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## German election turmoil

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**20 September, 2005**

## THE ARTICLE

### German election turmoil

**BNE:** Who will govern Germany now the election is over? This is the biggest unanswered question in the political limbo in which Europe's largest and most powerful country now finds itself. The figures suggest the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) should take the reins as it won the largest slice of the vote with 35.2 percent against 34.3 percent for Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats. However, incumbent Chancellor Schroeder is refusing to budge and is claiming victory for himself, even though he clearly lost the election, albeit by a mere 0.9 percent. It seems quick answers from the stalemate will be hard to come by and Germany will for some time remain entrenched in the current political quagmire.

Many in the CDU may be quietly pointing fingers of blame at their leader Angela Merkel for not winning the election more comprehensively. She enjoyed a 21 percent lead in the polls at the beginning of the campaign and was widely tipped to become Germany's first female chancellor. Many hoped she would drag Germany out of its economic doldrums where it has languished for the past seven years. Comparisons made with Britain's Margaret Thatcher seem way off the mark now. "Angie's" hapless campaign suffered from a lack of radical policies, personality clashes, political gaffes and poor leadership. Uncertainty surrounds her political future as the outcome of the chancellorship is still in the balance.

## WARM-UPS

**1. LOSING:** How do you feel about losing? Do you accept defeat easily and graciously or are you a sore loser? In pairs / groups, discuss your feelings about losing:

- a. A heated argument with a good friend
- b. An argument with someone you don't like
- c. A bet
- d. A game or race
- e. Your favorite sports team losing a final or a big game
- f. Losing your temper
- g. Your favorite political party losing in an election or referendum
- h. A job

**2. GERHARD SCHROEDER:** In pairs / groups, find out as much as you can about German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. Change partners often. After you have finished, sit with your partner(s) and share your information.

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Germany / elections / unanswered questions / limbo / Chancellor Schroeder / Angela Merkel / losing / blame / female leaders / personality clashes / the future*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. GERMANY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Germany. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. UNANSWERED QUESTIONS:** The world is full of unanswered questions – Who killed JFK? Did George W. Bush know Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction? Where is Osama bin Laden? Are there really aliens? Write down some questions you would like answers to. Ask different students your questions.

**6. ELECTION OPINIONS:** How far do you agree with these opinions on the German election? Talk about them with your partner(s).

- a. Germany will soon, once again, become the strongest economy in Europe.
- b. Gerhard Schroeder lost. He should accept defeat graciously.
- c. Uncertainty over who will be chancellor will upset the European economy.
- d. Germany needs a change of leadership.
- e. Angela Merkel is the best person to change Germany's economic fortunes.
- f. Germany will sink into deeper economic decline.
- g. A "grand coalition" should take place between Schroeder and Merkel.
- h. Schroeder's refusal to budge is disrespectful to German voters.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. The German election has ended in confusion with no clear winner.    | T / F |
| b. Angela Merkel's CDU party won the largest slice of the vote.        | T / F |
| c. Incumbent Chancellor Schroeder said he would concede in a few days. | T / F |
| d. Germany is set to remain entrenched in a political quagmire.        | T / F |
| e. Everybody in the CDU party is congratulating Angela Merkel.         | T / F |
| f. She is tipped to become Germany's second female chancellor.         | T / F |
| g. Germany has languished in economic doldrums for seven years.        | T / F |
| h. Angela Merkel's campaign strategy was faultless.                    | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| a. limbo            | deadlock    |
| b. budge            | woeful      |
| c. stalemate        | move        |
| d. entrenched       | blunders    |
| e. quagmire         | depression  |
| f. doldrums         | untrue      |
| g. languished       | uncertainty |
| h. way off the mark | quandary    |
| i. hapless          | rooted      |
| j. gaffes           | wasted away |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| a. This is the biggest                 | budge                             |
| b. political                           | Germany's first female chancellor |
| c. take                                | fingers of blame                  |
| d. Chancellor Schroeder is refusing to | the reins                         |
| e. remain entrenched in                | clashes                           |
| f. quietly pointing                    | unanswered question               |
| g. widely tipped to become             | in the balance                    |
| h. economic                            | the current political quagmire    |
| i. personality                         | doldrums                          |
| j. still                               | limbo                             |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### German election turmoil

**BNE:** Who will \_\_\_\_\_ Germany now the election is over?

This is the biggest unanswered question in the political limbo in which Europe's largest and most powerful country now finds \_\_\_\_\_. The figures suggest the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) should take the \_\_\_\_\_ as it won the largest \_\_\_\_\_ of the vote with 35.2 percent against 34.3 percent for Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats. However, incumbent Chancellor Schroeder is refusing to \_\_\_\_\_ and is claiming victory for himself, even though he clearly lost the election, \_\_\_\_\_ by a mere 0.9 percent. It seems quick answers from the stalemate will be \_\_\_\_\_ to come by and Germany will for some time \_\_\_\_\_ entrenched in the current political quagmire.

Many in the CDU may be quietly pointing fingers of \_\_\_\_\_ at their leader Angela Merkel for not winning the election more comprehensively. She \_\_\_\_\_ a 21 percent lead in the polls at the beginning of the campaign and was \_\_\_\_\_ tipped to become Germany's first female chancellor. Many hoped she would \_\_\_\_\_ Germany out of its economic doldrums where it has languished for the past seven years. Comparisons made with Britain's Margaret Thatcher seem \_\_\_\_\_ off the mark now. "Angie's" hapless campaign suffered from a lack of \_\_\_\_\_ policies, personality \_\_\_\_\_, political gaffes and poor leadership. Uncertainty surrounds her political future as the outcome of the chancellorship is still in the \_\_\_\_\_.

