Protestant thinking of respect for the government as God's servant, a belief not easily reconciled with fierce attacks on government representatives. Versteegh (1999:144-153) highlights two other organisational factors which prevented the CDA from becoming a more effective opposition. The parliamentary decision-making process was time-consuming, exacerbated by the need for CDA parliamentarians to go through the chairman of the relevant *fractie* commission and the CDA parliamentary leader or deputy before asking a written or oral question. In addition, the loss of instant access to valuable information sources was also a blow as the party tried to acclimatise to opposition.

Although the *fractie* had a sizeable group of members with governmental experience, not many adapted successfully to role change. For different reasons, Hirsch Ballin, Brinkman and van Rooy all left the Tweede Kamer before the end of the parliamentary term. The loss of such talents was a further blow to an already weakened

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<sup>22</sup> For example, de Hoop Scheffer had called for fiercer form of opposition at the beginning of 1996 (Hippe, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1997:28).

<sup>23</sup> D66's experience in government in 1981-2 had led to the subsequent loss of more than half of the party's support and polls predicted a similar outcome in 1998.

<sup>24</sup> Even before then the KVP had been in government continuously post-1946 and all three confessional parties participated in government more often than not. See Appendix.

group. The need for personnel renewal was recognised by party chairman Helgers in 1995 who suggested that the parliamentary party needed roughly thirteen new members with no-one serving more than three terms. Despite the angry reaction to Helgers' comments, the provisional list drawn up in 1997 reflected his ideas, with no-one standing for a fourth term and half of the electable places on the list being filled by newcomers (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1998:26). Admittedly, not all members of the parliamentary party were incapable of the adjustment. For example, de Hoop Scheffer and Hillen were amongst the most effective opposition politicians yet their performance also illustrated the divisions in the *fractie*. De Hoop Scheffer represented the party's right wing and was the preferred choice of leader for those who still regretted Brinkman's forced departure while Hillen was always a controversial figure on account of his firmly traditionalist views<sup>25</sup>. Hillen was also suspected by Maij-Weggen of being at the centre of the group within the parliamentary party who sought to topple Heerma (Versteegh 1999:139).

Throughout the CDA's first term in office, the party was incapable of matching its supporters' expectations of it. A commonly heard complaint was that the media devoted most of their political coverage to the government parties and especially to intra-coalition controversies (e.g. D66 and the VVD's dispute over the introduction of a corrective referendum) with little concern for the standpoint of the opposition<sup>26</sup>. In many instances, Heerma's role as leader of the largest opposition party was effectively usurped by VVD parliamentary leader Bolkestein. Bolkestein's adept use of the media and willingness to counter the coalition's policies contrasted greatly with the cautious, prudent approach of the CDA. Even where the government parties were united in parliament, the leader of Green Left, Paul Rosenmöller, was often more successful than Heerma in attacking the coalition. For example, in autumn 1997 it was the GL rather than the CDA who exploited the differences between the coalition partners on the matter of cutbacks for surviving relatives (Versteegh 1999:145). The inability of the CDA to counter the government in the parliamentary arena and simultaneously increase its own profile continued even after Heerma was replaced by de Hoop Scheffer and the after-effects of the 'culture shock' of the loss of office were felt throughout the 1994-98 period.

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, his criticism of the lack of discipline in modern families which caused a public outcry in 1993 (Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1994:24). In an interview with the author, Hillen also bemoaned the "decadent" nature of Dutch society.

<sup>26</sup> Hans Hillen mentioned in an interview with the author the example of a CDA initiative on health policy. When the policy was launched at a press conference, only two journalists were present.

## The Success of the Purple Coalition

In addition to the CDA's own difficulties in coming to terms with its new position, the successes of the PvdA-D66-VVD administration minimised the scope for the opposition. By 1994, there was a great deal of consensus over the broad direction of socio-economic policy among the parties. One complication faced by the CDA in adopting a strategy in opposition was that many of the policies the government enacted were in essence not especially different from those pursued by the CDA in office (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:224). Bolkestein had half-jokingly called the new cabinet "Lubbers IV without Lubbers" in 1994<sup>27</sup> (Andeweg 1995:164) and Lubbers confirmed in the International Herald Tribune in 1997 that the purple coalition was pursuing policies similar to those of his earlier cabinets. The coalition agreement foresaw cuts in public spending of 17.7 billion guilders, promised to lower the minimum wage and create jobs through lower labour costs. This offered no obvious means of attack for the CDA. Criticising the coalition from a right-wing standpoint was difficult with the VVD in government and in any case, the Gardeniers report had concluded that the loss of the CDA's social profile had influenced the 1994 defeat. However, the adoption of a more left of centre approach jeopardised the unity of the party and the *fractie* and was not necessarily credible with core supporters. The party under the combined influence of Heerma and Helgers leaned toward the latter option but even in 1998, only 15.8% of those intending to vote CDA placed themselves left of centre (DNES 1998). Differences between the coalition and the CDA on cultural-moral issues were clearer but while such issues did arise during Kok I, such as drug policy and longer shop opening hours, there was little evidence to suggest that CDA could profit electorally from its more traditionalist stance.

One of the CDA's problems was that the purple coalition proved to be far more stable than most observers' expectations. The formation of the coalition itself had been relatively easy. Admittedly, the formation lasted 111 days, the fourth longest duration in post-war Dutch history. Yet as Andeweg (1995:155) argues, the creation of the 1994 cabinet does not appear inordinately protracted compared to the post-war average of 83 days and especially in view of the momentous change brought by the result and the historic novelty of the coalition configuration. Minor cabinet crises arose through the 1994-8 period but at no time was the continuation of the coalition seriously in doubt. Tensions over the proposed route for the high speed Paris-Amsterdam train link,

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<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, the Dutch election survey of 1998 found that more than a quarter of respondents believed that the CDA actually were in government during the 1994-8, by far the highest incorrect response rate for all the parties the respondents were questioned about (DNES 1998)

agricultural reform after a pig epidemic and the lingering divisions over the corrective referendum were peacefully resolved. Even the resignation of scandal-tarnished VVD state secretary in social affairs and employment Linschoten failed to upset the coalition's steadiness as Bolkestein explicitly stated that his departure would have no consequences for the cabinet. The relative stability of the government, therefore, offered little opportunity for the CDA to benefit from coalition disagreement.

A further difficulty for the CDA was that the PvdA-VVD-D66 government came to office at a favourable economic time. The internal harmony of Lubbers III had been disturbed by the difficulty of satisfying the PvdA grassroots' expectations with the political priorities of the right wing of the CDA in a time of falling growth rates and rising unemployment. In contrast, the purple coalition was faced by fewer hard decisions. The government froze the level of the minimum wage and social benefits until 1996 but the levels were subsequently reconnected to average wage increases (Haverland 2001:320). That the coalition was able to take this decision was indicative of the upsurge in the economy after 1993. GDP growth between 1994 and 1998 averaged about 3% per year, well above the average within the EU (Economist 21/3/1998), while the government reduced the public sector deficit which fell from 4% to 1.5% (Economist 2/5/1998). The purple coalition felt sufficiently confident of reaching the Maastricht criteria that it introduced tax cuts in 1998 rather than prioritise further budget deficit reduction. The rate of unemployment was amongst the lowest in Europe at 5.5%. The government not only carried on the restructuring of the welfare state initiated by the CDA and VVD in the 1980s but also attempted to stimulate employment through more active labour market policies (van der Veen and Trommel 1999). While the coalition exceeded its own promises through the creation of roughly 500,000 between 1994 and 1998 (Economist 2/5/1998), it was widely accepted that the low unemployment rate still obscured a substantial amount of hidden redundancy. Even in this respect, however, the Kok government carried on the reforms of the earlier Lubbers cabinets, with further moves towards privatisation of social services<sup>28</sup>.

In the eyes of the international press, the image of the Netherlands changed radically as descriptions of the 'Dutch disease' gave way to appraisals of the Polder model and its possible utility in other national contexts (Cox 2001; Toonen and Hendriks 2001). The success of wage restraint and the expansion of part-time and temporary jobs appeared to have reaffirmed the strength of consensus government (Andeweg 2000). For

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<sup>28</sup> See van der Veen and Trommel (1999:302) for more details

the Christian Democrats, the fact that the consensual system could function smoothly without their participation was a disturbing development. The drift of the Labour Party into the centre and its acceptance of limited welfare state retrenchment undermined the CDA's previously unchallenged claim to a role in any governmental constellation. Admittedly, the PvdA's continued occupation of a centrist position was by no means certain. Despite Kok's wide popularity, signs of some discontent in the ranks were apparent<sup>29</sup>. Notwithstanding such minor disturbances, the coalition was remarkably stable and its successes simultaneously made the task of the CDA more arduous and raised more fundamental questions about the Christian Democrat's pivotal position in the centre of Dutch party politics.

### **1998 Tweede Kamer Election**

The CDA began its preparations for the election relatively early and compared to 1994, the campaign was relatively harmonious. However, controversies still developed over the strategy to be adopted and the party's electoral programme. The party made the decision to revamp its electoral research strategy. Rather than focus on groups defined by their specific social or economic characteristics, party researchers turned their attention to lifestyle groups. Five of the eight groups identified were potential targets for the party ('religious-altruistic', 'modest social involvement', 'dependent security', 'educated hedonists' and 'careful post-materialists') but debate broke out among the extent to which the party should devote its attention on any one group. De Hoop Scheffer and his supporters were more concerned about attracting the individualist 'educated hedonists' while the head of the Scientific Institute and the party's youth wing (CDJA) sought to win over more post-materialists (van Praag jr. and Penseel 1999:118). Eventually, the party decided on not prioritising the post-materialist vote although the dispute was not conclusively ended.

The second contentious aspect of the CDA's preparation was its electoral programme ('Samenleven doet je niet alleen'). After a process involving consultation with the party's supporters, church representatives and social organisations, the programme was presented in October 1997. It gave strong support to the family and the community, reaffirmed the party's belief in personalism and also contained prominent environmental themes (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1998:27). The programme contained a mixture of social welfare and traditionalist issues, particularly

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<sup>29</sup> Most complaints centred on the attempts of party chairman Rottenberg to transform the organisation of the party. The revolt of the grassroots eventually culminated in the election of the Leiden academic and party traditionalist Ruud Koole as chairman in 2001.

law and order<sup>30</sup>. A number of commentators thought the programme more left-wing than the PvdA on social issues (van der Brug 1999:184; Irwin 1999:272). This apparent lurch to the left at least on social matters was seized upon by Bolkestein who called the CDA a “leftist party” with “a dramatically bad electoral programme” (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1998:27; 1999:32). The programme was not as controversial within the Christian Democrats<sup>31</sup>. Even the normally critical CDJA were more positive in their appraisal although they and some local party branches sought unsuccessfully to liberalise asylum policy. Overall, the adoption of a programme labelled “Christian-social” by vice-chairwoman Lodders aroused surprisingly little argument. While the conflict over whether the party should target post-materialists or individualists revealed the presence of old tensions, the right wing of the party seemed to accept that following the debacle of 1994 and in view of the social wing’s strong presence in the party apparatus, there was little alternative to a more socially oriented party.

Moderate losses in the March local elections were too disheartening and the CDA still hoped to be able to stabilise its position. Polls, however, suggested that the battle was chiefly between PvdA and VVD which threatened to push the CDA into third position for the first time. The PvdA again ran a very professional and expensive campaign but the CDA was not far behind in campaign spending. The main CDA themes were family policy, care, education, security and solidarity (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1999:33). The campaign, however, was undermined by the refusal of the other parties to countenance a coalition including the CDA. The VVD’s reaction to the CDA’s election programme appeared to rule out any possible coalition and the PvdA, too, sought a continuation of the purple coalition<sup>32</sup>. Further damage to the party’s credibility came with the judgement of the Central Plan Bureau that the CDA programme would not lead to any new employment while the plans of the government parties would create roughly 100,000 jobs (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1999:18). Moreover, although the party had avoided the catastrophic personal divisions of 1994, the party still suffered from an unpopular leader as shown above. During the 1994-8 period, the CDA had been confronted for the first time by the limited opportunities given to opposition leaders in Dutch politics and neither Heerma nor de Hoop Scheffer had been able to rise above this disadvantage.

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<sup>30</sup> One of the most disputed proposals was the idea that children as young as 11 could stand trial for crimes.

<sup>31</sup> Interviews conducted with members of the Scientific Institute revealed that regardless of the election result, the manifesto was regarded with some pride.

<sup>32</sup> PvdA party research had indicated that leaving open the possibility of a PvdA-CDA alliance was not popular with Labour supporters (van Praag jr. and Pensel 1999:105).

The election result was undoubtedly a disappointment for the CDA. The party fell to third behind the PvdA (29%, +5) and the VVD (24.7%, +4.8) who both profited from the success of the purple coalition. D66 also lost badly (9%, -6.5), but while they could still draw comfort from what was after all their third best performance ever, the CDA dropped to its lowest ever level (18.4%, -3.8). The result was even more serious when contrasted to the worst *combined* result of the confessional parties (31.3% in 1972). Analysis of the election result confirmed the party's failure to adapt to opposition and successfully counter the achievements of the government<sup>33</sup>. Evaluation of the government's success in economic and employment was very positive (60% rated the government's influence on the economy favourably, 63.7% viewed its employment record positively). Such positive appraisals were also common among CDA voters and adherents. The lack of a prominent and attractive leading candidate was also a problem. Very few CDA voters mentioned de Hoop Scheffer as a reason for their vote in contrast to the popularity of Kok among PvdA voters. Instead, religion, tradition, party manifesto and party identification were far more likely to be mentioned as motivations for voting Christian Democratic. Despite this, further erosion of the Christian Democratic hold on religious communities was evident. Support among Catholic, Dutch Reformed and Calvinist voters all declined with an especially disturbing fall among Calvinists<sup>34</sup>. The CDA continued to draw most of the support of the religiously active but in view of the shrinkage of this group, this was little cause for celebration. The most serious failing, though, was the party's chronic lack of support among those who rarely attended church (5.1%) and those who declared no church affiliation (2.6%).

Although some questions remained over the reestablishment of the purple coalition with D66 wary of the possible effects on its popularity and some disagreements between the VVD and the PvdA on socio-economic policy, the Kok II cabinet was inaugurated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August after a formation period of 87 days. The CDA thus faced another demoralising parliamentary term in opposition. The intention of the new government to liberalise euthanasia policy and to introduce gay marriage promised some clear opportunities for the CDA to resist cabinet policy. Yet following the succession of setbacks suffered in the 1994-8 period, serious doubts about the CDA's capabilities as a party of opposition lingered.

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<sup>33</sup> All statistics in the following section come from the 1998 Dutch National Election Survey.

<sup>34</sup> This fall in *Gereformeerde* voters might be connected with the increasing difficulty in maintaining a balance between the denominations. For the first time, both the *fractie* leader (de Hoop Scheffer) and the party chairman (Helgers) were Catholic. For voting by denomination, see Table 4.3, Chapter 4.

### III. Programmatic Development (1990-8)

As outlined in chapter 3, the CDA in government under Lubbers became rather distant from the work of the Scientific Institute, leading to complaints that the party was neglecting its programmatic profile. This rift was still visible at the beginning of the 1990s when the party executive concluded that to counter the loss of votes in the heavily Protestant areas in the north-east of the country, the party should emphasise its Christian roots. However, Lubbers and the parliamentary party were fearful of alienating non-Christian voters and warned against dogmatism (Lucardie, Nieboer and Noomen 1992:20). The question of the 'C' in the CDA was again raised when the Bishop of Haarlem left the party in 1993 in disgust at the party's failure to push a more visibly Christian agenda on abortion and euthanasia. Not surprisingly then, the decision of party chairman van Velzen to revise the party's basic programme was not welcomed by all within the party. Many were anxious about unleashing another fierce ideological debate within the party (Metze 1995:154). The 1980 programme had bound the party together but only after substantial exertion over a long time period<sup>35</sup>. Nonetheless, from 1990, honorary chairman Steenkamp had headed a commission charged with writing a new programme. The fall of Communism did not produce a thorough revision of Christian Democratic ideas in the CDA (Lucardie 1993:40) although the structure of the programme was quite different from the 1980 effort. After being forced into opposition, the CDA once again reconsidered its ideological foundation. The programme of the Strategic Advice working group "Nieuwe wegen, vaste waarden" (New Ways, Firm Values) passed in 1996 will also be considered here. While the programme itself declared that it was not an electoral manifesto and the three year old *Program van Uitgangspunten* remained valid, the programme is worthy of attention for two reasons. First, it was the major programmatic work of the party during the 1994-8 period and is therefore valuable evidence of the party's ideological reaction to the shock of losing office. Second, the programme continues to be a reference point for the party in the present day<sup>36</sup>, demonstrating that it was not a short-term platform with little impact. The answers the programme attempts to give to contemporary social, economic and political problems are still the basis for much of the CDA's programme.

Both programmes were notable for their acknowledgement of change within society. The Programme of Points of Departure stated that Dutch Christian Democracy

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter III.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see the interview with CDA leader Jan Peter Balkenende (who himself had been the secretary of the group) in *Katholiek Nieuwsblad* 22/03/02.

had entered a third phase. After the earlier periods of emancipation and the post-war construction of the welfare state and the move towards European unity, the CDA now found itself in a time of great hope but also uncertainty. Society was changing through the ageing of the population, the influx of refugees and immigrants, new communication technologies and the growth of knowledge, increasing divergence in opinions and beliefs and the processes of Europeanisation and internationalisation (Section I). The introduction of 'New Ways, Firm Values' also stressed trends such as globalisation, increasing individualism and plural lifestyles and the swift development of new technologies. These offered new opportunities for personal fulfilment but at the same time resulted in the disappearance of a "feeling for direction" (Section 1, p.1)<sup>37</sup>. The goal of each programme, then, was to assert the relevance of Christian Democratic ideals in this age, to demonstrate that the "firm, deeply anchored values" (NWVW, Section 1, p.2) of the party were a foundation for the necessary new directions.

### **Principles and self-identity**

The religious roots of the CDA continued to be an important point of reference. In comparison to the CDU and the ÖVP, the number of references to the Bible and God was quite striking. For example, the party accepted the testimony of the Bible as of "decisive significance" for man, society and government (Article 1)<sup>38</sup>. In line with Protestant political traditions, the government was still seen as the servant of God (Article 6) and there was a firm commitment to maintaining Sunday as a day of rest. Even following the desertion of many non-religious voters in 1994, the later 1996 programme made no effort to cast off the CDA's religious baggage. Indeed, the unchanging values the party expounds were explicitly linked to the life and teachings of Christ (NWVW Section 2, p.4). This religious image of man leads to a wariness towards modern medical-technological developments. Respect for the inviolability of human life should remain the basis for law-making whether the issue is abortion or euthanasia although the party concedes that exceptions can arise in emergency situations (Section III.2). Any research which violated human dignity should be banned while research should always be accompanied by consideration of its ethical and social implications. Fears about genetic research were also expressed in New Ways, Firm Values (Section 3, p.11).

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<sup>37</sup> Page references for "Nieuw Wegen, Vaste Waarden" are taken from the version available via the Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen website. <http://www.rug.nl/dnpp/politiekePartijen/cda/publicaties/notasBrochures/1995nwvww.pdf> accessed 10/04/03.

The CDA's principles (justice, spread responsibility, solidarity and stewardship) remain unchanged from its original programme from 1980<sup>39</sup>. The importance of stewardship has grown since the earlier Programme of Points of Departure due to the party's greater environmentalism (see later). Individualism was also still rejected in favour of a personalist view of humanity. References to the free development of the person are almost always tempered by adjacent allusions to the individual's responsibilities towards neighbours and society. This was also the case in the later programme which stresses the role of values more emphatically. Politics was not simply a question of economics. Instead, the human element must always be central: where change is needed, people must be at the centre of the aims and measurement (Section 2, p.5).

### **Economic and social policy**

In social and economic policy, the Programme of Points of Departure favoured a limited role for the state. The government was to concentrate on its "core tasks" (Article 41) and the welfare system had to be viable in the long-term and encourage self-responsibility (Article 42). A reference was also made to the WAO crisis as the programme sought increased work for socially marginal groups such as those suffering from work disability (Article 45). In addition, the text also mentioned the pressure on the Dutch economy caused by high taxes, poor rates of labour participation, low investment in technology and the growth of regulation (Section III.3). An interesting comparison could be made between Article 41 of the 1980 programme and Article 46 of the 1993 text. Where the earlier programme speaks of an orientation of benefits to the level of income of those working, the later version significantly alters this to "the difference between wages and benefits ought to be such that it encourages the carrying out of paid work". Such statements corresponded to the greater market emphasis and welfare state retrenchment carried out by the Lubbers governments. Nonetheless, the typical Christian Democratic concern for integration and accommodation is unmistakable through the numerous mentions of the need for a "maatschappelijk draagvlak" (societal weight-bearing surface) in decisions<sup>40</sup>. This untranslatable, widely recognised term indicates "the need

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<sup>38</sup> See also the introduction in which it was stated that the CDA was led "by the authority of the source of inspiration, the Gospel" and later "by the Good News of God to man" as well as Articles 2 and 4.

<sup>39</sup> See Article 7 for spread responsibility, Article 8 for responsibility, 9 for solidarity 11 for stewardship.

<sup>40</sup> There are over 10 separate mentions of either "maatschappelijk draagvlak" or simply "draagvlak" in the text in reference to among other things economic problems, democracy,

for government policies to have widespread support from organised interests and citizens” (Andeweg and Irwin 2002:148). Throughout the programme, the CDA constantly reiterated that government policy must result from a process of social incorporation and produce social consensus. The party was not proposing a radical break from previous practices. While reform of the welfare state was necessary, it was to be achieved in a consensual fashion.

The social-economic policy outlined in “New Ways, Firm Values” was broadly similar. The first task of government was “to allow society to function as a community of responsible people....offering, supporting and protecting space” (Section 3, p.6). However, the programme mixed a greater amount of social concern with a stronger emphasis on adaptation. A minimum system of social security in which benefits would be set so low that unemployed parents could not resist any job regardless of the consequences was rejected and a number of policies were proposed to support the family. Following the debacle of 1994, the party also confirmed that the state pension (AOW) must remain intact as the basis for old age provision even though increasing numbers should take on supplementary pensions. Nonetheless, the programme conceded that the social market economy required changes. The government was no longer able to stipulate detailed regulations and was to intervene only where fundamental values were under threat and where markets were dominated by established interests (Section 5, p.17). More radically, a more active labour market policy was suggested based on a mixture of incentive and compulsion in which jobs could be provided for the unemployed at below the minimum wage with a top-up supplied through benefits. This contrasted sharply with the typical transfer-orientated Christian Democratic welfare state (van Kersbergen 1995) and signalled a greater willingness to change.

