EUROPE VOTES

Party Campaigning in European Parliamentary Elections 1979-2019

Edited by Dominic Wring and Nathan Ritchie

Loughborough University
Centre for Research in Communication & Culture

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Europe Votes: Party Campaigning in European Parliamentary Elections 1979-2019

Europe Votes: Party Campaigning in EEC/EU Parliamentary Elections 1979-2019

Dominic Wring and Nathan Ritchie (eds)

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Abbreviations

ADARSYA: Anti-Capitalist Left Coalition of Radical Left (Greece)
AfD: Alternative for Germany
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
AN: National Alliance (Italy)
AN.ELL: Independent Greeks
ANO: Action of Dissatisfied Citizens (Czech Republic)
BNP: British National Party
BR: Red Brigade (Italy)
CDS: Democratic and Social Centre (Spain)
CDU: Christian Democratic Union (Germany)
CEE: Central and Eastern European
CiU: Catalonian Nationalist Party (Spain)
Cs: Citizens (Spain)
CSU: Christian Social Union (Germany)
CSSD: Social Democrats (Czech Republic)
CUK: Change UK
DC: Christian Democrats (Italy)
DIMAR: Democratic Left (Greece)
DK: Democratic Coalition (Hungary)
DKK: Democratic Social Movement (Greece)
EATC: European Atomic Energy Community
EC: European Community
ECB: European Central Bank
ECSC: European Coal and Steel Community
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists
EEC: European Economic Community
EELV: Europe Ecology – The Greens (France)
EEMC: European Elections Monitoring Center
EFA: European Free Alliance
EFDD: Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy
ELD: European Liberals and Democrats
EMU: European Monetary Union
EP: European Parliament
EPEN: National Political Union (Greece)
EPP: European People's Party
EPU: European Parliamentary Union
EU: European Union
FdI: Brothers of Italy
FDP: Free Democratic Party (Germany)
FI: Feminist Initiative (Sweden)
FI: Forza Italia
FN: National Front (France)
GD: Golden Dawn (Greece)
GDR: German Democratic Republic
IMF: International Monetary Fund
IU: United Left (Spain)
JUNTS: Together in Catalan (Spain)
KD: Christian Democrats (Sweden)
KDNP: Christian Democratic People's Party (Hungary)
KDU-CSL: Christian Democrats (Czech Republic)
KIN.AL: Movement for Change (Greece)
KKE: Communist Party (Greece)
KSCM: Communist Party (Czech Republic)
LAOS: Peoples' Orthodox Rally (Greece)
LFI: France Unbowed
LMP: Green Party (Hungary)
LN: Lega Nord (Italy)
LR: The Republicans (France)
LREM: The Republic on the Move (France)
MDF: Democratic Forum (Hungary)
MEP: Member of the European Parliament
M5S: Five Star Movement (Italy)
MP: Member of (ordinarily national) Parliament
MRC: Citizen and Republican Movement (France)
MSZP: Socialist Party (Hungary)
MSI: Italian Social Movement
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCD: New Centre Right (Italy)
ND: New Democracy (Greece)
ODS: Civic Democrats (Czech Republic)
OP: Ecologists Greens (Greece)
PASOK: Panhellenic Socialist Party (Greece)
PCE: Communist Party (Spain)
PCF: Communist Party (France)
PCI: Communist Party (Italy)
PD: Democratic Party (Italy)
PDS: Party of the Democratic Left (Italy)
PDS: Party of Democratic Socialism (Germany)
PLI: Liberal Party (Italy)
PM: Dialogue for Hungary
PNV: Basque Nationalist Party (Spain)
PP: Popular Party (Spain)
PR: Proportional Representation/Rule
PRC: Reformed Communist Party (Italy)
PRI: Republican Party (Italy)
PS: Socialist Party (France)
PSE: Party of European Socialists
PSDI: Democratic Socialist Party (Italy)
PSI: Socialist Party (Italy)
PSOE: Socialist Workers Party (Spain)
RAF: Red Army Faction (Germany)
RM: Ruiz-Mateos (Spain)
RN: National Rally (France)
RPR: Rally for the Republic (France)
S&D: Socialists and Democrats
SAP: Social Democratic Party (Sweden)
SDP: Social Democratic Party (UK)
SED: Socialist Unity Party (Germany)
SNP: Scottish National Party
SOEM: Second Order Elections Model
SPD: Freedom and Direct Democracy (Czech Republic)
SPD: Social Democratic Party (Germany)

