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# The Economic Crisis of the 1930s and the Nazi Vote

The increase of electoral support of the Nazi party during the last years of the Weimar Republic is part of one of the most dramatic instances of the breakdown of a democratic regime involving the democratic process itself. Scholars studying this era do not dispute the fact that economic conditions played a role in this process. What is disputed is *what* role economics played. Competing interpretations range from those which assert that the breakdown resulted from the dissolution of former protective structures in the society to those which find nothing exceptional in the events, explaining them simply as a case in which the electorate punished the governing parties for unsatisfactory performance by voting for the opposition. What this latter view considers exceptional is only the character of the main opposition party, namely the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP or National Socialist German Workers' Party), but not the fact that it gathered so many votes. Between these extremes we find interpretations which identify a lasting change of voting patterns inside the boundaries of existing societal and ideological cleavages. This article confronts the competing interpretations and examines their empirical bases. We do not try to explain why the NSDAP was so successful in exploiting mass frustration at that particular time. Rather, we try to obtain information about the voting potential that it drew upon and in what way it did so. In short, we attempt to describe what happened, not why it happened.

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THEORETICAL APPROACH

*Individual Choice* The hypotheses that we discuss consider *individual* criteria, perceptions, and voting motivations to different degrees. None of them excludes the individual level completely. For instance, although an assertion about eroding class ties may be testable by the exclusive use of aggregate data, it nevertheless contains conjectures about subjective changes in individual situations. The reference to individual situations is even more visible if we talk about the punishment of governing parties or the radicalization of voters. In historical social research, we usually do not have access to survey data. Although our interpretations refer to *individual actions* which have collective consequences, they have been formulated from data on *aggregate behavior*. In stating these interpretations, we have inferred individual behavior from aggregate behavior and individual motivations from visible individual behavior. As long as this method of analysis is taken in explicit steps, it is possible to discuss whether our interpretations are merely speculations or testable hypotheses. Since statements about aggregate behavior can be deduced from statements about individual actions, but not the other way around, it is best to start from a conceptual model of individual voting decisions and to consider what conclusions can be drawn for the aggregate level. Then, by way of exclusion, we can decide what kind of individual actions are *not* compatible with the aggregate data that we possess.

The conceptual model of individual voting that we use is a model of rational choice: we suppose that individual voters define a situation in terms of the political and economic circumstances, the main problems, concepts for solving them, and the positions of different parties with respect to these problems and their solutions. We further suppose that the individual's choice among parties depends on this definition of the situation. If someone decides not to vote or to vote for the same party under all circumstances, that individual represents a borderline case which nevertheless fits easily into our framework. In the first case, the positions of all of the competing parties are "too far" from the individual's position; in the second case, all but one of the parties are "too far" from the individual's position.

In analyzing the movement of voters between parties, we use the following concepts: if the difference between two parties is a matter of principle to a voter, he is not disposed to oscillate

between them, whatever his personal satisfaction with general circumstances. If no principles are at stake in the choice between two parties, the voter feels free to alternate between them according to his general satisfaction. If the voter is confronted with a multiparty system, the number of dimensions and the salience of the dimensions by which he orders the system determine his options. In this sense, the fewer principles the voter's frame of reference contains, the less restricted are his options for rewarding and punishing the political parties. The more principles are involved, the more restricted are his options. The extreme case is the voter who places all parties in a frame of reference where all dimensions are of fundamental importance—he is the true loyal "client." The description of the electorate in these terms is straightforward. If there are no individuals with frames of reference, then movements in any direction will be possible. If individuals have frames of reference, but very personal ones, the picture will be the same at the aggregate level: the electorate can be characterized as disoriented, but not the individuals, as in the first case. If there are groups of individuals who share frames of reference, then there will be some order in the movement between parties, and the electorate can be characterized as structured.

But how can we draw inferences from aggregate data to individual actions? If severe economic depression can be considered a valence issue, then we can start from the assumption that only very few individuals have *economic* reasons to be satisfied with the present government. The aggregate fluctuations (which we interpret as reactions to the economic crisis) then give us hints about the salience of positional differences among parties for the voters. These positional differences may or may not contain economic themes themselves. Figure 1 illustrates this point by showing a system of four parties (A,B,C,D) which differ from each

*Fig. 1.* Party Positions in a Two-Dimensional Issue Space

| | | dimension I | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ia | Ib |
| dimension II | IIa | A | B |
| | IIb | C | D |

other along two positional dimensions (dimension I with the positions Ia and Ib, and dimension II with the positions IIa and IIb).

If we do not find major movements of votes among the parties, then we have to conclude that both dimensions are sufficiently salient for the total electorate to prevent any reactions to the economic crisis, whatever the amount of economic dissatisfaction. If we find fluctuations between A and C, on the one hand, and B and C, on the other, but no fluctuations between A and B or C and D, then positional differences along dimension II do not prevent movement, whereas differences along dimension I do. In this case, we have to consider dimension I as "salient," as a matter of principle, but not dimension II. The reverse is true if we find only "horizontal" but no "vertical" movements. If there are only "diagonal" movements, we have to conclude that for the total electorate positional differences are salient but that the dimensions are not independent from each other, and so on. If we find that movements are random, that there is no structure at all, then the *electorate* cannot be characterized by positional concepts—at least not by the ones used in our classification of party positions. No inference is possible in this last case concerning the presence or absence of frames of reference for *individuals*.

To understand the societal meaning of a party system, it is not sufficient to look at official party positions. It is necessary to find out whether there is some structure in the movement of voters among parties. If no structure can be detected, then there is no societal counterpart to party positions. If structure exists, it may be possible to describe it in terms of official party positions, but not always. The description of movements between parties allows us to draw inferences about the salience of motives in the electorate, and about the way economic strain is mediated politically. If the direction of movement changes over time or if it is changed by the appearance of a new party, we can trace that change in voting criteria. It is possible to tell which dimensions of the positional system are associated with the success or failure of a new contender. In this sense, one can talk of the *reasons* for changes in the party landscape.

Frequently, explanations of voting behavior refer only implicitly to subjective situations and instead use objective properties of individual situations as independent variables. The outstanding

cases are properties of the economic and social structure. This direct explanatory connection between objective properties of situations and voting behavior amounts to the strong assertion of a strict determination of subjective situations by objective situations: It is said that all individuals whose objective situations are identical also perceive those situations as identical and evaluate them by identical standards. Only if this is the case can objective properties of situations safely be used as shortcuts in explaining individual behavior. However, if we find definite connections between voting behavior and certain objective properties of individual situations, we can validly infer that somehow individual perceptions and evaluations are associated with objective situations. Changes in these connections then indicate changes in individual perceptions and/or evaluations, even if we cannot determine the nature of these changes. Therefore, it is legitimate to explain electoral change by objective situational explanations, as long as we keep in mind that these explanations do not tell us what happened at the individual level but only that something must have happened. Some interpretations of the development of voting behavior during the Weimar Republic use explanations of this kind only, whereas others additionally try to reconstruct the development on the level of individual motives and decisions explicitly.

*Electoral Change* Electoral change is described here by three sets of concepts: first, there may be changes in the social basis of the party system; second, changes may be the result of the rise of new issues combined with new patterns of party clientship or they may be the result simply of the perception of new reward/punishment options (without a lasting change in party identification); third, changes may affect only new voters or the whole electorate.

The first set of concepts is used by hypotheses which assert changing social or ideological cleavages. Concerning the rise of new parties, one might discern the following cases: (1) the cleavage structure remains intact, and the new party can be placed inside the existing cleavage structure; (2) for previously existing parties the cleavage structure is unchanged, but the new party manages to compete outside its boundaries; (3) a new cleavage structure develops, and the new party takes its place in this new structure; (4) the cleavages dissolve altogether, and the new party

competes, as do all other parties, for votes from an amorphous electorate.

