

ABSTRACTS

Jesse, Eckhard: The 2017 German federal election in the light of the representative election statistics.

The German representative election statistics is unique in the world. It documents the voter turnout for ten age groups and the voting behaviour for gender and six age groups. In 2017, the proportion of women voting for the CDU/CSU was particularly high, and women voting for the Greens even surpassed that share. Male voters dominated in the AfD's results and this at a considerably higher rate than in 2013. The same holds for FDP and Die Linke voters – though the gender gap in those parties is smaller. For the SPD the distribution of sexes among their voters is roughly identical. Union and SPD are more popular with the older electorate, whereas younger voters favour either Die Linke, the FDP and especially the Greens. Additionally, the statistics provide information on ballot box voting versus postal voting, vote-splitting and invalid voting behaviour; what the statistics cannot offer are explanations of the election results. Even though age and sex do not suffice to explain them, the representative election statistics is a fruitful source for scientific research – especially for comparative studies. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 223 – 242]

Bergmann, Knut, Matthias Diermeier and Judith Niehues: A complex entity: A socio-economic analysis of the AfD's 2017 German federal election outcome.

The empirical analysis of socio-economic characteristics of the 2017 German federal election results reveals that the AfD electorate largely corresponds to a cross-section of Germany's society. In the course of changing from a mainly Eurosceptical to a right-wing populist party, support for the AfD has particularly increased in lower income segments. Additionally, the AfD is especially successful in electoral districts with high employment shares in the manufacturing sector, both in East and West Germany. The analysis of AfD-strongholds highlights the different regional patterns within the Federal Republic: The party scored high in southern German industrial cities, rural areas in eastern Bavaria, agglomerations in the Ruhr Area and in various regions of East Germany. Depending on a constituency's specific economic and geographical situation, the AfD competes for core voters from several other parties. Finally, the range of regions in which the AfD was successful emphasizes that a monocausal interpretation – in particular the deprivation hypothesis – falls short when explaining its success at the polling stations. Actually, only a small fraction of the nationwide votes stems from the socially deprived strongholds in the Ruhr Area. In contrast, regional-specific and cultural-historical factors seem to be far more important explanatory determinants. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 243 – 264]

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

Jakobs, Simon and Uwe Jun: Party competition and coalition formation in Germany 2017/18: An analysis of the electoral platforms.

The 2017 German federal election was followed by a series of coalition talks that, since World War II, were unprecedented. After the exploratory talks between CDU/CSU, FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen had failed, CDU/CSU and SPD started to open negotiations. This decision stood in straight opposition to what the Social Democrats had declared immediately after the election results had been publicized, which was not to be available for coalition talks. An analysis of the parties' electoral platforms shows that the programmatic positions of CDU/CSU, FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen were set widely apart and that a coalition of these four parties would have demanded heavy concessions from all of the coalition partners. CDU/CSU's and SPD's platforms were closer together, which made forming and entering a new Grand Coalition more likely than the originally discussed alliance. However, CDU/CSU and SPD differ much more from each other than is often portrayed by the media. Both parties had to agree to quite some compromises in order to obtain a governing majority as it is necessary in parliamentary democracies. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 265 – 285]

Niedermayer, Oskar: The development of the German party system. The importance of short-term factors in the decade of change in Europe.

When only glancing at the 2013 German federal election it seems to be an exceptional case, as it reversed the long-term trend of the German party system towards an ever-increasing fragmentation by a specific combination of short-term factors. The results of the 2017 election, however, seem to have re-instated the long-term factors and led the fragmentation trend to pick up again. When taking a closer look it becomes apparent that the structural characteristics of the party system remained stable during the first half of the election period and that the election results were very strongly determined by short-term factors – especially by refugee policies. The development of the party system since 2013 therefore is not an inevitable process only determined by long-term economical and societal changes. It can be reversed or accelerated by the parties themselves, depending on how they shape the short-term factors determining the electoral behaviour by their own personal and policy offers to the voters. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 286 – 303]

Wiesendahl, Elmar, Benjamin Höhne and Malte Cordes: Member parties – a never-ending decline?