*remain*

*itself*

*albeit*

*govern*

*slice*

*budge*

*hard*

*reins*

*drag*

*enjoyed*

*balance*

*blame*

*clashes*

*way*

*widely*

*radical*

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'political' and 'limbo'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "GERMAN ELECTION" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about Germany and the uncertainty surrounding the recent election.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- govern
- reins
- slice
- budge
- albeit
- remain
- fingers
- enjoyed
- drag
- way off the mark
- gaffes
- balance

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. What adjectives describe your feelings about Germany's election turmoil?
- d. Are elections in your company confusing?
- e. What do you think of Gerhard Schroeder?
- f. What do you think of Angela Merkel?
- g. Do you think Gerhard Schroeder should concede defeat?
- h. Why do you think Germany's economy has become so weak?
- i. What are the consequences of Germany being in political limbo?
- j. Have you ever refused to budge on anything?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think Angela Merkel is similar to Margaret Thatcher?
- d. How did Angela Merkel lose her 21 percent lead so quickly?
- e. Many political commentators say Germany is not ready for a female chancellor. What do you think?
- f. What kind of radical policies are needed for Germany to recover?
- g. Has your country ever been in the economic doldrums?
- h. When do you think Germany will become strong again?
- i. Have you had any personality clashes?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### German election turmoil

**BNE:** Who will \_\_\_\_\_ Germany now the election is over? This is the biggest unanswered question in the political \_\_\_\_\_ in which Europe's largest and most powerful country now finds itself. The figures suggest the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) should \_\_\_\_\_ as it won the largest slice of the vote with 35.2 percent against 34.3 percent for Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats. However, incumbent Chancellor Schroeder is refusing to \_\_\_\_\_ and is claiming victory for himself, even though he clearly lost the election, albeit by a \_\_\_\_\_ 0.9 percent. It seems quick answers from the stalemate will be hard to come by and Germany will for some time remain entrenched in the current political \_\_\_\_\_.

Many in the CDU may be quietly pointing \_\_\_\_\_ at their leader Angela Merkel for not winning the election more comprehensively. She enjoyed a 21 percent lead in the \_\_\_\_\_ at the beginning of the campaign and was widely tipped to become Germany's first female chancellor. Many hoped she would \_\_\_\_\_ Germany out of its economic doldrums where it has languished for the past seven years. Comparisons made with Britain's Margaret Thatcher seem way \_\_\_\_\_ now. "Angie's" hapless campaign suffered from a lack of radical policies, personality clashes, political \_\_\_\_\_ and poor leadership. Uncertainty surrounds her political future as the outcome of the chancellorship is still in the \_\_\_\_\_.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on the German election. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. THE PLAYERS:** Make a poster describing Gerhard Schroeder and Angela Merkel. Try to explain some of their policies and differences. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**4. DIARY / JOURNAL:** You are Gerhard Schroeder or Angela Merkel. Write your diary / journal entry for the day of the election. Read your diary / journal to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. F      g. T      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                     |             |
|---------------------|-------------|
| a. limbo            | uncertainty |
| b. budge            | move        |
| c. stalemate        | deadlock    |
| d. entrenched       | rooted      |
| e. quagmire         | quandary    |
| f. doldrums         | depression  |
| g. languished       | wasted away |
| h. way off the mark | untrue      |
| i. hapless          | woeful      |
| j. gaffes           | blunders    |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| a. This is the biggest                 | unanswered question               |
| b. political                           | limbo                             |
| c. take                                | the reins                         |
| d. Chancellor Schroeder is refusing to | budge                             |
| e. remain entrenched in                | the current political quagmire    |
| f. quietly pointing                    | fingers of blame                  |
| g. widely tipped to become             | Germany's first female chancellor |
| h. economic                            | doldrums                          |
| i. personality                         | clashes                           |
| j. still                               | in the balance                    |

### GAP FILL:

#### German election turmoil

**BNE:** Who will **govern** Germany now the election is over? This is the biggest unanswered question in the political limbo in which Europe's largest and most powerful country now finds **itself**. The figures suggest the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) should take the **reins** as it won the largest **slice** of the vote with 35.2 percent against 34.3 percent for Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats. However, incumbent Chancellor Schroeder is refusing to **budge** and is claiming victory for himself, even though he clearly lost the election, **albeit** by a mere 0.9 percent. It seems quick answers from the stalemate will be **hard** to come by and Germany will for some time **remain** entrenched in the current political quagmire.

Many in the CDU may be quietly pointing fingers of **blame** at their leader Angela Merkel for not winning the election more comprehensively. She **enjoyed** a 21 percent lead in the polls at the beginning of the campaign and was **widely** tipped to become Germany's first female chancellor. Many hoped she would **drag** Germany out of its economic doldrums where it has languished for the past seven years. Comparisons made with Britain's Margaret Thatcher seem **way** off the mark now. "Angie's" hapless campaign suffered from a lack of **radical** policies, personality **clashes**, political gaffes and poor leadership. Uncertainty surrounds her political future as the outcome of the chancellorship is still in the **balance**.