

Abstracts

Gerd Strohmeier

Grand Coalitions in Germany and Austria

In terms of democratic theory grand coalitions are a special case that differs significantly from small coalitions. These differences are explained using coalitions in Germany and Austria as an example. The article discusses what factors led to the building of grand coalitions in both countries, what consequences they had for the respective political systems, why they are more frequent in Austria and what were the reasons for its higher acceptance in the Austrian public. In addition to that the comparison will contribute to the definition of a particular kind of grand coalition which has been the dominating type in both Germany and Austria: monopolizing grand coalitions.

Reimut Zohlnhöfer

The Reform of German Federalism Part I Effects on Lawmaking

The paper discusses the effects of the first step of the reform of German federalism on policy-making. It turns out that the new legislative competences of the Länder are of limited importance because they tend to coordinate policies among themselves. On the federal level, the overall ratio of bills needing Bundesrat approval to all bills decreases substantially, but it is mostly routine decisions that can be adopted without Bundesrat approval now. A counterfactual analysis of the red-green coalition's key decisions reveals that the necessity of Bundesrat approval might even decrease for important reforms. Nevertheless, the permanent electoral campaign which German governments find themselves in continues to make coherent and far-reaching reforms difficult. Furthermore, the effects of the reform depend on how the Federal Constitutional Court interprets the new constitutional rules.

Andreas M. Wüst

Candidates to the German Bundestag and Immigration Policy

An Analysis of Core Policy Aspects

Among the topics with a high potential for gaining relevance in Germany are immigration and integration policies. Most Bundestag candidates are principally open to the creation of a legal framework on immigration, but in favor of cultural assimilation. Their positions on immigration and assimilation are to a high degree determined by their ideological orientation. Attitudes toward globalization and on equal opportunities play an additional role for the position on immigration issues. Socio-structural and contextual factors contribute to an explanation of variance among the different candidates. And it matters for their position whether they consider a migration-related issue as being among the most important political problems. Yet, a generational shift in opinion could only be detected within the small parties FDP, Greens and the Socialists.

Patrick Horst

The Election of Obama as 44th US President

Barack Obama's election as President of the United States was the result of a referendum against an unpopular president who had been in charge of an economic recession and a controversial war in Iraq. Although he is the first Afro American to be elected the historic success of the junior senator from Illinois came as no surprise. Opponent John McCain could not separate himself from the negative image of George W. Bush and his Republican party. His reputation as a party maverick turned out to be a liability. Obama, on the other hand, created widespread enthusiasm among younger, black and Hispanic voters. But his fundamental advantage was the bad state of the economy. With the financial meltdown at the end of September 2008 his electoral success was all but certain.