

ABSTRACTS*

Behnke, Joachim: Testing the new electoral law in the German federal elections of 2013.

The new electoral law, which came into effect for the 2009 elections, is an improvement over the old law. Notably the problem of surplus seats is solved by the introduction of adjustment seats and the distortion in the proportional representation is thus neutralized. However, new problems were created which although they may not be unconstitutional are still serious enough to regard the design of the new law as failed. One of the most serious faults is the so-called “procedural return”, i.e. an unnecessary augmentation of the Bundestag, which cannot be justified by any substantial reason. Furthermore it can happen that in the final distribution several Landeslisten are lacking some of just those mandates by which the claim on seats is justified which is the basis of the adjustment. As a consequence, this contradicts the normative justification for the adjustment. The adjustment itself comprises the risk of a dramatic augmentation of the parliament. Finally, the new adjustment procedure itself can create a so-called absolute negative voting weight. For these reasons the new electoral system can definitely be classified as inferior to other conceivable alternatives. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 17 – 37]

Maier, Jürgen, Thorsten Faas and Michaela Maier: Catching up, but still lagging behind: perception and impact of televised debates using the example of Angela Merkel and Peer Steinbrück in 2013.

As for past German federal elections, the 2013 televised debate between chancellor *Angela Merkel* (CDU/CSU) and her challenger *Peer Steinbrück* (SPD) turned out to be the most important campaign event. Based on experimental and real-time response data we demonstrate that *Steinbrück* especially benefited from the debate. Although the expectation concerning his debate performance was rather low in the run-up to the event, he won the debate and was able to improve his image significantly. At the same time, support for *Merkel* declined. Although *Steinbrück* did not completely close the gap he was able to partially do so. This result even held a few days after the debate. Our findings for the 2013 debate nicely fit in with results from previous debates. Taken together, there is cumulative evidence that televised debates can have major effects on political attitudes and political behaviour. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 38 – 54]

Anders, Lisa: Who cares about Europe anyway? Europe as a campaign topic in German federal election.

European politicians’ main approach to handling the Euro crisis was through intergovernmental means, and, as a consequence, the EU’s indirect channel of representation has gained in importance. Against this background, this article investigates the role European issues played in the 2013 German federal election campaign. Were European issues neglected or even deliberately de-politicized? Or did the parties offer voters distinct alternatives on European issues? Based on a content analysis of three newspapers, the results do not indicate that an active de-politicization of European issues took place; rather, they show that politicians discussed European issues even during the crucial phase of the election campaign and that they were able to effectively communicate their different positions on various European issues. Governing parties were found to be particularly aware of European issues, with their European policy positions significantly more likely to be found in the analyzed newspapers than the positions of opposition parties. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 55 – 72]

* Diese sind in deutscher Sprache zu finden auf www.zparl.de beziehungsweise www.politik.uni-halle.de/zparl.

Niedermayer, Oskar: Winners, losers and the forever ‚others‘: small and minor parties at the German federal election of 2013.

At the federal election of 2013, 15.7 per cent of the voters voted for one of the parties not represented in parliament. The analysis concentrates on the small parties, which are not represented in the federal parliament but in some regional ones, and on the minor parties with no parliamentary representation at all. It presents a typology of these parties and discusses the reasons for their success or failure. They lie either on the supply and demand side of political competition or in external conditions, which in turn influence the orientations and activities of the actors. In addition to an overview of all small and minor parties taking part in the election, the analytical framework is used to explain why the FDP for the first time in its history failed to pass the five-percent-threshold, why the Pirate Party could not transform its regional successes to the federal level, why the Free Voters could not establish themselves at this level and why the Alternative for Germany was so successful. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 73 – 93]

Schmitt-Beck, Rüdiger: Euro criticism, economic pessimism and immigration skepticism: backgrounds of the well-nigh electoral success of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) at the German federal election of 2013.

