

Evolution of Ideologies and Strategies in German Political Parties: A Case Study of the German Green Party in Response to Environmental Changes

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Author's Declaration

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Abstract

Germany's Green Party has evolved significantly in response to environmental challenges and social changes, transitioning from a radical outsider to a more mainstream and influential political force.

This thesis applies Ronald Inglehart's theory of postmaterialism to examine the extent to which the Green Party's policies reflect postmaterialist priorities and how these preferences are articulated in party rhetoric and manifest in political behaviour. In simple terms, how does Germany's Green Party navigate the balance between pragmatism and idealism, and how does this balance impact their political effectiveness and policy outcomes?

The thesis aims to gain insights from the past two years (2022-2024) by studying the party's previously unexamined challenges (namely, the Russia-Ukraine war and the European election results).

By examining this, the thesis contributes to understanding how political parties respond to and are shaped by social changes, which can help assess the health and functionality of democratic systems.

Introduction

The emergence of Green parties in Europe during the 1980s challenged established models of party politics and raised new issues on the political agenda. Germany's Green Party has achieved significant electoral success, formed part of governing coalitions and actively engaged in policy formulation and state legislative processes (Haute, 2016).

The success of the Green Party reflects its ability to use and shape the interaction between post-materialist values and the traditional left-right political orientation in Germany. The Green Party has capitalized on this shift by aligning its platform with values which prioritize environmental protection¹ and social progress over material gains which has helped them resonate with a significant portion of the electorate who prioritize these issues. This strategy not only expanded their appeal but also increased their presence in broader political discussions and decisions, improving their visibility and influence (Kaelberer, 2008).

The Green Party's journey in Germany offers a unique lens through which to understand how political actors manage to adapt to contemporary environmental and social changes and build a discourse around environmental sustainability and social justice. The analysis of the challenges and strategies surrounding the Green Party will contribute to a deeper understanding of the intersection between environmental activism and political pragmatism.

¹ Within the context of the Green Party, environmental protection refers to the implementation of measures and policies designed to preserve natural resources, reduce pollution, and promote sustainability. This involves advocating for renewable energy, conservation efforts, sustainable development practices, and policies aimed at mitigating climate change to ensure the long-term health and stability of ecosystems. (Protect the climate, n.d.)

This study is timely given the current climate crisis and the critical role of policy in mitigating environmental degradation (Jungjohann, 2013). This research will undertake a detailed examination of the Green Party's historical strategies and policies. It seeks to answer the following question: What factors have driven the Green Party in Germany to shift its priorities and strategies over time, and how they were shaped?

My analysis will be mainly based on Ronald Inglehart's theory of postmaterialism. According to this theory, as societies become more economically stable, their citizens' priorities shift from primary material needs to more abstract values such as environmental protection, social justice, and quality of life. This shift is driven by increased existential security that allows individuals to focus on self-expression and quality-of-life issues (Inglehart, 2008). The facilitation of high levels of economic security has led to a societal shift towards valuing sustainability and social equity. This shift has created a fertile ground for political parties that prioritize these issues.

In addition, the thesis will explore the tension between pragmatism and idealism within the Green Party. This dynamic is crucial for understanding how the party navigates policy decisions and political alliances. The framework will examine the balance the party strikes between maintaining its core environmental ideals and adapting to the pragmatic realities of political governance. This balance influences the party's organizational structure, voter base, and policy outcomes.

To provide a balanced analysis in my thesis, I'll use an alternative theoretical framework that emphasizes materialist or economic factors to contrast with Ronald Inglehart's postmaterialist theory. The thesis will also consider the perspective of Realism in International Relations. This theory suggests that states, and by extension political parties, prioritize security and power dynamics, focusing on pragmatic and strategic decisions in response to external threats and international pressures. This perspective will be used to examine whether pragmatic security

considerations and power dynamics play a significant role in the Green Party's policy decisions and voter support, contrasting with the postmaterialist view that emphasizes value changes (Camisao&Antunes, 2018).

Kitschelt examines how institutional contexts, such as electoral rules, state centralization, and the type of executive power (presidential vs. parliamentary), influence party organization and strategy. He explains how these factors can cause parties to adopt comparable "rational-efficient" forms and strategies to improve their chances in elections.. (Kitschelt, 1994) So, based on this theory, I'll test whether this author is correct or incorrect in the Green Party's case.

This paper is structured into four chapters, each dedicated to exploring specific topics essential for answering the research questions and to examine which theories are applicable for the Green party and in what case. Finally, the findings from these chapters are synthesized, and the overall conclusions are presented in a cohesive and comprehensive manner.

- 1) Chapter 1 will explore the formation and evolution of the German Green Party, offering valuable insights into how the party has responded to and been shaped by social changes over time.
- 2) Chapter 2 . Examines the party's ideology and provides context for its policy decisions and legislative actions. It helps explain why the party prioritizes certain issues, how it approaches governance, and the rationale behind its strategic choices.
- 3) Investigating the party's decision-making processes, in Chapter 3, sheds light on how consensus is achieved and how conflicts are managed within the party. This includes the impact of rotating leadership on continuity and the effectiveness of grassroots participation in influencing key decisions.

- 4) Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive understanding of who supports the party, why they do so, and how this support base influences the party's strategies and policy outcomes.

Chapter 1. History of the Green Party in Germany

1.1 Formation and Early Development

The formation and evolution of the Green Party in Germany are rooted in various social and environmental movements that emerged during the late 20th century. Its origins trace back to 1980, when Germany witnessed the beginning of a movement sparked by people's frustration with the government's disregard of the dangers of nuclear energy and other environmental concerns. This had provided a good basis for the party to create an agenda that would take into account all those issues related to environmental protection (Goldenberg, 2017). This initial focus aligns with Inglehart's (1977) postmaterialist theory, which posits that as societies become more economically stable, citizens begin to prioritize non-material values such as environmental protection and social equality. However, early concerns were raised that strict environmental policies could hamper economic competitiveness and lead to the relocation of polluting industries (Kontsevaya, 2023). This highlights a key tension between the party's idealistic environmental goals and the pragmatic economic considerations they had to navigate. The long-term benefits of green policies in driving innovation, creating new economic opportunities, and ensuring sustainable economic health make a compelling case for their positive impact on economic growth. While there are short-term challenges associated with implementing strict environmental regulations, the potential for innovation, job creation, and positioning as a leader in green technologies outweigh these concerns. (Business, 2023)

Several key events played a significant role and contributed to the Greens' legacy. One of these events was the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, which was a turning point for the Greens, strengthening their anti-nuclear stance and strengthening their support in German society. This

event helped the party to establish its position as a significant political force, especially on environmental issues (Schoonmaker, 1992). The early formative phase of the party was marked by a commitment to radical ecological reforms, challenging both the capitalist framework and traditional Marxist perspectives on industrialization and environmental management (Hülsberg's, 1988). The Green Party's early years were characterized by a strong adherence to postmaterialist values.

The Green Party emerged from a wave of new social movements that wanted to address environmental issues but also societal concerns like peace and anti-nuclear stances, and when the Green Party was formed, it encapsulated these ideals into a more formal political agenda. The Party's effectiveness is well exemplified by their policy influence; for instance, their presence in parliament brought issues such as renewable energy, conservation and sustainable development to the forefront. Moreover, one of the Green Party's most significant impacts was shaping Germany's energy policy, particularly through the decision to phase out nuclear energy, which was a direct response to long-standing Green advocacy (Scharf, 1994).

In 1998, they entered into the federal coalition with the Social Democrats, and in 1999, the army participated in military missions in Kosovo, which was a key moment for the Greens, who previously held a radical pacifist stance. (German History Intersections, 1999) Their participation in the Kosovo intervention caused a significant rupture within the party, as it was Germany's first military deployment since World War II. This shift towards supporting NATO and military interventions largely resulted from the influence of Joschka Fischer, a leading figure of the Green Party, who served as the Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time. who reflected a pragmatic response to international security concerns, aligning with realism in international relations (Sloat, 2020). This event marked a significant shift from their radical pacifist stance, reflecting a pragmatic compromise necessary for

coalition politics. After the Kosovo intervention, the Greens still retained their skepticism and opposition towards military intervention, particularly by the US – such as in Iraq in 2003 – but more broadly moved towards a position of humanitarian intervention beyond Europe (Jeraj, 2022).

