

ABSTRACTS*

Tokatlı, Mahir: A new governmental system in the making? The Turkish parliamentary elections on June 7, and November 1, 2015.

In the parliamentary elections in June, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) failed to gain an absolute majority for the first time since 2002. The ensuing coalition negotiations were not successful and early elections were announced. In a time of great instability the AKP emphasized security and stability and took even stronger nationalistic stances. This helped them to win back their absolute majority with 49.5 percent, though not a constitutional changing majority, which would allow installing a presidential system à la turca with a strong executive branch. An important factor contributing to this result was the electoral success of the Democratic Party of Peoples (HDP), which managed to surpass the 10-percent threshold for the first time. They were able to mobilize voters in the eastern part of Turkey and successfully challenged the dominant role of the AKP in that region. The Republican People's Party (CHP) again finished as the second strongest party (25.3 percent), but received more than one third of its seats in the three biggest cities. The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) won a sizeable share of the vote (16.3 percent) in the first election, but lost half of its seats in the early elections. Thus, there was no change in the governmental system; nonetheless, the head of state *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan* is able to use his considerable powers in a constellation of a one-party government more extensively than in a coalition government. Additionally, the declaration of state emergency due to the failed coup attempt provides the possibility to govern by presidential decrees. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 735 – 752]

Krumm, Thomas: Voting abroad: A comparison of the Turkish parliamentary elections in Germany on June 7, and November 1, 2015.

Against the background of recent developments in Turkey, the results of the June and November 2015 parliamentary elections among Turkish citizens in Germany are analyzed at the level of 13 Turkish consulates and compared internationally. The share of votes of the ruling AK Party is about ten percent higher in Germany than the domestic results (in the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria, even about twenty percent higher). Within Germany one can observe a west-east difference in AKP support. This raises questions about the causes of the highly conservative voting behavior of Turkish immigrants in Germany in 'home elections'. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 753 – 770]

Arndt, Christoph: The Danish Folketing elections on June 18, 2015: Tight victory of civic parties and a highly volatile electorate.

The 2015 election to the Danish Folketing saw yet another change of government as the centre-left minority government led by the social democratic Prime Minister *Helle Thorning-Schmidt* lost to the centre-right camp, which obtained a single-seat majority. Despite this narrow lead, the election also saw a political landslide since the liberal-conservative Venstre lost its position as largest party to the social democrats after going down more than

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seven percent of the votes. The national-conservative Danish People's Party became the second largest party after gaining almost nine percentage points. The social liberals and socialists, the former coalition partners of the social democrats, more than halved their seats. The 2015 election was thus the election with the highest net volatility and voter migration since the earthquake election of 1973. The new Prime Minister *Lars Løkke Rasmussen* from the liberal-conservative Venstre is now confronted with various challenges since he was not able to build a coalition with other centre-right parties. The third largest party therefore governs alone as a single party minority government with a single-seat majority for the centre-right camp. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 771 – 782]

Pfeiffer, Christian: The Spanish general elections on June 26, 2016: A second attempt to form a government in the new four-party-system.

The general elections on June 26, 2016 were the second elections within seven months. Already on December 20, 2015, the Spanish citizens were asked to elect a new government. The elections in December can be seen as a political watershed, which indicated the end of the two-party-system (PP and PSOE), which had characterized the Spanish democracy ever since the democratic transition in 1982. The then old system was replaced by a four-party-system comprising the PP, PSOE, Podemos and Ciudadanos. Subsequently, Spain experienced a political blockade that led to new elections on June 26, 2016 which were clearly won by the conservative PP. But once again the formation of government seemed as difficult as before. Due to the high polarization, caused by all parties' lack of willingness to compromise and to enter into dialogue, and the territorial problem caused by the separatist movement in Catalonia, it needed the social democrats of the PSOE, who are going through the deepest crisis of their existence in democratic Spain, to unblock the political situation. *Mariano Rajoy* (PP) was elected on October 29, 2016 as the new and old prime minister of Spain and is the head of a minority government. He faces big political and economic challenges, which can only be solved by a new dialogue-based political culture. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 783 – 799]

Poli, Maria Daniela: The change of political parties in Italy.

Italian party pluralism is rooted in its constitutional history. On the basis of its three phases (1949 – 1994; 1994 – 2013; since 2013), both the relationship between electoral law and political parties and the 'serious' transformation of the political party system in Italy are analyzed. The original decision for proportional representation has been questioned since the 1990s; however, all attempts to force bi-polarism through modifications of the electoral law were not successful. In addition, the electoral Law No. 270/2005 has not only failed to solve the problem of non-government, but has also undermined the principle of political representation and has been declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. Even the recently passed Law No. 52/2015 ('Italicum') does not seem to be able to overcome the grounds of unconstitutionality. The party landscape, which in the first phase was characterized by the contraposition between the Christian Democratic Party and the Communist Party and by the lack of a working mechanism of alternation due to the so-called 'conventio ad excludendum', has become highly fragmented and populist in the second and third phases. *Renzi's* government is a prime example of the problems with the electoral law and the crises of the representation and the party system. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 800 – 813]

Johann, David, Marcelo Jenny and Sylvia Kritzinger: More competition at Austrian federal elections? The new party NEOS and its closest opponents.