One of the big surprises of the 2013 German federal election was the good result of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a party that was founded just six months before the election and nonetheless only by a small margin missed the five-percent-threshold necessary to gain seats in the Bundestag. Using the Rolling Cross-Section/pre-post-panel survey conducted as part of the 2013 German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) vote intentions and vote choices for the AfD are analyzed. The electorate of the AfD consisted of two groups: a small group of early-deciding voters that found the party mainly attractive because of its Euro-critical stances in economic policy, and a larger group of late-deciders who were attracted to this party through the immigration-critical stances that it emphasized during its campaign alongside its core theme of denunciation of the European currency union. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 94 – 112]

Jesse, Eckhard: The German federal election of 2013 reflected in the representative electoral statistics.

Germany is still the only state with a representative election statistic, identifying precisely electoral behaviour by age and gender and doing so without breaching ballot secrecy. Women's turnout rate (72.1 percent) is only slightly behind men's (72.7 percent), which is owed to male voters from 70 years on (79.9 percent) exercising their right to vote more often than female voters aged 70 or more (71.3 percent). CDU/CSU and SPD won in all age groups, the Left, the Green Party and the Liberals lost everywhere. The FDP and the Alternative for Germany failed to pass the five-percent-threshold because of their low female support (FDP: 4.1 per cent; AfD: 3.6 percent). Only 27.4 percent of persons who gave their second vote to the FDP also preferred the constituency candidate of "their" party (AfD: 30.0 percent). Compared to 2009, vote splitting decreased by 3.4 percentage points to 23.0 percent. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 113 – 127]

Rigoll, Dominik: On the limits of what can be said. How West German parliamentarians handled their individual experiences and exposures during the Third Reich.

This contribution examines the question of to what extent individual experiences and exposures of by-standing, persecution and perpetration during the Third Reich effected what could and what was expressed by members of the West German parliament and what not. To date, political science has not explored this set of problems systematically, however a number of contemporary studies highlight the importance of distinguishing different communities of remembrances and of experience in order to better understand politics in West and East German postwar society.

The samples examined in a study on the history of “militant democracy” lay the groundwork for two hypotheses. On the one hand, individual experiences during the Third Reich influenced the way parliamentarians argued. On the other hand, they avoided to talk frankly about this influence’s existence. Instead, members of parliament used more abstract topoi which reduced the political explosive force of the debate. Even when the Bundestag debated the “historical lessons” to be drawn from “1933”, the parliamentarians did not mention what they personally said and did before 1945. This “dosage” of (auto-)biographical information avoided historical mudslinging and guaranteed constructive collaboration. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 128 – 140]

Peitz, Detlef: Gerhard Herrgesell: SS-judge and parliamentary stenographer. Simultaneously a contribution to the beginnings of the administration of the German Bundestag.

The documentation of parliamentary sittings is essential to create transparency in a democracy; it is the quintessential purpose of parliamentary stenographers to provide that service. When democracy was rebuilt in Germany after the Second World War and due to the specialization required for parliamentary stenographers, it was inevitable that stenographers who had worked in special positions during the NS-regime were employed. Ten stenographers of the early years of the Bundestag had worked at the centre of the war machinery, the so-called Führerhauptquartier, providing verbatim records of the military briefings in the last years of the war. One of them was *Gerhard Herrgesell*, formerly an SS-judge. After some time in an internment camp he worked at the Parliamentary Council and the Bundestag administration. In 1968 – like four other stenographers from the Führerhauptquartier before him – he became head of the Stenographic Service of the German Bundestag. *Herrgesell* stands out because he took the initiative against unlawful actions of the SS and the military in 1944/45 and gave the Americans a crucial hint of where to find the military briefing records. He was also the only stenographer who in 1985 publicly spoke about his job during the NS-regime. But, like most of his colleagues, he avoided reflecting on his experiences during that time. It is very likely that due to personnel decision making schemes there were close ties between stenographers associated with the NS-regime leading in effect to a kind of syndicate of silence. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 141 – 157]

Wineroither, David M. and Gilg Seeber: The Austrian federal election of September 29, 2013: the end of the grand coalition in sight.