### **Foreign policy**

Continuity was the dominant theme of foreign policy. The CDA continued to support the process of European integration. However, like the 1980 programme, it was acknowledged that democracy in the EU was “defective” and that for citizens, the process of decision-making lacked transparency (Section III.1). This requires a greater level of participation from European citizens and more democratic control over decision-makers through the European Parliament (Article 21). The CDA also continued to take an active interest in developmental policy and the standard 1.5% level of National Income for developmental aid was confirmed. Aside from a stronger concentration on

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Europe and environmental policy. See, for example, Section II (Appèl), Section III.1

the tackling of security issues at EU level, the 1996 programme essentially reaffirmed these foreign policy commitments.

### **Family policy and the role of women**

Family policy remained an essential component of Dutch Christian Democratic policy. The traditional family should be supported through child benefit and the inclusion of child-raising years in pension calculations and social insurance (Article 46) with greater consideration to be given to their interests by the social partners (Article 43). Nonetheless, the adaptation of the party to changing social norms was comparatively quite radical. The government had to respect the diversity of society and no one form should be privileged. Gay and lesbian couples were even explicitly referred to (Section III.5) and other forms of living together involving an enduring acceptance of mutual responsibility had a right to public recognition and possibly legal registration (Article 72). To some extent, the CDA had reverted to a more standard Christian Democratic line by 1996. The family was crucial to the fabric of society as the “most vital form of living together” based on “the recognition that for most people the family is the most satisfying basis for existence which offers large advantages for society and a bridge between generations” (NWVW Section 3, p.7). Accordingly, the party called for tax and pension reform to help parents, the raising of child allowance and improved chances for parents re-entering the labour market (NWVW Section 3, pp.7-8). The re-concentration on the traditional family indicated a shift in the party’s stance. Other forms of domestic life were not to be ignored but the two parent family was given a discernibly stronger emphasis.

### **Environmentalism**

Compared to the 1980 Programme of Points of Departure, the 1993 programme contained a greater green component (Articles 55-68). The fruits of God’s creation were to be used but not be exhausted for future generations (Articles 11 and 12). The CDA desired sustainable economic growth, an ecologically responsible market economy and seeks to stimulate the development of clean energy sources (Article 56). In certain cases, the party was prepared to go beyond market instruments to ensure environmentally friendly development (Article 59) while international organisations like the EU (Articles 63-5) and the UN (Article 67) were also vital for appropriate policies. The eco-component of the CDA may not have distinguished it from other parties (Lucardie

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(Democratische Rechtstaat, Democratie in Europa) and Article 65.

1993:49) but the expansion of interest in this policy domain was unmistakable and continued into the later document.

### **Crime and Security**

A new theme of the 1993 programme was crime and security. The problem of escalating crime and especially international organised crime was identified. Although the party called for more appropriate punishments and swifter justice (Article 30), few clear policies were outlined. During the purple coalition, this attitude hardened. In 'New Ways, Firm Values' under the slogan of "A culture of acceptance not toleration", the party argues for a tougher line on official tolerance of illegal activities such as the sale of drugs or prostitution and on the presence of illegal immigrants within the Netherlands (Section 4, pp.14-5).

### **CDA Programmatic Development: New Ways In Opposition?**

While some party members feared that the revision of the CDA's basic programme would trigger off ideological tension, the broad strand of continuity in the new Points of Departure was unlikely to cause serious ruptures. The party retained a stronger religious element than other Christian Democratic parties and its fundamental principles were unaltered. The party remained pro-EU integration and continued to support the family even though there was a greater acknowledgement of diversity. Alterations took place in social and economic policy and in the party's new-found environmentalism. A more restricted welfare state and a greater emphasis on the market were sought but it was repeatedly affirmed that this was to be done in a consensual fashion. The social market model was to be reformed, not demolished. Equally, green themes were adopted but did not cause a fundamental reordering of the party's priorities. Nonetheless, from a comparative perspective, there was a deeper acceptance of social change in the CDA, for example in family policy and the commitment to multiculturalism. Following the electoral catastrophe of 1994, this adaptation continued. In some issues, proposals for reform were fairly modest. The party argued for a limited amount decentralisation (Section 7, pp. 28-9) and gave only tepid support was given to a FRG-style Additional Member Voting system. Moreover, the 1996 programme tried to reassert the relevance of Christian Democratic principles. At the same time, however, the document introduced more substantive reforms (e.g. in employment and security policy) . This together with the concurrent attempt to highlight the party's social profile, particularly through family policy, constituted the major programmatic response of the party to its exile in opposition.

“New Ways, Firm Values” was used as a basis for the development of the election manifesto although further refinement of ideas was also achieved through a series of working groups. A development of potentially major significance resulting from one such group was the contention by Scientific Institute leader Klop that the ideal model for the family was no longer based on the solitary male breadwinner and housewife but instead on two parents each with part-time jobs. The consideration of such ideas demonstrated that the CDA was strongly committed to the task of keeping its programmatic foundation relevant. The results were regarded with some satisfaction by members of the party yet in view of the 1998 result whether this was welcomed or even noticed by the electorate was less clear.

#### **IV. Organisational Developments**

As outlined in earlier sections, the organisational make-up of the CDA has been a less significant influence on the party’s development than has been the case for other Christian Democratic parties across Europe. The party had less in-built pluralism and power lay chiefly in the hands of the party in government and to a lesser extent the parliamentary party. Nonetheless, there was in the 1990-8 period a reaction against centralised power. Even before 1994, a greater dispersal of power and more grassroots involvement were being discussed. The first attempt at organisational reform came with the formation of the *Appèl en weerklank II* commission in 1993 which presented its report in the following year. The report contained some quite strong criticisms of a party organisation which was “overstaffed, overcentralised, overelaborate and lacking in transparency” with “too little turnover among leading personnel” (Fogarty 1995:151). The report suggested consultation with party members on certain topics, the reduction of the size of the party executive and a reorganisation of the CDA’s auxiliary organisations, for example the Women’s Council would become “an organisation of and for the CDA” (Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1995:43). The last suggestion was strongly resisted and eventually a compromise was found to ensure the Women’s Council retained its autonomy.

The theme of renewal was also raised in 1996 with a working group “Political Party New Style”. As a result of this investigation, nine test projects were initiated in 1997. These included differentiated membership, incentives for party branches to recruit members and the introduction of internal polls on certain topics (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 1998:29). The long-term impact of such innovations remains to be seen but in the short-term such efforts to spur more participation failed to reverse or

even halt the continued withering of the party's membership base<sup>41</sup>. Moreover, the limited number of CDA members in the 1998 DNES were overwhelmingly old and non-participatory<sup>42</sup>. If these trends were present throughout the party, then the aim of the reformers to create a vital and lively party culture could not be judged to have been a success by 1998.

In addition to these formal organisational changes, a further interesting intra-party development was the shift in the balance of power towards the party headquarters in Kuyperhuis. The loss of government responsibilities created a power vacuum which was to some extent filled by interim party chairwoman Lodders and then by her successor Helgers. Lodders' handling of the post-1994 crisis boosted her reputation within the party and while Helgers was not especially well-known before his appointment, he was successful on a number of occasions in exerting his will against the *fractie*, such as the battle over the 1998 candidate list<sup>43</sup>. Helgers' desire for renewal meant many established parliamentary figures (e.g. van de Camp, Hillen, Verhagen) found themselves below newcomers on the list (Versteegh 1999:236). Selected parliamentarians were able to adapt to opposition swiftly but the parliamentary group as a whole did not handle the change in the party's role well. The lack of unity, the weak leadership of Heerma and the generally poor performance of the parliamentary group in attacking the government undermined the *fractie's* ability to counter the growing influence of the extra-parliamentary party. With the election of de Hoop Scheffer, it was expected that the parliamentary group would pose a more dangerous threat to the government (Lepszy and Koecke 2000:225) and perhaps in the process claw back some power from the party chairman. However, by 1998 this did not appear to be the case. The 1998 election programme was drawn up by a commission headed by Lodders and in terms of content reflected the programmatic initiatives of the party in opposition rather than the more right-wing standpoint of de Hoop Scheffer.

The role of the other CDA affiliated organisations did not change drastically. The youth wing of the party continued to provide a critical, independent perspective (such as asylum issues and foreign aid) and pushed for a more radical response to the party's new situation post-1994. For example, the CDJA viewed 'New Ways, Firm Values' as "excellent values, but too few new ways" (Hippe, Lucardie and Voerman

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<sup>41</sup> See Table 4.34, Chapter 4.

<sup>42</sup> The youngest was born in 1959 while more than a third of the CDA members sub-sample were ranked in the second lowest level of participation.

<sup>43</sup> See section II, this chapter.

1996:36). The Women's Council, too, was often critical of central party ideas. With the publication of the report "Meer partij met vrouwen", the party recognised that more ought to be done to recruit women into the party with a proposal for a minimal level of 40% women for elected CDA members. In opposition, the Scientific Institute under director van Gennip became more influential. The WI was able to play a significant part in setting the party's agenda after the loss of office and van Gennip and his assistants (among them future CDA leader and Dutch prime minister Balkenende) were accorded a great deal of respect by the party leadership (Versteegh 1999:213).

In conclusion, the CDA embarked upon a number of test projects aimed at increasing participation within the party and reducing the centralism of decision-making. However, the success of these in stimulating increased participation within the party was not yet known by 1998 as experiments remained at an early stage. What was clearer by 1998 was that a certain fragmenting of power within the party had taken place. Even after the swift abandonment of the collective leadership idea, the central party apparatus headed by chairman Helgers and vice-chairwoman Ladders appeared to have a more prominent role in setting the party's general direction than previously while the *fractie*, by contrast, had more trouble finding its role in opposition.

## **V. Conclusion**

The fall of the Dutch Christian Democrats from the peak of the Lubbers years and of being the party that "ran this country" to the prolonged, painful exile in opposition was spectacular. In a short space of time, the CDA moved from being the pivotal party deciding which other parties governed with it to a helpless political bystander. Structural factors (i.e. the long-term erosion of key social groups) played a role in the CDA's defeat but contextual factors, namely the WAO crisis, the divisions within the party and an unpopular leader, were also significant reasons for the loss and the subsequent exclusion from government. Four years after the initial shock of being cast from office for the first time, the 1998 Tweede Kamer election result brought the worst ever result for the CDA. This, it was argued in Section II, was primarily attributable to leadership instability, the unfamiliarity of the CDA in opposition and the accomplishments of the purple coalition. Faced by a coalition successfully carrying out policies not dissimilar to the previous Lubbers-led cabinets and encumbered by a makeshift leader and a parliamentary group generally lacking political combativeness, the CDA was unable to land any telling blows against the government. Failing to assert its credentials as an opposition party, the CDA relied on an increasingly small core support as even traditional supporters deserted the party. No clear way out of the crisis was obvious as the party

faced several strategic dilemmas. One choice was whether to target the growing body of liberal-inclined individualist voters or the more socially active post-materialists. However, beyond this it was not clear whether increasing support among either of these groups could be achieved without further losses among the more traditionalist core support. The future of the Christian Democrats as a socially inclusive people's party was by 1998 very much open to question. The opposition years had triggered a greater degree of internal friction but there was no immediate danger of disintegration although the longer the party spent in opposition, the greater this threat would become.

In programmatic terms, the reaction of the party to the loss of office was clearer. As Section III showed, even before 1994, the party had revised its basic programme, adapting some of its ideas and policies to contemporary domestic and international developments while retaining its primary conceptions of humanity, society and the role of the government. In some respects, the party went significantly further in its adjustment to social trends than other Christian Democratic parties, for example in family policy. In opposition, programmatic work assumed a new importance. The direction of the party as a whole became much more closely linked to the plans coming out of Kuyperhuis. The actual programmatic work, however, brought few radical deviations from previous ideas. Although the CDA did try to re-establish its social credentials and again prioritised the two parent family, critical Christian Democratic principles were reasserted. Whether this blend of core continuity with elements of adaptation would be a successful basis for a re-establishment of Christian Democratic political power was far from certain. The same uncertainty surrounded organisational reform within the party. Section IV illustrated that the long-term effect of the main organisational changes in the 1990s (the attempt to encourage greater grassroots involvement, the growing power of the extra-parliamentary party) was unknown by 1998. The CDA, thus, entered its second parliamentary term as an opposition party with a large degree of apprehension.

## **Chapter 8. Issue Salience in the Manifestos of the CDU/CSU, ÖVP and CDA**

### **I. Introduction**

The Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), originally called the Manifesto Research Group, was an attempt to create a standardised framework for the analysis of electoral programmes across Europe and was initiated in 1979. The application of content analysis to party documents drew on Robertson's earlier work (1976) for theoretical validation. Here it was argued that the manifestos of various political parties could chiefly be distinguished by the degree of emphasis placed on certain issues. Rather than split their programme equally between issues on which they took a positive stance and those in which they took a negative one, parties tended to highlight only their positive policy domains (Budge 2001:82). The theory of issue salience also built on the earlier research of Stokes (1966) on valence issues, that is issues where a more or less unchallenged consensus existed and thus where only one position was politically feasible. However, it was discovered that in practice almost all issues functioned like valence issues within manifestos. Even where a party believed in the restriction of the welfare state, it would be unlikely to place a great deal of stress on outlining its proposals for curtailing state social spending in its manifesto. Instead, it would normally place a greater weight on free market policies or on economic orthodoxy. In contrast, a Socialist or Social Democratic party would devote a far more significant portion of its document to welfare state spending. The data gathered and coded by the CMP supported this theory. Individual coders examined the manifestos of political parties, counting the number of words used for each issue and then worked out what proportion of the whole document was given over to each issue.

As the dataset expanded and became available to an ever-greater number of researchers, it has been put to a variety of different uses, primarily in attempts to link systematically political parties to policy outcomes (e.g. Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990) and in studies of coalition formation (e.g. Budge and Laver 1993). Thus far, fewer researchers have employed the data to ask questions about the nature of parties themselves. Volkens (2001) analyses the policy positions of European Social Democrats in the post-war period while Bara and Budge (2001) look at short-term changes in Labour's election manifestos in the recent past in terms of the development of 'New Labour' ideology. This chapter draws upon these last two approaches but develops a new method for the analysis of Christian Democrat programmes. After considering some problematic aspects of the CMP's design, three different approaches based on the CMP data will be used: the left/right scale used by Budge and Hofferbert (1990) and Budge,

Klingemann and Hofferbert (1994), a study of issue salience by period and an alternative model based on free market liberalism, social-economic interventionism and social-cultural traditionalism. Although the left/right scale used by those involved in the CMP does broadly correspond with expectations of the parties' positions, it will be argued here that the latter threefold division is necessary in order to unravel more fully the tensions within contemporary Christian Democracy. These various methods offer another approach to the question of Christian Democratic party identity and change: to what extent were the changes in the parties highlighted in chapters 5, 6 and 7 reflected in manifestos? Can common trends in the structure of CDU, ÖVP and CDA manifestos be found?

## **II. Problems with the CMP**

Before analysing the political manifestos of the German, Austrian and Dutch Christian democrats, it is worth considering some limitations of this approach. One of the main problems is the coding. This system (see Budge et al 2001 Appendix III for full details on the coding system) was devised by the multinational members of the original group to collect together the main policy domains found throughout Western Europe. While on the whole this has been a success, certain problems remain. Each of the different categories covers a number of different policy preferences. For example, c201 "Freedom and Human Rights" encompasses "Favourable mentions of the importance of personal freedom and civil rights; freedom from bureaucratic control; freedom of speech; freedom from coercion in the political and economic spheres; individualism in the manifesto country and in other countries". By measuring the concept of freedom in such a flat, two-dimensional manner, the very real differences between a liberal notion of freedom and a Christian Democratic vision of freedom are overlooked. However, as the manifesto data is not the sole means of analysis being employed in this study, this problem is not relevant here. Nonetheless, it might be queried whether these separate elements of the "Freedom and Human Rights" category can be usefully grouped together. Some components of this category clearly belong to the right (e.g. freedom from bureaucratic control, individualism) yet personal freedoms might equally be used by the left (especially a post-materialist/left-libertarian party). It might be reasonably objected therefore that two quite different policy objectives are being collapsed into one vague category. This is not true for most of the other classification categories but it alerts us to the problem that once the data has been ordered into these overarching aggregations by the individual coder, they cannot subsequently be broken down without an extensive, time-consuming and methodologically dubious process of recoding.

Realistically, we can only work within the existing coding but should nonetheless be alive to the possibility of erroneous results as a consequence of the coding system.

A further inevitable difficulty arises from the use of the coding across countries and across time. The coding process necessarily involves blurring the subtleties and variations of national politics to produce a common model. Again this is justified given the project's international focus but at times, the categories can be frustrating. One such instance is "Multiculturalism: positive". All references to "cultural diversity, communalism, cultural plurality and pillarisation, preservation of autonomy of religious, linguistic heritages within the country including special electoral provisions" are included in this category. This immediately prompts the question whether support for a historically based form of cultural heterogeneity (such as *verzuijing* in the Netherlands) can be usefully grouped together with a more modern, *ethnically* mixed multiculturalism. The preservation of a traditional system of subcultural autonomy would certainly be deemed a right-wing position in the Low Countries but while it could be argued that extending this autonomy to incoming religious or ethnic groups is a logical step, it is not a necessary one, particularly if the traditionalists feel that the older nationally-rooted multiculturalism is under threat<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, it would be unwise to use this category as a gauge of traditionalism because it is impossible to know whether it is measuring the same phenomenon in different national and temporal contexts.

A more practical problem with comparing across nations is that different individuals will be involved in the process. The possibility certainly exists that each coder will bring a culturally shaped interpretation of the policy categories and/or the instructions for coding. However, the group developed a tight and rigorously applied system of checks and as Hearl (2001) and McDonald and Mendes (2001) have shown, the coding process does appear to have achieved a great degree of stability and reliability. It seems fair to conclude that many potential pitfalls inherent within such an ambitious large undertaking have been avoided. The problem of unwieldy or slightly unconvincing categories will probably only be overcome with the development of even more sophisticated computer software which should open up a wealth of possibilities for the individual researcher albeit at the cost of the unified method and standardized design of the CMP. Until such applications become available, the CMP remains an extremely valuable resource for researchers in a variety of different areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this has been an increasingly important debate within the CDA since 1998.

Finally before moving on to the data itself, the question of whether the manifesto data actually tells us of anything of significance must be addressed. Even if we accept that the relative weight of issues within the manifestos is carefully designed, we might still doubt their importance in evaluating the political stance of parties. Pelinka (1979:7-9) distinguishes between two fundamentally different type of party documents: programmes of basic principles aimed primarily at activists and members within the party and action programmes which are orientated outwards to the wider public and whose relevance is limited to a short space of time. Election manifestos fall into the latter category and are, therefore, more ephemeral. In constructing their electoral programmes, parties must frequently respond to short-term issues or trends. In the aftermath of a major environmental problem, the rational response of all parties would be to accord more space to the issue of environmental protection. This short-term focus would rarely herald a change of long-term consequence. There is, thus, a danger that by using election manifestos as an indicator of party change, we overstate the significance of short-term contextual factors that ultimately have little bearing on the ideological identity of a party. A possible example of this within the data used here is the CDU/CSU<sup>2</sup> programme for the 1990 Bundestag election. As the first federal election after unification, the campaign was naturally dominated by the consequences of this momentous upheaval. As a result, a striking 12.09% of the CDU/CSU manifesto was concerned with social welfare issues in contrast to just 2.9% eight years later. This deviation leads to a correspondingly abnormal position of the CDU/CSU on a left-right scale, i.e. far further left than usual.

A sensitivity to short term fluctuation, though, need not be a warning against using the data altogether. It merely emphasises that the dataset must be handled cautiously and in conjunction with a more qualitative, historical approach. Budge and Klingemann's swift yet convincing comparison (2001) of the left-right placement of parties generated by the CMP against the historical evidence supports the use of the former as a generally sound tool<sup>3</sup>. Overall, parties are situated in "appropriate sectors of the policy space" (p.48) and the overlapping of parties (one party becoming more right/left wing than another) is rare. Where odd deviations exist, they can be explained by reference to the extraordinary political events at the time. Developments in issue salience need not be a short-lived response to transient events. Where the structure of emphases changes in a manner not suggestive of short-term change, this could herald a

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the manifestos for the Christian Democrats in Germany are always presented jointly by the sister parties.

<sup>3</sup> This is especially the case in the three countries investigated here.

decisive development in a party's identity. The data is not a replacement for expert analysis of party positions and policy space but rather an additional instrument that can support or even challenge previously held notions. It is for this purpose that the dataset is employed here.

### III. Christian Democratic parties and the left-right scale

The left-right scale has been used in several earlier pieces of research utilising the manifesto data (Budge and Laver 1993; Budge and Hofferbert 1990). The measure is produced by separating out those issues belonging to the left and those typically advocated by the right. The proportion of the programme devoted to the former is then subtracted from the percentage given over to the latter creating a number located between -100 (a manifesto completely dedicated to left-wing issues) and +100 (one solely focusing on right wing concerns).

The table below shows the division of issues:

Table 8.1 Left-Right Scale Based on Manifesto Data

Right emphases: sum of %s for	Left emphases: sum of %s for
Military: positive	Decolonisation
Freedom, human rights	Military: negative
Constitutionalism: positive	Peace
Political authority	Internationalism: positive
Free enterprise	Democracy
Economic incentives	Market regulation
Protectionism: negative	Economic planning
Economic orthodoxy	Protectionism: positive
Welfare state limitation	Controlled economy
National way of life: positive	Nationalisation
Traditional morality: positive	Welfare state expansion
Law and order	Education expansion
Social Harmony	Labour groups: positive

Source: Budge and Klingemann (2001:22).

The classification of issues is certainly open to dispute. A left-libertarian might deny that freedom and human rights belongs to the right. Equally, the more authoritarian conservative components of the right (e.g. traditional morality) would quite probably not

be shared by a right-wing libertarian. The possible distortions resulting from using a single axis scale is problematic and is at the core of Kitschelt's criticisms of the CMP (1994:291-296). Budge and Klingemann's robust defence of the scale (2001:21-24) is quite persuasive yet it is with reservations that it is employed here. Regardless of whether one accepts Christian Democrats' claims to forge a new path between socialism and liberalism, the multifaceted, inclusive nature of such parties does make it difficult to place them on a single dichotomous scale.