The Green Party's shift from pacifism to supporting military interventions in Kosovo (1999) and Ukraine (2022) illustrates the pragmatic compromises required by coalition politics, aligning with Kitschelt's theory.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent German reunification in 1990 presented new challenges and opportunities for the Greens. They had to integrate with like-minded groups in East Germany, where similar environmental and social movements were active, but under different conditions. (Schoonmaker, 1992). The unification era tested the party's ability to adapt. The party's ability to navigate these changes illustrates their pragmatic approach to maintaining relevance and influence.

The Green Party rose to prominence in German politics between 1998 and 2005 when it served as the junior coalition partner to Gerhard Schröder's SPD. During this time, the party supplied the government with Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, who was instrumental in the Green Party's electoral strategies and successes (Goldenberg, Deutsche Welle, n.d.).

Despite their significant role in the coalition government and Fischer's high-profile position, in 2005, the Greens suffered in snap elections, receiving only 8.1% of the vote. This was a disappointing result given their previous influence and visibility in the government, highlighting the volatile nature of electoral support and the challenges the party faced in maintaining its momentum. Between 2007 and 2011, the party experimented with different coalition arrangements at the state level with varying degrees of success (Sloat, 2020).

Institutional Theories of Party Formation and Competition, as discussed by Kitschelt, demonstrate that the Green Party has consistently gained representation in the Bundestag due to Germany's proportional representation system. This system allocates seats based on the percentage of votes received, enabling the Greens to build a stable electoral base and influence policy, even as a minor party. (Kitschelt, 1994)

Angela Merkel indirectly influenced the Green Party's strategies and electoral success when she served as the Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety in her early political career (1994–1998). During Merkel's tenure as the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the party moved towards the political centre on various fronts, such as environmental policy. This shift created some overlap between the CDU and the Green Party, which could have led to the CDU taking votes from centrist Green Party supporters. At the same time, this shift also helped legitimize some of the Green Party's positions. Thus, Merkel's centrist environmental approach pushed the Green Party to distinguish their policies further, leading to strategies that emphasized the urgency of climate issues and the need for faster progress toward carbon neutrality. (Deloy, 2017)

1.2 Evolution and Pragmatic Shifts

After the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, Angela Merkel became an outspoken opponent of nuclear power. (Goldenberg, 2017) The Greens failed to capitalize on the Fukushima disaster at the national level, in part due to Merkel's decision to phase out nuclear power (Sloat, 2020). Support for the Green Party surged following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, which heightened concerns about nuclear safety, particularly in regions like Baden-Württemberg. (Smith, 2023). After unsuccessful attempts to join federal coalitions in 2005, 2009, and 2013, the Greens started emphasizing their policy autonomy, and then noticeable shifts in their

ideology began, which will be further elaborated on in Chapter 2. The federal structure of Germany provides multiple entry points for political influence, allowing the Green Party to participate in state and local governments. This can serve as a platform for national visibility and policy testing. (Kitschelt, 1994) An example of this is the Green Party leveraging its success in state governments, such as in Baden-Württemberg, to demonstrate its governing capabilities and influence national policies on environmental issues.

In the 2021 federal election, the Green Party achieved a record high with nearly 15% of the votes, and they became part of the coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), known as the "traffic light coalition" (Conradt, Green Party of Germany, 2023). This recent success underscores their continued relevance and the evolving balance between their foundational ideals and pragmatic governance strategies.

Since joining the coalition in 2021, the Green Party has advocated for robust climate policies. Annalena Baerbock, now serving as Foreign Minister, emphasized the need for policies combating climate change, integrating sustainability into the economy, and promoting social equity during her 2021 campaign as the Green Party's Chancellor candidate (Baerbock, 2021). The Party's current 2024 policies involve significant funding for renewable energy, gradual phase-out of fossil fuels, and legislative measures to meet Germany's climate targets. However, the party faces an inherent challenge in striking a balance between its ambitious climate goals and economic concerns, particularly in the wake of global events like the energy crisis exacerbated by the war in Ukraine (Oechtering&Campbell, 2023).

In 2022, there was a significant change in the energy landscape. The energy crisis, which was made worse by geopolitical tensions and the ongoing war in Ukraine, along with a decrease in natural gas supply from Russia, forced Germany to reconsider its energy strategy. The Green

Party, which was part of the coalition government, found itself in a difficult position as it urgently needed a reliable source of energy. To address this, the decision was made to temporarily reverse the nuclear phase-out by extending the operational life of Germany's remaining nuclear plants. This was seen as a practical approach to ensure energy security during a time of uncertainty. Greens' pragmatic approach to energy security has caused tension within the party, particularly among young members who are concerned about the party's commitment to climate-centered policies (Oechtering&Campbell, 2023).

Although this decision may seem to contradict the Green Party's foundational principles, it illustrates the complexity of governance, where idealism often meets the harsh reality of pragmatism. This indicates a growth within the party, recognizing that strict adherence to dogmas may not always benefit the greater good, particularly in crisis situations. The Greens' openness to compromise can be seen as a necessary, although difficult, adjustment to global realities, balancing immediate national interests with long-term environmental goals. The Greens, who have been vocal advocates of climate-centered policies, had to compromise on their anti-nuclear stance and support the continued operation of Germany's two remaining nuclear plants as emergency reserves to ensure energy security.

This decision could have severe implications for the Green Party's identity and internal cohesiveness. It runs the risk of isolating a significant portion of its base, especially young members who prioritize environmental purity and demand unwavering action on climate issues. This action might be seen as a betrayal, leading to a potential split in the party and a decrease in its environmental credibility.

Strategically speaking, the compromise on nuclear energy could also be viewed as a chance for the Greens to showcase their ability to govern responsibly. By being adaptable and open to

modifying policies to suit complicated international situations, the Greens could increase their appeal to a broader audience who appreciate practical and responsive leadership.

(Oechtering&Campbell, 2023).

The success of the Greens was no accident, it was the long-term result of the student protest of the late 1960s. (Langguth) The history of environmentalism dates back to before World War II, and during the Nazi regime, sustainability was rooted in German culture (environmental protection, energy efficiency, forestry and conservation). As a result, citizens have prioritised the environment and shown support for environmental organizations such as the German Greens. The Green Party makes efforts to raise awareness about environmental issues by conducting outreach programs, running advertisements, and engaging with citizens in various ways (Furedi).

In my analysis, I will consider the results of the European elections. The European Parliament elections serve as an important indication of political sentiment across the European Union and often reflect trends for national elections. In 2024, the elections were particularly significant for the German Green Party (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) as they aimed to capitalize on their previous electoral successes and increase their influence on the European stage. However, the party faced setbacks in the 2024 European Parliament elections, securing 11.90% of the vote and 14 seats, which is a decline from their performance in the 2019 elections when they received 20.5% of the vote and 21 seats. These losses were notable given the increased public focus on climate issues and the urgency of the European Green Deal, which the Greens have strongly supported.

One potential reason for the decline in voter support in the 2024 European elections is the Green Party's balancing act between ideological commitment and necessary pragmatic compromises. The decision to temporarily extend the use of nuclear power alienated

environmentally focused voters, while at the same time, the party's continued push for stringent climate regulations created economic burdens on citizens struggling with the fallout from the energy crisis. This dual strain appearing too radical for moderates, yet too compromising for core environmentalists may explain their electoral setback. The Greens' role in the coalition may have led to perceptions of diminished influence or effectiveness, particularly if voters felt that larger coalition partners overshadowed their policies.

According to Kitschelt's theory, party success depends on balancing policy innovation with electoral pragmatism. So the Greens' pragmatic compromises on energy policy might have undermined their innovative appeal, resulting in a perceived loss of identity and voter support (European Parliament. , 2024).