Up to this point what we have considered is knowledge of the kind one would use in objective situational explanations. If we want to ask questions about the "meaning" of change for the voters, we have to expand the focus of our explanations to the level of subjective situations. In particular, we might ask whether changing party strength at the ballot box should be interpreted as the development of a new stability (the development of new lasting loyalties) or as emerging instability (the development of new reward/punishment options). Those voters of the NSDAP for whom opposition to existing institutions was or became a matter of principle, we call radical NS-voters; voters of the NSDAP for whom the existing institutions did not pose a problem of principle, we call protest NS-voters. Radicalization should appear on the aggregate level in strongly one-sided movements of voters from other parties to the NSDAP; protest should appear in fluctuations in both directions, depending on economic developments and the governmental responsibilities of parties.

The last set of concepts examines the time dimension of electoral change. If changes affect only the social basis of a party, not its voters, that is, if former non-voters or new voters are the source of change, we call the process "mobilization" (in the case of former non-voters) or "erosion" (in the case of new voters). In addition, if previous voters change their behavior, the process is called "dissolution." Dissolution and mobilization indicate immediate change, whereas erosion indicates a gradual process. In the case of erosion, much smaller changes in electoral outcomes are significant with respect to the prospects of the party system than in the case of dissolution or mobilization. Although the distinction between mobilization and erosion is theoretically meaningful, we—because of the nature of our data—consider only the case of dissolution and a combined case of mobilization and erosion.

## LEADING INTERPRETATIONS OF ELECTORAL CHANGE

*Overview* The following hypotheses provide the bases for the leading interpretations of the electoral changes that took place during the Weimar years.

Mass hypotheses: According to writers such as Arendt, Bendix, and Kornhauser, the NSDAP was a *mass* movement that was made possible by the dissolution of former binding ties and separating cleavages. In this view, the economic crisis simply activated what had already occurred on a deeper level. The social structure which formed subjective situations had lost its power; a mass society with growing political lability had taken its place; it was a time for "movements" instead of parties. Among advocates of these hypotheses, some stress the phenomenon of general disorientation; others stress the "politicization of the unpolitical." The first version is referred to here as the dissolution version, the second as the mobilization/erosion version.[1]

Realignment hypothesis: Meckstroth puts forward a realignment interpretation of the development. He defines realignment as persistent changes in voting behavior. According to him, the critical elections took place between 1928 and 1932. His interest centers less on the fact of realignment than on its causes. The explanation he favors is a "valence issue model": the change was brought about not by positional rearrangements but by a dominating valence issue, the economic crisis. What started out as punishment behavior was transformed by the persistence of the crisis into new patterns of behavior.[2]

Class hypotheses: According to Burnham, Shively, Geiger, and Lipset, the NSDAP was a class-based party. The different interpretations all agree that the NSDAP vote came

1 For a general discussion, see Loren K. Waldman, "Models of Mass Movements. The Case of the Nazis," unpub. Ph.D. diss. (Univ. of Chicago, 1973). For the mass hypothesis, see Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1951); Reinhard Bendix, "Social Stratification and Political Power," *American Political Science Review*, XLVI (1952), 357–375; William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (London, 1959). For "dissolution," see *ibid.*, 102–113; for "mobilization/erosion," see *ibid.*, 177–182; Bendix, "Social Stratification," 371. For a discussion of the mass hypotheses, see also Bernt Hagtvet, "The Theory of Mass Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic: A Re-examination," in Stein U. Larsen, et al. (eds.), *Who Were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism* (Bergen, 1980), 66–117; Falter, "Radicalization of the Middle Classes or Mobilization of the Unpolitical? The Theories of Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix on the Electoral Support of the NSDAP in the Light of Recent Research," *Social Science Information*, II (1981), 389–430.

2 The term "critical election" was introduced by Vladimir O. Key in "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics*, XVII (1955), 3–18. See Theodore W. Meckstroth, "Conditions of Partisan Realignments: A Study of Electoral Change," unpub. Ph.D. diss. (Univ. of Minnesota, 1971).

predominantly from the Protestant middle class. Shively and Geiger interpret the success of the NSDAP as an unstable phenomenon: the crisis made the NSDAP attractive for middle-class voters, but in better times they might well have returned to their former parties (this interpretation is referred to here as "middle-class-protest"). Both Burnham and Lipset present variants of what in our terminology are radicalization hypotheses. In Burnham's view, the Protestant middle class lacked the stable patterns of party identification that existed for the Catholic and the working-class segments of the population. Economic stress helped the NSDAP to establish itself as *the* middle-class party as had the Zentrum/Bayerische Volkspartei (Zentrum/BVP or Catholic Center Party/Bavarian People's Party) for the Catholics and the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD or German Social Democratic Party) or the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD or German Communist Party) for the workers (referred to as "middle-class-formation"). For Lipset, the NSDAP's success was the consequence of the radicalization of an already existing middle-class ideology (referred to as "middle-class-ideological-radicalization").[3]

Mixed-causes hypothesis: Our own interpretation, in contrast to the previous hypotheses, explicitly takes into account the possibility that the movement of voters to the NSDAP might have been the consequence of different "subjective situations" in different sectors of the society. We have labeled this interpretation as "middle-class radicalization plus working-class protest": there was a stable transfer of middle-class voters toward the NSDAP, whereas the working class cast its ballots for the NSDAP largely as a protest.[4]

*Reconstruction* The aspects of change introduced in the previous section can be reformulated with respect to the NSDAP as follows:

3 See Walter D. Burnham, "Political Immunization and Political Confessionalism. The United States and Weimar Germany," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, III (1972), 1–30; Theodor Geiger, "Panik im Mittelstand," *Die Arbeit*, VIII (1930), 619–635; Seymour M. Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, 1960); W. Phillips Shively, "Party Identification, Party Choice and Voting Stability. The Weimar Case," *American Political Science Review*, LXVI (1972), 1203–1225.

4 See Falter, "Unemployment and the Radicalization of the German Electorate, 1928–1933," in Peter Stachura (ed.), *Unemployment in Germany, 1919–1945* (London, 1986), 187–209; *idem* and Dirk Hänisch, "Die Anfälligkeit von Arbeitern gegenüber der NSDAP 1928–1933," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, XVI (1986), 177–216.

(1) The possible correspondence of the party system and especially the NSDAP with properties of the social structure can present itself in four different ways: (a) there are no connections for the NSDAP and connections for established parties are vanishing, (b) connections persist for all of the other parties, but are irrelevant for the NSDAP; (c) connections persist and are partly relevant for the NSDAP; (d) connections persist and are as relevant for the NSDAP as for any other party: the NSDAP can be placed perfectly in the old cleavage structure.

(2) Movements toward the NSDAP can be restricted to former non-voters and new voters, or they can also include those who voted before.

(3) Movements of voters between the NSDAP and other parties or the group of former non-voters and new voters can be one-sided (only toward the NSDAP) or two-sided (also back to the other parties and non-voters), or one-sided for some parties and two-sided for other parties.

This reformulation results in a 4 × 2 × 3 matrix of possible combinations. If, for the sake of simplicity, we put the dimension of dissolution vs. erosion/mobilization inside the cells of the multidimensional classification, we get a scheme as depicted in Figure 2. Cell 1a would be consistent with the following hypoth-

*Fig. 2.* Dimensions of Change

| Relevance of Social Structure for Party Vote | Direction of Movement: one-sided | two-sided | mixed |
|---|---|---|---|
| generally vanishing | 1a b | 2a b | 3a b |
| absent only for NSDAP | 4a b | 5a b | 6a b |
| partly valid also for NS | 7a b | 8a b | 9a b |
| valid for NS as for other parties | 10a b | 11a b | 12a b |

a = all voters
b = only former non-voters/new voters

esis. The growth of the Nazi party was the product of a complete and immediate dissolution of all cleavage lines, and it was a radicalization process. In contrast, cell 12a would tell the following story. The growth of the NSDAP took place inside the boundaries of the existing cleavage structure; it was restricted to one segment of this structure; in this segment it attracted former voters as well as former non-voters/new voters; and the former voters of some parties were radicalized, whereas the former voters of some other parties voiced protest only temporarily by voting for the NSDAP.

Instead of commenting at length on all of the other possible cases, we analyze how the four hypotheses discussed previously fit in this classification system.