STAN: Mayors and Independents (Czech Republic)
SYN: Coalition of the Left, Movements and Ecology (Greece)
SYRIZA: Coalition of the Radical Left (Greece)
SZDSZ: Alliance of Free Democrats (Hungary)
TOP: Tradition Responsibility Prosperity (Czech Republic)
UDF: United Democratic Front (France)
UEM: United Europe Movement
UKIP: United Kingdom Independence Party
UMP: Union for a Popular Movement (France)
UPN: Union of the People of Navarre (Spain)
UPR: Popular Republican Union (France)
UPyD: Union, Progress and Democracy (Spain)
WTO: World Trade Organisation
YV: Yellow Vests (France)

Notes on Contributors

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Joyce Quin, Rt. Hon. Baroness
Rt. Hon. Baroness Joyce Quin has degrees from Newcastle University and the London School of Economics. From 1972-1979 she worked as a Lecturer in French and European Studies at the Universities of Bath and Durham. Elected to the European Parliament as MEP for Tyne and Wear in 1979 she became in 1987 MP for Gateshead in the House of Commons. She served as a government minister from 1997-2001 including as Minister for Europe. In 2006 she became a Member of the House of Lords. She is the author of a book on the British Constitution (2010). Also in 2010 she received the award of 'Officier de la Legion d'Honneur' from the Government of France.

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Anna Shavit holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Social Science at Charles University. Her research areas are political marketing (focusing on relations to political parties, citizen participation, and democratic process), government communication (covering mainly the Czech environment), and election campaigns (professionalization of campaigns, role of political consultants, etc.). She also works as a campaign strategist and has extensive experience with many campaigns in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. She is a Charles University research team member in ReMeD Horizon Europe. Anna is a former Fulbright scholar.

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Dominic Wring
Dominic Wring is Professor of Political Communication at Loughborough University, UK where he has co-directed news media analyses of the last six British General Elections and the 2016 'Brexit' Referendum. Since 2005 he has served as lead editor of the long-running Palgrave book series Political Communication in Britain, a volume of which has appeared on each of the UK national elections held since 1979. He helped found and is now a Senior Editor with the Journal of Political Marketing, a position reflecting his longstanding interest in political advertising and campaign communication.

Preface and Acknowledgements

The European Elections Monitoring Center which has sponsored this volume brings together political communication researchers from every European Union member state. The EEMC is devoted to collecting and collating campaign material from past as well as forthcoming European elections with the express purpose of archiving and making this available for current and future generations to study.

Led by Professor Edoardo Novelli of Roma Tre University, the EEMC network has been operational for 15 years. In this time, it has monitored and studied the 2009, 2014, and 2019 European election campaigns, published scientific papers and research reports, and organised international conferences, workshops, and seminars all over Europe.

The EEMC was able to research the most recent European elections of 2019 thanks to support from the Platform Europe project (n. COMM/SUBV/2018/E/0147) and funding provided by the European Parliament. The work, coordinated by Prof. Bengt Johansson (University of Gothenburg) and Prof. Novelli, provided real time monitoring of the campaign in all 28 EU member states using a data crawling platform based on automated analysis systems and AI models. The EEMC has created a searchable web archive containing more than 15,000 campaign related items produced by rival political parties in every country.

During the most recent EU elections partners representing each member state organised separate workshops to present analysis of their respective country's campaign and subsequently contributed their findings to the EEMC's final report. The resulting document- *2019 European elections campaign. Images, topics, media in the 28 member states* - was published by the Public Opinion Monitoring Unit - DG Comm of the European Parliament and presented at the House of European History in Brussels on July 11, 2019. The findings can be downloaded here: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e6767a95-a386-11e9-9d01-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

In 2020 the Center launched a three-year research programme, the EEMC Network 20-23 (n. 20911-EPP-1-2020-1-IT-EPPJMO-NETWORK), funded by the European Commission within the Erasmus+ Programme Jean Monnet Actions Network. The primary goals of the Network 20-23 were:

- to create a digital and online archive devoted to all European election held since 1979
- to publish a database of archives, foundations, private and public libraries, and political parties who collect and/or collate European election campaign material
- to organize four conferences devoted to exploring various aspects of the European election campaign experience
- to produce publications relating to different aspects of the project and in turn European election campaigning;
- to create an online educational course about European elections.

