

ABSTRACTS*

Sieberer, Ulrich: Lessons from Weimar? The German Bundestag's first parliamentary standing orders in 1951 between continuity and institutional reform.

The article provides an in-depth case study of the genesis of the first parliamentary standing orders of the German Bundestag in 1951. Descriptively, there is a strong continuity when comparing the standing orders of the Reichstag's internal rules during the Weimar Republic, with the exception of two major innovations (the establishment of a question time and public committee hearings) and conflicts regarding the rules on forming party groups, the procedures for initiating recorded votes, and restrictions on financial bills. Analytically, it remains to explain why the new rules exhibit such a strong path dependence despite the Weimar Republic's failure and despite the fact that the new constitutional regime constitutes a critical juncture on which far-reaching reforms could be expected. There is evidence that a combination of actors' perceptions, short-term competitive political considerations and risk attitudes explain the absence of a more fundamental reform. The relevant actors did not blame the Weimar Republic's failing on the institutional structure of the Weimar Reichstag and the parliamentary majority pursued well-defined small reforms to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the opposition in the short run. Under these conditions, large reforms with uncertain consequences were considered neither necessary nor advantageous. Beyond the specific case studied in the article at hand, this explanation suggests that actors' rational self-interest and path-dependency are complementary rather than competing explanations for institutional reform. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 3 – 25]

Bergmann, Henning, Stefanie Bailer, Tamaki Ohmura, Thomas Saalfeld and Ulrich Sieberer: Recorded Votes from 1949 to 2013 in the German Bundestag: Results of a new data set.

Roll call votes provide crucial data for the study of parliamentary behaviour. A novel dataset on all recorded votes in the Bundestag between 1949 and 2013 combines information on MPs' individual voting behaviour with contextual information on the respective motions and individual characteristics of MPs. First analyses illustrate potential applications for these novel data. First, there is substantial variation in the request for recorded votes over time. The observed patterns are consistent with theoretical models that understand roll call vote request as an instrument by which parliamentary party groups signal policy positions and enforce intra-party unity. Second, differences in voting unity between parties and over time can be identified. This variation can be partly explained by established theories but also highlights the need for further analysis. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 26 – 50]

Brocker, Lars: Public parliamentary sessions and closed sessions of the committees: The work sharing concept of article 42 (1) 1 Basic Law.

Publicity of parliamentary sessions is a basic principle of parliamentary democracy and enables the People to "control" parliament. However, a dictate of general transparency of parliamentary work does not follow from this. The principle of publicity is restricted to the

* Diese sind in deutscher Sprache zu finden auf www.zparl.de.

sessions of the floor of the House and cannot be extended to the sessions of the committees. Also parliamentary work does need an area of retreat. Closed sessions can assure efficiency and therefore the functioning of parliamentary work. Concerning the work of the German Bundestag this is appropriately postulated. This work sharing concept is laid out in article 42 (1) 1 Basic Law. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 50 – 57]

Radojevic, Marco: The appointment of Committees of Inquiry in the German Bundestag: What influence does issue salience have?

Committees of Inquiry are powerful instruments of legislative oversight and hold the potential to generate extensive public attention. One can argue that an issue needs to be salient before legislators consider establishing a Committee of Inquiry. The parliamentary groups in the Bundestag employ Committees of Inquiry in a strategic fashion. Legislators use them to signal their responsiveness to public concerns. Therefore, Committees of Inquiry do not reveal political scandals; instead, they are instigated as a reaction to issues already discussed in the public and the media. Two additional conditions are required for initiating a Committee of Inquiry: regular means of oversight are depleted and sufficient legislative resources are available. If these conditions are satisfied, parliamentary party leaders engage in a cost-benefit analysis for assessing the appointment of a Committee of Inquiry. A content analysis of 14 expert interviews with current and former MPs who were members of a Committee of Inquiry provides evidence for the influence of issue salience on the appointment of Committees of Inquiry. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 58 – 68]

Karow, Sophie and Sebastian Bukow: Democracy under time pressure? Findings on the acceleration of German legislation.