Mass hypotheses: All developments in the first two rows of the classification are consistent with mass hypotheses in general. Cases in the first row would be extreme variants of these hypotheses, which are not put forward in the literature on the Weimar Republic; therefore cells 4, 5, and 6 remain to be considered. Directions of movement are not explicitly asserted, but since the non-programmatic character of "movements" is frequently stressed, one would expect "protest" rather than "radicalization," that is, movements to and from the Nazi party, depending on general satisfaction. Both versions of the hypothesis, its dissolution version ("general trend of mass society") and its mobilization version ("politicization of the unpolitical") then would have to be placed in cells 5a and 5b respectively.

Realignment hypothesis: The realignment hypothesis, as Meckstroth puts it, does not fit well into our scheme. First, since Meckstroth defines realignment mainly with respect to party strength, not with respect to cleavages, the dimension "social basis" is not relevant to his hypothesis. Also, the dimension "direction of movement" is not helpful: since the valence issue of world economic crisis first brought about instability and then, through habitualization, new stability, it is not the direction, but the strength of the movement which counts. There should be markedly higher electoral volatility between 1928 and 1932 than before and after this period.[5]

5 At best, one might exclude the fourth row, since Meckstroth also states that voter movements after 1928 transcended traditional divisions ("Partisan Realignments," 192).

Class hypotheses: These hypotheses are consistent with the fourth row of the classification. Middle-class-protest conforms with cell 11: the growth of the NSDAP should be accompanied by lasting volatility of voters. According to Geiger, the mobilization version of middle-class-protest (11b) is more likely to be true than the dissolution version (11a). Middle-class-formation and middle-class-ideological-radicalization are both consistent with cell 10a of the classification system. Radicalization in Lipset's terms denotes an ideological process which affects the liberal segments of the middle class to a greater degree than it does the conservative segments. In contrast, Burnham does not imply any ideological roots of the movement. Therefore, middle-class-ideological-radicalization should appear in consistently stronger movements from Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP or German People's Party) and Deutsche Demokratische Partei (DDP or German Democratic Party) and to the NSDAP than from the Deutschnationale Volkspartei (DNVP or German National People's Party), whereas "middle-class-formation" should reveal no such differences.

Mixed-causes hypotheses: The variant of conceivable mixed-causes hypotheses which is addressed here is consistent with cell 9a of the classification: the cleavage structure is relevant for the NSDAP insofar as it draws its vote mainly, but not exclusively, from the Protestant middle class; there is also a strong influx of working-class votes. Votes from the old middle-class parties remain with the NSDAP; votes from SPD and KPD fluctuate, depending on general economic conditions. The protestant middle class voted NS because of its ideology; workers voted NS in spite of its ideology.

*Operational definitions* At this junction we have to discuss what the data have to look like to be able to corroborate or refute the hypotheses mentioned. On the one hand, data on the social bases of parties and their change are needed; on the other hand, we need data on the fluctuations of voters between parties.

*The social basis of parties and the place of the NSDAP* For every election a cross tabulation of parties vs. societal segments is needed. The entry in cell (i,j) of these tables gives the percentage of the voters in segment i which voted for party j in the election under consideration. To make the following distinctions easier to understand we will work with a numerical example. The situation

in the first election may have the properties illustrated in Figure 3. If what happened was a complete vanishing of the existing cleavage structure, then the variance of the entries in each column has to decrease from election to election until finally all of the entries in a given column have the same value. In the final election under study the picture would have to look like Figure 4a. In this example, 15 percent of the total population voted for party 1 and class segment was irrelevant. If the cleavage structure was irrelevant for the NSDAP only, but remained intact as far as other

*Fig. 3.* First Election

| | | party | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | NS |
| societal segment | 1 | 80 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| | 2 | 20 | 80 | 0 | 0 |
| | 3 | 0 | 10 | 80 | 10 |

*Fig. 4.* Electoral Change

4a: Complete Destruction of Ties

| | party | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | NS |
| segment 1 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 40 |
| segment 2 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 40 |
| segment 3 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 40 |

4b: Partial Destruction of Ties

| | party | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | NS |
| segment 1 | 50 | 10 | 0 | 40 |
| segment 2 | 10 | 50 | 0 | 40 |
| segment 3 | 0 | 10 | 50 | 40 |

4c: Partial Relevance for NSDAP

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | NS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| segment 1 | 70 | 10 | 0 | 20 |
| segment 2 | 10 | 60 | 0 | 30 |
| segment 3 | 0 | 0 | 50 | 50 |

4d: NSDAP Can Be Placed Perfectly

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | NS |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| segment 1 | 80 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| segment 2 | 15 | 80 | 0 | 5 |
| segment 3 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 70 |

parties are concerned, the variance in each column except that headed by the NSDAP would be marked as is shown in Figure 4b. A case of partial relevance of the cleavage system for the NSDAP would show some variance also for the NSDAP, but definitely less than for other parties as shown by Figure 4c. Finally, the NSDAP fits perfectly into the existing cleavage structure if it, like the other parties, is definitely confined to one segment of the structure (see Figure 4d).

*Fluctuations between parties* For every pair of consecutive elections a cross tabulation of parties at time t1 vs. parties at time t2 is needed. The raw data consist of tables in which cell (i,j) gives the number of voters who switched their vote from party i to party j between the elections. If we build percentages on the basis of the electorate in toto, cell (i,j) gives the same information as the raw data: it informs us about the *strength* of the flows among the parties. If we have three parties, 1, 2, and 3, with 50, 40, and 10 percent of the vote at time t1 and 51, 33, and 16 percent of the vote at time t2, the table for these elections might look as shown in Figure 5a. If we build row percentages, cell (i,j) gives information on the *disposition* of the voters of i at time t1 to switch their vote to party j in the next election.

In our example, the figure would have to look like Figure 5b. These two ways of presenting the data reveal different properties of movement. For instance, to call the NSDAP the "party of the unpolitical," as is done in the mobilization/erosion version of our hypotheses, could mean that the disposition of the unpolitical to vote for the NSDAP was stronger than this disposition of any other group of voters. It could also mean that the flow of

*Fig. 5.* Percentages

5a: Total Percentages

| | | t2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| t1 | 1 | 40 | 5 | 5 |
| | 2 | 8 | 28 | 4 |
| | 3 | 3 | 0 | 7 |

5b: Row Percentages

| | | t2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| t1 | 1 | 80 | 10 | 10 |
| | 2 | 20 | 70 | 10 |
| | 3 | 30 | 0 | 70 |

votes from former nonvoters to the NSDAP was greater than this flow from any other party. If, in our numerical example, party 1 is the NSDAP and "party" 3 is the nonvoters, then the first meaning of the hypothesis is consistent with the data—because 3,1 (30 percent) is greater than 2,1 (20 percent)—but not the second—because 3,1 (3 percent) is smaller than 2,1 (8 percent). Similarly differences arise concerning the question of whether movements are one-sided or two-sided. In our illustration, the disposition 3,1 is clearly greater than the reverse disposition 1,3—30 percent compared to 10 percent. This shift from party 3 to party 1 looks rather one-sided. If we compare the strength of flow, we see that 3,1 contains only 3 percent of the vote whereas 1,3 contains 5 percent and that there is actually a net flow of votes from 1 to 3.

We must be precise in our operational definitions of what is meant by movements between parties. Since the hypotheses discussed seek to explain the development of the NSDAP from its beginnings to the end of the Weimar Republic, we have to use information on the strength of fluctuations and the disposition of groups not for isolated pairs of elections but for the whole sequence. The operational definitions for our analysis are as follows:

Mobilization/erosion vs. dissolution
*Extreme mobilization.* Former nonvoters are the majority of NS-voters for most elections.
*Moderate mobilization.* Former nonvoters are the greatest single group of NS-voters; their disposition to vote NS is stronger than that of any other group for most elections.
*Weak mobilization.* Former nonvoters either have the highest disposition to vote NS or are the largest single group for most elections, but not both.
*Dissolution.* Former nonvoters are neither the largest nor the most strongly disposed group of voters with respect to the NSDAP.