The electoral success of the new party „NEOS - Das Neue Österreich und Liberales Forum“ has consequences for the Austrian party system. Drawing on data from the Austrian National Election Study (AUTNES) that cover the political supply side (parties and their candidates) and demand side (voters) of the political system, one can show that some NEOS issue positions overlap with the positions of the ÖVP and the Greens. Overall, however, NEOS can be classified as a liberal center party, situated between the Greens to their left and the ÖVP to their right, and that represents a modern, urban middle class in Austria. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 814 – 830]

Jarosz, Adam: Participation of the German minority in the Polish local elections 1990-2014.

The German minority is concentrated in the area of Opole Silesia and is an important political factor in this region. The Germans regularly gain many seats in the municipality, city and county councils, mostly in rural areas in the Eastern part of the Opole Voievodship. They are also an important faction in the Opole Regional Assembly. Despite initial controversies and tensions, they proved to be a solid host and an open partner for all political forces on the local political scenes. In a broader perspective the participation of the German minority in the Polish local government structures is a natural process in Poland's democratic development. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 831 – 850]

Pautsch, Arne and Robert Müller-Török: The electoral law for expatriate Germans according to § 12, 2 BWG reconsidered? A juridical and administrative analysis.

In 1985, German expatriates were given the right to vote in parliamentary elections. In 2012, the election law governing this right was challenged before the German Constitutional Court, which ruled that, among others, a mandatory residence within a certain time span before the respective election was unconstitutional. Hence, adaptations were necessary and subsequently became law. These laws need to be subjected to another critical analysis with a focus on whether expatriates can effectively exercise their right to vote. Postal voting, the only way for expatriates to participate in elections, contains several severe shortcomings, above all that timelines in the election laws are not feasible for the postal services in reality and that there is a lack of guarantees for a secret ballot. From the authors' perspective, polling stations in German consulates could be a possible remedy and, with software being able to comply with all voting principles, even eVoting. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 851 – 866]

Eisel, Stephan: E-petitions at the German Bundestag. A useful offer with limited range.

Since 2005, the German Bundestag offers the possibility to submit individual petitions through the use of an Internet form. In 2009, following a pilot experiment, it established the category of “public petitions” for issues of common interest, which can be supported by electronic signatures. Since 2011, data have been available that allow an analysis of this electronic petition system. These data show that the number of individual petitions through the online offer has not increased, online “public petitions” found only weak resonance, with mass petitions still having their largest popularity outside the Internet, the online-forums for debate are platforms for a small minority, and registered users are mostly unique

visitors and not permanent users. Although the online portal of the petitions committee of the German Bundestag (Petitionsausschuss des Deutschen Bundestages) makes it easier for citizens to turn to Parliament with their concerns, it is only used by a small minority and thus is similar to the reception rate of offers of similar kinds in the Internet. Its limited range is also a consequence of the constraints inherent to the Internet especially when it comes to political forums. The primacy or even exclusiveness of the digital world would therefore be contrary to the basic right of equal access to political participation, which is guaranteed in the German constitution. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 867 – 877]

Sturm, Roland: Brexit – the United Kingdom in a state of emergency?

The Brexit decision has far-reaching consequences for British politics and society. We do not know the answers to the following questions: Do referenda challenge parliamentary sovereignty and how do they relate to constitutional questions? Second, what are the prospects of the British party system and will we experience ten years or more of conservative rule? What keeps the British nations together and will Scotland challenge the unity of the UK? Then there are questions regarding economic developments, such as whether Brexit poses a vital danger for the British economy. What will the future relationship of the UK and the EU be like? What are Britain's options? [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 878 – 892]

Jesse, Eckhard: Making the case for a one-vote system with complementary votes for German federal elections.

Germany's two-vote system – effective at the federal level since 1953 and adopted by most of the 16 states thereafter – shows several deficits. For instance, due to the fact that the electorate does not base its electoral choice on the local candidates' political profile, the first vote has never attained its intended role of a "personal vote". That is why in most cases the first vote hinges on the second vote: Being somewhat opaque to most people, the first vote is considered to be a vote of secondary importance. Turning back to the one-vote system of 1949 would imply that the electors' vote is accounted for in a twofold manner: once for the candidate, once for his or her party. However, the electorate should be given a complementary vote that is deployed whenever the main vote is cast in favour of a person/a party that falls short off the five-percent threshold. As a result, the problem of wasted votes would be dramatically reduced. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 893 – 903]

Röper, Erich: More effective implementation of decisions on petitions by the German Bundestag.

Petitions against measures by official authorities are usually filed by individuals or groups to the responsible departments or parliaments. These requests or complaints are examined mostly without public debate by the petitions committee or the plenum and sent to the government for further consideration. However, parliament typically does not share information on how the executive branch dealt with the relevant matter. Therefore, Members of Parliament can neither execute effective control nor can they help petitioners by generating public pressure. As a consequence it seems appropriate to legally oblige the government to report to the parliament in due time to enable public debate of these matters in the plenum. [ZParl, vol. 47 (2016), no. 4, pp. 904 – 908]

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