Modern societies are characterized by an increasing acceleration in all areas of life. The political system is under pressure to adapt to this, especially since decision-making in democratic systems is perceived as taking too long. The question is whether democratic legislators adapt to the process of acceleration – which ultimately is a challenge to the political system's claim to exercise power – by speeding up their legislation. A quantitative analysis of German national legislation (1990 to 2013) shows that the German Bundestag has in fact been accelerating its legislation. In contrast, there is no evidence that other legislative actors outside the parliament have adapted to the general process of acceleration in the German society so far. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 69 – 84]

Reiding, Hilde, Wim van Meurs and Zoë Hulsenboom: Scrutinising the European subsidiarity test. Expectations and first experiences of the Lisbon instrument in the German Bundestag and the Dutch Tweede Kamer.

Five years have passed since the introduction of the subsidiarity test in the Lisbon Treaty. Hence, an evaluation of this instrument to enhance the position of national parliaments in European political decision-making is due. Looking back, parliaments have to decide whether the limited benefits (in terms of increased public trust and influence on the European Commission or national government) have been worth the considerable administrative costs. The glaring differences in the actual use of the instrument from one EU member state to the next have surprised both politicians and academics. Arguably, neither external

factors, such as the level of euroscepticism, nor internal procedural differences offer satisfactory explanations for these disparities. In spite of broad agreement on most European policy issues, Berlin and The Hague beg to disagree on this test. In the Bundestag, the prevailing opinion holds that upholding the subsidiarity principle is first and foremost the responsibility of the government as guarantor of the national interest. The parliamentary subsidiarity test is regarded as a measure of last resort at best. For the Dutch Tweede Kamer, however, irrespective whether it trusts national government or even the European Commission, the subsidiarity instrument epitomizes parliamentary self-esteem. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 85 – 101]

Jochem, Sven: The Finnish parliamentary elections of April 19, 2015 – Challenges for the negotiation democracy.

The Finnish election from 19th April 2015 caused a change in government and a distinct centre-right coalition in the Nordic country of great coalitions. For the first time, the right wing populist Finns-Party is a part of government. In reaction to great economic and political challenges, the new government proclaims an austerity strategy, which in turn fueled protests and conflicts with the left parties and trade unions. The right wing populist Finns-Party with its political goals and strategies implies one of the most severe challenges for the Finnish negotiation democracy in the nearer future. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 102 – 117]

Gawehns, Florian: Irresponsible government? The Australian Senate as institutional singularity in the age of political party fragmentation.

Whereas last chambers in most Westminster-Systems tend to be subject of reform or abolition efforts, the Australian Senate managed to defend its outstanding strong position within Australia's system of government. Australian exceptionalism of its federal bicameralism roots in its combination of a "strong" second chamber elected by proportional representation with a first chamber elected through a majority formula ("alternative vote") following the British constitutional pattern. Holding the balance of power, minor parties and independent Senators use their representation in the Senate to gain political influence. Simultaneously, rising party fragmentation in the Senate requires the government to use coalitions depending on the issue in order to obtain support for their legislative measures. Recent developments in Australian climate policy show how consensual decision-making and interparty negotiation are incorporated in a system originally based on majority rule. While the government accepted the power of the Senate and the delay of its legislative program, the Senate acknowledged executive supremacy over budget and supply legislation in exchange. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 117 – 138]

Thomala, Tobias: Is there life in the old dog yet? The Canadian general election on October 19, 2015.

The elections of the Canadian House of Commons 2015 surprised by an electoral victory of the once dominant Liberal Party of Canada which had been marginalized in the 2011 general election. The earthquake victory of the Liberals who were able to form a majority government after increasing their number of seats from 34 in 2011 to 184 in 2015 seems

to move backwards in electoral history in many regards. The Canadian electorate, eager for change, reduced the Conservative Party to its core vote in Western Canada and rural Ontario. The earlier Official Opposition, the NDP, was not able to live up to its electoral success in Québec in 2011 and became only the second largest opposition party. The Bloc Québécois lost votes and confirms the loss of significance of Québec separatism. The Liberal Party was able to regain old supporters like the regions of Québec and Ontario as well as the immigrant vote and also managed to score points with its young and famous front-runner *Justin Trudeau*. The electoral victory of the Liberals raises questions about their prospective dominance. They announced a great reform. The winner has already declared his intention to change the first-past-the-post electoral system to a more proportional one, from which smaller parties like the Greens could benefit. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 139 – 155]

Klatt, Jonathan: Altering the established electoral system – A comparison of reform-attempts in Italy, Japan, New Zealand and Canada.