Figure 8.1 Manifestos on a Left-Right Axis

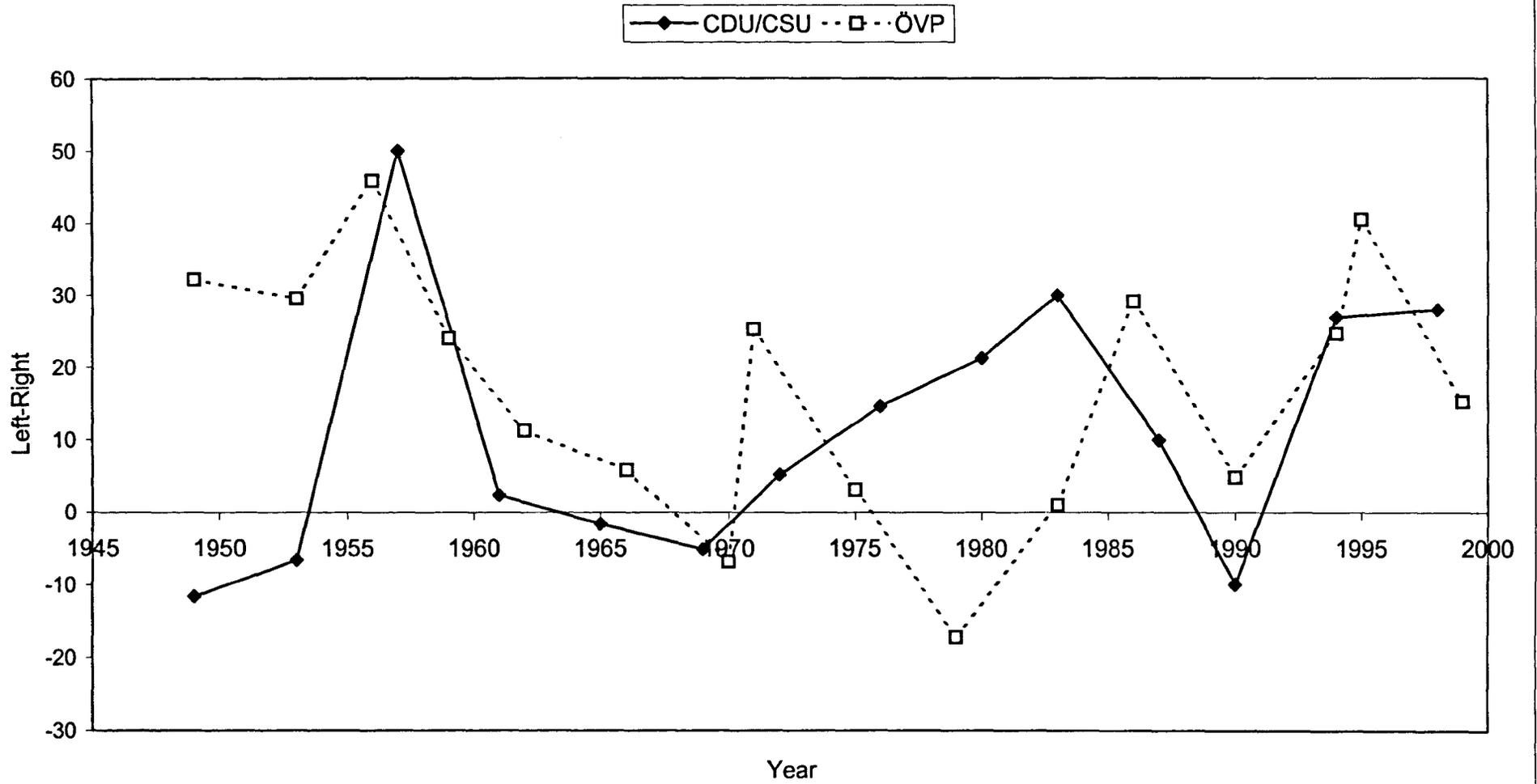
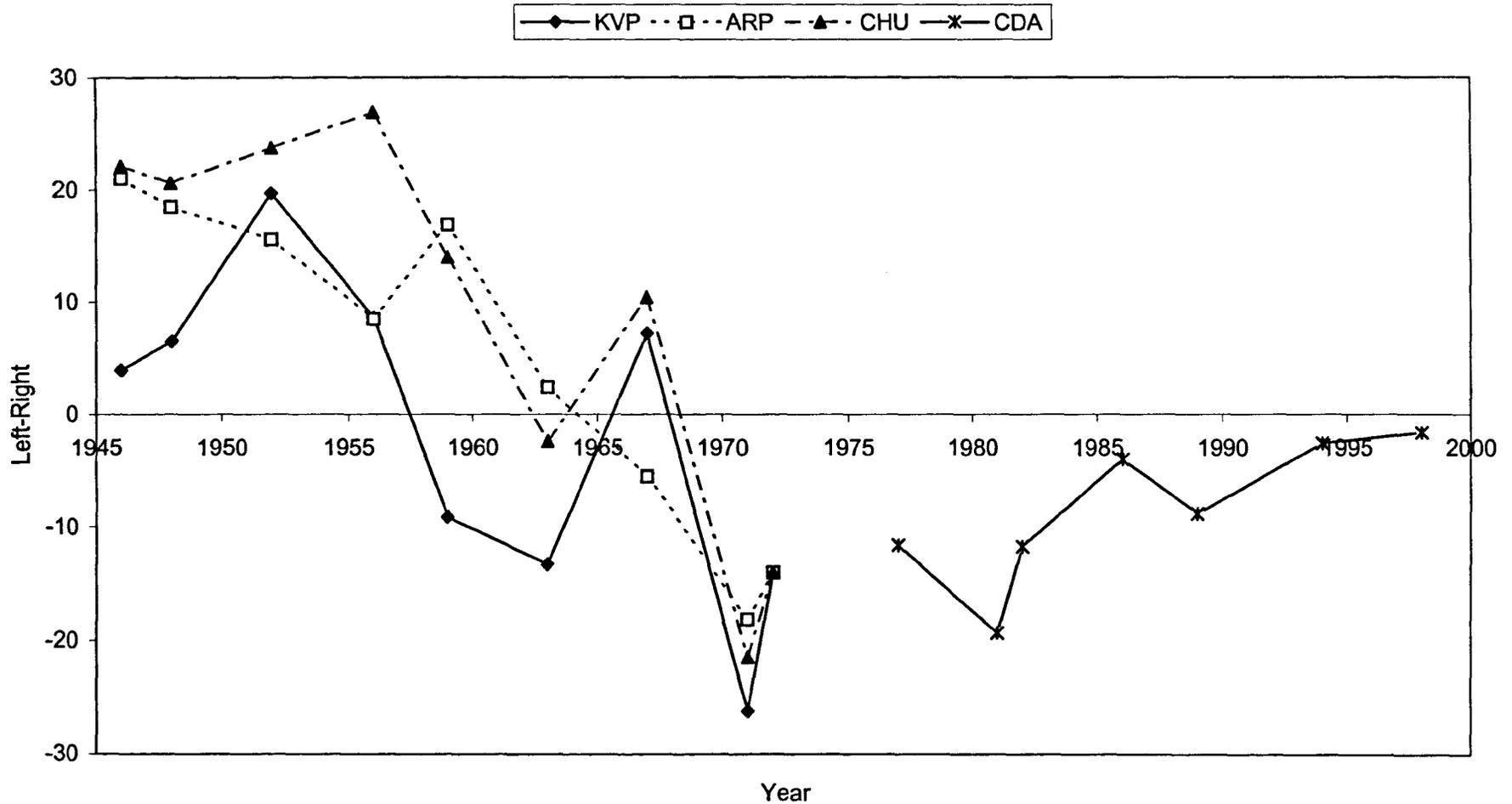


Figure 8.2 Manifestos on a Left-Right Axis



On first sight, Figures 8.1 and 8.2 illustrating the left-right movement of CDU/CSU, ÖVP Dutch confessional and CDA manifestos show a disconcertingly high amount of fluctuation. Even accounting for the flexibility of Christian Democratic parties, the range they cover is conspicuously wide. The CDU/CSU varies between –11.56 on the left and 50 on the right, the ÖVP between –17.1 and 45.9 and the KVP between –26.2 and 19.7. Only the position of the CDA displays strong continuity with a range of less than 20. Nonetheless, some of the outliers can be explained fairly easily and in general, as the following section will show, the graphs correspond to expectations in mapping the policy changes of Christian Democratic parties.

Some of the outliers can be explained fairly easily: post-war reconstruction in West Germany required state intervention pushing the CDU/CSU into the centre-left on the graph. Against this backdrop, the position of the party in 1957 stands out very clearly as the furthest right wing outlier. Intriguingly, this occurred at precisely the time that relations between the Union and business interest groups were at their most fractious. Adenauer had pushed through the historic pension reform in 1956 against the wishes of employers groups, the business wing of the Union and the CSU<sup>4</sup>. Some Christian Democrats had begun to express their unhappiness about the extent of state involvement in the economy. It seems quite plausible that the manifesto, as part of the famous ‘Keine Experimente’ campaign, was intended as a gesture of conciliation to these groups. Moreover, after a reform of the election law in 1956 had raised the number of constituency seats needed to win Bundestag representation to three for those parties not passing the 5% threshold, a more right-wing programme could also have been used to attract voters of the smaller right-wing parties (Refugee Party, German Party).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the CDU/CSU was much closer to the centre-ground although the parties drift back out right in reaction to the policies of the Social-Liberal government. This trend culminated in 1983, the second furthest right-wing outlier, where Kohl’s promised spiritual-moral turning point and economic cutbacks resulted in a more right-wing programme. The feeling that this promise was not fulfilled and the increasing domestic inaction of the Kohl government also seems to be reflected in the more centrist agenda of 1987. Since unification, CDU/CSU manifestos have shifted back rightwards. This again conforms to our expectations as economic problems have forced the party in government to examine how to make Germany an attractive location for investment (the *Standort Deutschlands* debate) while at the same time, responding to the increasing public concern with law and order issues. The movement of the CDU/CSU on

the left-right scale therefore does seem quite convincing even if the scale of the swings seems rather exaggerated.

The Austrian People's Party's initial scores on the left-right axis appear too far to the right. There was, after all, a brief "French period" in the early history of the ÖVP when the party was thought to be on the centre-left and closer to the more progressive French vision of Christian Democracy than the version dominant in West Germany (Kriechbaumer 1990:64). One possible explanation of the ÖVP's position is that the party was keen to stress its independence from the pre-war Christian Socials. As a result, themes of freedom, human rights and the free market were important given the weak democratic credentials and anti-capitalism of the Christian Socials. From 1956 until 1971, the ÖVP moved into a more centrist position as technocratic themes ("politics with a slide rule rather than a wine glass") became increasingly central. The abrupt lurch back to the right at this later date can be accounted for by the actions of the People's Party leadership at the time. After the ÖVP had been cast into opposition, a very definite strategic choice was made by party leader Schleinzer to move the party to the right in order to capture some FPÖ voters (Kriechbaumer 1995:56). The embrace of new ideas such as participatory democracy, education and international solidarity in the Salzburg programme which depicted the ÖVP as a "party of the progressive middle" is also captured by Figure 8.1. The decisive movement of the party to the left tends to confirm the idea that the process of self-examination and experimentation with new ideas was deeper in the People's Party than in their West German counterparts<sup>5</sup>.

As the era of Social Democratic domination came to an end in Austria and Austro-Keynesianism began to fail, the ÖVP began once more to adopt a more market-oriented platform stressing privatisation and state cutbacks, especially after the near-collapse of the state-run industries in 1985. Since this point, the ÖVP has continued this rightward course, albeit with a return to the centre in 1990 when the chairmanship was taken over by the moderate Josef Riegler. Under both Busek and current ÖVP leader Schüssel, the People's Party have moved unmistakably to a position on the right of the political spectrum. Given the evidence of Chapter 6 which demonstrated the traditionalist conservative positions adopted by the party under the Schüssel-Khol axis, the ÖVP's more centrist position in 1999 is unexpected but this will be further explored in later sections.

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<sup>4</sup> The pension reform was passed in the National Executive of the Union only by a narrow majority (Schwarz, 1997:224-8).

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3, Section III.

The pattern of the Dutch confessionals' left-right placement also seems to fit the historical evidence quite neatly. The parties are in appropriate positions, the KVP being to the left of the ARP and the CHU. All three parties drifted towards the left over the course of the following decades, albeit at different rates with the exception being the KVP and CHU's sudden swing rightwards in 1967. This followed the breakdown of the Cals cabinet in 1966 when the right wing of the KVP in parliament brought down the more progressive government. However, the continuing electoral decay of the confessionals, particularly the KVP and CHU, prompted another significant swing to the left in the following election. What the data does support very clearly is the increasing compatibility of the confessional parties<sup>6</sup>. In programmatic terms, the merger was far less problematic by 1971 than it would have been previously. An additional clear feature is the different response of the CDA to electoral decline. Whereas the loss of votes caused fluctuations in the policy positions of the confessionals, the merged party has stuck to a fairly consistent position just to the left of centre despite the disaster of 1994 and the failure in opposition before 1998. A number of possible explanations could be suggested for this apparent anomaly. Chapter 7 suggested that the election manifesto of the CDA did mark quite a departure for the party compared to 1994 and there remains the chance that change did take place but has not been recorded by the scale. This will be examined later on. Alternatively, it might be proposed that the difficulty in effecting the merger constrained the party's options in subsequent years. A programme which was the result of sustained and heated debate between the parties could not be easily jettisoned subsequently.

Table 8.2. Manifesto Left-right Placement- averages by period

	CDU/CSU	ÖVP	KVP	ARP	CHU	CDA
1945-2000	10.9	16.9	-1.9	5.0	8.9	-8.5
1945-1965	6.5	28.6	2.7	13.8	17.5	
1966-1985	4.9	1.9	-11.0	-12.5	-8.3	-14.2
1986-2000	15.0	22.8				-4.2
*1986-2000	23.6					

\*excludes the 1990 Bundestag election

The table above presents averages across different periods to analyse further the patterns of the left-right placement of the three parties. The clearest contrast emerging is the divergence between the German and Austrian parties on one hand and the Dutch on the other. The CDA and to some extent, its component predecessors, are very obviously to the left of the CDU/CSU and the ÖVP. The Dutch party has frequently been identified as amongst the most 'pure' Christian Democratic parties in Western Europe and its

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 3.

centrist position is less surprising, particularly as its earliest programmes were “mildly progressive” (Irving 1979:210). Furthermore, with a competitor to the right (at least on socio-economic policy) in the shape of the VVD, there is less incentive for the party to depart from its centrist moorings although the party did move to a slightly more right-wing position under Lubbers. The breakdown of averages by period reveals that the ÖVP’s shift rightwards in manifesto emphases in recent years is just about as significant as its move to the centre-left was in the 1970s. This gives further support to the account of the Austrian People’s Party in Chapter 6. In contrast, change in the CDU/CSU’s left-right position is much more gradual. Yet if we exclude the 1990 Bundestag unification election, there is enough evidence to suggest that there has been a considerable movement to the right. What shift there has been in regard to the CDA has also been in this direction but once more it must be stressed that this has not been a massive change. This is again borne out by looking at the standard deviations, which give an indication of the stability of the left-right position. The standard deviation of the left-right score for the CDA is 6.31 while for the same period (i.e. only 1977-2000) the equivalent figure for the ÖVP is 21.2 and 15.3 for the CDU/CSU (8.09 if 1990 is excluded).

In conclusion, Figure 8.1 shows a definite shift to the right in the manifesto positions of the CDU/CSU from the loss of office up until 1983 and then again following unification. Although the Kohl government never fulfilled the rhetoric of an economic turning-point in the 1980s (Webber 1992; Zohlnhöfer 1999), Chapter 5 illustrated that the party in government pursued a policy of welfare state retrenchment and market liberalisation in the 1990s. The influence of the social wing of the party dwindled and relations with the trade union federation deteriorated markedly. Figure 8.1 also highlights the ÖVP’s increasingly pronounced rightward course since the 1970s. This again corresponded to the analysis of Chapters 3 and 6. After the innovations of the early 1970s, the party increasingly focused its attack on the SPÖ government’s economic policy, particularly after the crisis of the state industries. However, the larger standard deviation also confirms that in the face of electoral failure, the People’s Party’s strategy was not especially consistent. The placement of the CDA on the left-right axis over the last two decades does stand out but not just for the Dutch party’s relatively leftist stance; what is equally striking is that regardless of severe electoral problems, the party has maintained a more stable position than the ÖVP. These findings are certainly interesting and to a large extent tally with the evidence of Chapters 3, 5, 6 and 7 but there remains the possibility that the left-right scale is nonetheless masking or distorting trends within the structure of issue salience for these three parties. Therefore, it is necessary to look in more detail at the programmes in question.

#### IV. Issue salience by period

Tables 8.3, 8.5 and 8.8 rank the stress accorded to the main policy domains for the CDU/CSU, ÖVP and CDA in election manifestos by period with the average proportion of text dedicated to the issue in brackets e.g. in the 1945-65 period, market regulation was the third most emphasised issue with an average 6.65% of CDU/CSU manifestos devoted to it.

Table 8.3 Ranking of CDU/CSU average manifesto emphases by period

	1945-65	1966-85	1986-98	1986-98*
<i>Technology and infrastructure</i>	1 (9.07)	1 (9.15)	1 (9.47)	2 (8.24)
<i>Welfare state expansion</i>	2 (8.78)	2 (6.79)	5 (5.85)	10 (4.07)
<i>Market regulation</i>	3 (6.65)			
<i>Free enterprise</i>	4 (6.35)			
<i>Political authority</i>	5 (5.23)	10 (3.19)		
<i>Foreign special relationships: positive</i>	5 (5.23)	5 (5.07)		
<i>Non-economic demographic groups</i>	7 (5.07)		8 (4.41)	
<i>Social harmony</i>	8 (5.06)		10 (3.91)	9 (4.56)
<i>Agriculture and farmers</i>	9 (4.76)		7 (4.92)	6 (4.64)
<i>Economic orthodoxy</i>	10 (4.31)	3 (6.18)		
<i>Governmental and administrative efficiency</i>		4 (5.4)	9 (3.92)	5 (5.23)
<i>Social Justice</i>		6 (4.67)		
<i>European Community: positive</i>		7 (4.36)	4 (7.31)	3 (7.99)
<i>Freedom and human rights</i>		8 (4.16)		
<i>Military: positive</i>		9 (4.11)		
<i>Environmental protection</i>			2 (8.44)	4 (6.87)
<i>Law and order</i>			3 (7.48)	1 (8.65)
<i>Traditional morality: positive</i>			6 (5.13)	7 (4.64)
<i>Incentives</i>				8 (4.61)

\*excluding 1990

The CDU/CSU data has been altered to include both the averages for the whole 1986-98 periods and for this period without the 1990 election. Several surprising features present themselves: first, the relative lack of traditionalism in the early manifestos is unexpected. From the early stages of the Union parties, the principle focus was on technological, infrastructural and economic issues and this remains the case until the emphasis begins to change in the most recent period. Second, several unlikely issue areas have actually increased in importance in the past couple of decades. Although the agrarian sector continues to contract, references to agriculture and farmers have increased (7<sup>th</sup> in the list in the 1986-98 period). Equally, positive references to traditional morality have increased, a particularly interesting phenomenon given its earlier relative lack of significance.

Other elements of Table 8.3 are less surprising. The weight of positive references to the EC/EU increases through time, acquiring particular significance in the Kohl era. The rising prominence (although slightly checked since unification) of

governmental and administrative efficiency is also predictable, the CDU/CSU having come to office promising state cutbacks. Another consequential development is the sudden rise of law and order as a key policy area within manifesto documents. If the 1990 election is excluded, law and order becomes the number one priority in the most recent era which is consistent with the analysis of Section III of Chapter 5 which showed that crime and security themes had developed into a major CDU theme by the time of the *Zukunftsprogramm* in 1998. Indeed, by excluding the 1990 figures, the programmes for the CDU/CSU in the last two decades indicate a new strategy: a mixture of traditionalist conservative concerns (law and order, traditional morality, agriculture and farmers) with strong pro-European and environmentalist elements with a concurrent reduction in the weight of interventionist policies. This is essentially confirmed by Table 8.4 which additionally reveals the clear movement between 1994 and 1998 towards a more free market based programme with governmental and administrative efficiency and free enterprise increasingly important themes. The table also shows the fading of the CDU/CSU's green profile: by 1998 environmental protection had fallen to 9<sup>th</sup> on the list and all other major parties including the PDS gave more attention to green issues than the Christian Democrats. An interesting anomaly is the emphasis on positive mentions of labour groups in 1998 which appears to be an attempt to repair the damaged relations with the Trade Union Federation<sup>7</sup>.

Table 8.4. CDU/CSU Issue Salienc in Elections in the 1990s

	1990	1994	1998
<i>Environmental protection</i>	1 (13.16)	4 (7.25)	9 (4.19)
<i>Technology and Infrastructure</i>	1 (13.16)	2 (9.42)	4 (6.51)
<i>Welfare State Expansion</i>	3 (11.18)		
<i>Internationalism: positive</i>	4 (7.89)		
<i>Non-economic Demographic Groups</i>	4 (7.84)	6 (6.16)	
<i>Traditional Morality: positive</i>	6 (6.58)	5 (6.88)	7 (4.19)
<i>European Community : positive</i>	7 (5.26)	9 (5.07)	2 (7.91)
<i>Agriculture and Farmers</i>	8 (3.95)	8 (5.43)	
<i>Law and Order</i>	8 (3.95)	1 (15.22)	3 (7.44)
<i>Market Regulation</i>	8 (3.95)	7 (5.8)	
<i>Incentives</i>		3 (7.61)	8 (5.12)
<i>Social Harmony</i>		10 (3.99)	9 (4.19)
<i>Free Enterprise</i>			4 (6.51)
<i>Labour Groups: positive</i>			6 (6.05)
<i>National Way of Life: positive</i>			9 (4.19)
<i>Governmental and Administrative Efficiency</i>			1 (10.23)

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 5, Section I.

Table 8.5 confirms once more the ÖVP's relocation on the right since the mid-1980s but does so in more depth. While the party has reclaimed its place on the right of centre in recent years, it has not been through stressing the same issues. Certainly, free enterprise and economic incentives have become vital once more but issue areas previously marginal have also become more central, namely governmental and administrative efficiency, economic orthodoxy and political authority. Equally striking is the falling importance of democracy, freedom and human rights and particularly social justice as well as the more traditionalist concerns of national way of life, social harmony and agriculture and farmers. Indeed, the changes in the ÖVP in the past twenty years are accurately captured by Table 8.5, tracing the transition from free market centre-right party with traditionalist concerns through the Salzburg period of re-evaluation (the interest in education, democracy, culture) in the 1970s to the blend of neo-liberal economics with cultural traditionalism that the party articulated in the late 1990s.

Table 8.5. Ranking of ÖVP average manifesto emphases by period

	1945-65	1966-85	1986-99
<i>Free enterprise</i>	1 (9.68)	7 (5.3)	1 (11.84)
<i>Incentives</i>	2 (8.5)		
<i>Freedom and human rights</i>	3 (7.4)		
<i>Democracy</i>	4 (6.42)	2 (7.25)	
<i>Social justice</i>	5 (6.14)	6 (5.55)	
<i>National way of life: positive</i>	6 (4.6)		
<i>Social harmony</i>	8 (5.12)		
<i>Agriculture and farmers</i>	7 (5.14)		
<i>Foreign special relationships: positive</i>	9 (4.9)		
<i>Welfare state expansion</i>	10 (4.46)	8 (4.65)	9 (3.64)
<i>Productivity</i>		1 (10.32)	
<i>Technology and infrastructure</i>		3 (7.07)	3 (6.22)
<i>Economic orthodoxy</i>		10 (4.3)	7 (4.28)
<i>Culture</i>		9 (4.35)	
<i>Education expansion</i>		5 (5.85)	10 (3.52)
<i>Non-economic demographic groups</i>		4 (6.82)	
<i>Economic goals</i>			6 (4.36)
<i>Environmental protection</i>			4 (6.11)
<i>Governmental and administrative efficiency</i>			2 (7.53)
<i>Political authority</i>			5 (5.55)
<i>Law and Order</i>			8 (3.89)

Table 8.6 showing recent issue salience in ÖVP election manifestos highlights the ÖVP's lack of a consistent strategy in the 1990s as it struggled with the challenges it faced. Environmental protection, an integral theme in 1990 and 1994, drops from the party's agenda later in the decade<sup>8</sup>. The 1995 programme was marked by a very strong concentration on free market themes with over a third of the entire manifesto dedicated to governmental and administrative efficiency, free enterprise and economic orthodoxy.