The rank order of established parties remained unchanged although the three largest parties moved closer together. The parties in government, Social Democrats and Christian Democrats, suffered moderate losses while the right-wing populist Freedom Party increased its vote share significantly. Both mainstream parties’ campaigns had attempted to mobilize core constituency. The FPÖ, on the other hand, once more promoted a hard stance on immigration issues. More pronounced changes, however, occurred at the level of small and medium size parties. The BZÖ, founded by *Jörg Haider*, failed to re-enter the parliament’s lower chamber. Election day saw predicted substantial gains for the Greens contained by the success of liberal newcomer NEOS. NEOS and the populist-right protest movement of billionaire *Frank Stronach*, both founded just a year before the elections were held, secured a sufficient number of votes to take the election threshold. Thus, for the first time in history, elections promoted no less than six parties into the Nationalrat. The election results set the course for a renewed cooperation between SPÖ and ÖVP, as forming a grand coalition was the only two-party model that ensured an absolute majority. The second *Faymann* cabinet was sworn in in mid December. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 158 – 174]

Hilmer, Richard and Stefan Merz: The German federal election on September 22, 2013: Merkel's masterstroke.

The German federal election in 2013 had one clear winner: CDU and CSU exceeded the 40 percent mark for the first time since 1994, and only just missed an absolute majority of seats. Thanks to major gains throughout the whole country and across all population groups, the CDU/CSU once again looks like a true “catch-all-party”. It is primarily *Angela Merkel* whom CDU and CSU have to thank for this victory: as Chancellor she shone on the international stage, her management of the Euro crisis was convincing and she understood how to defuse social conflicts such as the issues of nuclear power and minimum wage. The FDP as her coalition partner, however, did at no point manage to fulfil the high expectations it awoke in 2009 and as a result was punished by the electorate. For the first time, the Liberals are no longer represented in the German Bundestag. As far as the opposition parties are concerned, only the SPD achieved a slight increase, but still remained far below its own expectations. Its election campaign had a bumpy start, its top candidate *Peer Steinbrück* sometimes acted unfortunate and its programmatic promise of greater social justice remained finally ineffective when confronted with an improved economic climate. The Greens gambled away their long-lasting high in the polls with an election campaign, which neglected their brand core. With a bundle of tax increases, a Veggie Day and a debate on paedophile, they annoyed middle class voters and unsettled their regular voter base. The Greens even finished slightly behind the Left Party, which thanks to its strong top candidate *Gregor Gysi* could limit the major losses that had been feared. Symptomatic for the permanent volatility of voters' preferences was also that small parties did relatively well this time and the newcomer party *AfD* only narrowly missed the entry into the parliament. As the option of a Red-Red-Green coalition in the new four-party parliament had been excluded, the CDU/CSU as the clearly strongest party held exploratory talks with the SPD and the Greens. However, the first Black-Green coalition at national level appeared too risky to the Greens and the CSU. After long negotiations and a ballot among the SPD members – a novelty in election history – a grand coalition was formed three months after the election and is now led by *Angela Merkel* and *Sigmar Gabriel*. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 175 – 206]

Sturm, Roland: Government formation after the German federal election of 2013: across political camps and time consuming.

In many respects, coalition building after the 2013 federal election provoked political innovation and developed a new mode of decision-making. Decision-making on the new coalition treaty took three steps: talks about talks, bargaining and for the Social Democrats, a referendum of all party members. For the first time all relevant political representatives of the future coalition partners on the federal and the Land level, and even one representative on the local level, were involved in the negotiations on the coalition treaty. To allow parliament to begin to work although only a caretaker government existed, a new super-committee was invented which, however, was unable to do serious legislative work. Why did it take longer than ever before for the parties to agree on a new Grand Coalition? The most important reason was that during the election campaign both the Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats had firmly committed themselves to different political camps. To both overcome the boundaries they had set for themselves on the one hand and to maintain their party's identity on the other, they jointly initiated a deliberation process which was intended to ground their decision to cooperate on a base of political rationale. This deliberation process produced a longish coalition treaty, which, however, already came under fire in the first weeks of the new government. [ZParl, vol. 45, no. 1, pp. 207 – 230]