Once established, in most democracies electoral systems remain fundamentally unaltered. Therefore, countries that executed such change are of particular interest. Italy, Japan and New Zealand rejected their existing electoral laws and established mixed systems. In contrast, the Canadian attempt failed. In the examined cases, legitimacy deficits and a close interaction between party elites and the public were the key factors for a successful electoral system change. Due to the interests of the authorities, parliamentary majorities, which are necessary for political reforms, were not given. Instead, it took individual politicians who canalized public discontent and put reforms on the agenda, so that referenda and deselection of reform resistant parties enabled changes to the electoral system. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 156 – 175]

Mosler, Hannes B.: Banning the United Progressive Party in the Republic of Korea.

The South Korean constitutional court decided in 2014 to ban the minor leftist United Progressive Party (UPP) and to deprive its five lawmakers of their seats in the national parliament. In the petition by the right-conservative government to disband the UPP, the party was accused of supporting North Korea and to have planned to overthrow the South Korean government, which would violate the free democratic basic order and infringe upon the National Security Act. In his dissenting opinion, one of the nine judges challenged the majority's decision's main arguments. Also within heavily polarized politics, academia and society the petition as well as the decision was met with strong opposition. The investigation on the circumstances leading up to the initiation of the petition and the constitutional judges' interpretation of the article on political parties shows that the verdict leaves ample room for fundamental critique – both from a democratic theory perspective and from a legal theory perspective –, and concludes that the South Korean constitutional court handled the particular constitutional norm on party ban in a remarkably imprudent fashion. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 176 – 194]

Dörner, Andreas and Ludgera Vogt: Politicians and political satire: the staging of the political class by and in the German “heute show”.

The “heute show” (broadcast on ZDF, a public-service television broadcaster) is a satirical news show that has gained great attention within the political public sphere of Germany over the last couple of years. The show reaches a broad public and especially appeals to a younger audience. It has successfully established a new kind of discourse in German political culture. This article focuses on the show’s characteristics, lying between the genres of comedy and political satire. On the one hand the studio interviews offer politicians a stage for presenting themselves as sympathetic, self-ironical and popular individuals. On the other hand, the main strategy of the show is to criticize political actors for individual weaknesses while political issues and discussions receive less attention. There is some empirical evidence that watching the “heute show” may be responsible for developing a negative attitude concerning politicians. But there is no evidence that the show’s impact accounts for a general disenchantment with politics. Instead, it can improve political interest especially with the younger people. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 1, pp. 195 – 211]

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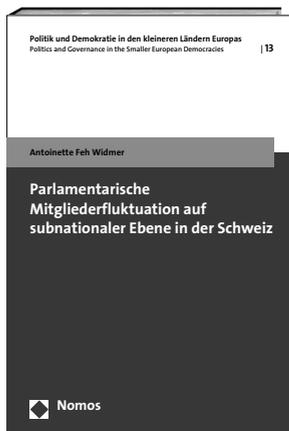
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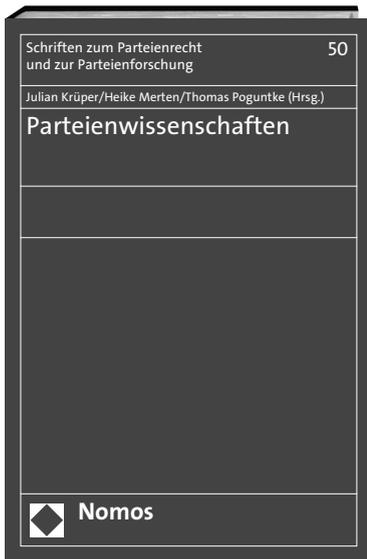
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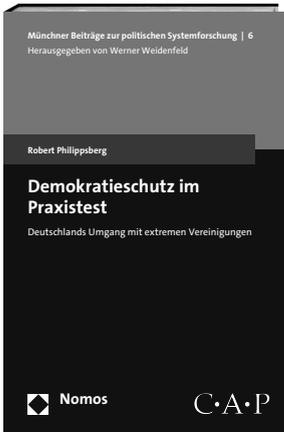
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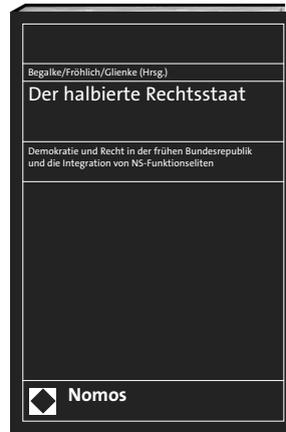
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