Radicalization vs. Protest. (Only the two extremes are described here.)
*Radicalization.* The former voters of a party i are radicalized with respect to the NSDAP if

party i grows smaller from election to election;
the loyalty of its voters as measured by (i,i) is low and diminishing;

the disposition (i,NS) is rising and reaches a high rank in comparison with the disposition to switch to third parties or to stay with i;
this rise is not balanced by an equal reduction of the disposition to vote for other radical parties such as the NSDAP (KPD, DNVP), except i is classified as a radical party itself;
the disposition (i,NS) is higher than the disposition (NS,i), except for a last stage in which the vote for i comes only from a few true believers and those who fluctuate randomly between i and the NSDAP.

*Protest.* The former voters of i shifted to the NSDAP mainly for protest if:

the share of the vote of party i is relatively stable;
the loyalty of its voters is high and stable;
the disposition (i,NS) is moderate but substantial; it may rank high in comparison to the dispositions to switch to third parties, but
the combined dispositions to switch to radical parties (NSDAP, KPD, DNVP) do not grow;
disposition (i,NS) is not generally higher than disposition (NS,i).

If a party is stable and has loyal followers, and the dispositions of its followers to switch to the NSDAP are low and symmetric, then neither radicalization nor protest has happened in respect to the NSDAP—the voters of this party are simply not affected by the existence of the NSDAP.

## DATE BASE AND STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

*Date base for our analysis* Our empirical analysis is based on two data sets. The first was originally derived from the ICPSR Weimar Election File. The second data set, containing fewer variables but a greater number of cases, carries information on the 4,000 to 5,000 communities of the Reich with more than 2,000 inhabitants. It contains about 200 variables, mainly electoral data for all Reichstag elections between 1920 and 1933, with the unfortunate exception of the two 1932 elections and some valuable social, economic, and sociocultural information on the community level.[6]

6 Since the ICPSR Weimar Election File data set contains virtually thousands of minor and major errors, we had to reconstruct our own county data set from scratch. For this purpose we used the relevant volumes of *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches* (Berlin, 1920–1934)

Both data sets, as is the case with the ICPSR file, can be used for analytical purposes only *if one adjusts the units for boundary changes*, which occurred in Weimar Germany with considerable frequency. Since these boundary changes did not follow a random pattern but took place mainly in the more urbanized and economically active regions of the Reich, serious distortions result if one does not neutralize their effect when creating county or community units which are stable over time. This restriction is often overlooked or treated in a rather cavalier fashion in the existing literature on the Nazi vote.[7] But, without such adjustments, it is not advisable to combine census and election data from different years. When we made the necessary adjustments, the number of cases in our county data set shrank by over 25 percent, from about 1,200 to 865. The problems created by boundary changes are even more serious for community data files if one does not restrict the adjustment procedure to pairs of elections.[8]

*Research techniques* All four of the hypotheses examined in this article imply individual-level relations. This kind of information is not available for the Weimar period. The only data existing are aggregate data. As a result, we must rely on percentages of parties or social indicators which are available only on a county or community level. Using this information, we are able to specify, for example, that the NSDAP fared much better between 1930 and 1933 in Protestant than in Catholic counties, that there is a negative correlation between unemployment figures and the Nazi share of the vote, and that there is a strong associ-

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plus a multitude of other printed sources, such as unemployment statistics, fiscal reports, and so forth. The county data set now contains about 650 variables, among them some 200–300 containing information on all Weimar Reichstag and presidential elections plus the two referenda on the expropriation of the former ruling princes ("Fürstenenteignung") and on the Young Plan concerning the payment of reparations. The rest of the variables are social, economic, and cultural indicators of the 1,200 counties of the Weimar Republic. The second data set is distributed by Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung, Bachemer Strasse 40, 5 Köln 40, Federal Republic of Germany.

7 Some examples are discussed in Falter and Wolf D. Gruner, "Minor and Major Flaws of a Widely Used Data Set: The ICPSR 'German Weimar Republik Data 1919–1933' Under Scrutiny," *Historical Social Research*, 20 (1981), 4–26.

8 For this reason the ecological regression analysis reported in Table 4 is based on such pairs of elections. The community data set, which in its raw form contains about 6,000 communities (all communities with 2,000 inhabitants and more plus the county-based means for all communities with less than 2,000 inhabitants), is thus reduced to about 4,000 community units.

ation between the losses of the middle-class parties and the national-socialist vote gains. What we would like to know, however, is information such as the percentage of Catholics and non-Catholics voting NSDAP in 1930 and the share of unemployed blue-collar workers voting for Adolf Hitler between 1928 and 1933. The most common yet seldom applied statistical technique to infer individual-level data from aggregate data is ecological regression analysis.[9]

Our analysis, as far as the individual level is concerned, was based on this technique. Unfortunately, ecological regression analysis works only if some rather strong statistical assumptions are met by the data. Some of these assumptions (the standard assumptions of regression analysis such as linearity) can be tested by means of aggregate data. Other assumptions, including those which permit inference from aggregate to individual level relations, cannot be tested by aggregate data alone or can be tested only under very special circumstances. The most important of these special assumptions of ecological regression analysis is that the slope of the regression line of each pair of variables under consideration is the same between the individual units as it is between the aggregate units; that is, no systematic contextual effects are permitted. Only random variation around the regression line is acceptable. From empirical evidence, we know that the assumption of noncontextuality is unrealistic in many instances. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to control our regression equation for potentially disturbing factors such as confession or urbanization. We thus might be able to neutralize, at least in part, unwelcome nonlinearities. Our findings are based on such an extension of the classic ecological regression technique. Furthermore, we weighted each county unit by its population or number of eligible voters in order to control for extreme variations in population figures. Finally, we applied a proportional fitting procedure to any negative estimators that arise since negative percentages do not exist in reality.[10] There is, however, no guarantee

9 See Jan-Bernd Lohmöller and Falter, "Some Further Aspects of Ecological Regression Analysis," *Quality and Quantity*, XX (1986), 109–125.

10 Although the transition probabilities for the elections between 1920 and 1928 were calculated on the basis of our *Weimar Community Data Set* without the use of control variables, the 1928 to 1933 transition probabilities as well as the voting propensities of the two confessions and the different social strata were calculated on the basis of the 865

for a total elimination of bias from our findings. Our statistical approach is rational in that it is based on an explicit statistical model and not simply on hindsight or the straightforward inference from simple bivariate ecological correlations or the aggregate-level regressions to individual-level relations that appears so often in research on the Nazi electorate.[11]

FINDINGS

*The social basis of the NSDAP* The realignment hypothesis is not discussed here since Meckstroth defines realignment mainly in respect to interparty fluctuations and not social cleavages. Concerning the other hypotheses, we find the following evidence (see tables 1, 2, and 3). In their "dissolution" version, the mass hypotheses assert that there will be at least a reduction of the inner social variance of the NSDAP between 1928 and 1933 ("social cleavages are irrelevant for all parties" or "social cleavages are irrelevant for the NSDAP only"). Both on an aggregate and on an (inferred) individual level, it can be shown that neither the moderate nor the strong version of the mass hypotheses is covered by our data. Neither the NSDAP nor the other parties became socially less distinct over time. Although the social basis of the other parties changed little between 1928 and 1933, the NSDAP became relatively less "white collar" and slightly more "self-employed" than it had been up to 1930. This change implies that the social structure was, in our terms, at least partially relevant for the NSDAP vote and that the trend went in the wrong direction.

The other two hypotheses are consistent with our data to a much higher degree. Since all three sub-types of the middle-class

county units of our *Weimar Republic County Data Set* according to an extension of the "classic" model of ecological regression analysis using urbanization and religious denomination as control variables in order to neutralize possible contextual effects. For details, see Lohmöller et al., "Unemployment and the Rise of National Socialism: Contradicting Results from Different Regional Aggregations," in Peter Nijkamp (ed.), *Measuring the Unmeasurable* (Boston, 1985), 357–370. Negative estimators or values above 100 were squeezed into the 0–100% interval by an iterative proportional fitting procedure.