1.3 Concluded remarks

The formation and evolution of Germany's Green Party demonstrate a clear response to significant social and environmental changes. The party's response to these challenges, such as their significant influence on Germany's energy policy and the phase-out of nuclear energy, shows their ability to shape and be shaped by social changes. However, the party also faced the challenge of balancing their idealistic environmental goals with pragmatic economic considerations. Concerns about strict environmental policies potentially hampering economic competitiveness highlight this tension.(from 2022) The recent decision to support military intervention in Ukraine further illustrates their pragmatic approach to international security concerns, aligning with the realist perspective in international relations. Also the recent energy

crisis exacerbated by the war in Ukraine forced the Green Party to make difficult decisions, such as temporarily reversing the nuclear phase-out to ensure energy security. This decision, while seemingly contradictory to their foundational principles, illustrates the complexity of governance and the need for pragmatism in crisis situations. It appears that when evaluating the German Greens, their loyalty to their principles and values varies over time. This is evidenced by their significant policy shifts regarding war, indicating that Inglehart's theory may not be applicable when discussing their politics towards the Russian-Ukrainian war. This topic will be further explored in the ideology chapter, as it represents a major ideological shift within the party.

Kitschelt's theory effectively explains the Green Party's strategic adaptations in response to Germany's proportional representation system and federal structure. However, internal ideological shifts, such as the debate between "Realos" (realists) and "Fundis" (fundamentalists), also play a significant role, suggesting that internal dynamics should not be overlooked. Address potential counterarguments or limitations of applying Kitschelt's theory to the Green Party, considering factors like unique ideological foundations or specific historical events that may not be fully explained by institutional contexts alone.

In conclusion, the Greens' electoral setback in 2024 underscores the complexities of balancing idealism and pragmatism in a rapidly changing political and economic landscape.

Chapter 2. Ideology of the party and its shifts

2.1 Formation and Early Development

Every political party has its own ideology, which changes over time. This chapter addresses the question of how the ideology of the German Green Party has evolved over time by highlighting key influences, internal dynamics, and external pressures that have shaped its ideological shifts.

The development of the German Green Party is remarkable due to the country's post-war history, economic influence, and central role in European environmental politics. The party originated from grassroots environmental movements and had to navigate Germany's complex political landscape, characterized by its federal system and the legacy of post-war reconstruction. These factors add unique pressures and opportunities, which make the German Green Party a distinctive case study in how environmentalist movements can transition into influential political entities while dealing with internal ideological diversity and external political challenges.

German Greens have established themselves as a rainbow-type Green Party, representing a broad coalition of ecological, youth, feminist, peace, minority, and new left groups (Kaelberer, 2008). One important factor in the success of the German Greens was the lack of left-wing alternatives to the Social Democrats at the time of their formation. (1980) However, the success of the Green party cannot be attributed solely to the absence of left-wing competition, as both Die Linke and the Social Democrats hold left-leaning positions on many issues. Rather, the Green Party has been successful due to their ability to maintain a

distinctive platform that highlights environmental concerns, social justice², and progressive politics. By consistently advocating for these causes and expanding their base of support, they have carved out a distinct political space and become a powerful force in German politics (Miller, 2020). The ideology of green parties leans towards the left wing because their commitment is to establish concrete equality³ and address social inequalities. Their left-wing identity is clearly understood as encompassing more than just ecological concerns. The Greens' longstanding emphasis on environmental issues, social equality, and progressive politics also aligns with postmaterialist values (Kaelberer, 2008). While many scholars argue that the Greens represent a new form of left-wing politics, this chapter explores the extent to which the German Greens challenge or reinforce traditional left-right divisions.

2.2 Shifts in Ideology and Influences

The idea that Green parties represent a new political divide is a common thread among scholars. Kitschelt (1988a) argues that a combination of structural changes and favorable political conditions have given rise to a new type of party that falls under the category of "left-libertarian". The party's ideology has undergone significant shifts over time, largely influenced by internal ideological diversity and external socio-political pressures (Burchell, 2002).

Kitschelt (1988a) argues that party strategy is shaped by the institutional environment, such as electoral systems and federal structures. The German Green Party's pragmatic shift can be understood through this lens. Germany's proportional representation system requires parties to

² The Green Party's commitment to social justice is reflected in their policies on wealth redistribution, welfare, and anti-discrimination. They advocate for higher taxes on the wealthy, comprehensive social welfare programs, and policies that protect and promote the rights of marginalized groups, ensuring equal opportunities and reducing social inequalities.

³ The Green Party aims to achieve concrete equality through specific policy measures that ensure all individuals have access to the same opportunities and rights in practice. An example is the Nuremberg Resolution of 2007, which combines the concept of a basic income with needs-oriented provisions to ensure that everyone has the resources necessary to live with dignity and participate fully in society.

form coalitions, which forces smaller parties like the Greens to compromise on their core policies to maintain influence within broader governmental structures. For example, the Green Party's decision to extend the operation of nuclear power plants during the 2022 energy crisis reflects how coalition pressures, combined with the necessity of retaining voter support across a broad spectrum, lead to strategic concessions. These pragmatic choices align with Kitschelt's theory that the institutional context, particularly in coalition-driven parliamentary systems, shapes party behavior by encouraging moderation and strategic flexibility

In the early 1980s, the Greens were seen as a radical left-wing force, championing anti-capitalism and environmental sustainability. However, over time, their ideology has shifted, blending traditional leftist values such as social justice with more centrist and even market-friendly approaches. This ideological flexibility has allowed the party to navigate coalition politics and expand its electoral appeal.

Some political theorists suggest that the Greens are now the new face of the left, filling the space left vacant by more traditional socialist parties like the SPD. This theory is grounded in the idea that the Greens have successfully integrated environmental and social justice issues, positioning themselves as the party for progressive, post-materialist voters.

Upon closer examination of the German Green Party, it becomes evident that their ideology cannot be easily confined to the traditional left-right spectrum. The party's emphasis on ecological sustainability and its pragmatic approach to governance make it a complex entity. Instead of being a straightforward continuation of left-wing politics, the Greens may be better understood as a new pole in German politics, a force that restructures the classical left-right divide.

The Green Party's agenda initially focused on protecting the environment and criticizing the capitalist profit motive. They advocated for an economic system that was more eco-friendly and decentralized. During this early phase, the party aligned itself with other environmental movements and strongly opposed traditional industrial practices that were harmful to the environment. One of the reasons for the shift was that their electoral base increasingly recognized the interconnectedness of ecological and social issues. Internally, the party's evolution was influenced by debates between different factions, such as the eco-libertarians, eco-socialists, realists, and fundamentalists. Each faction brought their own perspective on how best to integrate ecological concerns with broader social and political issues. Externally, changes in the global political landscape, such as the end of the Cold War and the rise of globalization, also played a significant role in shaping the party's ideology. These changes led the Green Party to reconsider their stance on issues such as national security and international cooperation and integrate them into their broader ecological and social agenda. Green Party's ideological shifts have been shaped by specific policy challenges and the realities of coalition politics. (Rüdiger, 2012) For example, while the Greens initially stood firmly against military intervention, their participation in the Kosovo mission in 1999 marked a significant shift towards a more pragmatic approach to international relations under Joschka Fischer's leadership. Similarly, their environmental stance had to adapt when the 2022 energy crisis led the party to support the temporary extension of nuclear power. These decisions illustrate how the party has navigated the tension between its foundational environmentalism and the need for pragmatic solutions in governance, especially in times of crisis.

(Hulsberg, 1988).

Moreover, the evolution of The Green Party's policy and ideology has been significantly influenced by both Marxist critiques of capitalism and capitalist critiques of centralized

economic planning. (Poguntke, 1987) This dual influence has provided a fertile ground for the development of the party's unique stance on issues such as industrial growth, sustainability, and the broader ecological crisis.

