

ABSTRACTS*

Horst, Patrick: The US-Democrats' presidential primaries in 2008: How Barack Obama won against Hillary Clinton.

The selection of the Democratic presidential candidate in the first half of 2008 was in some respects more important than the general election in November: It was almost certain that the winner of the Democratic contest would be elected next U.S. President, too. And for the first time in U.S. history this would be a woman or an African-American. Although *Hillary Clinton* was the frontrunner in the invisible primary all over 2007, in the end *Barack Obama* won the Democratic nomination. Besides his many skills and good fortune *Obama* proved to be more comfortable with his identity than *Clinton* was with hers. White racism no longer a hurdle, *Obama* overcame the much more dangerous "racism in the heads" of an older generation of black politicians and ministers with his successful campaign. *Clinton*, on the other hand, seemed to be a prisoner of sexist perceptions that the American society, the media and even her own campaign cultivated of her as a women's libber, a legacy problem acquired as First Lady. Only in a few rare moments she managed to escape this role attribution. But her "masculine-gendered campaign" reinforced this stereotype and antagonized many of the Democratic superdelegates who united behind *Obama*. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 259 ff.]

Kolkmann, Michael: Winning but falling short? Another victory for the Democratic Party in the 2008 congressional election in the United States.

The 2008 Congressional election ended with another victory for the Democratic Party. Due to Republican retirements, an abnormally bad campaign situation for Republicans, incumbent advantages and mostly uncompetitive districts, Democrats could enlarge their majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. After explaining the social structure of the 111th Congress and its leadership positions the question is asked whether Congress can continue to win back its constitutional role as a controlling and deliberative body, as it did in its previous term. To enact far-reaching reforms, e.g. in health care or climate politics, President *Barack Obama* may need to stress his campaign theme of bipartisan lawmaking to win over Republican votes, which is not helped by the increasingly polarized partisan groups in Congress. The prospects for Democrats in the 2010 midterm election look good. President *Obama* could be the first president to govern in a unified government for a full term since President *Carter*. [ZParl, vol 40, no. 2, pp. 280 ff.]

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

Kornelius, Bernhard: Obama and the turn of an era: His victory alone does not lead to change. The United States presidential election in 2008.

The United States presidential election of 2008 was a historic moment. After eight years of controversies over the *Bush* administration's conduct, long-drawn-out and divisive primaries and the most expensive campaign ever, the spectacular change was overshadowed by the global economic crisis. *Barack Obama* was elected 44th President, the first African-American ever to take office. After two narrow defeats in 2000 and 2004 the Democrats reclaimed the White House, flanked by successes in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Regardless of its political importance and symbolism the breakdown of the election result is less spectacular: *Obama's* lead over his Republican opponent *John McCain* was significant, but not overwhelming. The reasons behind the outcome for both candidates are complex and, as with virtually all democratic elections, not rooted solely in specific social-demographic groups or situational factors nor are they attributable to a singular event. There was no substantial realignment in the American electorate. Decisive instead were the political and administrative situations as well as the economic conditions in the context of a growing national desire for a fundamental policy change. The Republican candidate, *McCain*, was viewed as a continuation of the former administration despite all attempts to distance himself from President *George W. Bush*. *Obama* instead promised change to another, a renewed political America. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 296 ff.]

Falke, Andreas: Barack Obama's dilemma: Crisis manager or reformer? The formation of the government and its program in 2009.

From the onset of his presidency, President *Barack Obama* has been confronted with a severe financial and economic crisis. At the same time, he is pursuing an ambitious program of structural reforms in health care, climate change, energy efficiency, education and in reducing social inequality, all of which found entry into his stimulus package as well as his budget proposal. However, the financial and economic crisis is not under control, and his climate change and health care initiatives meet political and budgetary constraints. By the simultaneous pursuit of crisis management and ambitious long-term reform proposals, *Obama* risks overloading his agenda and thus damaging the long-term success of his presidency. So far his charisma has been able to absorb most of the political setbacks. If, however, he is unable to control the economic and financial crisis, his administration will become part of the crisis. *Obama* has assembled an impressive team, but his transition process has not been free of the frictions and delays that are typical for the American system of forming an administration. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 317 ff.]

Kübne, Alexander: U.S. presidential power invigorated by line-item veto. Experiences made during President Clinton's second administration.

At various times, U.S.-Presidents have desired line-item veto authority to help control spending and reduce deficit spending. President *Bill Clinton* became the first to cancel provisions of appropriations bills when the Line Item Veto Act took effect on January 1, 1997. Between the effective date and June 25, 1998 – the day the Supreme Court ruled the line-item veto unconstitutional – *Clinton* had vetoed 82 line-items in eleven different legislative acts. He used this new authority to achieve programmatic and partisan goals, but it had no

effect on overall spending and deficits. Above all, the line-item veto disrupts the existing system of checks and balances. It significantly alters the federal budget process by giving the president the unilateral power to change the text of duly enacted statutes. Such line-item vetoes are the functional equivalent of partial repeals of acts of Congress, but there is no provision in the Constitution that authorizes the president to enact, to amend or to repeal statutes. The ways in which President *Clinton* chose to exercise the line-item veto may have important implications for the use of this power by future presidents. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 337 ff.]

Schmitt-Beck, Rüdiger and Thorsten Faas: The election of the Hessian state parliament on January 18, 2009: the “Eternal Koch”.