The EEMC Network 2023 project coordinators were Professor Edoardo Novelli, Associate Professor Norbert Merkovity (University of Szeged), Assistant Professor Stamatis Poulakidakos (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) and Professor Dominic Wring (Loughborough University). This book is part of the ongoing work of the Center and this and other projects involvingwork by the team responsible can be downloaded via the EEMC website.

The editors would like to thank our colleagues for agreeing to contribute chapters about their own countries. We are hugely grateful to have been able to call on such a superb team of experts. Huge thanks also go to Baroness Quin for kindly providing the foreword based on her own experiences as a member of (the first directly elected) European Parliament, both Houses of the British Parliament, and the UK Government as Minister for Europe. We are also grateful to Alyn Smith MP for joining an EEMC event to give us the benefit of his experiences as another MEP turned MP with an expert interest in European politics.

Thanks to Sandy Robertson and Paddy Smith of the Loughborough University Policy Unit for helping to promote our project. We would also like to acknowledge Edoardo Novelli and Melissa Stolfi for their valued support and the vital co-ordination role they have undertaken to ensure the success of the EEMC. Thanks also to Helen Drake, Ronan Lee and Tim Oliver and her colleagues at Loughborough University London who kindly hosted a Center event on their campus. Demi Wilton and Magnus Hamann have provided invaluable service, and we are very appreciative of all the time and effort they have devoted to this project. Sincere thanks to Mirva Villa who has been patient and super helpful in enabling us to put this volume together.

DW and NR

Foreword

Joyce Quin

I welcome the opportunity to contribute a Foreword to this book about European Parliamentary elections since 1979. It is an innovative volume which, in a way I have not seen done before, describes the European election campaigns in different EU countries from the time of their becoming EU members and where each chapter draws on the election literature published by the different parties. This means that the descriptions of the campaigns are grounded in reality and facts—in itself a welcome change from the many opinions expressed about European elections and the European Parliament which all too frequently seem to be based neither on facts nor on extensive research.

This book is also making a very timely appearance as its publication coincides with the run up to the 2024 European Parliamentary elections, due to be held on 6-9th June. This time of course the elections are not taking place in the UK, as a result of Brexit. However there will be keen political interest in the outcome among observers in the UK as well as across the EU, both because of what the results may mean in terms of the direction of the EU as a whole and what it means in terms of political trends and changes in the different member countries. Reflecting on the political situation in France, for example, there is already much speculation as to whether the results will strengthen President Macron in his negotiations with the majority in the National Assembly. The President's situation may be made more difficult as a result, for example, of a swing towards the anti-European and anti-Macron forces of the nationalist right-wing.

My own interest in the European elections is two-fold. I began working life as a University Lecturer teaching European politics way back in the 1970s. I then experienced the first UK elections to the European Parliament as a Labour candidate in 1979 when, after a difficult campaign, I won a narrow victory to become the first elected MEP in my home area of Tyne and Wear. The memory of that campaign has remained with me vividly ever since and in reading this book I have been struck by the common threads and themes in European elections across the EU as well as some of the differences between them and the changes that have taken place over the years. As this volume effectively shows, this is very much a story both of continuity and change.