On the one hand, Marxist theory has had a profound impact on the Green Party. It frames environmental degradation as an inevitable consequence of the capitalist system's focus on profit and growth at the expense of ecological health. This perspective has been instrumental in shaping the party's critical stance on unbridled industrial growth and its push for a fundamental shift in how economies are organized. However, party goals, such as advocating for renewable energy, reducing carbon footprints, and prioritizing sustainability and quality of life over growth metrics, do not rely solely on Marxist ideology (Dijk, 2015).

On the other hand, the Greens have also been influenced by capitalist (market-friendly) perspectives, specifically regarding efficiency and innovation. They recognize that market mechanisms can sometimes lead to efficient use of resources (Fox, 2022) .

2.3 Recent Pragmatic Shifts

The Greens have long been regarded as peace-loving idealists but now they are among the loudest voices calling for heavy weapons to be delivered to Ukraine. Their current stance is in sharp contrast to their position on war in (2022-2024) best exemplified by the words of Joschka Fischer (1999). I stand on two principles: never again war, never again Auschwitz, never again genocide, never again fascism! The two go together for me. Such a shift, however, does not occur suddenly, even under the pressure of an invasion like the one in

So Yet the current situation has challenged pacifist approaches to security and defense policy, posing difficult dilemmas and exposing divisions within Europe. The recent shift towards a

more pragmatic approach in security and defense policy, such as supporting arms deliveries to Ukraine, aligns more closely with Realism in International Relations, which prioritizes state security and pragmatic decision-making in response to external threats.

Initially rooted in postmaterialist values, the party has increasingly incorporated pragmatic approaches to address the contemporary challenges since the late 1990s and this shift became more pronounced in the 2000s, as the party sought to balance its idealism with the realities of governance and coalition politics.

While the recent party rhetoric emphasized a firm stance on environmental policies, famously rejecting "ifs and buts," this slogan reflects the Greens' attempt to rally their base rather than a full rejection of compromise. Behind the scenes, the Green Party has continued to face the realities of coalition politics and governance. For example, despite their radical public stance, they were forced to compromise on the nuclear phase-out due to the energy crisis exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. This balance between ideological purity and pragmatic concessions shows that while they outwardly appeared more radical, internally, they were grappling with the economic and political realities that required flexibility. (Thurau, 2021). This shift is evident in their 2021 manifesto, which outlines ambitious climate targets, and public statements by leaders like Annalena Baerbock, who emphasized non-negotiable climate protection measures during the campaign. Additionally, their firm stance on issues like the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and the accelerated phase-out of coal demonstrates their commitment to maintaining their environmental principles despite political and economic pressures (Thurau, 2021).

The war in Ukraine has led to a significant social change within the German Green Party, resulting in a noticeable ideological shift within the party, demonstrating how external social and geopolitical events can reshape party policies and responses. This responsiveness to social changes ensures that the party remains relevant and can effectively address new challenges as

they arise. However, whether their change and response has a good or bad response from society will be discussed in Chapter V.

Now about the the recent European Parliament elections. Results represent a significant change for the German Green Party, prompting a period of reflection and potential strategic reassessment for the party. One potential reason for the decline in votes could be the balancing act between idealism and pragmatism. The German Green Party has historically sought to balance its core principles of environmentalism with the practical realities of governing. However, recent decisions, such as temporarily reversing the nuclear phase-out due to the energy crisis heightened by the war in Ukraine, may have caused disillusionment among some of its key supporters. While these pragmatic choices were necessary for immediate energy security, they might have been seen as betrayals of the party's strong environmental stance, leading to voter alienation.

One theory of mine is that the internal dynamics of The Green Party often involve debates between various factions, such as eco-libertarians, eco-socialists, realists, and fundamentalists. These internal conflicts can lead to fragmented messaging and policy proposals that do not uniformly resonate with the electorate. The tension between maintaining radical environmental ideals and adopting pragmatic policies for broader appeal may dilute the party's core message, confusing and frustrating potential voters.

The German proportional representation system has traditionally allowed the Green Party to maintain a stable presence in the Bundestag. However, the changing political landscape and competition from other parties, such as the rise of right-wing parties and shifts in voter preferences, have made it more challenging for the Greens to sustain their previous electoral success. This competitive environment necessitates the party to consistently adapt and redefine its strategies in order to remain relevant and appealing to a wider electorate.

It is important to consider that as economic concerns, social justice issues, and pragmatic governance become more pressing, the party's traditional focus on environmental issues alone may not be sufficient to retain voter support.

In an ever-evolving political landscape, the German Green Party has carved out a distinct position by addressing both environmental and socio-economic challenges through a balanced and nuanced approach. *Balancing Ideologies:* The Green Party has faced the challenge of balancing ideologies to create effective policies that address modern ecological crises while remaining politically and economically viable. The political party has attempted to merge Marxist demands for fundamental reforms with capitalist methods that take advantage of market efficiencies for the betterment of the environment. This blended approach is apparent in their sophisticated position on topics such as industrial expansion - where they promote a shift from conventional industries to sustainable ones rather than complete opposition to industrialization as a whole.

Unique Ideological Space: The Green Party has successfully created a unique ideological space that effectively addresses the complexities of modern ecological crises. By combining elements from both Marxist and capitalist critiques, the Greens propose a third way that emphasizes sustainability, equity, and ecological integrity without disregarding the role of markets and innovation in achieving these goals. Their approach goes beyond traditional environmentalism by incorporating ecological concerns within broader socio-economic frameworks, thus proposing solutions that are not only environmentally sound but also socially just.

This ideological stance enables the Green Party to address modern challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality. Their platform is unique and relevant in today's political landscape.

Navigating Coalition Politics: The Greens in Government:

As a member of a coalition government, the German Green Party faces both opportunities and challenges. In these arrangements, the Greens must often negotiate with partners who may not fully align with their priorities. This can result in compromises that are difficult for their voter base to accept. This situation is evident in the current "traffic light" coalition with the SPD and FDP, where the Greens hold key ministries, such as the Ministry for the Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The allocation of ministries is a crucial component of coalition politics. The Greens have strategically pursued ministries where they can wield substantial influence, especially in sectors that align with their fundamental values, such as environmental protection, energy policy, and foreign relations. However, this power-sharing agreement also necessitates that the Greens manage internal conflicts, particularly when coalition decisions clash with their principles or the expectations of their supporters. (Oechtering&Campbell, 2023)

The German Green Party, like any coalition partner, has had to make difficult decisions about whether to remain in government, even when coalition agreements go against their environmental goals. A notable example occurred during their participation in the "traffic light" coalition with the SPD and FDP, where the Greens supported the extension of nuclear power plants in 2022 due to the energy crisis, despite their long-standing anti-nuclear stance. This decision, though pragmatic, caused tensions within the party and among its supporters, illustrating how coalition politics can sometimes force the party to compromise on core values for the sake of governance and national stability.

They have generally chosen to stay in coalitions, believing that they can achieve more by being in government than by standing on principle alone. However, this pragmatic approach is not without its risks, as it can lead to dissatisfaction among voters who feel that the party is

compromising too much. Balancing these competing pressures is a constant challenge for the Greens as they seek to influence government policy while staying true to their ideals.

2.4 conclusion

The tension between radical ideals and practical strategies has led the Greens to be innovative in their policy proposals, combining ambitious ecological goals with realistic approaches. This dynamic can enhance the party's appeal, attracting a broader coalition of voters who range from staunch environmentalists to more moderate constituents concerned about ecological issues.

The evidence shows that the party has flexibility which allows the Greens to adapt to different political environments and electoral systems, making them more capable of influencing policy at various levels of government. The Green Party's performance in the 2024 European Parliament elections reflects the challenge of balancing ideological purity with practical governance. The party needs to manage internal coherence and respond to external political pressures in order to regain voter confidence and effectively advocate for its environmental and social justice agenda in the future.

Their ideological evolution suggests that they may be forming a new political pole altogether, one that transcends traditional divisions and reshapes the political landscape. While they share many leftist values, the Greens' ability to merge these with market-friendly and pragmatic approaches suggests that they are a hybrid, potentially restructuring how we understand political ideology in Germany.

