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**STRANGE BEDFELLOWS –  
FORMING COALITION GOVERNMENTS:  
LESSONS FROM GERMANY**

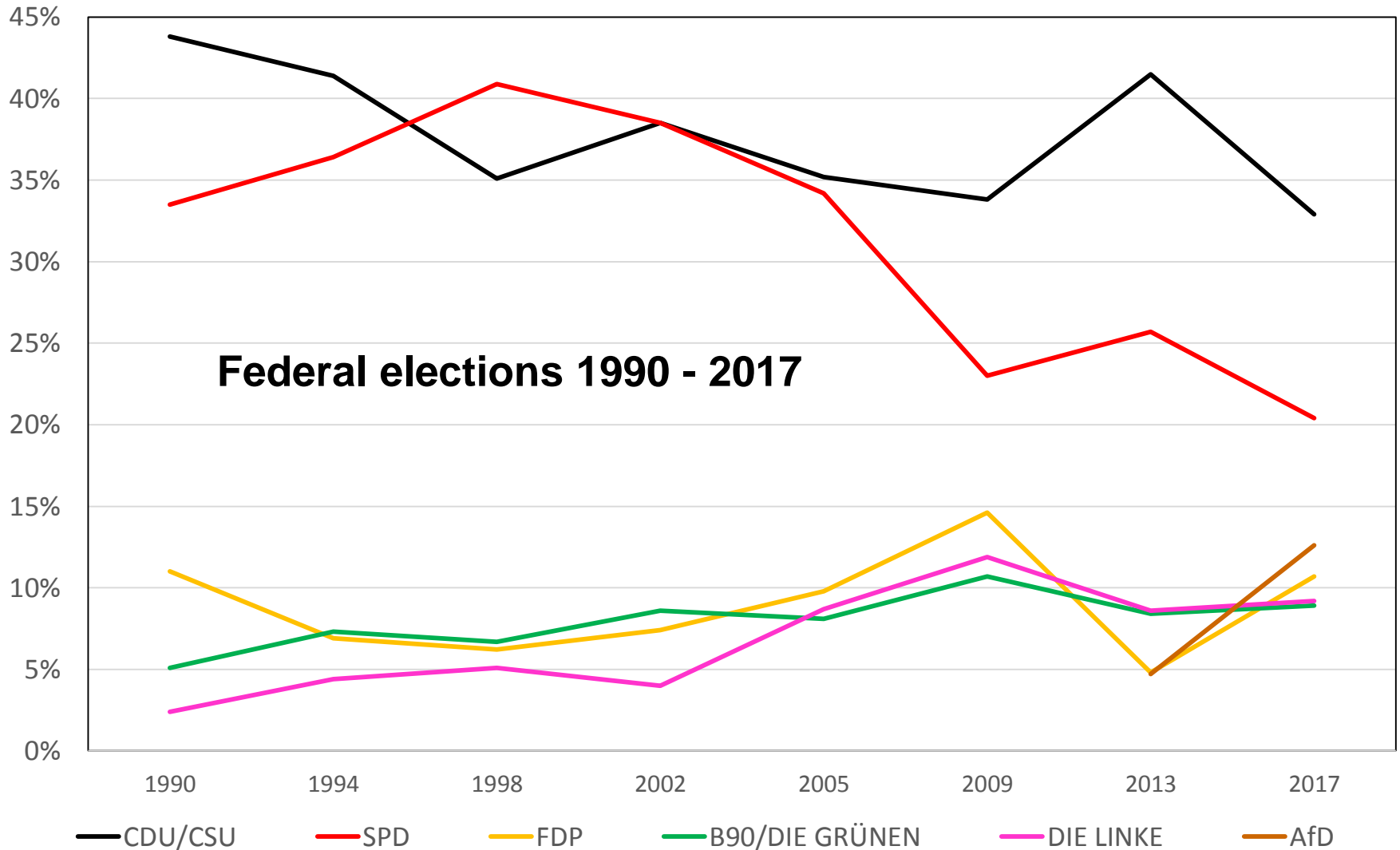
Presentation at Curtin's Corner  
February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018