11 For those feeling uncomfortable with the method, some aggregate correlations are reported in Falter and Hänisch, "Anfälligkeit"; Falter, "The National-Socialist Mobilization of New Voters," in Thomas Childers (ed.), *The Formation of the Nazi Constituency, 1919–1933* (London, 1986), 202–231; Falter, "Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Franken bei den Reichstagswahlen 1924–1933," *German Studies Review*, IX (1986), 293–318.

hypothesis assert that the NSDAP vote came primarily from the Protestant middle class, we analyzed the denominational and the class basis of the NSDAP. It should be significantly stronger among non-Catholics than among Catholics, among the middle-class electorate than among the blue-collar workers, and among Protestant in comparison to Catholic middle-class voters. Furthermore, there should be no significant differences between Catholic and non-Catholic blue-collar workers.

These expectations are met by our data with two notable exceptions: non-Catholic blue-collar workers displayed a stronger affinity toward the NSDAP than their Catholic counterparts; and Catholic white-collar workers and civil servants voted NSDAP somewhat more frequently than non-Catholic members of the salaried middle classes (see Tables 1 and 2). Furthermore, the difference between the affinity of white- and blue-collar workers for the NSDAP is smaller than might be expected. It is the self-employed, not the salaried, Protestant middle classes who showed a strong and disproportionally increasing sympathy for the Hitler movement. In other words, the middle-class hypotheses face some unexpected anomalies in light of our data—anomalies which they do not consider implicitly or explicitly. In order to increase their explanatory power, these hypotheses must be reformulated. They should not only be able to account for the interactions between social class and confession (something the radicalization and the protest hypotheses were unable to do), but they should also be able to give reasons for the striking differences in NSDAP affinity between the self-employed and the salaried middle classes of the non-Catholic majority of the Weimar electorate.

The anomalies of the middle-class hypothesis in respect to the vote of Protestant workers constitute evidence in favor of the mixed-causes hypothesis, which can be reconciled with a weak version of the middle-class hypothesis: There is clear evidence that the Hitler movement drew its vote mainly, but not exclusively, from the Protestant middle class, and that there was also a strong influx of working-class votes. What remains to be tested is whether any difference can be found between the character of the Nazi vote coming from the middle class and the character of the Nazi vote coming from the working class. The question of ideological radicalization, formation, and protest is addressed after

*Table 1* Voting Disposition of the Social Classes in Weimar Germany, 1920–1933 (Row Percentages)

| | | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | DNVP | LIB | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1920 | SELFEMPL | 1.1 | 7.8 | 27.8 | 16.3 | 19.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 27.9 |
| | WH COL | 1.7 | 21.6 | 7.4 | 9.0 | 29.6 | 5.4 | 0.2 | 25.1 |
| | BLU COL | 2.1 | 20.9 | 12.2 | 9.6 | 11.0 | 28.3 | 0.2 | 15.7 |
| 1924a | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 6.5 | 27.0 | 18.3 | 11.6 | 4.6 | 5.5 | 26.6 |
| | WH COL | 4.7 | 15.9 | 8.9 | 13.7 | 17.7 | 5.6 | 7.0 | 26.5 |
| | BLU COL | 18.6 | 21.3 | 9.4 | 13.2 | 7.5 | 6.4 | 3.8 | 19.8 |
| 1924b | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 4.6 | 30.9 | 19.6 | 13.9 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 25.4 |
| | WH COL | 3.1 | 21.8 | 8.2 | 15.2 | 20.0 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 26.2 |
| | BLU COL | 13.2 | 29.4 | 9.9 | 13.5 | 8.2 | 5.6 | 1.8 | 18.5 |
| 1928 | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 6.7 | 17.3 | 13.3 | 10.5 | 14.7 | 2.4 | 35.1 |
| | WH COL | 5.2 | 24.0 | 7.9 | 9.9 | 17.0 | 5.5 | 2.3 | 28.2 |
| | BLU COL | 13.9 | 31.1 | 10.1 | 9.1 | 6.3 | 10.0 | 1.5 | 17.8 |
| 1930 | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 8.0 | 19.9 | 6.1 | 7.1 | 16.2 | 18.1 | 24.6 |
| | WH COL | 6.0 | 23.5 | 8.9 | 6.6 | 12.2 | 6.0 | 16.0 | 20.8 |
| | BLU COL | 19.5 | 25.7 | 9.6 | 5.1 | 3.7 | 10.7 | 12.0 | 13.8 |
| 1932a | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 6.6 | 20.4 | 5.5 | 1.9 | 3.0 | 41.7 | 20.9 |
| | WH COL | 5.8 | 24.4 | 10.0 | 6.4 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 29.1 | 19.1 |
| | BLU COL | 22.5 | 22.2 | 10.8 | 3.8 | 1.3 | 2.3 | 24.5 | 12.6 |
| 1932b | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 6.5 | 18.7 | 7.9 | 2.4 | 3.5 | 35.8 | 25.1 |
| | WH COL | 7.5 | 21.6 | 9.1 | 9.4 | 3.5 | 2.7 | 24.6 | 21.4 |
| | BLU COL | 24.7 | 19.9 | 10.0 | 4.4 | 1.4 | 2.4 | 20.9 | 16.2 |
| 1933 | SELFEMPL | 0.0 | 5.4 | 17.9 | 7.5 | 1.7 | 1.8 | 53.1 | 12.6 |
| | WH COL | 6.2 | 20.9 | 9.7 | 9.4 | 2.7 | 1.7 | 34.5 | 14.8 |
| | BLU COL | 19.7 | 20.4 | 10.9 | 5.5 | 1.2 | 1.1 | 31.1 | 10.2 |

LIB = DDP and DVP voters combined.

Percentages were computed by means of multiple regression analysis; urbanization and religous denomination were controlled for the county data set.

our discussion of whether dissolution or mobilization was the predominant feature of the process.

*Mobilization or dissolution?* Although the mass hypotheses were rejected above in their general version, they could still be true in a mobilization version. If the nonvoters (the "unpolitical") were concentrated in one segment of society, the general mobilization of nonvoters would lead to a predominance of this segment in the NS vote even if *all* former nonvoters had the same strong disposition to vote NS. If we take a look at our data, neither this version of the mass hypotheses nor the mobilization

*Table 2* Voting Disposition of the Social Strata by Confession (Row Percentages)

| | | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | DNVP | LIB | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1920 | CATHIND | 1.6 | 9.1 | 45.9 | 7.0 | 11.1 | 7.9 | 0.2 | 17.4 |
| | CATHWCOL | 2.2 | 18.5 | 16.4 | 11.2 | 20.6 | 9.3 | 0.2 | 21.5 |
| | CATHBCOL | 1.9 | 11.0 | 24.2 | 7.6 | 9.1 | 15.3 | 0.2 | 30.7 |
| | OTHIND | 1.2 | 9.9 | 11.6 | 19.7 | 23.0 | 0.0 | 0.2 | 34.5 |
| | OTHWCOL | 1.5 | 19.5 | 8.2 | 8.8 | 27.9 | 6.6 | 0.2 | 27.4 |
| | OTHBCOL | 2.0 | 25.0 | 8.3 | 11.6 | 14.8 | 29.7 | 0.1 | 8.5 |
| 1924a | CATHIND | 2.5 | 8.1 | 48.0 | 4.9 | 8.3 | 4.8 | 4.3 | 19.2 |
| | CATHWCOL | 5.8 | 12.6 | 10.8 | 12.6 | 11.1 | 5.1 | 8.8 | 33.1 |
| | CATHBCOL | 15.9 | 8.3 | 20.9 | 11.7 | 6.9 | 7.0 | 3.2 | 26.1 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 5.7 | 11.9 | 26.6 | 13.0 | 4.6 | 6.1 | 32.2 |
| | OTHWCOL | 5.1 | 16.5 | 11.2 | 13.9 | 20.1 | 6.2 | 5.2 | 21.8 |
| | OTHBCOL | 18.5 | 27.2 | 4.6 | 13.8 | 8.3 | 5.9 | 4.5 | 17.2 |
| 1924b | CATHIND | 3.7 | 8.4 | 51.2 | 5.2 | 8.9 | 4.1 | 2.3 | 16.1 |
| | CATHWCOL | 5.3 | 17.3 | 10.5 | 15.9 | 12.3 | 4.3 | 3.6 | 30.7 |
| | CATHBCOL | 8.7 | 11.2 | 25.1 | 11.7 | 8.9 | 5.6 | 2.1 | 26.6 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 5.0 | 14.3 | 27.6 | 16.2 | 2.4 | 2.8 | 31.8 |
| | OTHWCOL | 3.3 | 21.4 | 12.1 | 14.1 | 21.6 | 2.8 | 2.2 | 22.5 |
| | OTHBCOL | 13.3 | 36.8 | 3.8 | 14.9 | 9.0 | 5.1 | 1.9 | 15.2 |
| 1928 | CATHIND | 5.1 | 10.5 | 30.3 | 6.6 | 8.7 | 12.9 | 2.2 | 23.8 |
| | CATHWCOL | 5.9 | 17.7 | 11.6 | 10.9 | 10.6 | 8.1 | 3.0 | 32.2 |
| | CATHBCOL | 9.0 | 16.3 | 17.8 | 10.4 | 8.7 | 9.7 | 1.9 | 26.3 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 8.3 | 6.7 | 16.7 | 11.3 | 13.6 | 2.4 | 41.0 |
| | OTHWCOL | 5.8 | 24.9 | 9.1 | 9.6 | 17.7 | 6.5 | 1.7 | 24.6 |
| | OTHBCOL | 13.8 | 36.1 | 7.3 | 8.8 | 6.3 | 10.6 | 1.6 | 15.4 |
| 1930 | CATHIND | 5.4 | 10.2 | 35.4 | 4.1 | 6.4 | 11.8 | 9.0 | 17.5 |
| | CATHWCOL | 7.0 | 17.7 | 12.6 | 6.1 | 7.6 | 9.8 | 19.2 | 20.0 |
| | CATHBCOL | 14.2 | 12.7 | 17.0 | 6.8 | 6.2 | 10.7 | 11.1 | 21.4 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 9.1 | 6.9 | 7.5 | 7.3 | 17.3 | 23.4 | 28.5 |
| | OTHWCOL | 7.2 | 24.0 | 10.1 | 6.7 | 12.8 | 5.8 | 12.4 | 21.1 |
| | OTHBCOL | 19.1 | 30.7 | 7.5 | 4.2 | 3.3 | 11.6 | 13.4 | 10.7 |
| 1932a | CATHIND | 6.0 | 10.1 | 39.0 | 4.4 | 2.1 | 3.1 | 16.6 | 18.7 |
| | CATHWCOL | 7.6 | 15.7 | 13.2 | 5.8 | 2.4 | 3.2 | 31.3 | 20.8 |
| | CATHBCOL | 17.8 | 13.7 | 21.4 | 5.7 | 1.9 | 3.1 | 19.3 | 17.1 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 7.1 | 6.4 | 6.0 | 1.7 | 2.8 | 54.8 | 21.2 |
| | OTHWCOL | 7.0 | 26.8 | 11.3 | 6.4 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 26.1 | 17.5 |
| | OTHBCOL | 21.5 | 25.0 | 6.8 | 3.1 | 1.1 | 2.0 | 28.9 | 11.6 |
| 1932b | CATHIND | 7.5 | 9.7 | 34.0 | 5.7 | 2.5 | 3.3 | 15.2 | 22.0 |
| | CATHWCOL | 8.7 | 14.0 | 12.5 | 7.6 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 25.8 | 25.3 |
| | CATHBCOL | 17.7 | 12.9 | 19.1 | 6.9 | 2.3 | 3.2 | 17.7 | 20.2 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 7.5 | 6.5 | 8.8 | 2.3 | 3.2 | 45.9 | 25.9 |
| | OTHWCOL | 9.2 | 23.5 | 10.5 | 9.5 | 3.3 | 2.7 | 22.9 | 18.4 |
| | OTHBCOL | 24.0 | 22.0 | 6.7 | 4.0 | 1.3 | 2.2 | 24.1 | 15.8 |

*Table 2* (Continued)

| | | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | DNVP | LIB | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1933 | CATHIND | 6.9 | 10.0 | 33.1 | 6.2 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 27.0 | 13.1 |
| | CATHWCOL | 8.0 | 14.1 | 12.7 | 8.0 | 2.2 | 1.9 | 38.9 | 14.2 |
| | CATHBCOL | 13.1 | 12.9 | 21.5 | 7.5 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 27.6 | 13.9 |
| | OTHIND | 0.0 | 5.9 | 6.4 | 8.0 | 1.5 | 1.6 | 64.7 | 12.0 |
| | OTHWCOL | 7.3 | 22.5 | 11.2 | 9.5 | 2.5 | 1.6 | 30.8 | 14.6 |
| | OTHBCOL | 19.3 | 22.4 | 6.5 | 5.0 | 1.1 | 0.9 | 35.8 | 9.0 |

LIB = DDP and DVP voters combined.
CATHIND = Catholic Independents
CATHWCOL = Catholic White Collar
CATHBCOL = Catholic Blue Collar
OTHIND = Non-Catholic Independents
OTHWCOL = Non-Catholic White Collar
OTHBCOL = Non-Catholic Blue Collar

version of any other hypothesis seems to be supported. As tables 1, 2, and 3 show, there is some difference between the percentage of nonvoters for different social groups, but neither this difference nor its development over time indicates disproportional mobilization. In addition, the fluctuation between pairs of successive elections indicates clearly that "dissolution" is more in accordance with the facts than mobilization (see Tables 4 and 5). The group of nonvoters is by no means less stable than other groups of voters, as an inspection of the main diagonals reveals; the disposition of this group to switch to the NSDAP is greater than this dispostion for voters of the KPD and the SPD, for instance, but less than the NS-disposition of DDP/DVP and DNVP voters; only the net flow over time of former nonvoters to the NSDAP constitutes a figure of importance (see Table 6).[12]

In combination with the evidence on the social basis of the Weimar party system, these findings lead to the conclusion that the mass hypothesis is uncorroborated if not refuted by the facts. For the remaining hypotheses, we have to keep in mind that some mobilization in favor of the NSDAP took place, but that there is no evidence of exclusive or even dominant mobilization effects.

12 For further details, see *idem*, "National-Socialist Mobilization."

*Table 3* The Voting Disposition of the Catholics and Non-Catholics in Weimar Germany, 1920–1933 (Row Percentages)

| | | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | DNVP | LIB | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1920 | CATH. | 1.4 | 8.0 | 48.5 | 0.5 | 5.8 | 10.0 | 0.5 | 25.4 |
| | NON-CATH. | 1.8 | 21.1 | 0.6 | 17.0 | 23.1 | 16.5 | 0.0 | 19.8 |
| 1924a | CATH. | 8.6 | 4.5 | 42.5 | 2.7 | 3.4 | 4.7 | 3.2 | 30.5 |
| | NON-CATH. | 10.2 | 20.7 | 1.7 | 20.8 | 14.6 | 6.1 | 5.9 | 20.0 |
| 1928 | CATH. | 4.8 | 9.0 | 36.7 | 3.6 | 4.0 | 9.5 | 1.8 | 30.4 |
| | NON-CATH. | 9.0 | 28.0 | 0 | 14.0 | 12.7 | 11.1 | 2.0 | 23.2 |
| 1930 | CATH. | 7.9 | 7.4 | 39.2 | 2.3 | 3.0 | 9.8 | 9.1 | 21.3 |
| | NON-CATH. | 11.6 | 25.4 | 0.0 | 7.4 | 8.3 | 12.3 | 17.6 | 17.4 |
| 1932a | CATH. | 10.2 | 6.4 | 41.8 | 2.1 | 0.7 | 2.9 | 16.0 | 19.9 |
| | NON-CATH. | 12.6 | 23.1 | 0.1 | 6.2 | 2.3 | 2.4 | 38.2 | 15.1 |
| 1932b | CATH. | 10.7 | 5.8 | 38.7 | 2.3 | 0.9 | 2.7 | 13.7 | 25.1 |
| | NON-CATH. | 14.3 | 20.9 | 0.1 | 8.7 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 32.6 | 17.8 |
| 1933 | CATH. | 7.6 | 6.0 | 39.0 | 3.0 | 0.6 | 1.4 | 28.2 | 14.1 |
| | NON-CATH. | 12.0 | 20.4 | 0.3 | 8.9 | 2.2 | 1.4 | 43.9 | 10.9 |

LIB = DDP and DVP voters combined.

