

## Party Politics in the Decision-Making System of German Merkel's Grand Coalition

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### Abstract

Grand coalition parties—the Union Party (CDI+CSU) and SPD—currently hold approximately 73% of the seats in the German Bundestag, but are nonetheless beset by many conflicts and problems, including decreasing party membership, falling popular support and poor election results in local parliaments. Moreover, the three opposition parties—FDP, die Linke and the German Green party—can currently claim around 10% support in polls. In effect, since November 2005, there has been a five-party system in place not only at the federal level, but also contesting local government elections. Meanwhile, a CDU-Grünen coalition has emerged at the local level in Hamburg. These strange conditions make Merkel's grand coalition different from the minimum winning coalitions typically seen in stable political systems. This research considers the impact of Merkel's grand coalition on German politics, examining the political procedures and applying "veto player theory": number of veto players, distance of different ideologies, and intra-cohesion grade of veto plays. This provides insight into how Merkel's grand coalition operates, why its policies have changed and why there has been a decline in political stability.

**Key Words:** grand coalition, German political parties, Merkel, veto player theory