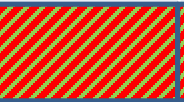
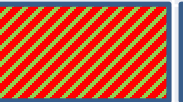

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## 2. Erosion of the two big „people’s parties“ CDU/CSU and SPD



# Federal elections and governments 1990 - 2017

	1990	1994	1998	2002	2005	2009	2013	2017
participation rate	77.8%	79.0%	82.2%	79.1%	77.7%	70.8%	71.5%	76.2%
CDU/CSU	43.8%	41.4%	35.1%	38.5%	35.2%	33.8%	41.5%	32.9%
SPD	33.5%	36.4%	40.9%	38.5%	34.2%	23.0%	25.7%	20.4%
FDP	11.0%	6.9%	6.2%	7.4%	9.8%	14.6%	4.8%	10.7%
B90/DIE GRÜNEN	5.1%	7.3%	6.7%	8.6%	8.1%	10.7%	8.4%	8.9%
DIE LINKE	2.4%	4.4%	5.1%	4.0%	8.7%	11.9%	8.6%	9.2%
AfD							4.7%	12.6%
others	4.2%	3.6%	6.0%	3.0%	4.0%	6.0%	6.3%	5.3%
CDU/CSU/SPD	77.3%	77.8%	76.0%	77.0%	69.4%	56.8%	67.2%	53.3%
								

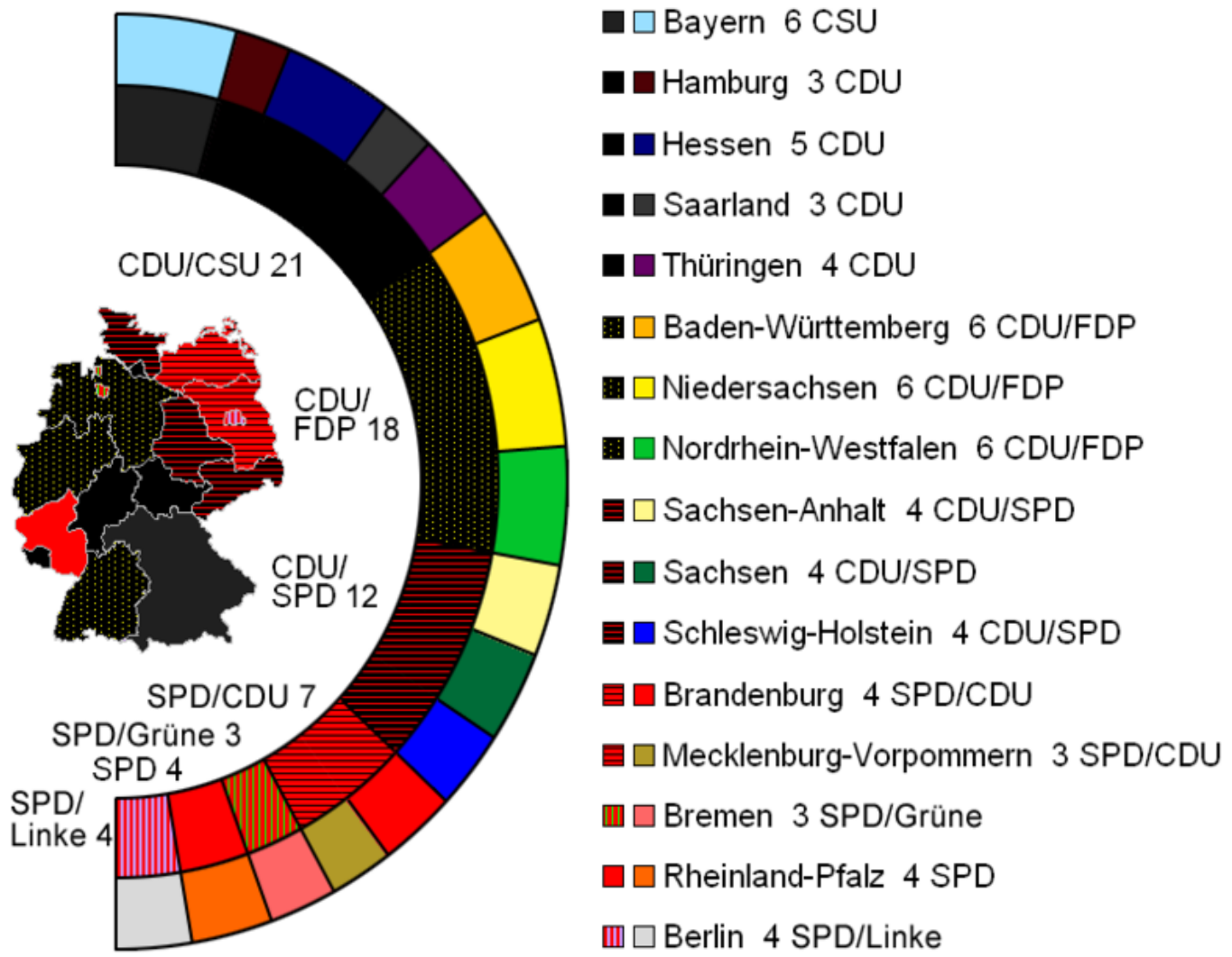
### 3. The Bundesrat: influence of the Länder governments on federal legislation