*Analysis of voting transitions between parties* The first hypothesis we have to discuss here is the *realignment* hypothesis: According to Meckstroth, the economic crisis first instigated instability and then, through habitualization, led to a new stability. Electoral volatility, therefore, should be significantly higher between 1928 and 1932 than before or after this period of realignment. Electoral volatility may be measured either by the mean deviation from the diagonal of our transition tables or by the mean stability of parties in each pair of elections. Both measures are equivalent. Since we are interested in dispositions for change (or stability), we calculated the arithmetic means of the diagonals of our seven fluctuation tables (see Table 5). Meckstroth seems to be right when we compare the two pairs of elections between 1928 and July 1932 to the successive two pairs. The mean stability of the two pairs of elections after July 1932 is 54.5, whereas the mean stability for the preceding two pairs is 46.7. If we look back to the three pairs of elections between 1920 and 1928, the mean stability again is lower than that for the "realignment period,"

*Table 4* Voter Movements Between Consecutive Elections, 1920–1928 (Row Percentages; Community-Level Data).

ELECTION 1924a

| ELECTION 1920 | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KPD | 19 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 13 | 8 | 7 | 17 | 2 |
| SPD | 11 | 42 | 6 | 10 | 12 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 17 |
| Z/BVP | 6 | 5 | 50 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 17 | 11 |
| LIB | 6 | 15 | 8 | 30 | 25 | 0 | 8 | 14 | 17 |
| DNVP | 4 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 48 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 12 |
| OTHER | 21 | 19 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 20 | 20 |
| NSDAP | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| NONVOT | 6 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 10 | 3 | 58 | 22 |
| ALL | 9 | 15 | 11 | 11 | 15 | 10 | 5 | 24 | |

ELECTION 1924b

| ELECTION 1924a | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KPD | 41 | 19 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 17 | 9 |
| SPD | 0 | 81 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 15 |
| Z/BVP | 2 | 5 | 70 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 11 |
| LIB | 4 | 6 | 2 | 66 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 11 |
| DNVP | 3 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 70 | 0 | 3 | 13 | 15 |
| OTHER | 6 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 40 | 3 | 21 | 10 |
| NSDAP | 8 | 13 | 9 | 14 | 27 | 9 | 13 | 7 | 5 |
| NONVOT | 3 | 9 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 57 | 24 |
| ALL | 7 | 20 | 13 | 12 | 16 | 8 | 2 | 22 | |

ELECTION 1928

| ELECTION 1924b | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KPD | 52 | 16 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| SPD | 6 | 79 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 20 |
| Z/BVP | 3 | 7 | 55 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 13 | 12 |
| LIB | 3 | 5 | 5 | 45 | 2 | 15 | 3 | 22 | 12 |
| DNVP | 4 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 51 | 11 | 1 | 12 | 16 |
| OTHER | 4 | 7 | 31 | 6 | 6 | 29 | 3 | 15 | 8 |
| NSDAP | 5 | 17 | 13 | 12 | 9 | 18 | 8 | 19 | 2 |
| NONVOT | 5 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 78 | 22 |
| ALL | 8 | 22 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 2 | 26 | |

LIB = DDP and DVP voters combined.

*Table 5* Voter Movements Between Consecutive Elections, 1928–1933 (Row Percentages; County-Level Data).

ELECTION 1930

| ELECTION 1928 | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KPD | 57 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 12 | 8 |
| SPD | 7 | 68 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 22 |
| Z/BVP | 7 | 0 | 66 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 4 | 12 |
| LIB | 2 | 10 | 6 | 31 | 5 | 10 | 26 | 11 | 10 |
| DNVP | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 27 | 11 | 31 | 16 | 11 |
| OTHER | 5 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 47 | 11 | 7 | 11 |
| NSDAP | 9 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 13 | 38 | 11 | 2 |
| NONVOT | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 14 | 50 | 26 |
| ALL | 10 | 20 | 13 | 7 | 6 | 11 | 15 | 19 | |

ELECTION 1932a

| ELECTION 1930 | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KPD | 58 | 11 | 9 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 10 |
| SPD | 9 | 63 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 16 | 5 | 20 |
| Z/BVP | 6 | 7 | 65 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 13 |
| LIB | 5 | 18 | 11 | 6 | 12 | 2 | 36 | 11 | 7 |
| DNVP | 8 | 11 | 7 | 2 | 20 | 3 | 33 | 17 | 6 |
| OTHER | 7 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 49 | 16 | 11 |
| NSDAP | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 85 | 0 | 15 |
| NONVOT | 8 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 57 | 19 |
| ALL | 12 | 18 | 14 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 31 | 17 | |

ELECTION 1932b

| ELECTION 1932a | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| KPD | 66 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 11 | 12 |
| SPD | 10 | 67 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 18 |
| Z/BVP | 7 | 5 | 63 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 14 |
| LIB | 18 | 13 | 11 | 15 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 24 | 2 |
| DNVP | 9 | 8 | 10 | 3 | 49 | 5 | 0 | 16 | 5 |
| OTHER | 13 | 10 | 13 | 5 | 9 | 22 | 11 | 18 | 3 |
| NSDAP | 3 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 76 | 6 | 31 |
| NONVOT | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 81 | 17 |
| ALL | 13 | 16 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 27 | 20 | |

*Table 5* (Continued)

| | ELECTION 1933 | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ELECTION 1932b | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NSDAP | NONVOT | ALL |
| KPD | 62 | 7 | 7 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 6 | 13 |
| SPD | 2 | 78 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 16 |
| Z/BVP | 5 | 4 | 74 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 13 |
| LIB | 14 | 16 | 11 | 12 | 10 | 4 | 23 | 10 | 2 |
| DNVP | 3 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 49 | 2 | 34 | 6 | 7 |
| OTHER | 9 | 17 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 33 | 6 | 3 |
| NSDAP | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 92 | 2 | 27 |
| NONVOT | 2 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 42 | 41 | 20 |
| ALL | 11 | 16 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 39 | 12 | |

LIB = DDP and DVP voters combined.

falling slightly below 40. If we accept the notion that electoral volatility is a valid indicator of realignment, then the realignment period might have started much earlier than Meckstroth has assumed.

The picture changes slightly, if we consider only the stability of the middle-class parties, that is, DNVP, LIB (DDP/DVP), OTHER, NSDAP and, for totally pragmatic reasons, the Non-voters. Then the mean stability of this "camp" between 1928 and July 1932 was marginally lower than that of the preceding period (37:37.3) and considerably lower than that of the following two pairs of elections (37:44.8). A realignment might indeed have taken place; but, if so, it was more or less restricted to the "politically unchurched" voters of the middle-class parties, and it seems to have started in the 1920–1928 period. Recoined in this way, the realignment hypothesis becomes indistinguishable from the middle-class and the mixed-causes hypotheses as far as the process of change is concerned. Since there were no elections from 1933 to 1948, we will never be able to determine if the nine-month period between July 1932 and March 1933 can legitimately be called a new state of normality. In any event, there is evidence that it might be more fruitful to inspect electoral change on a group level than on the level of the total electorate. In order to do so we summarily characterize each party's electoral fortune during the Weimar Republic.

*Table 6* Fluctuation between NSDAP and Other Parties

| ELECTION | KPD | SPD | Z/BVP | LIB | DNVP | OTHER | NONVOT |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20/24a | 0.13 : 0.00 | 0.58 : 0.00 | 0.60 : 0.00 | 1.26 : 0.00 | 1.00 : 0.00 | 0.90 : 0.00 | 0.53 : 0.00 |
| 24a/24b | 0.25 : 0.39 | 0.15 : 0.66 | 0.26 : 0.45 | 0.26 : 0.70 | 0.37 : 1.33 | 0.25 : 0.47 | 0.19 : 0.33 |
| 24b/28 | 0.14 : 0.10 | 0.20 : 0.34 | 0.24 : 0.26 | 0.36 : 0.24 | 0.16 : 0.18 | 0.24 : 0.36 | 0.44 : 0.38 |
| 28/30 | 0.40 : 0.18 | 2.20 : 0.24 | 1.08 : 0.18 | 2.60 : 0.10 | 3.41 : 0.06 | 1.21 : 0.25 | 3.64 : 0.22 |
| 30/32a | 0.50 : 0.30 | 3.20 : 0.30 | 1.30 : 0.60 | 2.53 : 0.15 | 1.98 : 0.75 | 5.40 : 0.0 | 3.36 : 0.0 |
| 32a/32b | 0.48 : 0.93 | 1.08 : 1.55 | 0.84 : 1.24 | 0.08 : 0.31 | 0.0 : 0.93 | 0.33 : 0.31 | 0.34 : 1.86 |
| 32b/33 | 1.17 : 0.54 | 0.96 : 0.27 | 0.39 : 0.27 | 0.46 : 0.27 | 2.38 : 0.81 | 0.99 : 0.0 | 8.40 : 0.54 |

LIB = DDP and DVP voters combined.