Table 8.6 also illustrates the influence of the Schüssel-Khol course in 1999 more clearly than the left-right axis. Where the latter scale showed only a movement towards the centre, the table shows that this obscures the heavy emphasis on law and order and traditional morality.

Table 8.6 ÖVP Issue Salience in Elections in the 1990s

	1990	1994	1995	1999
<i>Environmental protection</i>	1 (14.2)	3 (7.47)		
<i>Free Enterprise</i>	2 (9.1)	1 (9.38)	2 (14.17)	5 (7.33)
<i>Technology and Infrastructure</i>	3 (6)	6 (5.46)	7 (6.67)	6 (7.15)
<i>Education Expansion</i>	4 (5.8)			3 (8.7)
<i>Political Authority</i>	5 (5.1)	9 (3.46)	6 (7.5)	
<i>Internationalism: positive</i>	6 (4.9)	4 (5.65)		
<i>Governmental and Administrative Efficiency</i>	7 (4.7)	8 (3.55)	1 (15.42)	7 (4.79)
<i>Welfare State Expansion</i>	8 (4.4)		9 (6.25)	8 (4.72)
<i>Social Harmony</i>	9 (3.8)		10 (1.67)	10 (3.6)
<i>Democracy</i>	10 (3.6)			
<i>Law and Order</i>		2 (7.92)		1 (9.82)
<i>Economic Goals</i>		4 (5.65)		
<i>Incentives</i>		7 (3.73)	4 (10.83)	
<i>Freedom and Human Rights</i>		10 (3.28)		
<i>Economic Orthodoxy</i>			3 (12.08)	
<i>Productivity</i>			5 (9.58)	
<i>Economic Goals</i>			7 (6.67)	
<i>European Community : positive</i>				2 (9.26)
<i>Traditional morality: positive</i>				4 (8.02)
<i>Non-economic Demographic Groups</i>				9 (4.47)

Table 8.7 Ranking of Dutch confessional<sup>9</sup> average manifesto emphases by period

	1945-65	1966-75
<i>Traditional morality: positive</i>	1 (9.82)	9 (4.03)
<i>Welfare state expansion</i>	2 (7.92)	1 (8.71)
<i>Multiculturalism: positive</i>	3 (5.16)	
<i>Social justice</i>	4 (4.81)	3 (5.07)
<i>Free enterprise</i>	5 (4.59)	
<i>Agriculture and farmers</i>	6 (4.36)	
<i>Incentives</i>	7 (4.35)	
<i>Non-economic demographic groups</i>	8 (3.75)	7 (4.27)
<i>Corporatism</i>	9 (3.60)	
<i>Technology and infrastructure</i>	10 (3.26)	6 (4.52)
<i>Democracy</i>		2 (6.97)
<i>Culture</i>		5 (4.59)
<i>Internationalism: positive</i>		4 (5.01)
<i>Education expansion</i>		8 (4.17)
<i>Environmental protection</i>		10 (3.84)

The order of the combined Dutch confessionals' manifestos is chiefly interesting as a contrast to the German and Austrian Christian Democrats and supports the analysis of

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 6, Section III.

Chapter 2, Section III which highlighted the confessionals' much firmer views on the regulation of public morality. In the 1945-65 period, traditional morality played a major role while the large amount of text about multiculturalism was clearly in support of the pillarised system<sup>10</sup>. In the last years of their existence, the structure of issue salience for the parties changed dramatically as traditional morality and support for multiculturalism were downplayed in favour of issues more commonly associated with the left (welfare expansion, democracy, internationalism). This instability in the confessionals' manifestos gives a further indication of their desperation as the process of depillarisation rendered their position more vulnerable.

Table 8.8. Ranking of CDA average manifesto emphases by period

	1975-85	1986-98
<i>Welfare state expansion</i>	1 (7.83)	6 (4.47)
<i>Internationalism: positive</i>	2 (6.5)	3 (6.33)
<i>Environmental protection</i>	3 (6)	1 (8.67)
<i>Technology and infrastructure</i>	4 (4.8)	3 (5.88)
<i>Education expansion</i>	5 (4.57)	6 (4.47)
<i>Social justice</i>	6 (4.23)	9 (3.16)
<i>Govt and administrative efficiency</i>	7 (4.03)	2 (6.93)
<i>Economic goals</i>	8 (3.57)	
<i>European Community: positive</i>	9 (3.47)	7 (3.89)
<i>Democracy</i>	10 (3.4)	
<i>Law and order</i>		3 (5.15)
<i>Non-economic demographic groups</i>		8 (3.38)

As was suggested by the left-right scale in Section II, there is a strong sense of continuity in the balance of the policy emphases in CDA manifestos by period as environmentalism, internationalism, technology and education receive a consistently high amount of attention. However, Table 8.9 which shows the structure of issue salience in the two elections in the 1990s suggests that the stability shown in Table 8.8 and Figure 8.2 hides considerable change. Environmentalism remained a major theme in the 1990s but following the loss of office and the changes in leadership, governmental and administrative efficiency declined in significance in 1998. Furthermore, welfare state expansion becomes the most heavily stressed policy having not been relevant in 1994. The return to traditional morality and the heightened interest in law and order are further interesting aspects of the CDA's reaction to opposition. Therefore, while the left-right scale registered little change in the position of the CDA, Table 8.9 confirms the analysis of chapter 7 which found evidence of a clear programmatic response of the CDA to opposition.

<sup>9</sup> The ARP, KVP and CHU scores have been combined for the sake of clarity to produce a single table.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 2, Section II.

Table 8.9 CDA Issue Saliency in Elections in the 1990s

	1994	1998
<i>Environmental protection</i>	1 (8.73)	2 (6.85)
<i>Governmental and Administrative Efficiency</i>	2 (8.23)	10 (3.99)
<i>Internationalism: positive</i>	3 (7.53)	7 (4.59)
<i>European Community : positive</i>	4 (5.29)	
<i>Market Regulation</i>	5 (4.69)	
<i>Law and Order</i>	6 (4.64)	3 (6.66)
<i>Technology and Infrastructure</i>	7 (4.14)	6 (4.98)
<i>Education Expansion</i>	8 (4.09)	9 (4.29)
<i>Social Harmony</i>	9 (3.29)	4 (6.36)
<i>Multiculturalism: positive</i>	10 (2.79)	
<i>Welfare State Expansion</i>		1 (9.32)
<i>Traditional Morality: positive</i>		5 (5.13)
<i>Non-economic Demographic Groups</i>		8 (4.49)

### Conclusion

From tables 8.3, 8.5 and 8.8, immediate differences between the countries are clear: the CDU/CSU has always prized technology and infrastructure as a vital policy area whereas the ÖVP has consistently emphasised free enterprise the most. Social justice has frequently been prioritised by the merged CDA and its predecessors and also, to some extent, by the ÖVP while its relevance in CDU/CSU programmes has been negligible. The German sister parties have typically devoted a sizeable amount of text to social harmony, a theme of less significance for the Austrian People's Party and even less important in the Dutch context.

By the 1990s, however, strong convergence in the policy priorities can be detected. In all three countries, Christian Democrats re-discovered more traditional issues in the 1990s: positive depictions of traditional morality and social harmony were increasingly important aspects of manifestos. Law and order became a central theme: it was the main topic of the manifestos of the CDU/CSU in 1994 and the ÖVP in 1999, the second most emphasised issue in the ÖVP manifesto of 1994 and third highest ranked policy area in the CDU/CSU and CDA programmes in 1998. Furthermore, environmentalism had become increasingly marginal in electoral programmes. The 'green' clothing donned earlier had been largely discarded by the end of the decade and only the CDA continued to prioritise green ideas by the last election of the decade.

Signs of an increasingly technocratic version of Christian Democracy were also visible. In addition to a shared emphasis on technology and infrastructure, governmental and administrative efficiency was another vital Christian Democratic theme. Nevertheless, by the last election of the decade, both the CDA and ÖVP had recoiled

from using this as a dominant topic. Instead, the Dutch party adopted a more social platform while the Austrians mixed traditionalism with a new pro-Europeanism. Apart from the 1998 CDA programme, there has also been a diminished concern for social interventionism. References to social justice have become much rarer and welfare state expansion has dropped in prominence, particularly in CDU/CSU manifestos where it was not among the most salient issues in either 1994 or 1998.

The representation of the parties presented here fits well with the evidence of Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The case studies of the parties in the 1990s highlighted a common incorporation of crime and security concerns, movement towards greater market liberalism, a renewed emphasis on the family and a concurrent interest in welfare reform. Following issue salience theory, we would not expect the last trend to be expressed through mentions of social cutbacks, but through less emphasis on interventionism. As shown above, each of these three trends has been reflected in the structure of issue salience within CDU/CSU, ÖVP and CDA manifestos in recent years although the case of the CDA is less straightforward. While the CDU and the ÖVP both moved rightwards in the 1990s, one aspect of the CDA's response to opposition was to revive the party's social profile. Once more, this can be seen in the relative priorities of the 1998 manifesto where welfare state expansion was the most emphasised policy domain.

## V. An Alternative to the left-right scale

Section III illustrated that the CMP data ordered into the left-right schema appeared to give a plausible representation of the parties' policy movements over time. However, Section IV gave a far more nuanced portrait of the parties' manifestos and highlighted that the left-right approach missed more subtle changes in the construction of Christian Democratic programmes, most notably the response of the CDA to four years of opposition in 1998 and the ÖVP's adoption of a more traditionalist position in 1999. There is a danger therefore that by focusing exclusively on the left-right scale, other critical developments are overlooked (see also Penning and Keman's recent Dutch election study 2002). The trends presented also suggest an alternative framework for interpreting the movements of Christian Democratic parties. In all three cases, there was a common mixture of traditionalist ideas with support for a mixed economy (i.e. a predominantly market based model with limited state interventionism). This is again consistent with the examination of the essence of Christian Democracy in Chapter 1. The precise balance of these themes is different across nations and varies through time but the shared feature of Christian Democratic parties is the synthesis of these ideas. Therefore, it is useful to consider a non-dichotomous means of measurement. The tables and analysis of the previous section suggest a threefold division of Christian Democratic manifesto emphases:

- 1) free market liberalism
- 2) social-economic interventionism
- 3) social-cultural traditionalism

The ordering of the CMP variables into the categories used here is as follows:

Table 8.10

<b>Free Market Liberalism</b>	<b>Social-Economic Interventionism</b>	<b>Social-Cultural Traditionalism</b>
Freedom and human rights	Market regulation	Military: positive
Government and administrative efficiency	Economic planning	Constitutionalism: positive
Free enterprise	Keynesian demand management	Political authority
Economic incentives	Controlled economy	National way of life: positive
Protectionism: negative	Nationalisation	Traditional morality: positive
Economic orthodoxy	Social justice	Law and order
Welfare state limitation	Welfare state expansion	Social harmony
Labour groups: negative	Education expansion	Agriculture and farmers
	Corporatism	
	Labour groups: positive	

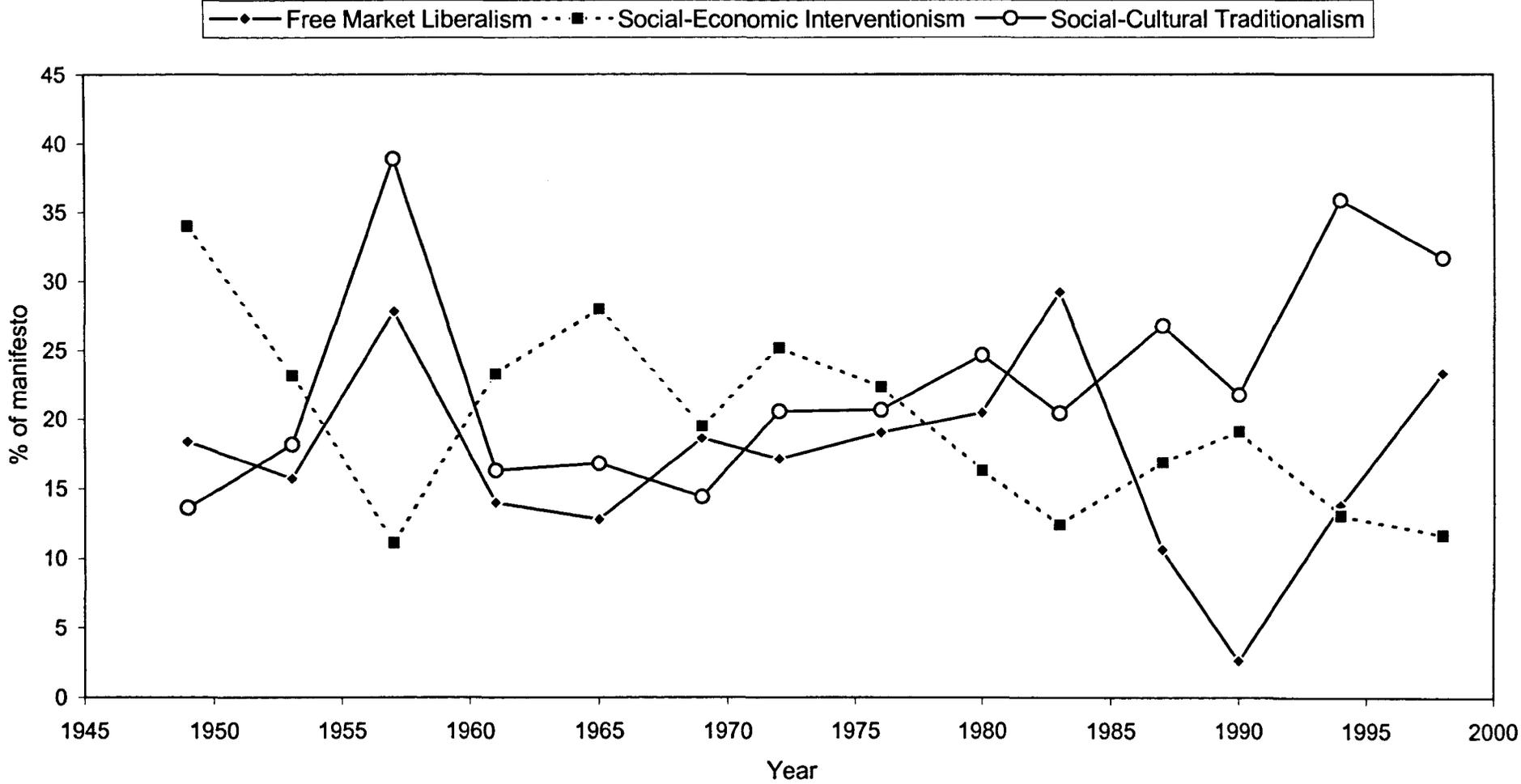
There are a number of disputable inclusions and exclusions. As stated before, the freedom and human rights variable is unfortunately rather broad and might include policies aimed at supporting human rights abroad rather than the economic aspect being measured here. Productivity, a possible candidate for incorporation under Free Market Liberalism, has been omitted because it is too vague and does not specify how productivity is to be increased. The placement of corporatism and labour groups under social-economic interventionism might be queried but as Christian Democratic social policy has typically been agreed upon through neo-corporatist channels involving labour groups, their inclusion seems reasonable.

Figure 8.3 shows the manifesto emphases of the CDU/CSU using the threefold division proposed above. The balance between free market liberalism, social-economic interventionism and social-cultural traditionalism has swung quite a lot over the 1949-98 period. Two periods where one category consistently received most emphasis over a succession of elections are visible. From the election of 1961 to 1980, social economic interventionism was the highest priority within Christian Democratic manifestos. With the candidacy of Strauß in 1980 this changed and the Union concentrated on social-cultural traditionalism while Kohl's platform of social cutbacks in 1983 pushed free market liberalism to the top of the agenda. Subsequently, however, the last four elections have witnessed an increasing concentration on traditionalist ideas and disregarding the exceptional election of 1990, a simultaneous drop in social-economic interventionism. The turn towards traditionalism since 1987 is quite striking as can be seen in Table 8.11 below. It is also emphasised by the growing gap between the different ideological strains within Christian Democratic manifestos. From the 1960s until the 1980s, the gap between the categories was quite narrow. Ever since then, the structure of emphases has developed in a less balanced way. If 1990 is excluded, there has been no consistent increase or decrease in the free market component but state intervention has clearly receded in importance while traditionalism has assumed a more central role.

Table 8.11 Structure of CDU/CSU Manifestos- Average by Period and Trends

	Free Market Liberalism	Social-Economic Interventionism	Social-Cultural Traditionalism
1949-65	17.7	23.9	20.8
1966-85	20.9	19.1	20.1
1986-98	12.6	15.2	29.0
Trend (r/year) 1949-98	-0.07	-0.28	0.23

Figure 8.3. CDU/CSU Manifesto Emphases

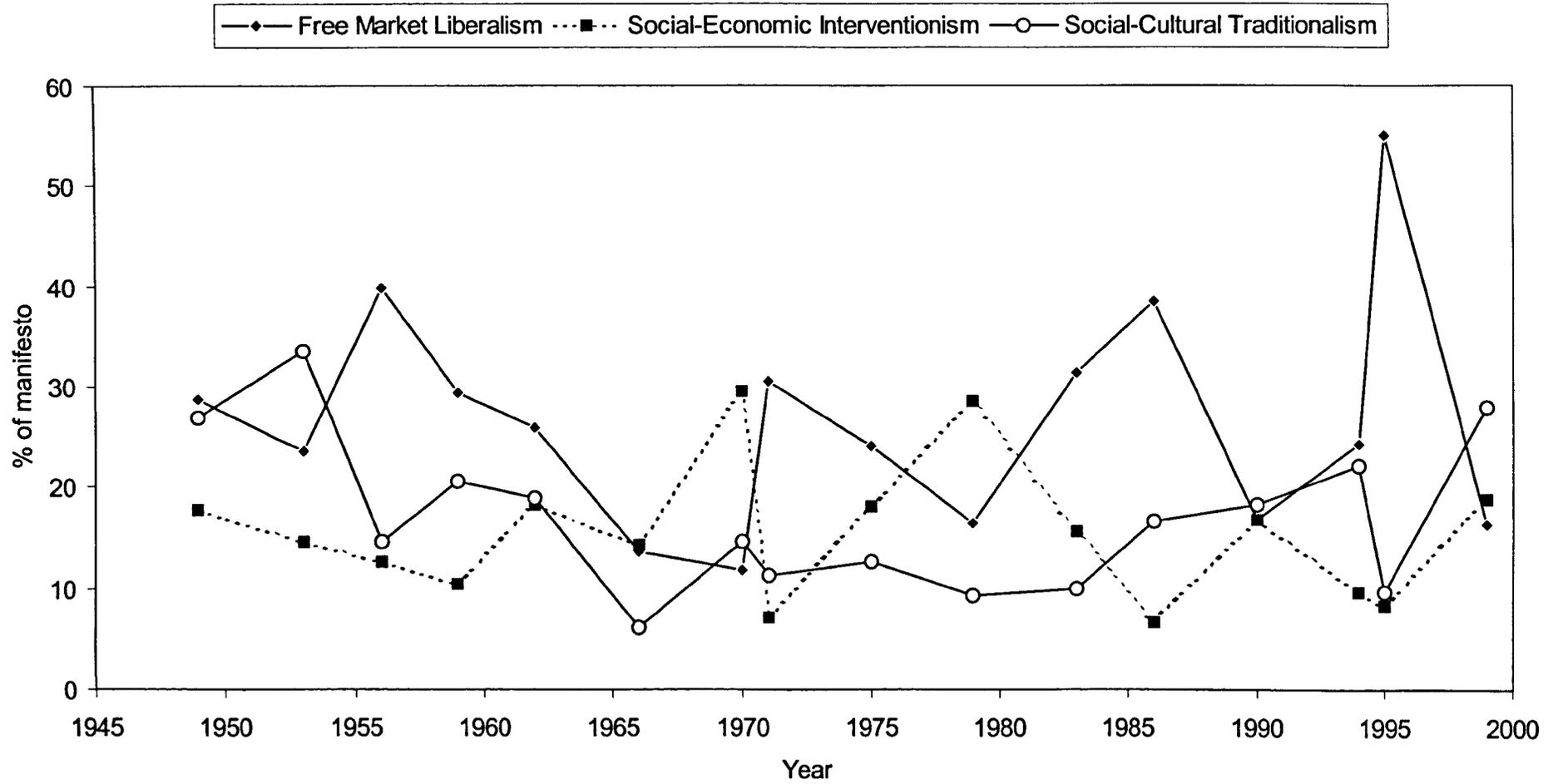


ÖVP manifestos are quite differently organised in relation to their issue emphases. The predominant theme has been free market liberalism- in ten out of sixteen elections, it has been the most heavily stressed of the three categories. The ÖVP first developed market-based programmes in the Raab era and it was also the initial response of the party to being out of government in 1971. When the Austrian economy ran into difficulties during the 1980s, the party again adopted predominantly market-centred manifestos although once in office, the party's priorities became less consistent. Interventionism reached its peak in ÖVP manifestos between the 1960s and 1970s, although even then its importance varied from election to election. Over the past two decades, its significance has declined as shown by Table 8.12. Aside from the earliest Nationalrat elections, there has been a relative lack of concern for traditionalist issues. It is interesting that the traditionalism was quite a significant aspect of the 1994 programme under Busek's leadership. This would seem to confirm his weakness in the party as a whole and the lack of consensus his liberal, open standpoint generated. Nonetheless, the 1999 manifesto stands out so clearly for its unmistakably traditionalist position. The Schüssel-Khol course represented an abandonment of the profoundly market-dominated 1995 platform where an unprecedented 55% of the manifesto was devoted to free market themes. The adoption of a more traditionalist stance can also be seen in Table 8.12 although trends are weak due to the ÖVP's inconsistent strategy since the 1980s.

Table 8.12 Structure of ÖVP Manifestos- Average by Period and Trends

	Free Market Liberalism	Social-Economic Interventionism	Social-Cultural Traditionalism
1949-65	29.4	14.7	22.9
1966-85	21.3	18.8	10.7
1986-99	30.1	12.0	18.9
Trend (r/year)			
1949-99	0.04	-0.04	-0.10

Figure 8.4 ÖVP Manifesto Emphases



The most outstanding feature of Figures 8.5, 8.6 and 8.7 and confirmed by the tables below is the decline of traditionalism in the manifestos of the confessional parties. For each of the three parties, the emphasis given to these issues fell markedly before the merger of the CDA. In both the ARP and the KVP, the most accentuated category was social-economic interventionism although the Anti-Revolutionaries' manifestos retained quite an even balance between issues until the last few elections. The leftward direction of the CHU can also be seen in its increasing focus on state intervention which brought it much closer to the other two parties.