Thinking back to those first elections there was an obvious difference between the elections in the UK and those elsewhere across Europe. The UK was the only country to operate a constituency, first-past-the-post system, rather than a proportional system with party lists of candidates. Given the number of MEPs allocated to the UK this meant that the constituencies were on average eight or nine times the size of a Westminster constituency. In Tyne and Wear, the constituency comprised over 500,000 voters and someone calculated—possibly spuriously —that it would take all day, every day, for nine years for a candidate to call on every elector! It was therefore a daunting task to engage voters with the issues involved. However there were some obvious links between the European Community and the constituency which could be highlighted to show the relevance of the elections, the main ones being shipbuilding, fishing, and European grants for disadvantaged regions. Tyne and Wear had a third of the UKs shipbuilding capacity at that time but the industry was impacted by European as well as national rules and faced retraction, restructuring and job losses. The EEC fisheries policy had begun to impact the UK and in Tyne and Wear there was the North Sea fishing port of North Shields. The area as a whole was also eligible to receive some of the increasing expenditure in European regional and social policy and already local Councils were involved in putting schemes forward for assistance. These economic issues, rather than issues relating to individual constituents (which were naturally directed much more to Westminster MPs) predominated. The national Labour party campaign—a hesitant campaign based on opposition to the EU and a reluctance to participate in the elections at all—made little mention of issues of direct local relevance and so with scant resources we produced a leaflet of our own (in black and white, colour being too expensive!) in addition to the national leaflet available.

Labour was also bruised by the victory of Mrs Thatcher in the general election a month earlier in May 1979 which also meant that many party workers and activists were demotivated by that defeat and did not relish further electioneering. As someone who had voted 'yes' to Europe in the 1975 Referendum and who wanted to play a positive and cooperative role in the European Parliament from the outset I found it all a challenging experience. Five years later in the 1984 elections, which I also fought, the mood of the Tyne and Wear electorate was strongly influenced by the scarring experience of the dramatic

Joyce Quin pictured at a recent European Conference

Why Labour? because . . .

Labour Euro – M.P.'s will work full-time. Only Labour has rejected the idea of the "dual mandate" which allows Westminster M.P.'s to be European M.P.'s at the same time.

The Labour government's job creation schemes have helped the North-East. The Conservatives wish to cut public expenditure. With Labour's record Labour Euro-candidates can argue for similar job creation policies within the E.E.C.

Labour is used to co-operating with European political parties and will work for change to benefit consumers and working people throughout Europe.

LABOUR WILL FIGHT FOR YOU IN EUROPE

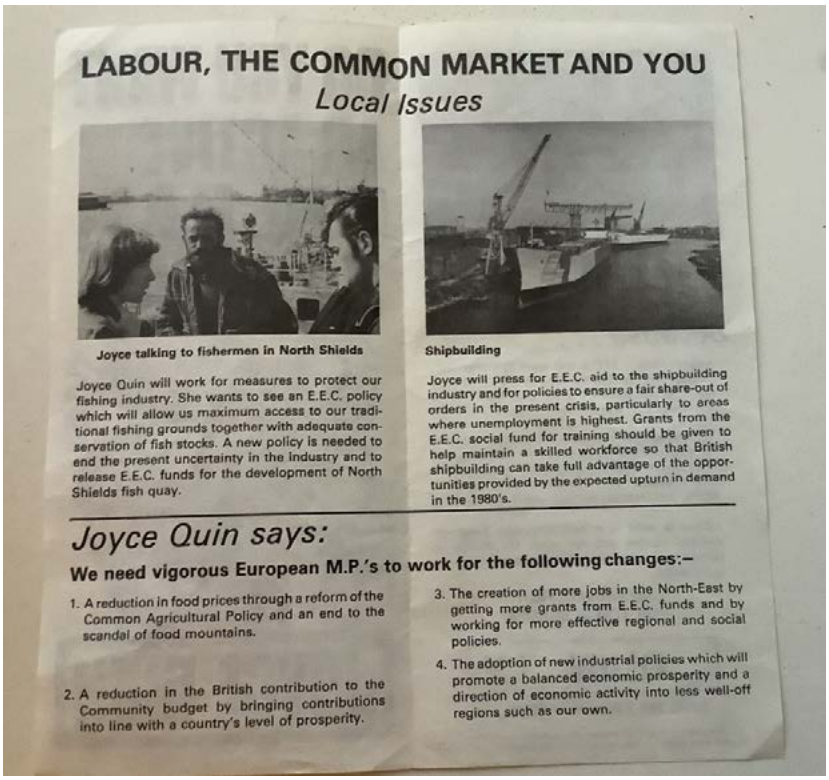
QUIN X

JUNE 7th 7.00 a.m. – 10.00 p.m.

