

Alexander H. Trechsel

European Union Democracy Observatory (EUDO)

Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies

European University Institute, Firenze, Italy

Europeanization of European Democracy

Conference and Public Forum

Canada and Europe: Converging or Diverging Responses to
International and Domestic Challenges?

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Starting point

- Focus on “EU Democracy”
- My argument: it’s limited, but improving...
- Where can EU Democracy be found?
 - European Parliament elections
 - European Citizen Initiative
 - Integration referendums
- Only direct mechanism of citizen participation: European Parliament elections
- However, series of national elections regarding national issues held at the same time



Starting point

- Generally: “second order events”, where less is at stake than in national elections, where large, governing parties lose, new small parties gain, turnout is low and where the competition concerns above all national politics
- There were several attempts to change this, recently, some more successful than others



Starting point

- First: creation of a European party system, with European parties as drivers?
- Second: Andrew Duff's proposal of creating a transnational constituency for at least a part of the European Parliament?
- Third: the Spitzenkandidaten -> implemented based on the legal basis offered by the Treaty of Lisbon and thanks to political will by the largest parties to "play the game"



Starting point

- However: Spitzenkandidaten plan did not work either – the “presidentialization” of the European electoral system did not really have the anticipated impact on the elections
- More precisely: Spitzenkandidaten-campaigns did have an impact on the probability for turning out, but only for those who recognized at least one of the top candidates, Schulz or Juncker
- But these were few! 19% Juncker, 17% Schulz
- In sum: institutional approach for Europeanizing European Democracy pretty much failed...



The exogenous shock: the economic and financial crisis

- As many preceding crisis: very strong repercussions on European integration
- On the one hand: massively weakened the project of a united Europe – the Eurocrisis has almost led to a break-up of the Union and this threat is not over yet
- On the other hand: strong integration push: two-pack, six-pack, Fiscal compact, Banking union...



The exogenous shock: the economic and financial crisis

- Add to this: Europe has become an item affecting parties and voters. It does so at the national level – and it does so at the European level
- To put it provocatively: what the great European thinkers, leaders and policy makers have failed to achieve, reckless bankers, first in the US and then in the rest of the world, have successfully, though involuntarily, achieved



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- Ongoing work together with Diego Garzia (EUI) and Lorenzo de Sio (LUISS): we looked very closely at the outcomes of the 2009 and of the 2014 EP elections
- We look at electoral gains and losses by parties in these two European elections
- In our framework, winning means getting higher electoral returns in EP elections than in the preceding national elections – inverse for losing



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- Example: Front National wins more in EP elections than in national elections -> it profits from EP elections
- The inverse is true for, say, the Socialists in France in 2014 – they lost votes quite dramatically in the EP elections compared to the last national elections



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- We distinguish throughout our research between Western and Eastern Europe
- 1. in the West, the second-order character of the elections has not changed much. It gets slightly weaker in 2014, but it's still clearly there: large parties and governing parties lose
- 2. in Eastern Europe, we do not find much of a second-order model effect
- First conclusion: above all a Western phenomenon – political parties in the new European member states seem to be immune to this



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- Thanks to two very large research efforts led at the European University Institute in 2009 and 2014, we have unique data at our disposal allowing us to measure the issue-space in which parties competed in these two European elections
- Data: EU Profiler 2009 the euandi 2014 pan-European Voting Advice Application projects
- 274 parties coded in 2009, 242 in 2014
- Ceteris paribus: detailed information on party stances on 30 issues for each election
- 17 common statements in 2009 and 2014



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- Again, we find two results, but this time they are very similar across the EU
- First, when we take the issues on which parties compete into account, we can much better predict the outcome of the elections. This was already the case in 2009, but in 2014 it became even more important. So we start seeing a political space that contains issues on which parties throughout Europe compete, independently from their national origins
- Our second result here is even more surprising



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- In 2014, contrary to 2009, out of a long series of issues, **European integration** stands out. It is the **only** issue that matters across the board, both in the West and in the East
- However, there is a big nuance to be made: in the **West**, it is parties that wanted to **stop** or even **reverse** European integration that profited most, electorally. Opposition to Europe paid out



Modifying the second-order model: empirics

- In the **East**, however, the **inverse** took place. A pro-integration attitude was actually welcomed by the voters, leading to better electoral outcomes for those parties championing this policy issue



Conclusions

- First, our results show that the second-order character of European elections is mainly a Western European phenomenon – in Eastern Europe, being small or big, in government or not does not affect – across the board – the electoral fate of parties in European elections
- What does affect the latter, however, and this is our second and most novel result, is that taking a stance on European integration matters – it matters so as the only issue in both Western and in Eastern Europe



Conclusions

- This is good news to democracy in Europe. Although European integration does not resonate the same way in the East and in the West, it is a driving force of electoral outcomes at the European level
- From a purely democratic, normative theoretical point of view we have, for the first time in 2014, an interplay between parties and voters in Europe where EU integration actually makes a difference
- European elections have thus been Europeanized
- But is this also good news to European integration?



Conclusions

- Probably not so, at least not in the old Europe, where integration becomes a liability to parties
- We have a situation in which European integration has become the Obama of Democrats in the 2014 US Congressional elections -> trying to mobilise voters by reference to Obama punished the Democrats
- In Eastern Europe, however, we have the 2010 situation, with Obama being an asset in the mid-term elections



Conclusions

- This gets us back to the issue of direct participation of citizens to the European integration process. As with referendums, it can go wrong from the perspective of furthering integration
- At the same time, however, we made progress to higher levels of democratic legitimation of integration
- Synchronization of salient, pan-European issues -> Europeanization of European elections undeniably took place in 2014 -> with the immigration crisis, 2019 might become even more Europeanized



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Thank you for your attention

Alexander.Trechsel@eui.eue