#### (1) Germany's executive federalism

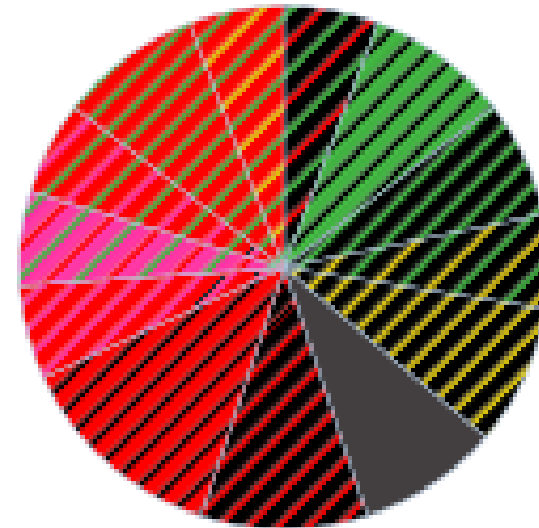
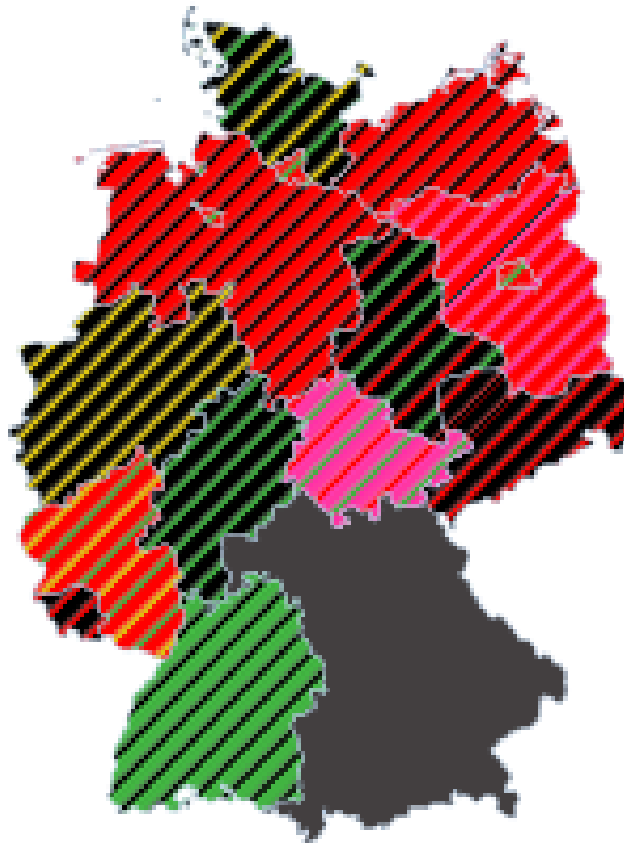
- Federation (Bund) and States (Länder) constitute independent levels of government with full quality of state (institutions of legislation, execution and judiciary)
- special type of federalism: ‚executive‘ federalism with centralized legislation (Bund) and decentralized execution/administration of federal laws at the level of the Länder
- Bundesrat (Second Chamber of Federal Legislative): members of state governments!
- For a majority of regulations, the approval of the Bundesrat is necessary!
- Number of votes: 6 for the big states (NW, Bav, BW, LS) down to 3 for the small states (HB, Saar, MWP, HH)
- Minister presidents of the States are part of the party delegations for federal coalition negotiations because
  - many issues of the coalition treaty need the approval of the Bundesrat when they come to legislation
  - they are influential members of the party boards and potential candidates for chancellorship!