Twelve months after the preceding election, Hessian voters were again called to the polls. In the absence of any other feasible coalition option, the second election within a year became necessary after two failed attempts to form a red-green minority government supported by the Leftist party. Individual social-democratic MPs had refused supporting such a coalition. Hesse then saw a short, but not very intense campaign. Following the Social Democrats' disaster in forming a government, they experienced yet another disaster on election night, facing tremendous losses from which mostly the Greens and the Liberals (and not so much the Christian Democrats) benefitted. Also, the Leftist Party was able to re-enter Parliament, while turnout was somewhat lower than before. As an overall result of the election, the Hessian state parliament was more fractionalized than ever before. Still, Christian Democrats and Liberals obtained a stable majority and – following rather short negotiations – agreed to form a coalition; *Roland Koch* was re-elected as the prime minister. The formation of this coalition also impacted federal politics: The “Grand Coalition” in Berlin can now no longer count on a stable majority of its own in the Bundesrat, but is dependent on the support of state governments ruling with third parties instead. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 358 ff.]

Niedermayer, Oskar: German citizens' take on democracy: No basic consensus among East and West Germans.

An analysis of the citizens' attitudes towards democracy differs on three levels: (1) the value level (idea of democracy in general), (2) the structural level (the form the democratic order takes on the national level) and (3) the performance level (functioning of democracy on a day-to-day basis). Separate longitudinal analyses of these three levels show that nine of ten Germans support the idea of democracy in general. The structural level receives less support, although the overwhelming majority still is in favour of the German form of democracy specified by the constitution. However, the majority of Germans is dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy in the country. On all three levels, the support in East Germany is systematically lower than in West Germany, i.e.: To this day, the understanding of democracy in East and West differs substantially. This can also be shown when turning to a typology of democratic orientations combining all three levels. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 383 ff.]

Behnke, Joachim: Trust and control: The impact of values on attitudes towards political institutions.

For modern democracies representative government is the only feasible option. Consequently, the nature of the relationship between the represented and the representatives lie at the core of every democracy theory, which since *John Locke* has been identified with the concept of “trusteeship”. The fundamental question concerning this relationship is therefore to what extent the trust of the represented – that the representative is really working in their interest – is actually justified. Values play an important role in this process of building trust in two ways: if the representative has a value system more or less identical to that of the represented, this will be interpreted as a signal for the similarity of interests and thus creates trust. But trust can also be based on the voter’s perception that the representative holds values which will induce him or her to act as an honest broker in the voters’ interest. The more the voter perceives the representative to lack such values, the lower the level of trust, which must then be compensated by establishing institutions of political control. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 397 ff.]

Gabriel, Oscar W. and Lisa Schöllhammer: Why Germans do not trust their district delegate more than the Bundestag.

In the seventies, when the political system of the United States was subject to a general crisis of confidence, *Richard F. Fenno* presumed that the American citizens love their congressmen much more than their congress. The presumption was later supported empirically in analyses conducted by *Glenn Parker* and *Roger Davidson*. It is plausible to assume that institutional and cultural differences between Germany and the United States result in a dissimilar structure. As survey data collected in Germany in 2005 show, German citizens trust the Bundestag more than their district delegates, and the members of the Bundestag as a group turn out as the least liked group. In general, trust in the respective objects is more similar in Germany than in the United States. Moreover, trust in parliament and the representatives depends on similar, only gradually different, factors. The evaluation of performance is by far the most important determinant of trust which is considerably higher in the Bundestag than in the district delegates. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 414 ff.]

Decker, Frank: Pre-electoral coalition propositions. An outline of research questions for Germany.

The issue of pre-electoral coalition propositions has only recently sparked research interest in comparative political science. This is attributable for the most part to the lack of data, which are generally difficult to collect, even more so for elections dating back far. For the purpose of analysis it is useful to differentiate between strong or weak, positive or negative and one-sided or reciprocal propositions. The occurrence and frequency of pre-electoral coalition propositions vary among political systems, depending on the institutional framework (parliamentary or presidential government, federal or unitary state organization, electoral system) and the political culture. In Germany, changes in the spectrum of political parties essentially require political actors to be more flexible in their coalition building patterns. This in turn entails institutional adjustments such as new rules of how governments

are formed or a shift of attitudes towards an increasing acceptance of minority governments. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 431 ff.]

Bühlmann, Marc, Adrian Vatter, Oliver Dlabac and Hans-Peter Schaub: The quality of democracy in the sub-national laboratory: Creating a new measure. Comments on Sabine Kropp et al. (ZParl 4/2008).

Sabine Kropp, Benedikt Giesbers, Nicole Höhmann, Laura Möllers and Matthias Ruschke (ZParl, vol. 39 (2008), no. 4) showed that *Vanhanen's* "Index of Democratization" is ill-suited to measure the quality of democracy in either the German Bundesländer or in Swiss cantons. They suggest that one should test the suitability of future measures of the quality of democracy within sub-national entities. Here an alternative approach is proposed: After showing the requirements which a new instrument for measuring the quality of democracy in sub-national regions has to meet, a new instrument developed explicitly for the sub-national level is conceptualized. It bases on the idea of a dual measurement: by combining aspects of the liberal and the radical model of democracy, this new instrument is meant to measure the quality of democracy in Swiss cantons. [ZParl, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 454 ff.]