Chapter 3. The Organization of the party

3.1 The Green Party's Organizational Structure

This chapter delves into the unique organizational structure of the German Green Party, emphasizing its commitment to participatory democracy and rotation in leadership. It examines the strengths and challenges of this model, particularly how it affects policy-making, leadership continuity, and internal cohesion. How is the German Green Party organized, and what challenges does it face with its unique structure?

The organizational structure of all German parties is in many respects determined by relatively extensive and detailed legislation. The constitutionally required organizational conformance with democratic principles is laid out in great detail in the ‘party law’. Furthermore, the electoral law regulates procedures for candidate selection and specifies veto powers that the party hierarchy may use against certain lower-level nominations.

The German Green Party) has a unique organizational structure that emphasizes its commitment to participatory democracy. ⁴This structure is significantly different from traditional political party frameworks. The party is headquartered in Berlin and its supreme governing body is the federal assembly, which convenes annually. (Conradt D. P., 2024) Between assemblies, the federal party committee (Bundeshauptausschuss, BHA) meets quarterly, acting as the principal policymaking entity. The decisions made by the BHA have a binding effect on the federal board of directors of the party. This board operates under a rotation system, which requires that half of its members be renewed annually. The main purpose of this system is to prevent the concentration of power and ensure that there are always fresh perspectives within the party leadership (Poguntke, 1987).

Germany's public funding mechanism enables the Greens to have significant resources, which has facilitated a professional organizational structure while maintaining lower campaign costs compared to more traditional parties. For instance during the early 1980s, the German Green

⁴ The Green Party incorporates participatory democracy into its organizational structure through rotating leadership, ensuring no concentration of power, and grassroots engagement, involving members at all levels in decision-making and policy formation.

Party received a significant amount of public funding. They recorded over DM 40 million in public funds between 1980 and 1984, which was much more than the DM 15 million they received through donations and membership fees. Most of the funds were used for domestic political activities, but they also resulted in legal challenges⁵.

This pledge not only represents the largest single contribution to the fund in its history but also underscores Germany's ongoing commitment to climate leadership and its role in supporting climate resilience and emission reduction in developing countries (greenclimate, 2023).

Germany has historically prioritized environmental and political causes in their financial strategies, albeit in different contexts and scales.

The Greens' organizational philosophy integrates deep-rooted principles of grass-roots participation and direct democracy. The party has established certain measures to ensure that bureaucratic dominance is reduced and that active participation is promoted at all levels of the organization. Some of these measures include separating party office from mandate, placing strict limitations on office accumulation, and granting autonomy to local organizations. These steps are taken to ensure that the party remains transparent, fair, and accountable to its members. Moreover, the Greens' rules enforce transparency and accountability, with provisions such as the public accounting of finances and the restriction of leadership terms to enhance democratic engagement within the party. The Green Party's dedication to participatory democracy aligns with Inglehart's postmaterialism, which emphasizes citizen engagement and self-expression. This organizational model can be analyzed to understand how the party's structure supports these values and connects with their voter base.

The German Green Party has historically embraced an idealistic approach in its organizational structure, reflecting its commitment to deep-rooted principles of grass-roots participation and

⁵ The legal challenges the Green Party faced included accusations of improper use of public funds, violations of public accounting standards, and lack of transparency in financial reporting. These challenges prompted scrutiny and legal proceedings to ensure compliance with the regulations governing public funding.

direct democracy. For instance, its 1989 party program was marked by an idealistic vision, advocating for radical environmental policies and strict adherence to anti-authoritarian principles. However, just two years later, the party's 1991 program revealed a shift toward a more pragmatic approach, emphasizing the need for realistic and achievable policy goals that could be implemented within the existing political framework. This shift illustrates the party's evolution as it grappled with the practical realities of governance, highlighting the tension between maintaining idealistic values and adapting to the demands of political life.

3.2 Challenges and Practical Realities

Despite its commitment to participatory democracy, the Green Party's organizational model poses several challenges. One of the key issues is the principle of leadership rotation. While this prevents the formation of a political elite, it also disrupts continuity in leadership and limits the development of experienced policymakers. As a result, the party often lacks long-term strategic planning and consistent execution of policies, which can be detrimental to its overall political influence (Frankland, 2009).

The participatory model encourages broad member involvement, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered in policy-making, which can lead to more comprehensive and representative policies (Conradt, 2024). But, as I mentioned, there are challenges associated with this model, including a lack of experience, slow decision-making, and internal conflicts. Therefore, I will discuss these three conflicting opinions about party organization. Frequent changes in leadership can result in a lack of continuity and experience in governance, potentially impeding long-term strategic planning and execution.

Consensus-building can slow down decision-making processes, which may be detrimental in situations requiring quick and decisive action. During coalition negotiations, the need to

involve and consult a wide range of members can delay reaching agreements, impacting the party's ability to form effective coalitions quickly.

When it comes to internal conflicts, having various factions within the party, including eco-libertarians, eco-socialists, realists, and fundamentalists, can lead to disagreements and make it difficult to develop cohesive policies. The historical division between the "Realos" (realists) and "Fundis" (fundamentalists) within the party has often sparked intense internal debates and slowed down the process of making policies (Poguntke, 1993).

Subsection: The Party from Inside: Working Mode and Political Culture

The Green Party's internal culture is characterized by participatory and anti-authoritarian attitudes, which create a political environment with minimal deference to leadership. Political debates within the party are intense and inclusive, reflecting a broad engagement across the membership spectrum. This inclusivity ensures that power does not become centralized but is distributed across various levels of the party's structure, enhancing the democratic nature of decision-making processes (Poguntke, 1993).

The grass-roots model of the Green Party may seem clear in theory, but in practice, the working mode is more complex. While strategic decisions are ideally made at lower levels or broader assemblies, sometimes they require prompt action that cannot always include extensive consultation. This necessity allows elite groups within the party, such as those drafting coalition agreements or programmatic revisions, to exert considerable influence by shaping the alternatives presented for decision-making (Wolfgang&Sajuria, 2020).

The fact that these influential groups often operate without counterproposals lends them an unchallenged authority to define party stance, thereby creating a de facto elite. However, this influence is periodically balanced by the party's engagement in extra-parliamentary activities,

such as collaborations with new social movements, which can shift influence back to the federal executive during periods of active protest (Poguntke T. , 2001).

Structurally, the federal executive of the Green Party is at a disadvantage compared to the parliamentary party, which has access to significant resources, including paid personnel. The federal executive, comprising mainly unpaid members who manage their roles alongside their personal careers, struggles to exert substantial control over the fully professionalised parliamentary group. This disparity is compounded by the lack of overlap between the federal and parliamentary levels, which hampers continuous political cooperation.

While the Green Party's adherence to grass-roots democracy and participatory governance is idealistic and commendable, it faces practical challenges in a political system that often requires rapid, centralized decision-making. The lack of resource parity between the federal executive and the parliamentary party can lead to imbalances in political influence, potentially undermining the party's democratic ideals.

To address these challenges, the party might consider enhancing the connectivity and resource sharing between its various branches, thereby ensuring that its foundational democratic principles are not compromised by operational necessities. Furthermore, fostering continuous and systematic engagement among all levels of the party could help mitigate the effects of the sporadic dominance of elite groups, ensuring that the party remains true to its grass-roots ethos.

Upon examination, it is evident that the German Green Party endeavors to function as a democratic model of participation. However, the party faces the challenge of balancing its idealistic principles with practical political demands. Consequently, the party's internal structure and culture represent both its strengths in promoting extensive participation and its weaknesses in dealing with occasional centralization of power. This tension is well-explained by the perspective of Realism in International Relations, which posits that political actors must

often make pragmatic decisions to maintain power and influence, even if these decisions compromise their ideological values (Camisao&Antunes, 2018).

The Green Party's ongoing struggle to balance idealistic principles with pragmatic demands in political life can be better understood through the application of realist theory. This framework emphasizes the importance of strategic decision-making and the need to prioritize practical considerations at times in order to achieve broader political goals and maintain the party's influence within the complex landscape of German politics.