# (2) The composition of the Bundesrat 2006 and 2017

## 2006



2018

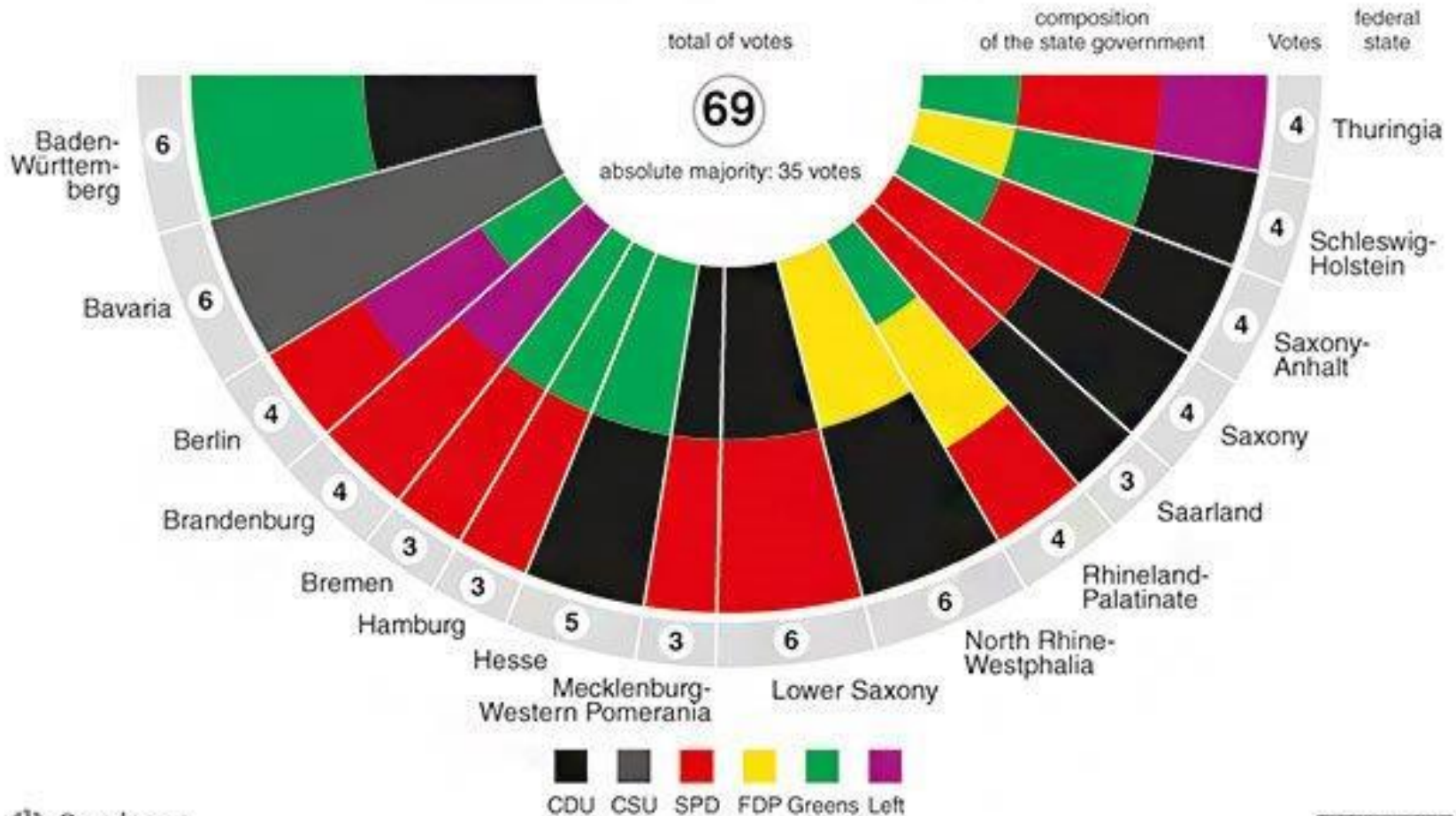


	SPD + CDU	9		CDU + GRÜNE	5
	CDU + SPD	7		SPD + FDP + GRÜNE	4
	GRÜNE + CDU	6		CDU + SPD + GRÜNE	4
	CSU	6		SPD + LINKE	4
	CDU + FDP	6		SPD + LINKE + GRÜNE	4
	SPD + GRÜNE	6		LINKE + SPD + GRÜNE	4
				CDU + GRÜNE + FDP	4



2018

# Composition of the Bundesrat



### (3) Difficult compromises ...

#### ... across all parties in favour of necessary majorities for federal legislation

- Each state government can only vote unanimously in the Bundesrat.
- In case of coalition governments, coalition treaties determine that if the partners do not agree on an issue the state must abstain in the vote.
- The smaller parties, which were in a total minority position in the Bundestag since 2013 ('grand coalition'), have tried to influence majorities in the Bundesrat in favour of their federal political positions, e.g.
  - to hinder a sharpening of the asylum regulations in the refugee crisis
  - to influence climate change policies, ...
- All parties have to balance the preference of their 'right' and 'left' wing members.
- In the past, there was a clear majority: black or black-yellow against red or red-green trying to block federal legislation in case of an opposite majority!
- Actually, there is often no clear majority in the Bundesrat which causes negotiations across all parties necessary for a majority.
- The Federation tends to 'buy' votes with special financial 'privileges'.