Published by J. Graham, 26 Westfield Ave, Crawcrook, Tyne & Wear
Printed by Howe Brothers (Gateshead) Ltd., Swan Street, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear

DO YOU WANT AN ACTIVE EURO-M.P.? VOTE

JOYCE QUIN



LABOUR, THE COMMON MARKET AND YOU

Local Issues

Joyce talking to fishermen in North Shields

Joyce Quin will work for measures to protect our fishing industry. She wants to see an E.E.C. policy which will allow us maximum access to our traditional fishing grounds together with adequate conservation of fish stocks. A new policy is needed to end the present uncertainty in the industry and to release E.E.C. funds for the development of North Shields fish quay.

Shipbuilding

Joyce will press for E.E.C. aid to the shipbuilding industry and for policies to ensure a fair share-out of orders in the present crisis, particularly to areas where unemployment is highest. Grants from the E.E.C. social fund for training should be given to help maintain a skilled workforce so that British shipbuilding can take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the expected upturn in demand in the 1980's.

Joyce Quin says:

We need vigorous European M.P.'s to work for the following changes:–

1. A reduction in food prices through a reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and an end to the scandal of food mountains.
2. A reduction in the British contribution to the Community budget by bringing contributions into line with a country's level of prosperity.
3. The creation of more jobs in the North-East by getting more grants from E.E.C. funds and by working for more effective regional and social policies.
4. The adoption of new industrial policies which will promote a balanced economic prosperity and a direction of economic activity into less well-off regions such as our own.

Image: My campaign leaflet from the inaugural 1979 European Elections.

demise of regional industries such as coal, steel, and shipbuilding, under the Thatcher government. As a result, the outcome, although once again based on a very low turn-out, was a very large Labour majority.

Perhaps because of the need to report back to their individual constituencies, but also because most UK MEPs elected in 1979 were not well-known national politicians, both Conservative and Labour MEPs concentrated fulltime on their European work and made their mark as assiduous attenders. This was commented on by the Parliament's splendid first President, the former French Minister, Simone Veil, who in her autobiography contrasted ruefully the part-time attitude of many French MEPs in comparison to the British, despite the UK's more equivocal attitude overall to EEC membership.

The Conservatives in 1979 won 60 seats to Labour's 17 (and the Liberals none) so theirs was the dominant UK voice in the first European Parliament—and a very pro-European voice it was in its majority. Indeed, one of the biggest and most dramatic changes in European politics over the years has been the evolution of the Conservatives from a pro-EU position to a sceptical or anti-EU stance. In contrast, comparably notable and rapid was the movement in the 1980s from Labour having an anti-European policy to adopting a pro-European approach.

While the European constituencies were unwieldy, my own recollections of being an MEP was that the constituency work in many ways was the most satisfying part of the job because it gave the MEP a unique role—that of examining European legislation not just for its effects on the country as a whole but on the different regions and sub-regions of the country, something which no-one else was doing. Amending legislation to take into account the needs of a particular area or industrywas surprisingly feasible even in the early days of the EP, and made the work worthwhile and special.

A major turning point in the history of the European elections in the UK was the adoption of the regional list system of proportional representation for the European elections in 1999. By that time I was Europe Minister working to Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary. Although we were by treaty obligations under an agreement to move towards a proportional representation system for the elections, I do not remember the Blair government feeling coerced into this move. On the contrary, within government there was some support for the change. However, as has often happened in many countries who change electoral systems, both short-term and long-term results often dashed the hopes of the governing party introducing the changes. In the UK the change did facilitate representation of previously excluded parties. This benefited, as expected, the Liberals and the Green Party but also allowed UKIP and even the British National Party to win European seats and thereby gain a much higher national profile and publicity. No one introducing the change in 1999 imagined that UKIP/Brexit party would eventually top the poll—a feat which it accomplished in 2014 and which was the first time since 1906 in a UK national election that a party other than Labour or the Conservatives had triumphed.