Table 8.13 Structure of KVP Manifestos- Average by Period and Trends

	Free Market Liberalism	Social-Economic Interventionism	Social-Cultural Traditionalism
1945-65	15.4	25.7	17.6
1966-75	17.4	21.2	10.5
Trend (r/year)			
1945-75	0.12	0.06	-0.56

Table 8.14 Structure of ARP Manifestos- Average by Period and Trends

	Free Market Liberalism	Social-Economic Interventionism	Social-Cultural Traditionalism
1945-65	19.1	21.4	19.6
1966-75	13.7	21.3	12.0
Trend (r/year)			
1945-75	-0.27	-0.04	-0.50

Table 8.15 Structure of CHU Manifestos- Average by Period and Trends

	Free Market Liberalism	Social-Economic Interventionism	Social-Cultural Traditionalism
1945-65	15.4	17.1	25.8
1966-75	16.7	19.5	14.4
Trend (r/year)			
1945-75	-0.01	0.26	-0.62

Since the formation of the CDA, social-economic interventionism has been the prime focus in half of the eight Tweede Kamer elections. However until 1998, it seemed to be dropping in importance. From the 1982 election, after which Lubbers 'no-nonsense' cabinet took office<sup>11</sup>, there was a jump in the attention given to free market economics. This remains stable until 1998 when the CDA stepped back from the neo-liberal line represented by Brinkman in 1994. Furthermore, similar to the CDU/CSU and the ÖVP, there has also been an undoubted rise in the use of social-cultural traditionalism over the last few elections. By 1998, this theme received the most amount of text in the

manifesto. This is quite staggering when the history of the confessionals is examined: the last time traditionalist ideas had assumed such importance was in 1956 for the CHU and 1952 for the ARP and KVP. Therefore, using the threefold classification, it is possible to see that there was quite a clear reaction by the CDA to the defeat in 1994 resulting in a fundamental reorganisation of the party's priorities.

Table 8.16 Structure of CDA Manifestos- Average by Period and Trends

	Free Market Liberalism	Social-Economic Interventionism	Social-Cultural Traditionalism
1976-85	13.5	20.9	8.6
1986-98	14.5	16.1	14.7
Trend (r/year)			
1976-98	-0.06	-0.25	0.58

<sup>11</sup> However, van Agt, not Lubbers, had been the leading candidate in the election.

Figure 8.5 KVP Manifesto Emphases

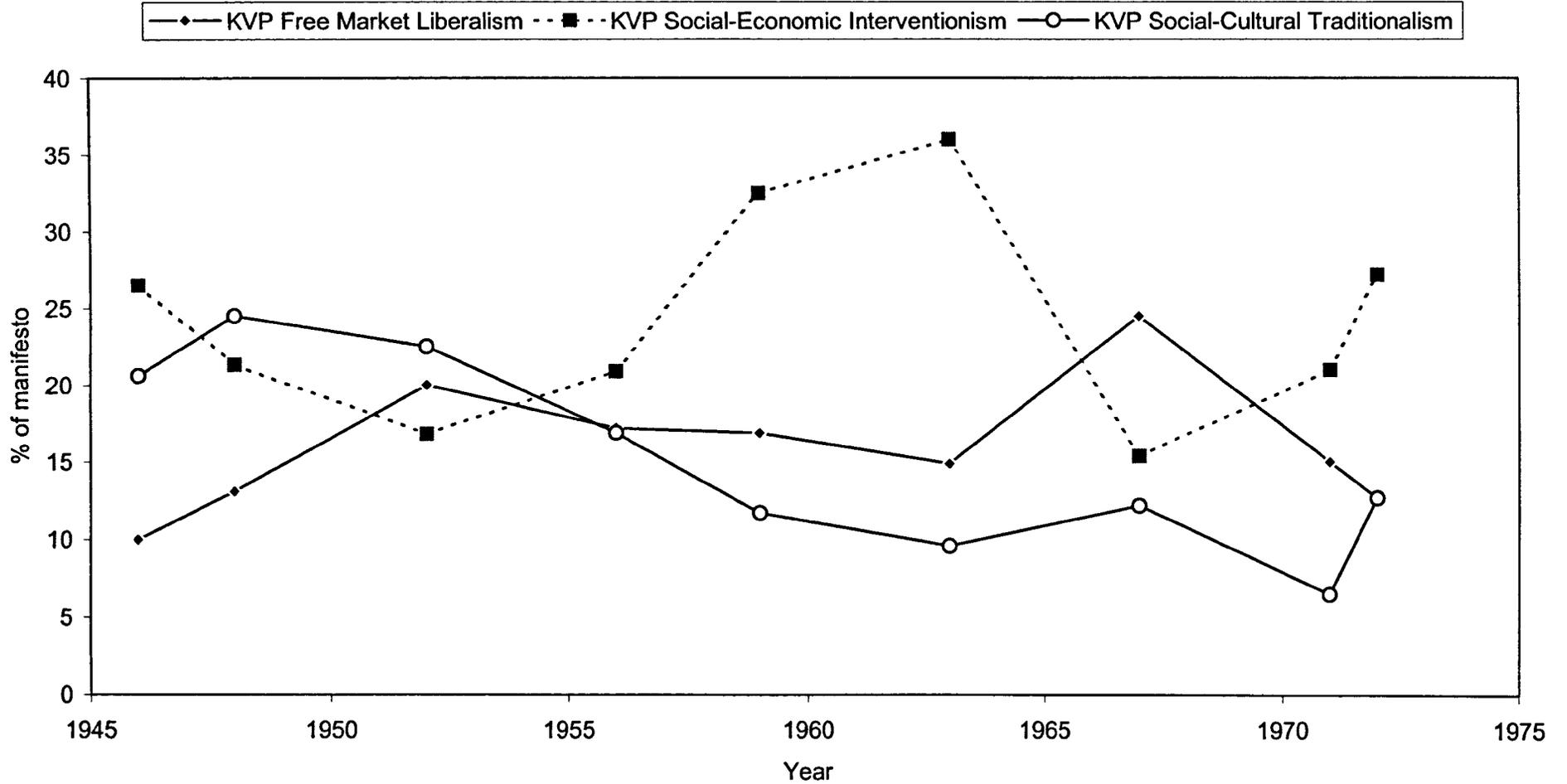


Figure 8.6 ARP Manifesto Emphases

—◆— ARP Free Market Liberalism    - - ■ - - ARP Social-Economic Interventionism    —○— ARP Social-Cultural Traditionalism

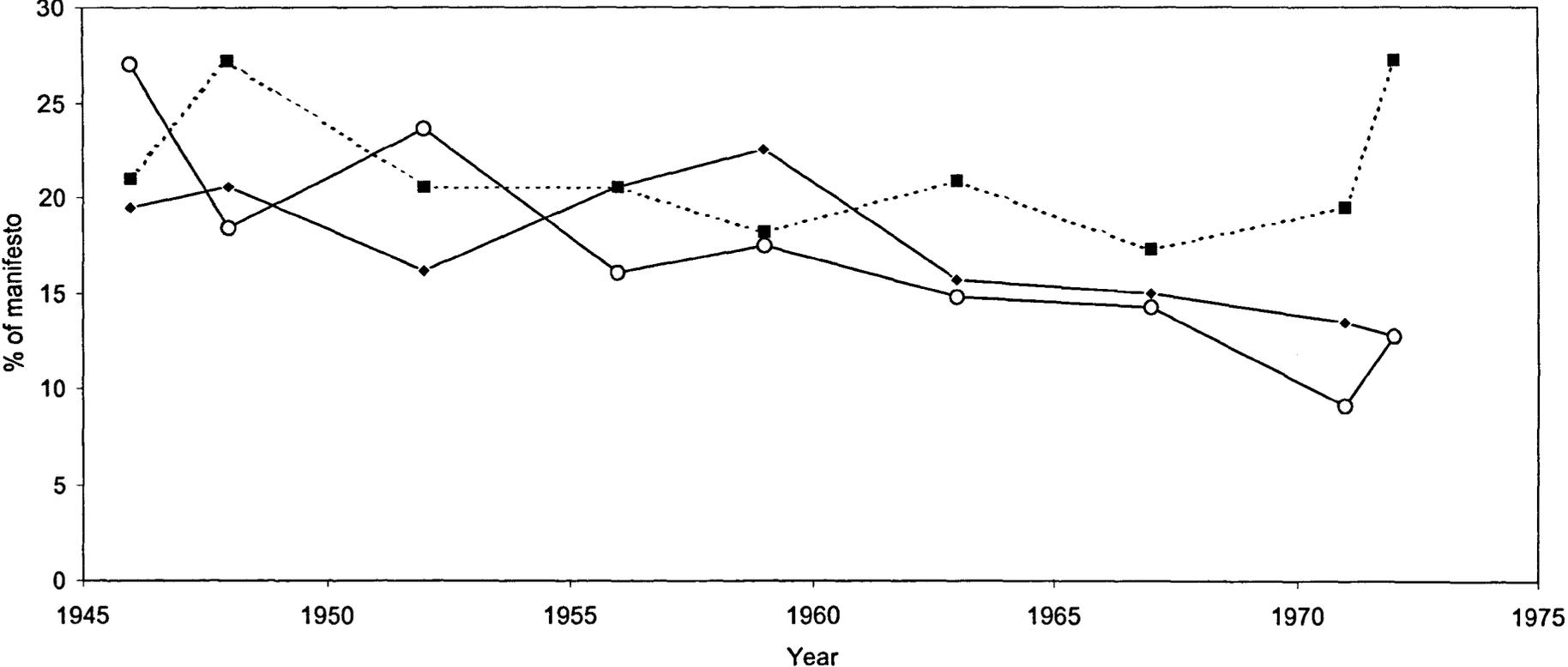


Figure 8.7 CHU Manifesto Emphases

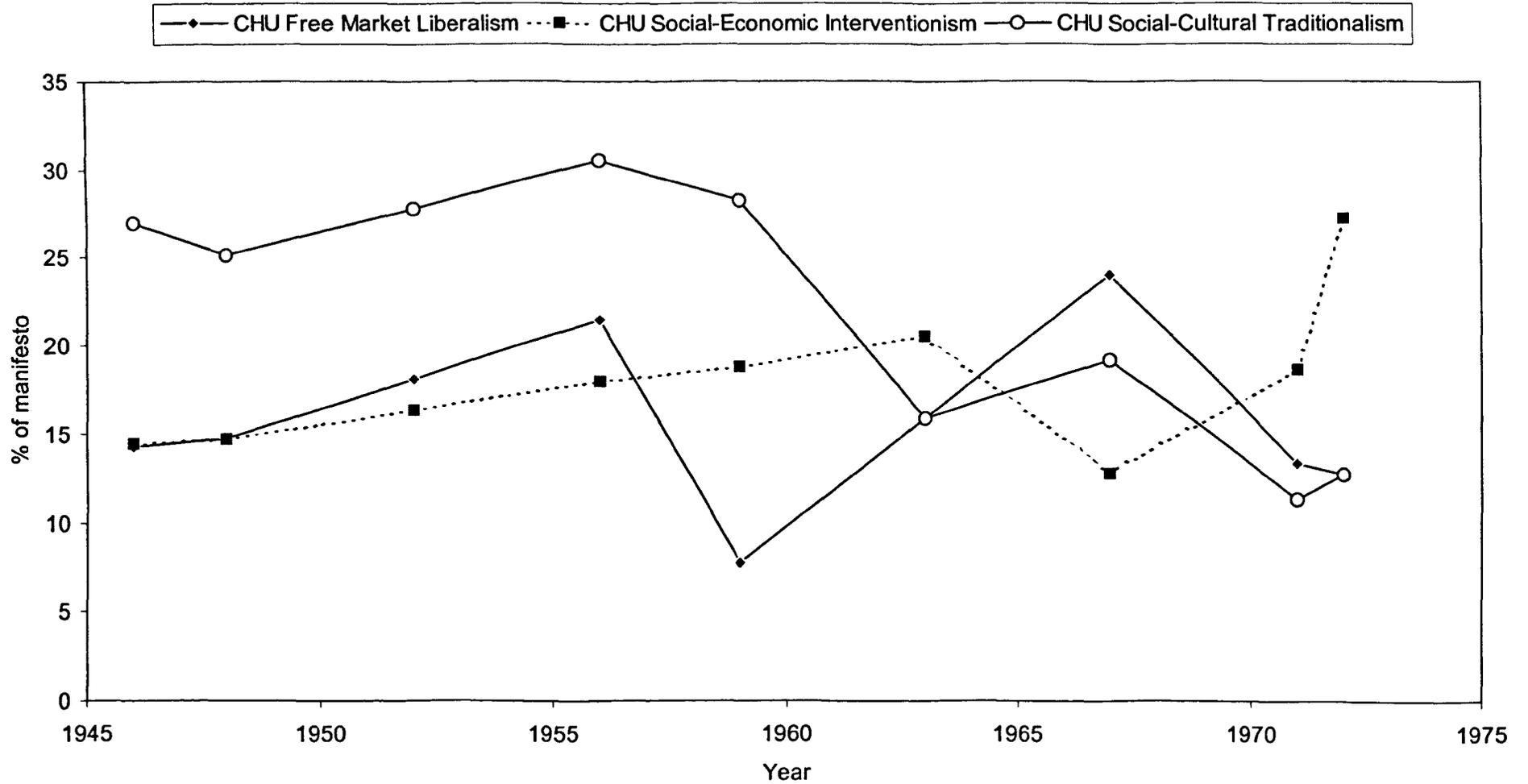
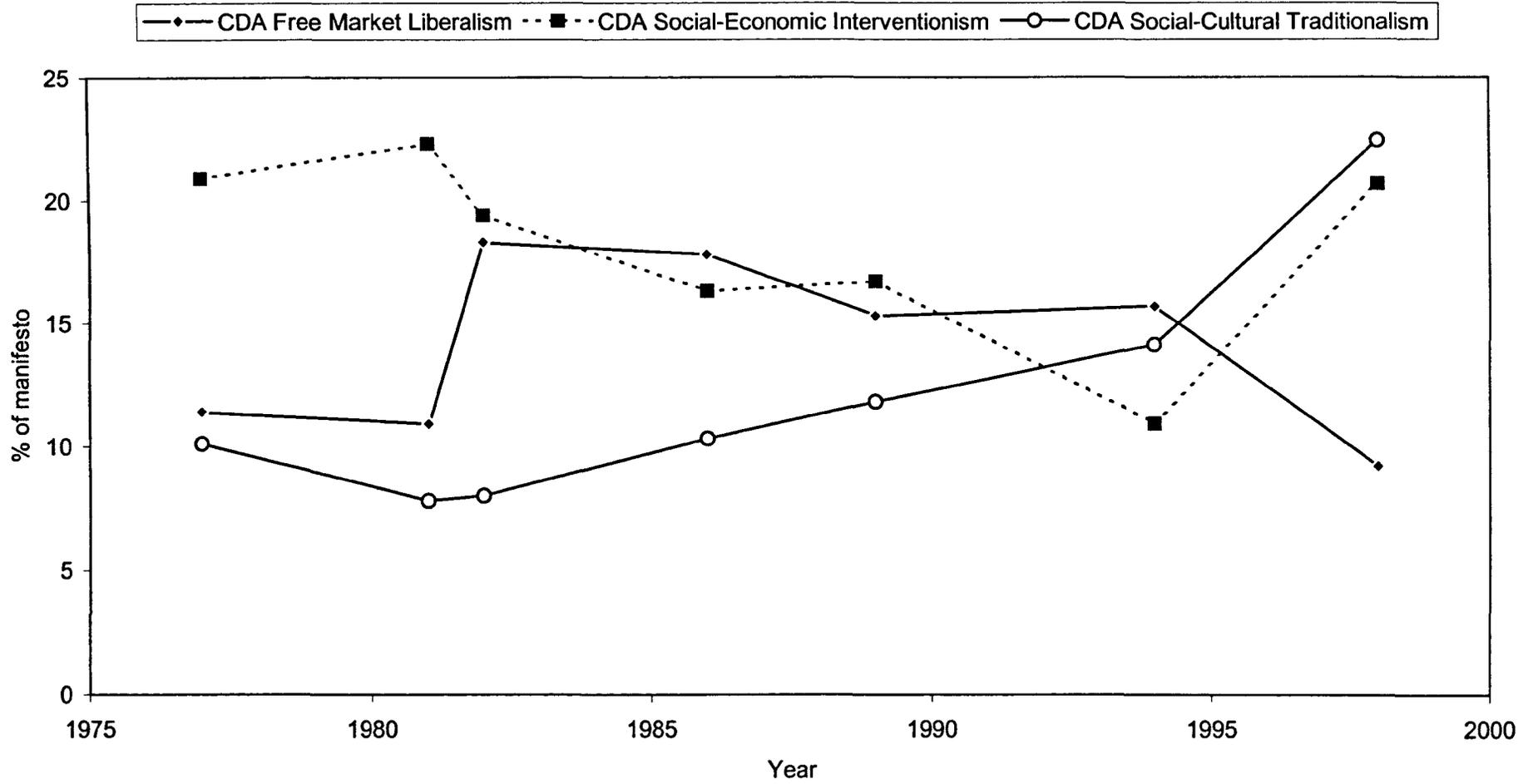


Figure 8.8 CDA Manifesto Emphases



## **VI. Conclusion**

The preceding sections have analysed the development of Christian Democratic manifestos in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands through a variety of different methods. The left-right scale used in Section III broadly matched expectations of the parties' positions although the swings it registered appeared exaggerated. Nonetheless, as Section IV proved, it also missed crucial changes within Christian Democratic issue salience. Drawing on these results and the description of the core of Christian Democracy presented in Chapter 1, it was contended that the structure of issue salience in Christian Democratic manifestos can best be understood through a threefold division of free market liberalism, social-economic interventionism and social-cultural traditionalism. This allows for a greater appreciation of the dynamics within the parties than a simple dichotomous measure as there is often more than one factional struggle within Christian Democratic parties. As was shown in Chapter 3 and in the later case studies of the parties in the 1990s, crucial battles have taken place not just between the social and business-oriented wings but also between modernising and traditionalist factions. Any examination of change within Christian Democracy must, therefore, include some consideration of traditionalism.

There remains the risk of confusing short-term political fads with more significant ideological modifications. The immediate goal of manifestos is not just to articulate a political identity grounded in historic ideologies that is capable of mobilising adherents; they must also present a popular policy programme which accords with the general mood of the electorate. Rising public interest in green issues was mirrored in the political programmes of virtually all parties and equally, a common awareness of governmental and administrative efficiency is now spreading across the political spectrum. Can we be certain that the developments identified in this chapter are of lasting significance if manifestos are by their nature so responsive? This is partly a temporal question. Clearly, if a party's structure of issue salience remains radically different for a sustained period of time then it would seem safe to conclude that real change has occurred. The averages used for the top ranking issue priorities in section IV and V help to minimise the hazards of overestimating short-term change and hence indicate that the programmatic alterations found here are of more enduring significance.

In terms of manifesto structure, the analysis highlighted that each party has to some extent adapted to political, social and economic trends. The final years of the confessional parties in the Netherlands illustrated one possible response to change. Confronted by a sudden loss of voters and a rapidly changing political environment,

each party abandoned many of their former priorities, notably traditionalist issues, and instead incorporated a new range of social concerns. As shown by Sections III and IV, however, this tactic has not been adopted by Christian Democrats in the 1990s as they faced electoral decline. On the contrary, each of the parties has heavily stressed their social and cultural traditionalism in election manifestos in the 1990s. To some extent, this can be attributed to their absorption of law and order issues, a previously insignificant theme, but it has also resulted from their renewed interest in traditional morality and social harmony. The analysis also revealed that the strain of social interventionism within Christian Democracy has clearly declined in prominence in the programmes of the CDU/CSU and the CDA. The shift to rhetoric and policies based on austerity and retrenchment under the leadership of Kohl and Lubbers respectively was therefore echoed in the structure of manifestos. ÖVP programmes followed a similar if less consistent path. By the end of the 1990s, however, there was greater variation in the direction of the parties. The influence of the Standort debate could be seen on the CDU/CSU's more market-orientated 1998 programme which heavily stressed governmental and administrative efficiency and free enterprise. In contrast, both the Austrian and Dutch Christian Democrats retreated from strongly free market programmes after disappointing election results.

Van Kersbergen (1999:369) identified two policy-related predicaments at the heart of Christian Democratic parties' problems in the 1990s. The first pertained to "the complicated if not paradoxical struggle to regulate publicly issues of private morality and the family on the basis of Christian norms and values" in increasingly individualist and secular societies. The second, and for van Kersbergen more decisive, problem was the question of how to strike "a politically viable balance between upholding and transforming the continental welfare state regimes in an increasingly unfavourable social and economic context". The analysis of the manifesto data here would suggest that in terms of the former dilemma there has been increasing convergence in the behaviour of the parties. All the parties under scrutiny have not only continued to emphasise their social and cultural traditionalism but have actually increased the prominence of such themes in their electoral platforms. Therefore, Christian Democratic parties have not discarded their traditionalist agenda and continue to battle against social and cultural trends. Such efforts may lack broad electoral resonance but it is also vital to note the central role of law and order issues in recent programmes. The revitalization of traditionalism within Christian Democracy is therefore both a re-discovery of older themes and an incorporation of new popular concerns.

With reference to the second problem, more divergence is obvious. After an initially interventionist reaction to unification, the CDU/CSU moved to an increasingly market-based programme in 1994 and 1998. In both the ÖVP and the CDA, however, the last election of the decade saw a markedly reduced emphasis on free market liberalism. The crucial similarity across all three countries was that when the Christian Democrats adopted a heavily free market programme, they were punished by the electorate at the ballot box. As was shown by the case studies in previous chapters, this difficulty was a central reason for the CDU's problems in the decade and was also relevant for the Dutch and Austrian parties. Consequently, none of the parties have solved the predicament of how to reconcile the need for retrenchment and adjustment with the typically broad social inclusion of Christian Democracy.

## Chapter 9. The CDU, ÖVP and CDA in the 1990s and beyond: At the crossroads between tradition and adaptation?

### I. Introduction

Previous chapters have explored the political, programmatic and organisational aspects of the challenge to Christian Democracy in the 1990s in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. Each of the case studies argued that the problems of the parties were not limited to short-term circumstances but instead that the parties' self-identity as *Volksparteien* was coming under increasing stress. The extent of the electoral challenge varied but in all three countries, there was a clear downward trend across national and regional elections with the ÖVP and CDA sliding to their worst ever results. Of the three parties, the CDU was clearly in the strongest position but even it had fallen behind its Social Democratic rival by 1998 and both the 1994 and 1998 results were new post-1949 lows. Other indicators (partisanship, membership) also pointed to a decline of the parties on the ground. The contraction of the Christian Democratic core in Austria and the Netherlands prompted sombre reflections on the future of the party. Yet no clear strategic solution existed. Efforts to open the party up to society risked the loyalty of regular voters (e.g. the Busek-led ÖVP in 1994). Conversely, however, concentrating on more traditional issues to mobilise the party faithful appeared no more successful in arresting the Christian Democratic electoral slide as was shown by the 1999 Austrian and 1998 Dutch elections.