3.3 conclusion

In conclusion, the structure of the German Green Party is a model for participatory democracy, reflecting a commitment to transparency, member participation, and a check on leadership power. Although the party holds democratic ideals, it faces practical challenges due to its distinct organizational choices. It must balance the ideals of grass-roots with the demands of governance to maintain its relevance and effectiveness in the evolving landscape of German politics. This balancing act is crucial for the party to navigate successfully (Poguntke, 1987).

We have observed that the post-materialist theory is applicable to the organisation of German political parties. The party has upheld post-materialistic values since 1980, even though these values have diminished in some cases over time, as I discussed in previous chapters. However, the party's internal structure still maintains these values. According to this party's organizational structure, it supports its idealistic values by ensuring that decision-making is inclusive, transparent, and democratic. This evolution underscores the party's ongoing struggle to balance its idealistic principles with the practical demands of governance, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in the evolving landscape of German politics.

Chapter 4. The Green Party's policy

4.1 Environmental Policy: ‘Nur wir sind das original‘

In analyzing the environmental policy stance of the German Green Party as articulated in key party resolutions and its broader political implications, it is evident that the party has significantly evolved in its approach to environmental issues. This transformation represents a shift in strategy and a stronger commitment to environmentalism, which the party calls "radical realism" (Probst, 2013).

The Green Party's shift back towards a strong environmental stance can be viewed as a strategic refocus during periods of political disorientation and uncertainty. This was particularly noticeable in their move away from the perceived stagnation during their second term in government. Despite temporarily de-emphasizing their environmental initiatives while in government, the Greens are still strongly associated with environmental competence and credibility in the public's perception. This image has encouraged the party to re-emphasize its ecological commitments. (Blühdorn, 2009)

The concept of "radical realism" introduced at the Cologne party conference in 2006 and further developed by the time of the Nuremberg conference in 2007, represents an attempt to balance practical political approaches with the party's foundational radical environmental principles. This stance acknowledges past underestimations in the severity of environmental issues while advocating for significant structural changes to social practices and the socio-economic order. Such changes are aimed at transitioning to what the Greens envision as a "solar society," a metaphor for a sustainable future predicated on zero emissions (Fuhr, 2016). Some people believe that making practical compromises is essential for achieving political success. They suggest that taking a more moderate approach can help gain broader support and facilitate gradual but significant progress. Practical approaches can appeal to a wider range of voters,

including those who may be hesitant to support drastic changes. This broader appeal is crucial for winning elections and gaining the political power needed to implement policies (O'Neill, 2019). Considering these perspectives, the pragmatic approach of the Green Party has resulted in more significant environmental and political outcomes. While radical environmentalism emphasizes the urgency of climate issues, pragmatic politics have proven more effective in achieving real-world results. Limitations of Radicalism: While radical policies are crucial for highlighting the severity of climate issues, they can sometimes alienate moderate voters and other political parties, making it challenging to build the necessary consensus for policy implementation (Knight, Germany: Greens stay bullish despite attacks in Bavaria, 2023).

The party is presenting its eco-political positioning as a return to its roots and a reaffirmation of being "the original" in environmental politics. However, their renewed emphasis on uncompromising environmentalism also poses several challenges. Firstly, it should be noted that the political viability of The Greens' approach may be in question. Historically, The Greens have balanced their strong environmental principles with a pragmatic approach to coalition politics. They have made compromises when necessary to achieve broader legislative goals, as seen in their participation in various coalition governments at both federal and state levels. The pragmatic approach emphasizes the understanding that political progress often requires negotiation and flexibility. However, the party's recent focus on rejecting "ifs and buts" shows a renewed commitment to certain non-negotiable environmental principles. Some view this as a refusal to compromise, demonstrating their determination to uphold core values even in the face of political pressure. This doesn't mean that the Greens are entirely unwilling to compromise, but rather that they prioritize their environmental agenda and may resist concessions that significantly undermine their ecological goals. This shift is evident in their 2021 manifesto, which outlines ambitious climate targets, and public statements by leaders like

Annalena Baerbock, who emphasized non-negotiable climate protection measures during the campaign . Additionally, their firm stance on issues like the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and the accelerated phase-out of coal demonstrates their commitment to maintaining their environmental principles despite political and economic pressures (Thurau, 2021).

The Greens face a challenge in upholding their environmental principles while also showing the strategic flexibility needed for effective governance. They must navigate coalition politics carefully, balancing the need to achieve immediate legislative victories with their long-term goal of advancing comprehensive environmental reform. This balance is crucial for maintaining their political relevance and continuing to influence national policies (O'Neill, 2010).

Although the Greens have established themselves as the leading party in eco-politics, their approach may not appeal to a broader audience that prioritizes more pragmatic methods of promoting sustainability. As a result, this could potentially distance voters who prefer more moderate or gradual approaches to environmental policy.

One more challenge is about systemic challenges. The party has put forward some radical proposals, such as a complete transition to renewable energy, revamping transportation policies, and converting all agriculture to organic practices. These proposals require significant changes not only in policies but also in individual lifestyles and societal norms. These changes demand substantial sacrifices from all economic segments of society and may not be universally welcomed or feasible.

In conclusion, the German Green Party's evolution in environmental policy reveals a tension between pursuing ideological purity and pragmatic politics. While their unique eco-political stance sets them apart from other parties in German politics, it also risks isolating them in a system that demands compromise and collaboration. As the Green Party moves forward, they

need to strike a balance between their radical ideals and the practicalities of governance and coalition-building. They need to be able to inspire change while also working effectively within the political process to implement that change. This balance is crucial for the party to expand their influence and turn their environmental agenda into actionable policies that appeal to a wider range of voters.

About their recent Enhanced Climate Policy Goals, The German Green Party is determined to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70% by 2030, which is a significantly higher target than the current government's goal of a 55% reduction. This ambitious objective highlights the party's dedication to not only sustain but also expedite Germany's shift towards renewable energy sources. This transition includes the rapid expansion of renewable energy infrastructure and increased adoption of electric vehicles. Their proactive stance in these areas highlights a strategic move to set more stringent environmental benchmarks than other political factions, illustrating a dedicated effort to lead Germany into a more sustainable future (Thurau, 2021). In today's global political landscape, a political party's foreign policy strategy not only reflects their international stance but also their values and domestic agenda.

The Greens have a foreign policy that focuses on enhancing the European Union and reinvigorating the transatlantic partnership. This strategy demonstrates their dedication to multilateralism and international cooperation, which they believe are crucial for tackling worldwide issues such as climate change and geopolitical instability. Their policy aims to reinforce Germany's role within a strong EU, contrasting with the nationalist or isolationist tendencies emerging in global politics (Eder, 2023).

The Greens' critical approach towards Russia and China, especially their opposition to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline and support for opposition groups in these countries, represents a distinctively proactive and principled foreign policy stance. This approach is likely informed

by their broader environmental and human rights principles, highlighting a consistency between their domestic policies and international positions. Their clear stance on human rights issues, particularly concerning the treatment of the Uighurs in China, further emphasizes their commitment to global human rights advocacy (Annalena Baerbock , 2021).

The Green party's climate and foreign policies are expanding with new elements that align well with their "radical realism" approach in environmental politics. The party's willingness to establish and pursue high environmental standards, even if it means making difficult systemic changes and working with other countries, reflects their long-held principles and demonstrates a mature awareness of the geopolitical dynamics that shape global environmental policies.

The challenges associated with these ambitious goals, particularly in terms of political feasibility and public appeal, align with the systemic challenges identified in your initial analysis. The Greens' strategies require broad societal and political consensus, which may be difficult to achieve given the extensive changes they propose. Moreover, their foreign policy stances, particularly the firm positions on Russia and China, may complicate diplomatic relations but are consistent with their commitment to transparency and human rights.