## 4. Most recent developments

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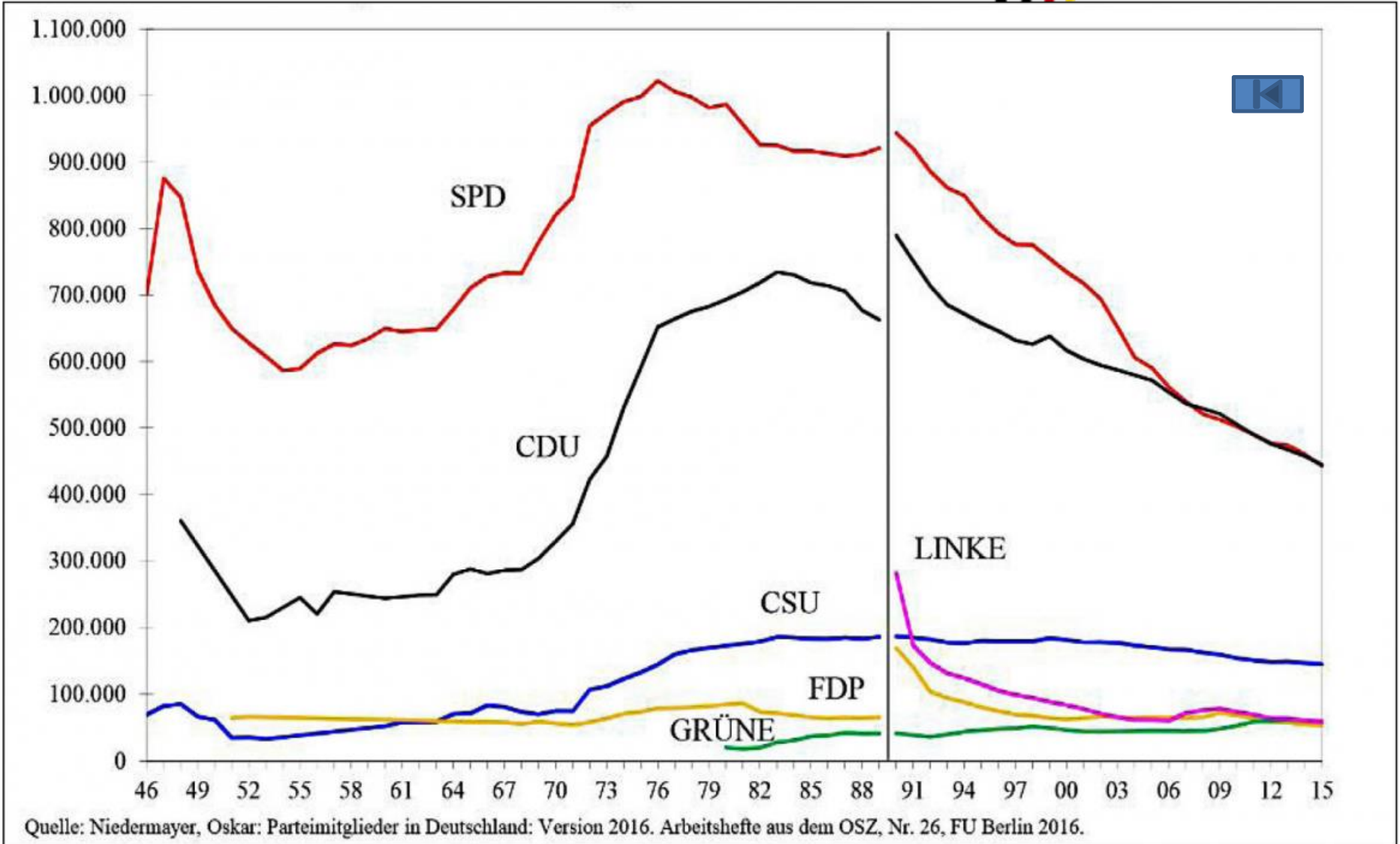
- The rise of the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)
- The failure of negotiations for a „Jamaica“ coalition for federal government
- SPD: discussion on minority government or a „third way agreement“ vs. „grand coalition“
- Difficult coalition negotiations of CDU, CSU and SPD
- The chaos of the SPD leaders and the referendum of SPD members on the coalition treaty
- The decline or the end of Merkel’s power?

## 5. Some conclusions

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- The German party system is again under change.
- All try to cover a median voter program without regarding the traditional position of the respective party in the past.
- The other wing of the party member remains ‘under control’ as long as the party participates in government, but are discontent and ‘mumble’; many abandon their membership  
(➔ sharp decline of members since the 1980’s) 
- number of switching voters has been increasing
- experience from the most recent state and federal elections: a convincing and trustable personality of the leading candidate is more important than an ideological party program
- The extremely right wing party ‘Alternative für Deutschland’ will win seats in Parliaments as long as parties present front-runners who even don’t convince their party members.

# 5. Some conclusions



Quelle: Niedermayer, Oskar: Parteimitglieder in Deutschland: Version 2016. Arbeitshefte aus dem OSZ, Nr. 26, FU Berlin 2016.