In programmatic and organisational terms, too, there were signs of strain. One of the foundations of Christian Democratic success had been the ideological breadth of such parties. While purporting to be an alternative to the errors of socialism and liberalism, Christian Democratic parties in Germany and Austria happily integrated former liberals, conservatives and social Catholics (Haungs 1991:172; Müller 1997:265). The Dutch Christian Democrats also brought together a varied mixture of different religious and philosophical traditions. Accordingly, programmes tended to contain a fusion of the different strands within Christian Democracy, an ideological patchwork binding the party together. By the 1990s, there were some indications that the stitches of this programmatic fabric were coming apart as the social Catholic heritage of these parties receded in significance and social-economic policy became more oriented towards free market solutions. The integration of different strands of thought (social Catholic, conservative and liberal) under one political roof was mirrored in the federal party structures of the CDU and ÖVP which embraced regional, interest and ideological diversity. This form of *Volkspartei* organisation demanded a skilful mix of cultivating

inner-party harmony with effective decision-making, a task which proved far easier in government than in opposition. Yet by the 1990s, the maintenance of this balance was becoming increasingly problematic even for the CDU and the ÖVP in government. Though the Dutch party lacked the formal and geographical pluralism of the other parties, the CDA's unity was also undermined by factional battles.

Rather than summarise the conclusions of earlier sections, this chapter will return to the two principal aims outlined in the first chapter. Using the evidence presented in chapters 4-8, some conclusions will be drawn about the reasons for the decline of Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s and about the parties' reaction to this electoral contraction. This will lead on to a final section which will briefly look at post-1999 developments. In Austria and the Netherlands, Christian Democrats made a stunning electoral recovery in 2002 and although the Union parties did not recover possession of the German chancellorship, the sister parties regained the initiative early in the second term of the red-green government. The implications of this apparent renaissance of Christian Democracy will be considered in terms of the themes of this thesis.

## **II. The Causes of Christian Democratic Decline**

### **Erosion of Christian Democratic Core Vote**

Chapter 4 demonstrated that the key social constituencies for Christian Democratic parties were in long-term decline. To stretch Kirchheimer's metaphor (1966), the 'private hunting grounds' of Christian Democrats were increasingly low on game. The electoral support of the CDU/CSU, ÖVP and CDA continued to be based on the religiously active, the self-employed, farmers and elderly voters. With the exception of this last band of voters, each of these groups was shrinking. This had caused a withering of the electoral core of Christian Democracy which none of the parties had fully overcome. The CDU/CSU was most successful at winning voters from beyond this natural reservoir, taking a greater share of the votes of white collar employees, blue collar workers, civil servants and the non-religious than their equivalents in Austria and the Netherlands. Nonetheless, even in Germany, support for the CDU/CSU from each of these groups dropped in the 1990s. The ÖVP's problems in this regard were even more serious with greater competition from the SPÖ and the FPÖ for such voters. Occupational characteristics were less useful in explaining the vote in the Dutch context but the CDA's chronic weakness among secular voters was unmistakable. Demographic change was more favourable to Christian Democrats in view of their traditional popularity among older age groups but even here there were signs that such

strength was being challenged. In each of the three countries, Christian Democratic voting in the group of voters aged roughly between 45 and 59 fell away more sharply than support in the electorate as a whole. Indeed, for the ÖVP, other areas of the Christian Democratic heartland (self-employed, farmers) also began to desert the ÖVP.

The contraction of the social bases of Christian Democratic support did not entail inevitable electoral losses for such parties but rather should be understood as a background condition. Political parties need not be passive victims of social and cultural change and can respond successfully to environmental changes. As the process of dealignment has equally affected the stability of the Social Democratic vote, an increasingly independent electorate offers electoral opportunities as well as dangers. Nonetheless, clearly these opportunities were not taken by Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s. Indeed, it is striking that the CDU/CSU whose vote was less reliant on such core groups suffered the smallest electoral decline. The question arises then: why were the parties unable to counterbalance such losses? To answer this, we must look to both system-level changes and intra-party factors.

### **Increased Party Competition**

In all three countries, Christian Democratic parties faced an intensified level of competition. This could be charted in party system statistics such as increased party fragmentation and volatility (Volkens and Klingemann 2002:162; Dalton, McAllister and Wattenburg 2000:31-3). The strategic dilemma resulting from this competition was greater for the ÖVP and CDA than for the CDU. Both the Austrian and Dutch parties faced a powerful competitor to the right with the accompanying dilemma of whether to battle this right-wing threat directly or to remain in a centrist position. In Austria, the ÖVP lost ground throughout the decade to the populist right-wing FPÖ who advocated restricted immigration and asylum, an anti-European policy and more extensive economic liberalisation. The primary concern of the right-wing liberals in the Netherlands, the VVD, was economic but its parliamentary leader Bolkestein also raised questions about Dutch asylum and European policy albeit in a far less sensationalist manner than Haider. Like the FPÖ, the VVD also gained its best ever result in this decade. The CDU has faced less problems in this regard apart from during the brief period of far-right ascendancy in 1991-2. Nonetheless, the success of the DVU in the Saxony-Anhalt Land election in 1998 illustrated that the Union could not take for granted the continuing lack of a threat on the right in all regions.

Greater party competition in the 1990s also resulted from the contraction of the mainstream political spectrum and the growing congestion around the centre-ground. The increasingly moderate course of the main centre-left party in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands produced a more compressed party arena as the differences between parties became less distinct. This process simultaneously reduced the ability of the Christian Democrats to mobilise grassroots and opened up the possibility of voters vacillating between the major parties. This was evident first in Austria where the SPÖ, led by Vranitzky, absorbed much of the ÖVP's policy rhetoric in the process undermining the People's Party's distinctiveness on central socio-economic questions. The PvdA's abandonment of the polarisation strategy and its consequently more centrist course was also a greater challenge to the Christian Democrats in the Netherlands. Another by-product of this was to deprive the CDA of its earlier unchallenged position in any coalition as the PvdA and the VVD overcame their longstanding antipathy. In Germany, this trend was only visible by 1998. Previous SPD Chancellor-candidates had been uninspiring choices but under Schröder, the SPD became a far greater threat to the Union's political supremacy.

A further consideration for the ÖVP and CDA was the rise of the green parties. The increasing success of moderate post-materialist parties in Austria and the Netherlands challenged the depth of the Christian Democratic adoption of environmentalism and raised questions within the parties about whether they should seek out the votes of young post-materialists. In Germany, the divide between the Greens and the CDU was too great for the party to worry too much about appealing to such voters. There were, however, small signs of a growing political congruence between younger CDU and Green politicians which might indicate that this strategic debate will play a larger role in Christian Democratic circles in the future.

### **Issue context**

The greater level of party competition faced by Christian Democrats and the strategic questions arising from it was also exacerbated by the changing nature of salient issues across Western Europe. Fears about crime, immigration and economic insecurity dominated the political agenda in the 1990s<sup>1</sup>. Christian Democratic parties have been

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<sup>1</sup> In Germany, the most prominent issues in the early part of the decade as rated by respondents in the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen surveys concerned the effects of unification and the asylum and foreigners question. After 1994, replies were increasingly dominated by unemployment. The most important issues to the Austrian electorate were securing jobs and securing pensions although fighting crime, foreigners and the wasting of public funds also figured prominently (Müller 2000:38). In the 1994 DNES, unemployment and crime were mentioned most as the

able to adapt relatively easily to the rising importance of law and order issues as has been shown in the individual case studies. A greater prominence was given to such problems in election manifestos and a discernible toughening of programmatic rhetoric took place, for example, in the ÖVP's 1999 manifesto, the CDU's 'Future Programme' and the CDA's 'New Ways, Fixed Values'. Christian Democrats also responded to public fears about increased immigration and asylum-seeking. Both the CDU and the ÖVP in government carried out measures to restrict the flow of incomers, stressed that illegal immigrants would not be accepted and threatened the deportation of foreigners who committed crime. To an extent, then, the programmes of the far-right have been co-opted although whether this allayed public fears on the issue remained to be seen (Chandler 2002:15).

The most problematic topic for Christian Democrats concerned economic issues. After the failure of state socialism and the difficulties of Social Democracy, "center-right parties in Europe might be expected to benefit from the apparent shift in the political agenda around the world to neo-liberalism" (Wilson 1999:260). Yet the mood of economic insecurity which spread around Western Europe was not advantageous to the Christian Democrats. Mounting unemployment, sluggish growth rates, pension problems and expanding budget deficits raised questions about the extent of state involvement in the economy and the viability of the welfare state. Economic difficulties were further aggravated by the convergence criteria required for EMU, putting real pressure on incumbent governments to tackle politically awkward economic reforms.

For Chandler (2002:15), the explanation for the decline of centre-right parties despite the victory of the market economy lay in the left's absorption of the right's economic agenda. Electorates across Europe appeared more willing to accept neo-liberalism from the centre-left than their centre-right adversaries. This was undoubtedly true but it also neglects the specific problems confronting the Christian Democrats. As shown throughout this study, the Christian Democratic approach to social and economic policy was never wholly dominated by free market thinking. Social Catholicism entailed a philosophical tolerance of government intervention when lower social organisations failed to provide a social good or service and in practice led to Christian Democratic acceptance of an extensive social state. It was possible to identify a rhetorical shift in Christian Democracy in each of the three countries during the 1980s but policy changes were more limited as social expenditure continued to rise. A more extensive

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largest problems facing the country but over 50% of the survey felt there were too many asylum

reconstruction or even dismantling of the welfare state would have provoked opposition not just from numerous veto-points in the system but also from within the party. However, pressure for reform in the 1990s increased as the need to comply with the criteria for Economic and Monetary Union forced greater fiscal austerity. Accordingly, the CDU, ÖVP and CDA began to push for more welfare retrenchment and market liberalisation. As shown in Chapters 5 and 7, the effects of this for the German and Dutch Christian Democrats were nothing short of catastrophic. Although other contributing factors should not be ignored, the attenuated social profiles of the CDU and CDA resulted in unprecedented electoral losses and expulsion from government. The ÖVP's proposed programme of social cutbacks ('blood, sweat, toil and tears' according to Finance Minister Ditz) in 1995 did not provoke a similarly dramatic electoral collapse but neither did it bring the expected reward and was subsequently moderated in the 1999 election. In each of the three countries, the adoption of a harder line on socio-economic policy was electorally unpopular and seriously tested the integrative capacity of Christian Democratic parties.

### **Intra-party difficulties**

Increased party competition and the rise of divisive issues raised crucial questions about strategy for the Christian Democrats. Disagreements resulting from this were an important cause of intra-party strains. Disunity was most apparent in the ÖVP and the CDA but the CDU was also afflicted by such problems. The already high levels of factionalism within the Austrian People's Party was if anything aggravated in the 1990s. This was chiefly the result of discord over coalition strategy, whether to remain in the Grand Coalition or to form a black-blue alliance. However, this dispute also related to divergent visions of the ÖVP's identity: a more liberal, open party against a more conservative, traditionalist course. By 1999, proponents of the latter option appeared to have prevailed but this victory was by no means assured. In addition to strategic quarrels, regional factionalism became increasingly disruptive as the provincial parties argued with each other and with the federal party while the assertiveness of the Business League also aroused more ill-feeling.

Friction within the CDA escalated rapidly at the beginning of the decade. Growing distance between the party in government and the extra-parliamentary party was evident at the beginning of the decade as the latter strove for more principled standpoints and a greater Christian content in policy. This tension was less destructive,

however, than the antagonism over socio-economic policy which developed between the CDA parliamentary party and the Lubbers III cabinet. Undoubtedly, this split contributed to the CDA's problems in 1994 as the party openly displayed its disunity to the electorate. After 1994, the aim of inner party cohesion remained elusive. The parliamentary party was divided with a substantial number of representatives unwilling to accept the new leadership although harmony appeared to be restored with the election of de Hoop Scheffer. A further division also opened up between the extra-parliamentary apparatus and the parliamentary party as the former sought more control.

Ruptures within the CDU were more restricted. A number of prominent party rebels had been marginalized, the party apparatus, and especially the role of General Secretary, had lost significance and the regional party organisations were weak. While the party continued in government, there was little enthusiasm within the Union for a challenge to the policies of the Kohl government. The main intra-party conflict was between the social and business wings which became more acute during the *Standort* debate and after the failure of Alliance for Jobs. Nonetheless, in comparison to the Austrian and Dutch parties, the CDU's problems in this regard were less serious. Factional disputes did not constantly undercut the authority of the central party leadership as in Austria nor did they badly damage the credibility of an election campaign as the "fit of political ineptitude" (Fogarty 1995:154) suffered by the CDA did in 1994.

A further problem for each party was unpopular and/or weak leadership. No chairman of the ÖVP could claim to have the party fully under control. Both Riegler, an unwilling candidate from the outset, and Busek appeared weak and unable to act against the power of the Leagues and the provincial parties. Neither was seen as a charismatic political performer (Müller, Plasser and Ulram forthcoming:17) and both rated poorly in comparison to SPÖ chancellor Vranitzky and FPÖ leader Haider. Following their failures, Schüssel conveyed a more modern and popular image and promised the party a brighter future. However, this early potential faded as he too seemed unable to assert his authority against the rampant factionalism within the party and he became embroiled in minor scandal. His indifferent performance as Vice-Chancellor failed to stop further Christian Democratic electoral losses in 1999.

The Dutch Christian Democrats were also saddled with a succession of unpopular leaders. In 1994, Brinkman was a controversial figure even within CDA circles and could not match Lubbers' wide appeal across society. His successor as

*fractie* leader, Heerma, never exerted control over the party, struggled to cope with the role of opposition leader and was ill at ease in the media. Following Heerma's resignation as parliamentary party leader, de Hoop Scheffer gave the party more forceful leadership but as the 1998 election analysis showed, he was rated poorly by voters in comparison to other candidates.

The CDU was again the exception for most of the decade as Kohl's status as the chancellor of unification ensured a lingering electoral bonus. The exceptionally personalised campaigns run by the Christian Democrats in the successful 1990 and 1994 Bundestag elections attested to the popularity of the Chancellor. By 1998, this bonus had been completely depleted. After prolonged economic difficulties and political stalemate, the candidacy of Kohl was now a burden, symbolising the political stagnation of the CDU and the government's lack of credible solutions to the nation's problems.

### **Conclusion**

Christian Democratic electoral difficulties in the 1990-9 period can therefore be traced to a range of structural and contextual factors. The long-term decomposition of integral social constituencies was critical in accounting for the new volatility of electoral support but the parties were also hamstrung by their own shortcomings. Publicly aired intra-party disagreements and ineffectual leadership gave the impression of weak parties caught in internal turmoil. Even the CDU began to follow this trend post-1994. The higher level of intra-party tension was not just, however, the result of nationally specific circumstances. New issues such as law and order and immigration and asylum rose in prominence across the established West European democracies. While incorporating such themes caused anxieties among liberal Christian Democrats, this programmatic adjustment did not arouse serious internal difficulties. The most divisive issue was in fact not 'new' but the vexed question of economic and social reform was given fresh relevance by the need to comply with the Maastricht convergence criteria and the deteriorating economic context.

Tackling deep-rooted economic problems strained the ideological and organisational diversity of Christian Democratic parties. The social wing of each party came under pressure to accept stronger welfare and labour market reforms, putting its leading representatives in an awkward position. In addition, there was little indication of public enthusiasm for such an agenda. Referring to the general problems of centre-right parties in Western Europe, former CDU General Secretary Geißler attributed their electoral decline to the loss of their *Volkspartei* profile, an observation of particular

pertinence to Christian Democrats. By adopting what Geißler considered in essence a neo-liberal economic agenda, such parties had damaged their social profile and frittered away their integrative capacity<sup>2</sup>. Geißler's criticism is, of course, a one-sided interpretation of the electoral problems of the centre-rights, neglecting the role of other factors. Nonetheless, as was seen in both the case studies and the manifesto analysis in Chapter 8, when Christian Democratic parties pushed a more market-centred agenda, they were punished by the electorate. Short-term factors such as unpopular leaders and internal divisions should not be ignored but it also remains to be seen whether a less social version of Christian Democracy has the same electoral appeal.

### **III. Paralysis or adaptation: Christian Democratic Responses to Decline**

The case studies have investigated the behaviour of Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s in terms of their strategic choices, ideological change and continuity, and organisational developments. The main findings of these chapters will be summarised here. It is worth returning at this point to Harmel and Janda's model of party change (1994) as outlined in Chapter 1. Party change was most likely when an external shock affected the party's primary objective. While the end of the Cold War caused all three parties to revise their basic programmes in the early 1990s, we would not expect the end of Communism to result in significant adaptation as policy ambitions were not uppermost in the priorities of Christian Democrats. German unification and the collapse of the Communist bloc were indeed sizeable shocks but as shown in Chapter 1, Christian Democratic parties are first and foremost office-seekers and programmatic considerations have typically played a more marginal role. According to the Harmel and Janda model, we would expect that Christian Democratic parties to be more sensitive to significant electoral erosion and/or the loss of national office. For office-seeking parties, such troubling developments could not be ignored. At the time of the revision of the basic programmes, only the ÖVP had suffered major problems in national elections and therefore, substantive programmatic change would be unlikely. Nonetheless, the continual electoral slide of Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s would lead us to expect some modifications by the later half of the decade. Moreover, the different scale of the problems faced by the three parties would further suggest that the nature of the adaptation would also vary. The Dutch party out of office and with a crumbling vote would seem more likely to adopt new strategies and ideas than the CDU whose problems were a latent threat until 1998. Although the ÖVP remained in office, its

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Heiner Geißler in *Die Neue Gesellschaft* No. 4/00.

continuing electoral crisis and the limited strategic opportunities available to it as junior coalition partner would also lead us to expect a more consequential change in the party.

### **Leadership Change**

A common response to electoral losses for parties averse to programmatic work is personnel renewal at the head of the party (Müller 1988:103). This occurred in both the ÖVP and CDA where a succession of leaders were tried out. In the former, there was a swift progression from Riegler to Busek to Schüssel as federal chairman with none of them really establishing a firm hold of the turbulent party. There was more continuity within the parliamentary party where Heinrich Neisser led the *Klub* between 1990 and 1995 and then Andreas Khol between 1995 and 1999. However, the instability of the party was also shown in the succession of seven different General Secretaries in the 1990-9 period. The reaction of the CDA to its predicament was not wholly dissimilar. Under pressure from party colleagues, parliamentary leader Brinkman resigned and in his place Heerma was elected while interim party chairwoman Lodders was also eventually replaced by Helgers. Heerma's poor performance then led to the election of de Hoop Scheffer as *fractie* leader. Leadership change, however, did not produce sustained improvements in poll results. Within the CDU, Kohl's position was untouchable after unification regardless of the Union's slide in opinion polls and *Landtag* elections. Other leading federal positions were also reasonably stable: there were only two general secretaries and two parliamentary leaders in the 1990-8 period.

### **Coalition Strategy**

Another response to party decline could be found in the various parties' coalition strategies. This was most obvious in Austria where the People's Party shifted after 1994 to an increasingly confrontational approach. Intra-coalition disputes with the SPÖ increased and the government collapsed in 1995 after an intractable budgetary quarrel. Even after the renewal of the Grand Coalition, tension within the coalition remained very high until 1999 with the Christian Democrats the instigators of most disagreements. Finally, the party's coalition strategy took a radical change of course in 2000 when negotiations with the Social Democrats were halted and a black-blue coalition was formed after exceptionally swift discussions with the FPÖ. No such drastic steps were taken by the Christian Democrats in Germany and the Netherlands. The CDU in government did move to a more confrontational strategy but with the opposition and the trade unions, not its coalition partners. By the 1998 election, it was clear that another Kohl government would almost certainly revive the Christian-Liberal coalition. The CDA once in opposition responded initially with a 'governmental opposition' strategy

which was quickly abandoned when it proved ineffective but its later more confrontational attitude was similarly fruitless. In advance of the 1998 election the party's coalition options looked very limited as another purple coalition appeared inevitable if the result made this possible.

### **Programmatic Change**

In all three parties, the revision of their basic programmes in the early part of the decade did not bring about a fundamental re-evaluation of Christian Democratic beliefs and priorities. The new basic programme of the CDU was particularly dominated by continuity but even in the cases of the ÖVP and CDA, significant departures from earlier documents were few in number. The Christian image of humanity was still central to the parties as they wrestled with the implications of new scientific and medical developments. All three parties incorporated an eco-dimension to their programme but the essentials of the social market economy remained in place. Some accommodation with changing patterns of domestic life was evident, particularly in the CDA which explicitly recognised gay and unmarried couples, but the family continued to play a vital role in the Christian Democratic vision of society. Free market policies (deregulation, privatisation, tax reform) were increasingly important but within the context of the programmatic development of each party, this change could not be seen as a radical break with previous practice. Furthermore, the concerns of the social wing of each party were also reflected in the desire for social justice, limited expansionist policies to bolster the family and for change to take place in a consensual framework. Within the field of foreign policy, little change occurred despite the fall of Communism as Christian Democrats remained committed Atlanticists and European integrationists although the sweeping changes of 1989-90 relegated the significance of Austrian neutrality and allowed the ÖVP to embrace a more unequivocal pro-European course.

Scrutinising basic programmes for evidence of radical change is perhaps a fruitless endeavour. As such documents are composed with the chief aim of maintaining intra-party harmony and mobilising grassroots activists, there is an inherent tendency for continuity and the re-assertion of fundamental values. Contrary to the Schumpeterian understanding of political parties, deeply anchored ideological identities cannot be easily shifted to new philosophical waters. The lack of ideological upheaval within Christian Democracy in the early part of the 1990s is therefore not surprising. However, looking beyond basic programmes, a certain tension in the programmatic priorities of Christian Democrats can be discovered. Chapter 8 illustrated that there were definite signs of change in the manifesto structure of the three parties during the 1986-99 period. In the

manifestos of each of the parties, the balance between the three strands of issues identified (free market liberalism, social-economic interventionism and social-cultural traditionalism) had altered. In all three countries, the Christian Democrats had by the end of the decade swung to a more traditionalist position. Law and order, traditional morality and social harmony all assumed an enhanced role within Christian Democratic manifestos. Rather than back away from the religiously inspired regulation of public morality, as might be expected given the growth of individualism and the decline of organised religion, Christian Democrats appeared to be assigning such efforts greater prominence. The manifesto data, of course, does not reveal the precise content of the party's statements but the case study analysis of programmatic documents underscored the essential consistency of Christian Democratic views on the Christian image of humanity and in specific policy areas such as abortion and controversial new medical techniques. More variation was found in terms of free market economics and state interventionism. In opposition, the CDA reversed the waning of interventionism and instead, conspicuously reduced the amount of market liberalism. Following the disappointment of 1995, this path was also chosen by the ÖVP. In both cases, most of the expansionist welfare rhetoric concerned pro-family policies. In contrast, social interventionist themes continued to lose significance in the electoral programme of the CDU/CSU in 1998 while free market aspects were accorded increased priority.