4.2 Social Policy: ‚Vor allem für die schwächsten der gesellschaft‘

The German Green Party has undergone a significant evolution in its approach to social policy. Initially, the party focused primarily on environmental issues, but it has since expanded its focus to address broader social concerns, especially those affecting the most vulnerable members of society. This shift is indicative of the party's response to changing societal dynamics and its attempt to position itself as a comprehensive political force capable of addressing a wide range of public concerns.

The Green party had traditionally not been highly focused on the typical social policy areas such as wealth redistribution or class-based politics. Their emergence was mainly due to issues

that did not affect the pressing social concerns of poverty and inequality that usually influence left-wing politics. However, with the rise of economic globalization, increasing wealth disparities, and the decreasing effectiveness of the redistributive welfare state, social policy has become a top priority for them (Sloat A. , 2020).

Since 2002, the Green Party has proposed a social policy that combines aspects of the paternalistic welfare state of the traditional left and the activating, punitive approaches of neoliberal workfare models. This approach aims to empower individuals and promote self-determination. It rejects excessive state intervention and the neoliberal approach of abandoning social responsibility. The Green Party's vision involves a tax-funded essential provision that upholds individual dignity and autonomy. This is a departure from welfare systems that stigmatize recipients and dictate their lifestyle choices.

In the early 2000s, the German government, led by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, introduced the Agenda 2010 reforms, which included the Hartz IV legislation. These reforms aimed to modernize the German welfare state by reducing unemployment benefits and encouraging recipients to return to work more quickly. However, the Hartz IV reforms were criticized for increasing social insecurity and failing to provide adequate support for those in need.

Initially, the Greens backed the Agenda 2010 reforms as part of their coalition with the SPD. However, this support created a division between the party leadership and its grassroots base. The grassroots base believed that the reforms worsened social inequality and economic insecurity.

In response, the Greens have been distancing themselves from these policies. They are now focusing on creating a social system that provides security without coercion and enhances societal solidarity and inclusion. The Green Party is now advocating for reforms that ensure a basic level of security for all individuals, emphasizing the importance of dignity and autonomy over punitive measures. Their alternative proposals include promoting a guaranteed basic

income to ensure that all citizens have access to essential resources without the stigma associated with welfare.

Also, Investing in social services that support individuals in finding employment, rather than penalizing them for being unemployed. Developing economic policies that promote job creation in sustainable industries, ensuring that new jobs are both environmentally and socially beneficial. By focusing on these alternatives, the Greens aim to create a more inclusive and supportive social policy framework that aligns with their core values of environmental sustainability and social justice (Staudenmaier, 2017).

The Nuremberg Resolution of 2007 marked a pivotal moment in articulating the Greens' social policy framework. It combines the concept of an unconditional basic income with a pragmatic, needs-oriented basic provision model. This resolution is a pledge to significantly change the social safety net, with the goal of ensuring that it upholds the dignity and independence of all citizens, especially those who are most in need. The Greens' approach emphasizes the importance of eliminating punitive measures and instead creating a supportive environment that motivates individuals to take personal initiative and engage in society (Prainsack, 2020).

The Green party's recent adoption of a social policy framework that emphasizes dignity, empowerment, and participation ⁶is a sign of their policy agenda maturing to encompass a broader understanding of societal wellbeing. However, this approach poses several challenges. Implementing such a transformative agenda requires significant political support and may face resistance not only from conservative factions but also from centrist elements that view such extensive reforms as financially unsustainable.

⁶ Discuss how the Green Party's policies promote empowerment and participation, emphasizing their approach to social justice and community engagement. Initiatives include promoting self-determination through social policies and creating supportive environments that motivate personal initiative, ensuring individuals can actively contribute to and shape their communities.

While the Greens' focus on social justice and individual dignity ⁷may resonate with their base, it is uncertain whether this appeal is broad enough to attract a wider electorate, particularly those more inclined towards moderate or incremental policy changes. There is uncertainty surrounding some of the Green Party's proposals because they are considered radical or non-moderate by some voters. For example, their plans for wealth redistribution, significant increases in social spending, and comprehensive climate regulations may be seen as economically disruptive or too interventionist by those who prefer more market-driven solutions.

Additionally, while many people support the ideals of social justice and individual dignity, there is contention over the proposed methods to achieve these goals. Policies such as higher taxes on the wealthy, strict environmental regulations affecting industries and jobs, and expansive welfare programs may face resistance from those who fear economic repercussions or disagree with the level of government intervention these measures entail.

Financing an ambitious social policy agenda through higher taxes on the wealthy and capital gains could prove controversial, potentially alienating economically conservative voters who might otherwise support the Greens on environmental grounds.

In conclusion, the Greens' development of a distinct social policy agenda illustrates their evolution from a party focused primarily on environmental issues to one that seeks to address the comprehensive challenges of contemporary society. Green values that balance individual empowerment and collective responsibility towards social justice, aiming to redefine the social contract in Germany practically.

⁷ The Green Party's social policies aim to protect and enhance individual dignity, particularly for marginalized groups. Policies such as the proposed tax-funded basic provision uphold individual dignity and autonomy, avoiding the stigmatization of welfare recipients by ensuring support without coercion.

Chapter 5. The German Green Party Voters

5.1 Voter Demographics and Characteristics

The German Green Party, known as Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, has a diverse voter base. This chapter explores the demographics and characteristics of those who support the Greens in Germany. Green Party voters are often characterized by certain demographic trends. Typically, they are younger, more urban, and more educated than the average voter. Many Green voters reside in larger cities and metropolitan areas, where environmental and progressive policies are more resonant. They also tend to have higher levels of education, with a significant proportion holding university degrees. Additionally, Green voters are often found in higher income brackets, though the party also attracts a substantial number of young people and students. However, older voters and those with lower education levels tend to shift their votes to other parties, like the SPD, even if they initially consider the Greens (Kamphorst&Abou-Chadi, 2023). Understanding the motivations behind voting for the Green Party is crucial for comprehending their electoral success and policy priorities. The primary motivations for German Green Party voters include a strong commitment to environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and sustainable development. These voters prioritize policies that address renewable energy, conservation, and the reduction of carbon emissions. Additionally, Green Party supporters are often motivated by progressive social values, including gender equality, social justice, and human rights. They tend to support policies that promote inclusivity and diversity.

The German Green Party's voter base has evolved from a niche group ⁸of environmental activists and countercultural groups in the 1980s to a broad, mainstream political force. In its early years, the party attracted voters primarily concerned with environmental issues and anti-nuclear activism. Over time, as the party expanded its platform to include a wider range of social and economic issues, it attracted a more diverse electorate. Today, the Greens appeal to a wide spectrum of voters, including urban professionals, young people, and even former supporters of other mainstream parties. The influence of the Green Party's voter base on German politics has grown substantially. German Green Party voters have a significant influence on national policy, particularly in areas related to the environment, energy, and social justice. The growing support for the Greens has pressured other major parties to adopt more environmentally friendly policies and to take stronger stances on climate change. This influence is also evident in coalition governments, where the Greens have been able to push for substantial policy changes in areas like renewable energy, emissions reduction, and public transportation. Additionally, the Greens' strong showing in elections has helped to shape public discourse around sustainability and progressive social policies. The Green Party is often seen as an "issue entrepreneur" that mobilizes voters around specific issues, particularly climate change. In the 2021 election, climate change was a top concern for many voters, which initially placed the Greens in a strong position. Approximately 40% of voters considered voting for the Greens during the campaign due to their focus on climate issues (Kamphorst&Abou-Chadi, 2023).

German Green Party voters share many similarities with Green Party supporters in other countries, particularly in Europe. They are generally well-educated, urban, and

⁸ The German Green Party's voter base has evolved from a niche group of environmental activists and countercultural groups in the 1980s to a broad, mainstream political force.

environmentally conscious. However, there are also notable differences. For instance, the German Greens have a more significant influence on national politics compared to their counterparts in many other countries, partly due to Germany's proportional representation system, which allows for greater representation of smaller parties. Additionally, the specific policy priorities and political context can vary, with German Greens placing a strong emphasis on industrial and economic transformation towards sustainability, reflecting Germany's status as a major industrial nation (Viatkin, 2020).