Declining numbers of party members in Europe have led to the presumption that over time parties will disappear as membership organizations. This view is opposed by the normalization thesis, which predicts that membership parties will survive albeit on low levels. But how likely is it that they will either disappear or normalize their membership numbers? Membership developments are subject to a business cycle and in Germany it reached its climax between the mid-1970s up until shortly after the German reunification in the early 1990s. Since then there has been a steady decline in membership, mainly due to a lack of entries, an increase of resignations and a steadily growing cohort of older party members passing away. According to the normalization thesis, membership numbers are expected to continue to decline following the extraordinary inflow of members in the mid-1970s and early 1990s. In the longer term it is expected that those numbers will stabilize. By means of

a time series analysis their development is estimated up to 2030. The results show that more members will join than leave. When this phase – in which a large share of resignations is owed to members passing away – subsides, the numbers of entries and exits are likely to align. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 304 – 324]

Walther, Jens and Michael Angenendt: ‘Free Voters’ as a hybrid between party and independent local lists. Members, identity and organization.

Since the beginning of the Federal Republic, Free Voters have been a dominant actor in German local politics. Despite their importance on the local level, their membership structure, identity and organization have hardly been studied. Based on a representative survey their self-perception as a non-party, the socio-economic profile of their members and their organizational structure are empirically analysed. The findings show that their members view the continuing process of party-formation in a predominantly positive light, yet still hold a sceptical attitude towards established parties in parliament. While their socio-economic profile resembles that of members from other parties, the organizational structure of the Free Voters is quite different from that of established German parties with far less than half of the respondents being a formal member of the Free Voters. Their sceptical stand towards traditional party organization forms is therefore also expressed by a lower degree of formalization. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 325 – 345]

Hilmer, Richard and Jérémie Gagné: The 2017 German federal election: GroKo IV – no alternative for Germany.

For the election on September 24, 2017, *Angela Merkel's* second Grand Coalition had a remarkable record to present to German voters: stable economic growth, secure jobs and unemployment at a rare low. However, both coalition partners were dealt a blow: CDU/CSU and SPD received their worst results since 1949. Whilst citizens did acknowledge the country's increasing wealth, they were still critical of its unequal distribution. Additionally, many voters were anxious about their financial outlook and the threat of old-age poverty in the mid and long run. Nonetheless, the public's general mood had been mainly positive until the summer of 2015, when it started turning in light of an increasingly dramatic refugee situation. Despite an initially wide support for *Merkel's* decision to accept Syrian refugees stranded in Budapest into Germany, scepticism and outright opposition grew fiercer as the number of refugee arrivals kept going up. At the end of the day, SPD voters disappointed by a government policy perceived as socially unjust shifted towards the Left Party, the Greens and the FDP, while an even higher number of former CDU/CSU voters turned towards the FDP and the AfD – out of protest against refugee policies. With an AfD score of 12.6 percent, a party right of the CDU/CSU, managed for the first time not only to enter the national parliament, but also to achieve third rank. A new multitude of parliamentary parties (six instead of four) was not the least of factors complicating coalition building. At first, odds seemed high for CDU/CSU, FDP and the Greens to form a coalition but after weeks of difficult negotiations, programmatic and strategic discrepancies turned out to be too wide. Thus, the only option remaining was to re-establish the very Grand Coalition so severely punished by voters: a government on probation, arguably. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 372 – 406]

Siefken, Sven T.: “Reluctant” government formation – the tedious road to the coalition after the 2017 German federal election.

The formation of the federal government in Germany after the Bundestag election in 2017 was more complicated and took longer than ever before. This was not only caused by the election results but also by the early determination of the SPD to take the role of opposition. Thus only a “Jamaica” coalition (named after CDU/CSU’s, FDP’s and Greens’ party colours) seemed possible. Exploratory talks were held in a formal way and in great detail. But when the FDP stepped out, they failed. A phase of uncertainty and discussion about new elections or a minority government ensued. The federal president took the lead and admonished the parties to stronger efforts in building a government. Eventually, a contract for a Grand Coalition composed of CDU, CSU and SPD was negotiated. The parties accepted it through different instruments, with the SPD conducting a written survey of all members as it had done in 2013. Thus the federal government was installed 171 days after the election was held. The entire process of government formation shows both an advanced formalization and its pitfalls. The growing importance of the Länder in the coalition negotiations is as apparent as is the necessity to analyze the role of individual actors in the process. [ZParl, vol. 49 (2018), no. 2, pp. 407 – 436]