In addition to the manifesto data, the case studies found evidence of a more far-reaching change in the programmatic direction of the parties by the end of the 1990s compared to the fairly tepid revisions of the basic programmes in the first half of the decade. In both the CDA's 'New Ways, Fixed Values' (1996) and the CDU's *Zukunftsprogramm* (1998), there was a perceptible shift towards a firmer stance on law and order (e.g. drugs, illegal immigration) and a greater willingness to reform the social welfare state. On the latter issue, for example, the CDU now stated that any measure which created work should be considered social and distanced itself from the aim of full employment. Although it backed moves towards deregulation, the CDA's position was more ambiguous as it still firmly rejected a minimum system of social welfare. The Dutch party also reasserted the value of the two parent family, signalling a slight retreat from the reforms earlier in the decade. In both programmes, environmental themes were still important but within the CDU, the shallow commitment of the party to green issues was obvious through the opposition aroused by Schäuble's suggestion of an eco-tax, the continued commitment to nuclear power and the lack of consensus on the eco-social market model. Although the ÖVP produced no comparable document, the party under the Schüssel-Khol course also moved toward prioritising family policy and toughening

its rhetoric on law and order. In addition, the falling public interest in green issues was mirrored in the People Party where the discussion of the eco aspect of the eco-social market model was virtually non-existent.

### **Organisational Change**

Developments within the structure of the parties can be divided into two categories: formal attempts at reform and informal changes in the balance of intra-party power. Each of the parties introduced initiatives to halt the contraction of the mass membership and increase grassroots participation. Within the time-frame of this study, however, there was little sign that they were having the desired effect. While the CDU remained in government, the more radical suggestions to breathe life into the party (such as polls of members) stood little chance of being accepted. The CDA, which had suffered the worst shrinkage of the membership, had attempted to address some of its organisational weaknesses even before 1994 through the 'Appel en weerklank' commission and these efforts continued in opposition with the experimentation with more participatory styles. Yet by 1998, there was no indication of an end to the shrivelling of the mass basis of the party. In Austria, the principal problem was less the loss of members, but rather the weakness of the federal party apparatus vis-à-vis the Leagues and the provincial parties. Attempts to rectify this imbalance have constrained to some extent the dominance of the Leagues but the federal party still appeared ineffective and weak against the *Land* party organisations. Therefore, the effects of formal organisational reforms in the three parties were limited.

Informal changes in each of the three parties were also observable during the 1990s. Not all of these could be classified as conscious adaptations to party decline but nonetheless, such intra-party power relations did have implications for the future outlook of the parties. In the last part of the Kohl era, the influence of many arms of the party (the social committees, Land party organisations) withered as decision-making increasingly centred around the Chancellor, his advisors and the leadership of the *Fraktion*. While this centralisation offered greater opportunities for co-ordination, there was a danger that once the resources of national office were lost, a power vacuum could appear which would threaten the unity of the party. The major development within the ÖVP was the growing strength of the parliamentary leader, Khol, who forced a new unity upon the *Klub* and became a highly visible presence in national politics. The difficulty with this was that Khol tended to polarise opinion within the People's Party and was not an consensus-based politician who could integrate the various wings of the party. Whether the enhanced influence of the *Klubobmann* would continue after Khol's

tenure was, in any case, unclear. An organisational consequence of the CDA's move into opposition was a greater dispersion of power. The party apparatus headed by chairman Helgers became more influential in shaping the direction of the party while the authority of the parliamentary party was curbed.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study give some support to Harmel and Janda's general propositions about party change. While still in office and relatively unaffected by electoral losses, there was little reason for Christian Democrats to alter radically their strategy, programmatic identity or organisation. Initial changes in the decade were limited despite the momentous events in Eastern Europe and a more unfavourable economic context. However, more significant developments took place later in the decade when the parties' position in government had either been lost or was under threat. In the alien environment of opposition and having experienced serious electoral decline, the CDA embarked upon leadership renewal, programmatic adaptation and organisational reform. The party moved to a more traditionalist platform, toughened its stance on law and order and bolstered its social profile through a more interventionist manifesto in 1998. Similarly, the ÖVP engaged in extensive personnel change at the head of the party and adopted a more traditionalist agenda after 1995 while there was also a greater effort to centralise the party. The major change for the People's Party, however, was its new coalition strategy. As expected, there was less need for the CDU to initiate major reform in this period as it was still in government and its electoral problems were less severe. Nonetheless, by 1998 there were indications that it, too, had moved to a more traditionalist position with a pronounced stress on law and order issues. With the exception of the CDU, the parties had also retreated from the more market-centred electoral platforms of earlier in the decade after these had provoked an electoral backlash. This does not imply that the CDA and ÖVP had abandoned their earlier desire to reform the welfare state and reduce regulation. As was shown in the individual case studies, such policies remained important within the programmes.

The choice therefore for Christian Democrats was less clear-cut than opting for either tradition or adaptation; rather, the parties responded to the altered environment in which they found themselves by pushing their traditionalism to the fore. However, it must also be conceded that the absorption of a stronger law and order agenda was a novel element in this strategy of adaptation through tradition. Such issues had not previously been especially prominent in Christian Democratic thinking as shown in Chapter 8 and the individual case studies. Still, the new focus on traditionalism seemed

to signal victory for those Christian Democrats who wanted to concentrate on the party's core supporters rather than broaden the appeal to different social groups. Highlighting traditionalist issues was also perhaps a more viable approach than a nakedly pro-market programme. Yet whether such a strategy could revitalise Christian Democratic prospects was very much open to question. With a draining reservoir of support for sustenance, a 'closed' strategy based on mobilising regular voters did not generate much hope that the parties would recover their former dominance, especially given their weakness among younger voters and non-churchgoers. Relying upon an ever decreasing number of regular supporters would also eventually raise serious doubts about the *Volkspartei* model. If Christian Democratic voters continued to be drawn disproportionately from dwindling social groups, then the party as a vehicle for the integration and accommodation of a broad cross-section of society would be critically undermined.

Predictions of such parties' eventual demise were nonetheless very premature. All the established parties faced similar problems in balancing the concerns of their shrinking grassroots with the electoral imperative of broadening their support. Christian Democrats were not unique in suffering from partisan and membership erosion and facing pressure for programmatic and organisational adaptation. Furthermore, the parties retained considerable organisational resources and in the case of the CDU and ÖVP, sizeable mass memberships. Indeed, although voters' dissatisfaction with the mainstream parties became ever more obvious, the established parties still managed in most cases to cling on to power. There was no reason to believe therefore that the position of the Christian Democrats was irredeemable. With the bond between parties and voters loosening, short-term variables and issues have increased in importance. Although this opened up the possibility of more volatility, with more assured leadership, more intra-party unity and a more favourable issue context Christian Democrats would, in theory at least, be able to benefit from such changes. The golden age of Christian Democracy belonged, however, to the past. In an age of voter unpredictability, parties were more vulnerable, particularly those seeking to reconcile a plurality of different interests and viewpoints. As shown throughout chapters five to seven, the trend towards growing divergence between the different factions renders *Volksparteien* very susceptible to intra-party feuding.

#### **IV. Developments since 1998**

At the start of the new millennium the prospects for Christian Democratic parties looked at best uncertain, at worst rather bleak. Core supporters were fewer in number and a

variety of centrifugal pressures raised doubts about the viability of the *Volkspartei* model. Moreover, the parties faced the twin programmatic difficulty of selling their religiously derived traditionalist beliefs to an electorate largely distant from religious institutions whilst simultaneously reconciling their philosophical heritage of social Catholicism with a political agenda increasingly averse to state intervention. In all three parties, observers pointed to the possibility of a less Christian Democratic identity developing<sup>3</sup> as the influence of social Catholicism faded yet there was little evidence to indicate that such a transformation would be rewarded at the ballot box. The CDU and the CDA faced the additional problem of their position in opposition. As shown by Chapter 3, existing outside their natural environment of government was no easy task for Christian Democrats. On the other hand, the ÖVP still in government and now in possession of the chancellorship had a similarly unpredictable future facing the domestic polarisation and international outcry resulting from its alliance with the Freedom Party. For some, the People's Party was "riding on the back of a tiger that sooner or later would swallow them" (Rose 2000:33).

## CDU

Initially, the CDU appeared to have coped quite successfully with the transition (Helms 2000:420-2). Admittedly, the party's adaptation was very limited: no real programmatic reconsideration was undertaken in the immediate aftermath of the defeat and a smooth transition from Kohl to Schäuble<sup>4</sup> as party chairman took place as the party avoided comprehensive personnel renewal. Nonetheless, early success in countering the troubled new red-green administration in *Landtag* elections indicated that the CDU's problems might not be especially deep. However, the Union's problems multiplied at the end of 1999. A major financial scandal arose, wrecking Kohl's reputation, eventually undermining Schäuble's position and shattering the Union's recovery in the polls<sup>5</sup>. Following the unfortunate Schäuble's resignation from his posts as chairman and *Fraktion* leader, he was succeeded by Angela Merkl in the former post and Friedrich Merz in the latter. These changes signalled a much more significant change in the Union as Merkl became the first female leader of the party as well as the first easterner<sup>6</sup>. Both she and Merz were relatively short of political experience and for many of the more conservative members of the Union, Merkl, in particular, was too liberal. Kohl's intransigence in refusing to name his secret donors continued to cast a shadow over the

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<sup>3</sup> See Lucardie and ten Napel (1993) for the CDA; Walter and Bösch (1999) for the CDU; Sperl (2000) for the ÖVP.

<sup>4</sup> In contrast to Kiesinger, Kohl stepped down as party chairman directly after the election.

<sup>5</sup> For more details, see Clemens (2000).

<sup>6</sup> Although born in Hamburg, Merkl had spent most of her life in the former GDR.

Union and Merkl failed to establish convincing authority over the party. In many policy areas, the CDU appeared disunited, symbolised by the failure of the party to prevent the government's tax reform passing through the Bundesrat<sup>7</sup>.

Some programmatic adaptation had taken place in the 'Essener Leitsätze' in which more money for families was pledged, the concept of the family was expanded to include single parents and unmarried couples with children and more concrete measures to support working women were proposed. In addition, Merkl initiated a debate on a 'new social market' fit for a globalised world economy in which the labour market would be subject to more liberalisation and insurance increasingly based on private contributions<sup>8</sup> (Bösch 2002:69). The omission of the 'eco' prefix also signified the further marginalisation of the environmental component of the Union's programme. However, it was noticeable that the 'new social market' was not included in the CDU/CSU election programme.

Regardless of such programmatic reforms, throughout 2000-1, the question of the chancellor candidate in the next Bundestag election remained unresolved. Backed by Junge Union, Frauen-Union and General Secretary Meyer, Merkl clung on to hopes of clinching the nomination but by 2002 she still had little support among the Land party leaders, her relationship with Merz was not especially close and the Bavarian minister-president Stoiber appeared more appealing to Union voters. Consequently, Merkl was persuaded to let Stoiber stand as chancellor candidate<sup>9</sup>. The poor economic record of the red-green government, its internal divisions and its frequently poor self-presentation offered an excellent opportunity for the Union parties to return to government. Stoiber, learning from the mistakes of his mentor Strauß, advocated a moderate agenda and the CDU seemed more committed to the campaign than in 1980. However, after a virtuoso campaign performance from Schröder based on his hands-on approach during the catastrophic floods and clear rejection of military action against Iraq, the SPD managed to salvage its once desperate position. Together with gains for the Greens, this was enough to provide a thin majority for the government and the Union was left in opposition again. The CDU/CSU performance was extremely disappointing in view of the earlier traumas of the government and its economic record. Certainly, the sister parties registered a modest improvement in their vote but placed in historical context, it

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<sup>7</sup> CDU party leaders in Bremen, Brandenburg and Berlin all broke the earlier agreement to oppose the bill.

<sup>8</sup> See the CDU Discussion Paper from Berlin 27/08/01.

<sup>9</sup> See Der Spiegel (Nr.3 14/01/02) for more details on the battle over the candidacy.

was only the third time ever the sister parties received less than 40% and it was their third worst result ever. In addition to the traditional heartland areas of the religiously active and older voters, the CDU/CSU had polled well among blue-collar workers and men. However, the strong gains made in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg were not replicated elsewhere as the limitations of a CSU *Kanzlerkandidat* were exposed in Stoiber's lack of allure to northern and eastern voters, women and white-collar employees<sup>10</sup>. While the second Schröder cabinet enjoyed no honeymoon period in office with approval dropping incredibly rapidly, the Union's long-term prospects were not necessarily rosy. Once again, the party had struggled with its opposition role and while Merkl consolidated her power by becoming parliamentary leader, serious doubts remained about her leadership with speculation already that the 2006 candidature would be between Stoiber and Hessian minister-president Koch.

## ÖVP

While the ÖVP's coalition with the FPÖ triggered a wave of international outrage culminating in the unofficial sanctions imposed by Austria's EU partners, this drew attention away from the extensive reform programme embarked upon by the government. According to FPÖ Finance Minister Grasser, the black-blue agenda sought "a paradigm change in social and economic policy" (quoted in Obinger 2001:360) through increased privatisation, extensive deregulation of labour and welfare cutbacks. In the first few months of its existence, the ÖVP-FPÖ government introduced more than 120 new laws (Obinger 2001:383). Amongst the measures introduced were the pension reform, the introduction of student fees, reforms to unemployment benefit and the establishment of outpatient charges. The mantra of 'zero deficit' was endlessly repeated by Grasser and budget consolidation was an indispensable part of the government accord. As significant as the policies themselves was the manner of their introduction. The social partners, but especially the trade unions and employees' associations, found themselves sidelined while the cabinet pressed ahead regardless of the objections. The government's willingness to use its parliamentary majority to push through reforms regardless of dissent from both sides of the social partnership seemed to many like the breaking of a taboo while according to ÖVP Economic Affairs Minister Bartenstein, the social partners now only had a right of suggestion, no right of veto (*Profil* 29/2001). Indeed, in 2001 the government trained its attention on the partners themselves with the removal of Hans Sallmutter as the president of the Main Association of Social Insurance Agencies (*Sozialversicherungs Hauptverband*), a prominent government critic. This

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<sup>10</sup> See voting behaviour according to social and occupational characteristics at

provoked the first ever nation-wide demonstration in the Trade Union Federation's history when 50,000 participants took to the streets of Vienna in a "Demo für Demokratie".

The ÖVP's participation in such executive action raised questions about its Christian Democratic identity. Both the nature of the laws and the manner of their implementation seemed to indicate that the social image of the party was fading rapidly. Sperl (2000:165) argued that the receding influence of social Catholicism pointed to the party moving to a more Anglo-American style form of conservatism. In addition, the ÖVP Interior Minister Strasser, formerly thought of as a liberal, pushed a firm line in immigration and asylum issues. At the same time, however, the government's prestige policy, the *Kinderscheck*, a benefit for parents who stayed home to raise their children, signalled a certain amount of continuity with earlier Christian Democratic ideas as did the party's refusal to let the FPÖ influence its pro-European line. Despite the domestic polarisation caused by the black-blue government, the ÖVP enjoyed an impressive resurgence in opinion polls and Land elections as the Christian Democrats capitalised on first the unpopularity of the sanctions and then the crumbling of support for the FPÖ. Intra-party dissent about the party's direction in government was therefore contained as the FPÖ finally seemed to have been stopped. Caught between its populist impulses and the attempted professionalism of the FPÖ cabinet members, the party was continually on the verge of disintegrating into open civil war throughout the government's lifetime. Partly as a consequence of his earlier gamble, Schüssel's reputation also grew considerably in office as he conveyed an appropriately statesmanlike image.

The government finally collapsed over the FPÖ's divisions on tax reform and the purchase of interceptor jets. Now in a position of strength for the first time since the 1980s, the ÖVP ran a heavily candidate-centred campaign<sup>11</sup>. The result for the Christian Democrats was spectacularly good: the party became the largest party, a feat not achieved since 1966 and registered the greatest ever gains by a single party (+15.4%, 42.3%). In an incredibly volatile election, the ÖVP's success was based on the attraction of former FPÖ voters<sup>12</sup> but other interesting aspects of its triumph were its greatly increased support among young voters (33% of voters under 30) and blue collar workers

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[http://www.aicgs.org/wahlen/vot\\_behavior.shtml](http://www.aicgs.org/wahlen/vot_behavior.shtml) accessed 25/08/03.

<sup>11</sup> Posters, playing on the doubts of many about SPÖ leader Gusenbauer, asked 'Wer, wenn nicht er?' alongside a picture of the Chancellor.

<sup>12</sup> According to the polling agency SORA, the ÖVP received a net gain of 620,000 in voter mobility between the ÖVP and FPÖ. Apart from 1999 ÖVP voters, the other main source of its

(34%), especially among skilled workers (Plasser and Ulram 2002:12). Three coalition constellations were realistically possible: ÖVP-SPÖ, ÖVP-Green or ÖVP-FPÖ. While a majority of the electorate favoured a Grand Coalition, talks failed due to wide differences on student fees, the divisive issue of the interceptor jets and pension reform. Short-lived negotiations with the Greens broke down for similar reasons and once again, an ÖVP-FPÖ government was formed with great haste. The ÖVP's recovery had certainly been remarkable but this 'black-blue' encore risked compromising its foundation. The FPÖ was still extremely unstable and the issue of a further pension reform threatened to set off yet more mass protests. What did seem clear was that the party's hold on the chancellorship was crucial to its future success. The party showed previously hidden levels of unity during the period 2000-2 with Schüssel firmly in control as long as he remained Chancellor.

### **CDA**

Confronted by a further parliamentary term in opposition, the CDA nonetheless refrained from radical changes. De Hoop Scheffer was confirmed as parliamentary leader in spite of his limited appeal in 1998. Party chairman Hans Helgers announced his withdrawal from politics, considering that he had laid the foundations for future success with his execution of a process of renewal. He was succeeded in 1999 by van Rij who spoke of his desire for the party to have "an open culture of debate" (de Boer, Lucardie, Nomen and Voerman 2000:21). In view of the deep problems experienced by the party, divisions within the Christian Democrats were not especially threatening although the conservative Christian Course movement within the party caused friction in its attempt to remove the openly homosexual Pex as the first reserve candidate on the European Parliament list. Elections in the provinces and for the European Parliament brought contrasting results for the CDA. In the former, the CDA unexpectedly improved its position and regained its position as the largest party although this was as much a consequence of increased political fragmentation<sup>13</sup> as the CDA's gain of 1.5%. Nevertheless, as a result of this improved showing, the CDA once more became the largest grouping in the upper house. Less encouraging was the EP election in which the party lost support. However, the CDA was still the biggest party and the coalition's popularity appeared to be waning as it encountered greater difficulties (e.g. the near fall of the cabinet over the failure of the law to introduce the corrective referendum in the upper chamber).

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electorate in 2002 were non-votes in 1999 <http://www.sora.at/wahlen/wsa/nrw02/> Accessed 29/08/03.

<sup>13</sup> Nineteen different lists won representation.

In 2000, the party celebrated its twentieth year of existence but it was a quiet year politically apart from the resignation of scandal-tainted PvdA Minister of Internal Affairs Peper. Within the Christian Democrats, however, intra-party friction increased as a debate about multiculturalism erupted. An initiative focusing on the integration of migrants provoked objections from those fearing a dilution of the party's religious inspiration while de Hoop Scheffer's demand for immigrants to adapt to Dutch traditions was criticised by the party council (de Boer, Lucardie, Noomen and Voerman 2001:152-4). De Hoop Scheffer also came into conflict with former leader Lubbers over the party's rejection of the coalition's planned euthanasia law. The following year intra-party quarrelling escalated into a leadership crisis in which party chairman van Rij challenged de Hoop Scheffer's position as leading candidate. Failing to win the unqualified support of the party's daily executive<sup>14</sup>, de Hoop Scheffer stood down as leading candidate and parliamentary leader. In his place, Jan Peter Balkenende, a Tweede Kamer newcomer in 1998, was chosen for both positions. The affair caused a spate of resignations and with the election less than a year away, raised unpleasant memories of the 1994 debacle. However, the damage was limited as the experienced Bert de Vries took over as interim chairman.

In comparison to 1998, there was more disunity in the coalition and while the economy was still performing well, greater public dissatisfaction on issues such as health and the railways was apparent. Above all, however, questions of security had risen prominence. By February 2002, over 50% of voters rated crime and security as one of the two most important problems in the Netherlands (van Praag 2003:15). The issue of crime and security had also become linked to immigration and asylum with growing public unease on these issues. Although this damaged the standing of the government, the prime beneficiary was not the CDA but Liveable Netherlands, a new protest party that had grown out of Hilversum and Utrecht. LN's popularity was largely based on its leading candidate, the flamboyant columnist and former sociologist Pim Fortuyn who had transformed the party's agenda from a populist progressive one to a more rightist populist stance. Fortuyn was by no means willing to be tied down to LN's more moderate electoral platform though and after he had criticised the constitutional protection against discrimination in February 2002, he was removed as LN's leading candidate. He promptly formed his own list (LPF), winning considerable success in the

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<sup>14</sup> Van Rij was offered third place on the list.

local elections in Rotterdam in March and polls predicted a sizeable vote in the upcoming Tweede Kamer election.

An already tumultuous election campaign was rendered even more bizarre after the collective resignation of the Kok cabinet a few weeks in advance of election over a report about the Srebrenica massacre and then more significantly, by the murder of Fortuyn nine days before the election. The election went ahead in a climate of great uncertainty and an outpouring of public grief over the assassination. The outcome brought a cataclysmic end to 8 years of purple government as the coalition lost 43 of its 97 seats and 27% (PvdA -13.9%, VVD -9.2, D66 -3.9%). Despite the party's own recent problems, the CDA emerged as the major victor of the election. The party gained 9.6% and 14 seats as the party seemed to profit from Balkenende's more respectful stance towards Fortuyn. Where all other major parties had fiercely attacked Fortuyn before his death, Balkenende had refrained from emotive language and direct confrontations (van Praag 2003:16). A quickly patched together cabinet composed of the CDA, VVD and LPF fell apart almost as rapidly as it had been put together and new elections were held at the beginning of 2003. In these, the CDA managed to sustain its vote and eventually, the Balkenende II cabinet was formed with the VVD and D66. The exceptional events of 2002 had therefore led to the CDA resuming its pivotal position in the centre of Dutch politics and cabinets, in the process restoring its governmental credentials through the solid leadership of Balkenende. However, as issues like security and immigration drop in importance, the focus again appears to be shifting to socio-economic issues. The party's divisions in the 1989-94 period on precisely these issue areas and its subsequent banishment from government should provide a sobering reminder of the party's vulnerability as future CDA success may well depend on how successfully the government handles the balance between reform and economic security.