Numbers indicate the percentage of eligible voters who switched from one election to the next toward the NSDAP from the party given at the head of the column (first number) and those who went the other way (second number).
0.00 represents genuine zeros; 0.0 is the result of the proportional fitting procedure (see n. 10).

Communist Party: Starting from small beginnings, the KPD eventually held a stable share of the vote, about 10 percent of the electorate. The loyalty of its voters (as measured by the main diagonals of each subtable of Table 4) grew consistently from 19 percent to over 60 percent. The disposition of its voters to switch to the NSDAP was low (always less than 10 percent), and the NSDAP never ranked high among the alternatives (the NSDAP was the leading alternative only in the last election; in all other elections, it was at best the fifth-ranking alternative). The asymmetry in dispositions was low, and the net flow very small (see Table 6). We can therefore conclude that the NSDAP did not really affect the KPD voters. Whether they were radicals or protesters, the NSDAP to them constituted neither another way of expressing their convictions nor another outlet for protest.

Social Democratic Party: The SPD, too, kept a stable share of the electorate (between 15 and 22 percent). The loyalty of its voters was even higher (in the end over 75 percent). Until 1928, the disposition of SPD voters to switch to the NSDAP as well as the rank of the NSDAP as an alternative was low; after 1928, the NSDAP was as important as the KPD as an alternative and ranked first or second. There was asymmetry in dispositions and a substantial net flow of votes toward the NSDAP. If we look at the proportion of SPD voters who were disposed to switch to radical parties in general (NSDAP, KPD, and DNVP), we find stability and even a reduction during the last three pairs of elections (26, 21, and 11 percent). All features taken together, we conclude that the NSDAP became simply another protest outlet for SPD voters after 1928.

Zentrum/BVP: The stability of the share and the loyalty of voters of the Center party and the Bavarian People's party were comparable to those of the SPD vote. The disposition to switch to the NSDAP and the rank of the NSDAP as an alternative were quite low except for two elections (1930 and 1932a). The asymmetry was low, and the net flow marginal. Here, as for the SPD, the combined propensities to switch to radical parties were stable and falling in the last elections (21, 18, and 13 percent). The behavior of the voters of Zentrum/BVP with respect to the NSDAP is best characterized as "temporary irritation." Radicalization did not occur and the NSDAP did not prove to be a lasting means of protest for Catholic voters.

*LIB (DDP/DVP):* There was a clear loss of votes over time, from 17 percent of the electorate in the beginning to 2 percent in the last elections. The loyalty was only moderate in the first elections and exceptionally low in the later ones. The disposition to switch to the NSDAP rose dramatically from 1928 to 1930, and the NSDAP became by far the most attractive alternative, in two elections ranking higher than DDP/DVP themselves. The asymmetry was high except in the end, and the net flow of votes to the NSDAP was substantial. If we again look at the combined propensities to vote for radical parties, we find very high figures for the last four elections, with the right wing parties dominating. This shift is a clear instance of a one-sided movement consistent with "radicalization."

*DNVP:* The picture is about the same as for the liberals. The share of the vote fell from a high of 16 percent in 1928 to 7 percent in 1933. The loyalty of DNVP voters was somewhat higher than for the DDP and the DVP, but still only moderate. From 1930 on, the NSDAP was the preferred alternative; in two elections it ranked even higher than the DNVP itself. The asymmetry was high, and the net flow substantial. The combined propensities of DNVP voters to remain with the DNVP or to switch to other radical parties were always high, the Communist party playing a minor role and the NSDAP gaining weight over time. The fate of the DNVP was similar to that of the DDP and the DVP, as far as the NSDAP is concerned. Since the DNVP is classified in this analysis as a radical party, instead of using the label "radicalization" we call the movement of its voters "further radicalization."

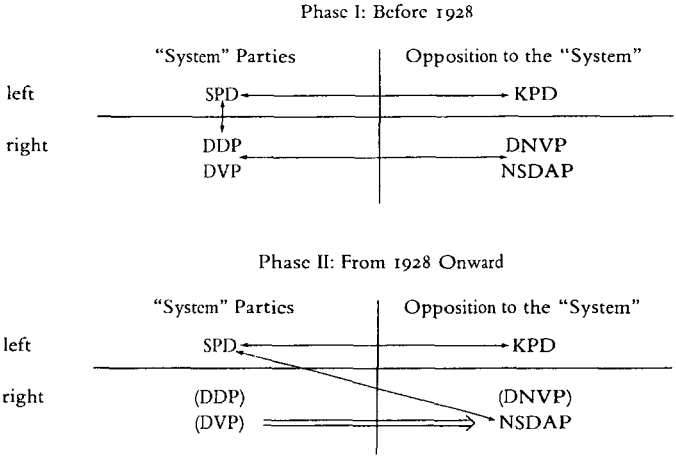
If we put all of the pieces together, we can now discuss the hypotheses concerning the overall character of the change in voter behavior during the Weimar Republic. To explore the voting patterns of the middle class, we have to choose among middle-class-protest, middle-class-formation (equal radicalization of all Protestant middle-class voters), and middle-class-ideological-radicalization (differences among different groups). The movement to the NSDAP of the voters of all of the parties under study is so one-sided that we can exclude middle-class-protest immediately and consider only the other two versions. Although the ideological-radicalization hypothesis claims consistently stronger movements from the DDP and DVP to the NSDAP than from

the conservative DNVP, there should be no such differences according to the formation hypothesis. The evidence shows no marked differences between the two liberal parties and the DNVP before 1933, thereby refuting the claims of the middle-class-ideological-radicalization hypothesis and corroborating, at least in tendency, the "middle class formation" hypothesis.

As far as the influx of working-class votes is concerned, we find clear evidence that the process behind it was different from that for the middle class. A mixed-causes hypothesis in the form of middle-class-formation plus working-class-protest is fully supported by our data. The data also indicate that our hypothesis has to be refined considerably—the difference between KPD voters and SPD voters hints that ideology played a major role. In terms of our theoretical considerations, we can suggest how to refine the mixed-causes hypothesis.

*Conclusions* Extremely simplified, the economic crisis led to a transformation of the social mapping of the Weimar party system. As Figure 6 shows, two phases can be discerned.

*Fig. 6.* Political Change in Weimar Germany




NOTE: Zentrum/BVP is excluded from this figure since denomination obviously was the salient issue for the voters of these parties, which made them stable clients.

In phase I, those opposed to the "system" took the left-right dimension into account. For those still supporting the system, a *combination* of the system-dimension and the left-right dimension was salient; they crossed either the systems boundary or the class boundary, but not both. In phase II, when the economic crisis dominated every other issue, positional differences were affected in different ways. For those who were opposed to the system, nothing changed at all. For those not opposing the system, the left-right dimension was salient in different ways. Workers who defected from the SPD and voiced their protest no longer were reluctant to cross the left-right dimension, whereas members of the Protestant middle class lost their inhibition against crossing the systems boundary but clearly were reluctant to cross the left-right dimension.

The growth of the NSDAP was neither an instance of rewarding-punishing behavior of the electorate nor the effect of mass radicalization. The way that the economic crisis was transformed into a political crisis was complex, but not beyond reconstruction. Satisfactory explanations of the electoral rise of Nazism after 1928 call for more encompassing and data-oriented hypotheses than those normally given by electoral historians.