The Green fraction in the current German Bundestag is the largest ever, with 118 seats. It is also one of the youngest, most diverse and representative fractions, with 58.5% female members, an average age of 42, and 14.4% having a migrant background (Lanfranco, 2021).

As I said The Greens typically perform best among the well-educated in urban areas. However, this makes things difficult for the Bavarian Greens, as Germany's largest state has a lot of rural voters who are traditionally skeptical of the party (Knight, 2023).

Statistical evidence suggests that the Green Party has greater support in West Germany compared to East Germany. Historically, the former West Germany has been more supportive of the Greens due to various socio-economic factors and political attitudes. Additionally, the Green Party has traditionally resonated more with urban, educated, and environmentally conscious voters, demographics that are more prevalent in the western parts of Germany. In contrast, the eastern regions have shown higher support for parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD), reflecting different political priorities and historical experiences. (Eichhorn, 2019).

Incorporating Inglehart's postmaterialist theory helps explain why the Green Party has more supporters in West Germany compared to East Germany. According to Ronald Inglehart's postmaterialist theory, as societies achieve higher levels of economic security and stability, their citizens begin to prioritize non-material values such as environmental protection, social

equality, and quality of life over materialistic concerns like economic growth and physical security. (Inglehart, 1977).

5.2 Regional Support Differences

West Germany, which is more economically developed and has experienced longer periods of stability and prosperity since the post-war era, has shown a greater adoption of postmaterialist values. This economic and social environment offers individuals the security to prioritize issues beyond their immediate material needs, such as environmental sustainability and social justice, which are key components of the Green Party's platform. (Regev, 2020).

On the other hand, East Germany has encountered more economic difficulties and followed a different historical path due to its socialist history and the economic changes after reunification. As a result, its population may still focus more on materialistic issues such as economic security and job stability. This could lead to less support for political parties that promote values related to non-materialistic concerns, such as the Green Party.

The Green Party's struggles in the East are further compounded by the rise of parties like the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has capitalized on material concerns and regional discontent. The Greens' attempts to adapt to the new socio-political landscape in Germany, particularly through their coalition-building efforts and outreach in the East, have yet to fully overcome these regional disparities. Acknowledging these challenges is crucial for understanding the Green Party's electoral dynamics and the broader shifts in the German electorate. This shows both the successes and limitations of the Green Party's strategies in responding to the changing German electorate, particularly the regional challenges posed by the socio-economic divide between East and West Germany.

In conclusion, the demographics of the Green Party's electorate younger, well-educated, urban voters with progressive values strongly influence the party's political behavior and policy priorities. This voter base expects the party to uphold strong commitments to environmental sustainability, social justice, and inclusive governance. For example, the Greens' emphasis on climate policy and renewable energy is directly aligned with the priorities of urban voters who are more likely to view environmental sustainability as critical (Kamphorst&Abou-Chadi, 2023) Additionally, the party's focus on progressive social policies, such as gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights, reflects the values of their well-educated electorate, who tend to prioritize social justice (Sloat, 2020)

However, the challenge lies in balancing these ideals with the practical demands of coalition politics and broader electoral appeal. For instance, in coalition governments, such as the 2021 "traffic light" coalition with the SPD and FDP, the Greens had to compromise on some of their environmental goals, particularly around the issue of nuclear power, to ensure energy security during the war in Ukraine (Oechtering&Campbell, 2023)This balancing act is crucial for maintaining the support of their base while also attracting a more diverse electorate, including more moderate voters who may prioritize economic stability alongside sustainability.

Conclusion

This thesis explores the evolution and ideological shifts of Germany's Green Party, with a focus on how the party has upheld its environmental values amidst the complexities of governance and public opinion. The formation and evolution of the German Green Party are closely tied to major social and environmental changes. The research confirms that the party underwent significant ideological shifts, especially in response to external geopolitical pressures and internal party dynamics.

Through the successful application and comparison of Ronald Inglehart's post-materialist theory and the perspective of Realism in International Relations, this research has deepened our understanding of the Green Party's ideological evolution and organizational dynamics. The study has provided new insights into the relationship between political ideology, practical decision-making, and democratic functionality. The findings revealed that while the Green Party's evolution in Germany aligns with the underlying logic of both theoretical perspectives, the actual pathways of ideological change are complex and multifaceted.

The Green Party's performance in the recent European Parliament elections has raised concerns as they secured fewer votes compared to previous elections. This sheds light on the challenges the party faces in maintaining electoral momentum. Despite their popular platform of environmentalism and social justice, the decrease in votes indicates a potential disconnect between their idealistic values and the practical concerns of voters, especially given broader geopolitical and economic challenges. This outcome suggests that the Green Party must continuously reevaluate its approach to governance and policy messaging if it aims to maintain its influence both within Germany and on the European stage. For example, the party's recent shift from a pacifist stance to supporting arms deliveries to Ukraine highlights the tension between idealistic values and pragmatic governance. This shift indicates that while the party

remains committed to its core environmental and social justice principles, it must also navigate the practical demands of international politics and national security. In essence, the balance between pragmatism and idealism within the German Green Party is shaped by both internal and external factors. The application of Realism in International Relations reveals how external threats and geopolitical realities can incentivize pragmatic policy decisions, even when they conflict with the party's foundational ideals. Conversely, Inglehart's postmaterialist theory helps to explain the party's enduring commitment to progressive values and grassroots participation, despite these pragmatic shifts.

The German Green Party's political effectiveness and policy outcomes depend on the balance between idealism and pragmatism. Initially, the party focused on long-term ecological and social goals guided by postmaterialist values such as environmentalism and pacifism. However, external geopolitical pressures and internal party dynamics forced the party to adjust its stance, particularly in response to the conflict in Ukraine. This adaptation demonstrates the party's pragmatic approach to governance, which sometimes requires compromising on idealistic principles to address immediate political and security challenges.

The dual-theoretical approach has uncovered several important insights. Firstly, the Green Party's ideological shifts in Germany are not simply a response to internal dynamics, but are significantly influenced by external geopolitical factors. Secondly, the party's ability to balance its idealistic values with pragmatic political strategies is crucial for maintaining its relevance and effectiveness in the changing political landscape. Lastly, these ideological shifts demonstrate that the party's commitment to its core principles, while strong, is flexible enough to adapt to changing political realities.

The party's organizational structure emphasizes participatory democracy and rotational leadership, reflecting its values of inclusivity and decentralization. However, this structure also poses challenges in terms of ensuring consistent leadership and making efficient decisions.

Balancing democratic principles with practical governance needs highlights the ongoing tension between idealism and pragmatism within the party.

The research recognizes the challenges of understanding complex political changes. It suggests that future studies should delve into voter attitudes, public opinion, and media influences to better understand the social and political impacts of these shifts.

As the Green Party continues to develop, it's important to acknowledge that political actors significantly influence and sometimes limit democratic processes. The theoretical frameworks of postmaterialism and realism offer a strong way to analyze these dynamics, but also uncover the complexities and contradictions in political evolution.

Given the complexities of the political landscape, it becomes evident that simplistic solutions cannot address the nuanced challenges that the Green Party, and political parties in general, face. While the data reveals possible pathways for balancing ideological commitments with pragmatic governance, the Green Party's performance in the recent European elections highlights ongoing struggles to maintain electoral strength while staying true to its core environmental and social justice goals. The reduced votes for the Greens suggest that while their ideals resonate with certain segments of society, they face increasing competition from both traditional and emerging parties.

As European and global political dynamics continue to shift, the Green Party must refine its strategies to remain relevant. This includes adapting not only to societal changes but also to geopolitical pressures such as climate policies and international relations. It is clear that the party will need to navigate these challenges carefully if it wants to continue influencing European politics. This conclusion emphasizes that while specific recommendations may offer

some guidance, they cannot capture the full complexity of political evolution, which remains unpredictable and contingent on myriad factors.

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