## **Conclusion**

Post-1998 developments in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands highlight the need for caution in predicting the future for political parties. Once again, party survival rather than failure is the dominant theme. In both the case of the ÖVP and the CDA, few observers in 2000 would have prophesied the scale of the Christian Democratic electoral recovery and yet by 2002 they had moved back into a position of considerable power. Schüssel's strategic gamble of forming a coalition with the FPÖ worked almost perfectly. Weighed down by government responsibility, the Freedom Party lost much of its populist appeal and was split between the party in office and the extra-parliamentary and provincial parties. By contrast, the spoils of office encouraged far greater discipline in

the ÖVP which reaped the reward in opinion polls, *Landtag* elections and finally, in the 2002 *Nationalrat* election. The CDA, too, has benefited from public perception of it as a force for stability. In the chaos of the 2002 election campaign, the CDA profited from the simultaneous desire for both change and continuity. As the most moderate opposition party, the Christian Democrats were well-positioned to capitalise on discontent with the purple coalition without the uncertainty and radicalism of the LPF. The German situation is less comparable: the CDU failed to take advantage of the perilous economic context and the blunders of the Schröder government. The 2002 Bundestag election has to be viewed as a missed opportunity for the Union despite its improved showing. Therefore, while the ÖVP and the CDA have managed to re-establish their centrality in the Austrian and Dutch political systems respectively, the CDU remains in a transitional phase.

The specificities of post-1998 political developments in each country indicate that cross-national explanation is difficult. The 2002 results in the Netherlands and Austria appear to be exceptional elections determined by national conditions. The circumstances of the Dutch election in particular were absolutely unique and even the Austrian election appeared more like a one-off plebiscite on Schüssel's chancellorship. It is therefore too early to speculate about the permanence of any Christian Democratic resurgence. As this study has shown, the basis of earlier Christian Democratic success has been eroded over time and it would seem highly unlikely that such parties can assume a similar pre-eminent role. Electorates across Western Europe show weakening partisanship and higher levels of anti-party feeling (Webb 2002). In such an environment, the potential for explosive change will always be present and it may be that in the future the extremely high volatility of the 2002 Dutch and Austrian elections becomes less exceptional. Indeed, in both countries elections throughout the 1990s displayed increased levels of aggregate volatility. If such a scenario transpires, then the foundation of party success will always be under threat from electoral tremors. Yet in comparison to political newcomers, the established parties have a number of valuable assets. These advantages are not just based on organisational resources and the cartel tendencies of the long-standing major parties. While the ties between party and voter may have become loose, the established parties have the advantage of name recognition and reputations based on decades of government participation. Disenchantment with parties may be widespread but as could be seen in the Dutch and Austrian elections in 2002, electorates still look to steady parties with renowned government credentials despite the pervasive desire for change. If Christian Democrats are able to accommodate both desires, then their electoral prospects may well be promising. Whether this is

feasible is, however, open to question. This study of Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s has illustrated that the process of adaptation and change does not come easily to broad, internally heterogeneous parties in which different and frequently opposing perspectives and interests co-exist. Change undermines the programmatic balance between the different strands of Christian Democracy and upsets the power relations between the various constituent interests. It would therefore be unwise to write off the 1990s as an aberration in the history of Christian Democratic parties. The threat from the centre and the right will re-emerge and if the internal diversity of Christian Democracy again becomes open factional warfare, or the parties fail to supply convincing answers to pressing contemporary problems, serious electoral decay will again be the likely result.

## Appendix I

### National Elections Results Since 1945

#### Bundestag election results

	1949	1953	1957	1961	1965	1969	1972	1976	1980	1983	1987	1990	1994	1998	2002
CDU/CSU	31.0	45.2	50.2	45.3	47.6	46.1	44.9	48.6	44.5	48.8	44.3	43.8	41.4	35.1	38.5
SPD	29.2	28.8	31.8	36.2	39.3	42.7	45.8	42.6	42.9	38.2	37.0	33.5	36.4	40.9	38.5
FDP	11.9	9.5	7.7	12.8	9.5	5.8	8.4	7.9	10.6	7.0	9.1	11.0	6.9	6.2	7.4
Greens									1.5	5.6	8.3	5.1	7.3	6.7	8.6
PDS												2.4	4.4	5.1	4.0
Others	27.9	16.7	10.3	5.7	3.6	5.4	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.5	1.4	4.2	3.6	5.8	3.0
Turnout	78.2	86.0	87.8	87.7	86.8	86.7	91.1	90.7	88.6	89.1	84.3	77.8	79.0	82.2	79.1

#### Nationalrat election results

	1945	1949	1953	1956	1959	1962	1966	1970	1971	1975	1979	1983	1986	1990	1994	1995	1999	2002
ÖVP	49.8	44.0	41.3	46.0	44.2	45.4	48.3	44.7	43.1	43.0	41.9	43.2	41.3	32.1	27.7	28.3	26.9	42.3
SPÖ	44.6	38.7	42.1	43.0	44.8	44.0	42.6	48.4	50.0	50.4	51.0	47.7	43.1	42.8	34.9	38.1	33.2	36.5
FPÖ		11.7 <sup>1</sup>	10.9	6.5	7.7	7.1	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.4	6.1	5.0	9.7	16.6	22.5	21.9	26.9	10.0
KPÖ	5.4	5.1	5.3	4.4	3.3	3.0	0.4	0.9	1.4	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.6
Greens													4.8	4.8	7.3	4.8	7.4	9.5
LiF															6.0	5.5	3.7	1.0
Others	0.2	0.5	0.4	0.1	0	0.5	3.3	0.2	0.04	0.03	0.05	3.5	0.3	3.3	1.3	1.1	1.5	0.09
Turnout	94.3	96.8	95.8	96.0	94.2	93.8	93.8	91.8	92.4	92.9	92.2	92.6	90.5	86.1	81.9	86.0	80.4	84.3

<sup>1</sup> 1949 result is for FPÖ predecessor League of Independents (VdU)

Tweede Kamer election results

	1946	1948	1952	1956	1959	1963	1967	1971	1972	1977	1981	1982	1986	1989	1994	1998	2002	2003
KVP	30.8	31.0	28.6	31.6	31.5	31.8	26.5	21.8	17.7									
ARP	12.9	13.2	11.3	9.9	9.3	8.7	9.9	8.5	8.8									
CHU	7.8	9.1	8.9	8.4	8.1	8.5	8.1	6.3	4.8									
CDA										31.9	30.8	29.3	34.6	35.3	22.2	18.3	27.9	28.6
PvdA	28.3	25.6	28.9	32.6	30.3	28.0	23.5	24.5	27.3	33.8	28.3	30.4	33.3	31.9	23.9	28.9	15.1	27.3
VVD	7.8 <sup>2</sup>	7.9	8.8	8.7	12.2	10.2	10.7	10.3	14.4	17.9	17.3	23.1	17.4	14.6	19.9	24.6	15.5	17.9
D66							4.4	6.7	4.1	5.4	11.0	4.3	6.1	7.9	15.4	8.9	5.1	4.1
CPN	10.6	7.7	6.1	4.7	2.4	2.7	3.6	3.8	4.4	1.7	2.0	1.8	0.6					
PSP					1.8	3.0	2.8	1.4	1.5	0.9	2.1	2.3	1.2					
PPR								1.8	4.8	1.6	1.9	1.6	1.3					
GL														4.1	3.4	7.2	7.0	5.1
SP										0.2	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.4	1.3	3.5	5.9	6.3
GPV			0.7	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.8	1.6	1.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	1.0	1.2	1.3	1.2		
SGP	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.2	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.6
RPF												1.5	0.9	1.0	1.7	2.0		
CU																	2.5	2.1
DS70								5.3	4.1	0.7	0.5	0.4						
BP					0.6	2.1	4.7	1.1	1.9	0.8	0.2 <sup>3</sup>							
LPF																	17.0	5.7
Others	1.0	2.7	3.8	0.9	0.5	1.5	2.4	4.2	1.9	1.5	0.8	2.1	1.5	1.8	8.4	2.8	2.3	1.3
Turnout	93.1	93.7	95.0	95.5	95.6	95.1	94.9	79.1	83.5	88.0	87.0	81.0	85.8	80.3	78.7	73.2	79.0	79.9

Note: only those parties winning seats in 2 or more elections have been included.

<sup>2</sup> Partij van de Vrijheid

<sup>3</sup> Renamed Rechtse Volkspartij.

## Appendix II

### Government composition 1945-2003

#### Germany

Date	Composition	Chancellor
1949-53	CDU/CSU-FDP-DP	Adenauer
1953-56	CDU/CSU-FDP-DP-GB/BHE	Adenauer
1956-57	CDU/CSU-DP-FVP	Adenauer
1957-61	CDU/CSU-DP	Adenauer
1961-63	CDU/CSU-FDP	Adenauer
1963-66	CDU/CSU-FDP	Erhard
1966-69	CDU/CSU-SPD	Kiesinger
1969-74	SPD-FDP	Brandt
1974-82	SPD-FDP	Schmidt
1982-98	CDU/CSU-FDP	Kohl
1998-	SPD-Greens	Schröder

#### Austria

Date	Composition	Chancellor
1945	SPÖ-ÖVP-KPÖ	Renner
1945-47	ÖVP-SPÖ-KPÖ	Figl
1947-53	ÖVP-SPÖ	Figl
1953-61	ÖVP-SPÖ	Raab
1961-64	ÖVP-SPÖ	Gorbach
1964-66	ÖVP-SPÖ	Klaus
1966-70	ÖVP	Klaus
1970-83	SPÖ	Kresicky
(between 1970-71 SPÖ minority government supported by FPÖ in parliament)		
1983-86	SPÖ-FPÖ	Sinowatz
1986-87	SPÖ-FPÖ	Vranitzky
1987-97	SPÖ-ÖVP	Vranitzky
1997-2000	SPÖ-ÖVP	Klima
2000-	ÖVP-FPÖ	Schüssel

#### The Netherlands

Date	Composition	Prime Minister
1945-46	PvdA-KVP-ARP-np	Schermerhorn
1946-48	KVP-PvdA-np	Beel
1948-51	PvdA-KVP-CHU-VVD-np	Drees
1951-52	PvdA-KVP-CHU-VVD-np	Drees
1952-56	PvdA-KVP-ARP-CHU-np	Drees
1956-58	PvdA-KVP-ARP-CHU	Drees
1958-59	KVP-ARP-CHU	Beel
1959-63	KVP-ARP-CHU-VVD	de Quay
1963-65	KVP-ARP-CHU-VVD	Marijnen
1965-66	KVP-PvdA-ARP	Cals
1966-67	ARP-KVP	Zijlstra
1967-71	KVP-ARP-CHU-VVD	de Jong

1971-72	ARP-KVP-CHU-VVD-DS70	Biesheuvel
1972-73	ARP-KVP-CHU-VVD	Biesheuvel
1973-77	PvdA-PPR-D66-KVP-ARP	den Uyl
1977-81	CDA-VVD	van Agt
1981-82	CDA-PvdA-D66	van Agt
1982	CDA-D66	van Agt
1982-86	CDA-VVD	Lubbers
1986-89	CDA-VVD	Lubbers
1989-94	CDA-PvdA	Lubbers
1994-98	PvdA-D66-VVD	Kok
1998-02	PvdA-D66-VVD	Kok
2002	CDA-VVD-LPF	Balkenende
2003-	CDA-VVD-D66	Balkenende

Note: np= non-partisan

In each case, the party of the chancellor/prime minister is named first.

## Appendix III

### Landtag Election Results in Germany and Austria Since 1990

#### Germany

##### Baden-Württemberg

	1992	1996	2001
CDU	39.6	41.3	44.8
SPD	29.4	25.1	33.3
FDP	5.9	9.6	8.1
Greens	9.5	12.1	7.7
Republikaner	10.9	9.1	4.4
Others	4.7	2.8	1.7

##### Bavaria

	1990	1994	1998
CSU	54.9	52.8	52.9
SPD	26.0	30.0	28.7
FDP	5.2	2.8	1.7
Greens	6.4	6.1	5.7
Others	4.9	3.9	3.7

##### Berlin

	1990	1995	1999	2001
CDU	40.4	37.4	40.8	23.8
SPD	30.4	23.6	22.4	29.7
FDP	7.1	2.5	2.2	9.9
Greens	9.4	13.2	9.9	9.1
PDS	9.2	14.6	17.7	22.6
Others	3.5	8.7	7.0	4.9

##### Brandenburg

	1990	1994	1999
CDU	29.4	18.7	26.5
SPD	38.2	54.1	39.3
FDP	6.6	2.2	1.9
Greens	6.4	2.9	1.9
PDS	13.4	18.7	23.3
Others	1.1	1.1	5.3

##### Bremen

	1991	1995	1999	2003
CDU	30.7	32.6	37.1	29.8
SPD	38.8	33.4	42.6	42.3
FDP	9.5	3.4	2.5	4.2
Greens	11.4	13.1	8.9	12.8
DVU	6.2	2.5	3.0	2.3
Others	3.4	15.0	5.9	8.6

Hamburg				
	1991	1993	1997	2001
CDU	35.1	25.1	30.7	26.2
SPD	48.0	40.4	36.2	36.5
FDP	5.4	4.2	3.5	5.1
Greens	7.2	13.5	13.9	8.6
Schill				19.4
Others	4.3	16.8	15.7	4.2

Hesse				
	1991	1995	1999	2003
CDU	40.2	39.2	43.4	48.8
SPD	40.8	38.0	39.4	29.1
FDP	7.4	7.4	5.1	7.9
Greens	8.8	11.2	7.2	10.1
Others	2.8	4.2	4.9	4.1

Lower Saxony				
	1990	1994	1998	2003
CDU	42.0	36.4	35.9	48.3
SPD	44.2	44.3	47.9	33.4
FDP	6.0	4.4	4.9	8.1
Greens	5.5	7.4	7.0	7.6
Others	2.3	7.5	4.3	2.6

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern				
	1990	1994	1998	2002
CDU	38.3	37.7	30.2	31.4
SPD	27.0	29.5	34.3	40.6
FDP	5.5	3.8	1.6	4.7
Greens	4.2	3.7	2.7	2.6
PDS	15.7	22.7	24.4	16.4
Others	9.3	2.6	6.8	4.3

North Rhine-Westphalia			
	1990	1995	2000
CDU	36.7	37.7	37.0
SPD	50.0	46.0	42.8
FDP	5.8	4.0	9.8
Greens	5.0	10.0	7.1
Others	2.5	2.3	3.3

Rhineland-Pfalz			
	1991	1996	2001
CDU	38.7	38.7	35.3
SPD	44.8	39.5	44.7
FDP	6.9	8.9	7.8
Greens	6.5	6.9	5.2
Republikaner	2.0	3.5	2.4
Others	1.1	2.2	4.6

## Saarland

	1990	1994	1999
CDU	33.4	38.6	45.5
SPD	54.4	49.4	44.4
FDP	5.6	2.1	2.6
Greens	2.6	5.5	3.2
Others	3.4	1.4	1.3

## Saxony

	1990	1994	1999
CDU	53.8	58.1	56.9
SPD	19.1	16.6	10.7
FDP	5.3	1.7	1.1
Greens	5.6	4.1	2.6
PDS	10.2	16.5	22.2
Others	3.6	1.3	2.1

## Saxony-Anhalt

	1990	1994	1998	2002
CDU	39.0	34.4	22.0	37.3
SPD	26.0	34.0	35.9	20.0
FDP	13.5	3.6	4.2	13.3
Greens	5.3	5.1	3.2	2.0
PDS	12.0	19.9	19.6	20.4
DVU			12.9	
Others	4.2	3.0	2.2	7.0

## Schleswig-Holstein

	1992	1996	2000
CDU	33.8	37.2	35.2
SPD	46.2	39.8	43.1
FDP	5.6	5.7	7.6
Greens	5.0	8.1	6.2
PDS	10.2	16.5	22.2
DVU	6.3	4.3	
SSW	1.9	2.5	4.1

## Thüringen

	1990	1994	1999
CDU	45.4	42.6	51.0
SPD	22.8	24.6	18.5
FDP	9.3	3.2	1.1
Greens	6.5	4.5	1.9
PDS	9.7	16.6	21.3
Others	3.3	1.3	3.1

Source: compiled from <http://www.election.de>

**Austria****Burgenland**

	1991	1996	2000
ÖVP	38.2	36.1	35.3
SPÖ	48.1	44.5	46.6
FPÖ	9.7	14.6	12.6
Greens	3.4	2.5	5.5
Others	0.6	2.4	0

Source: <http://www.wahlen.bgld.gv.at/landtag>

**Carinthia**

	1994	1999
ÖVP	23.8	20.7
SPÖ	37.4	32.9
FPÖ	33.3	42.1
Greens	1.6	-
Demokratie 99	-	3.9
LiF	2.6	-
Others	0.4	0.4

Source: <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/frameless/wahlen.htm?ID=M14>

**Lower Austria**

	1993	1998	2003
ÖVP	44.2	44.9	53.3
SPÖ	33.9	30.4	33.6
FPÖ	12.1	16.1	4.5
Greens	3.2	4.5	7.2
Others	1.5	0.6	1.5

Source: <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/linkmap/politik/noe2003wahl/> and <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/frameless/wahlen.htm?ID=M17>

**Salzburg**

	1994	1999
ÖVP	38.6	38.8
SPÖ	27.0	32.3
FPÖ	19.5	19.6
Greens	7.3	5.4
LiF	5.8	3.7
Others	1.8	0.3

Source: <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/frameless/wahlen.htm?ID=M15>

**Styria**

	1990	1994	2000
ÖVP	44.2	36.3	47.3
SPÖ	34.9	55.9	32.3
FPÖ	15.4	17.2	12.4
Greens	1.7	4.3	5.6
LiF	-	3.8	1.1
Others	3.8	2.5	1.2

Source: <http://www.verwaltung.steiermark.at>

Tyrol

	1994	1999
VP-Tyrol	47.3	47.2
SPÖ	19.8	21.8
FPÖ	16.1	19.6
Greens	10.7	8.0
LiF	3.4	3.2
Others	2.7	1.3

Source: [http://wahlen.tirol.gv.at/wahl2000/wahlen\\_ergebnis\\_detail.cfm](http://wahlen.tirol.gv.at/wahl2000/wahlen_ergebnis_detail.cfm)

Upper Austria

	1991	1997
ÖVP	45.2	42.7
SPÖ	31.4	27.0
FPÖ	17.7	20.6
Greens	-	5.8
LiF	-	2.1
Others	5.6	1.8

Source: [http://www.ooe.gv.at/wahlen/OOE\\_index.htm](http://www.ooe.gv.at/wahlen/OOE_index.htm)

Vienna

	1991	1994	2001
ÖVP	18.1	15.3	16.4
SPÖ	47.8	39.2	46.9
FPÖ	22.5	27.9	20.2
Greens	9.1	7.9	12.4
LiF	-	8.0	3.4
Others	2.5	1.7	1.7

Source: <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/frameless/wahlen.htm?ID=M29>

Vorarlberg

	1994	1999
ÖVP	49.9	45.8
SPÖ	16.2	13.0
FPÖ	27.4	18.4
Greens	7.8	6.0
LiF	3.5	3.4
Others	0.9	4.5

Source: <http://www.wienerzeitung.at/frameless/wahlen.htm?ID=M16>

## Appendix IV

### Leading National Party Positions

#### CDU

##### **Bundesparteivorsitzende**

(Federal Party Chairman)

Kurt Adenauer (1950-66)

Ludwig Erhard (1966)

Kurt-Georg Kiesinger (1967-71)

Rainer Barzel (1971-73)

Helmut Kohl (1973-98)

Wolfgang Schäuble (1998-2000)

Angela Merkel (2000-)

##### **CDU/CSU Fraktionsvorsitzende**

(CDU/CSU Parliamentary Party Chairman)

Heinrich von Bretano (1949-55)

Heinrich Krone (1955-61)

Heinrich von Bretano (1961-64)

Rainer Barzel (1964-73)

Karl Carstens (1973-76)

Helmut Kohl (1976-83)

Alfred Dregger (1983-91)

Wolfgang Schäuble (1991-2000)

Friedrich Merz (2000-2)

Angela Merkel (2002-)

##### **Generalsekretär**

(General Secretary)

Bruno Heck (1967-71)

Konrad Kraske (1971-73)

Kurt Biedenkopf (1973-77)

Heiner Geißler (1977-89)

Volker Rühle (1989-92)

Peter Hintze (1992-98)

Angela Merkel (1998-2000)

Ruprecht Polenz (2000)

Laurenz Meyer (2000-)

#### ÖVP

##### **Bundesparteiobmann**

(Federal Party Chairman)

L. Kunschak (1945)

Leopold Figl (1945-52)

Julius Raab (1952-60)

Alfons Gorbach (1960-63)

Josef Klaus (1963-70)

Hermann Withalm (1970-71)

Karl Schleinzer (1971-75)

Josef Taus (1975-79)

Alois Mock (1979-89)

Josef Riegler (1989-91)

Erhard Busek (1991-95)

Wolfgang Schäuble (1995-)

##### **Klubobmann**

(Parliamentary Party Chairman)

Julius Raab (1945-53)

Alfred Maleta (1953-62)

Felix Hurdes (1962-66)

Hermann Withalm (1966-70)

Stephan Koren (1970-78)

Alois Mock (1978-86)

Fritz König (1987-90)

Heinrich Neisser (1990-94)

Andreas Khol (1994-99)

Wolfgang Schüssel (1999-2000)

Andreas Khol (2000-2)

Wilhelm Molterer (2003-)

### **Generalsekretär**

(General Secretary)

Felix Hurdes (1945-52)

Alfred Maleta (1952-60)

Hermann Withalm (1960-70)

Karl Schleinzner (1970-71)

Herbert Kohlmaier (1971-75)

Erhard Busek (1975-76)

Sixtus Lanner (1976-82)

Michael Graff (1982-87)

Helmut Kukacka (1987-90)

Raimund Solonar (1990-91)

Ingrid Korosec (1991-95)

Ferdinand Maier (1991-93)

Wilhelm Molterer (1993-94)

Maria Rauch-Kallat (1995-2003)

Othmar Karas (1995-99)

Reinhold Lopatka (2003-)

## **CDA**

### **Fractievoorzitter**

(Parliamentary Party Leader)

A.A.M. van Agt (1977)

W. Aantjes (1977-78)

R.F.M. Lubbers (1978-82, 1986, 1989)

B. de Vries (1982-86, 1986-89)

L.C. Brinkman (1989-94)

E. Heerma (1994-97)

J.G. de Hoop Scheffer (1997-2001)

J.P. Balkenende (2001-2, 2003)

M.J.M. Verhagen (2002-3, 2003-)

### **Partijvoorzitter**

(Party Chairman)

P.A.J.M. Steenkamp (1975-80)

P. Bukman (1980-86)

B. Fleers (interim) (1986)

W.G. van Velzen (1987-94)

P.C. Lodders-Elfferich (interim) (1994-95)

J.J.M. Helgers (1995-99)

M.L.A. van Rij (1999-2001)

B. De Vries (interim) (2001-02)

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