While the change in the voting system helped minor or non-traditional parties low turnouts in the election were also a factor and the UK has recorded low participation levels in all European elections, with at no time rates going over 40%. A House of Commons Research Paper from the 2009 elections describes UK turn out as 'consistently low relative to other member states since the first EP election in 1979, although the gap appears to have closed since then due to falling turnout elsewhere.' Sadly, therefore, UK voter apathy seems to have been contagious although the impressive turnouts in Greece described in this volume, where in 1994 even in the aftermath of a general election voter participation was over 70%, show that some countries recorded levels of turnout which must have been the envy of UK MEPs.

The most evident finding in this book is that European elections in the different countries have been dominated by national rather than European issues. The elections are seen primarily as a way for parties to advance their national standing and to capitalise on a national mood. Even when European issues are addressed in the election campaigns they are put firmly into the national context with national politicians vowing to fight for their countries interests in Europe, and win victories for their countries through tough negotiations. While of course politicians are elected to represent their constituents and their regions/countries, the concentration on securing national advantages obscures the real nature of the EU and the reality of the work of its institutions. It also oversimplifies and distorts;the EU often gets blamed for things that go wrong, and the national government and parties claim the credit for any successes. Given too that, despite the concentration on national issues, the electorate know that the elections will have no direct effect on the composition of national governments this whole approach has the effect of making the elections seem less important and even irrelevant.

Yet, UKIP's successes suggest that concentrating on European issues in a European election can resonate with voters, so does this mean that if the major, and pro-European parties, had not shied away from European issues they too could have made the European elections more relevant to the

voters? I personally feel—but others may disagree—that over the years the main parties should have made more effort to engage voters with the issues the European Parliament was dealing with. They should also have explained how the powers of the Parliament had greatly evolved from the early days of being largely a consultative body to the processes of co-decision and of initiation of policies which has become the norm. Certainly in the UK, the idea of the European Parliament as a powerless talking shop continued to hold sway long after it had evolved to play a far more influential and central role.

Will this dominance of domestic issues continue into the future or will parties change their strategy to try to inform electors and to combat lower turnouts? The comment in the chapter on Greece in this volume that 'often politicians themselves were keener on discussing football rather than the results of the EP elections' sums up the problem perfectly!

While parties at European elections have rarely stressed the role they play in the international political groups in the European Parliament, an interesting issue raised in this book is how far membership of such groups, and the experience of working day by day within such groups, may have influenced how parties conduct their European election campaigns. My overall impression is that the influence of the international groupings on the electoral campaigns of their constituent political parties is slight but that in no way diminishes the importance of the groups in the workings of the Parliament itself. Certainly my own experience as a Labour MEP and then as Europe Minister was that Labour's role in the Socialist Group was a vital part of their MEPs' work and, having attended the Group meeting on the last day of UK membership of the Parliament in 2019, I was struck by the heartfelt standing ovation given to the leader of Labour's MEPs, Richard Corbett, and the tributes MEPs from across the EU made to him and his colleagues.

In the case of the British Conservatives MEPs a different evolution took place however. Having played an active role as members of the Christian Democratic Group in the Parliament in the early years the growth of Euro-scepticism and the eventual withdrawal of Conservative Members from that Group meant increasing isolation from the European political mainstream. For their part, since gaining representation, the Liberal Democrats, as well as the Greens,have been active members of their respective international groupings, despite the term "Liberal" covering quite a wide range of political stances and policies.

In reading this book a number of other themes have suggested themselves to me. One of the interesting angles to explore further is how integrated (or not) the MEPs of the various countries are into their national political structures. Busy and conflicting timetables make contact between MEPs and national MPs difficult but my impression is that some countries ensure that their MEPs are heard in government and party circles regularly whereas in others contact is fragmented and largely uncoordinated.

Another interesting question is how is far being elected to the European Parliament is a steppingstone for individuals to then seek election to their National Parliament? While this was much in evidence in the early years it seems now as if it has been replaced by a two-way process—with politicians also frequently moving from the national Parliament into the European Parliament. Indeed, having experience in both Parliaments in my view is something to be welcomed rather than discouraged.

I hope that this book will raise questions and trigger further research and publications. For example, there is potentially fruitful research left to do upon how the media in different countries report European Elections, or how the education and school systems in the different countries inform pupils about the European institutions, as well as teach them about national and local political structures.

Whatever further research might be stimulated as a result of this volume it certainly seems to me to constitute a very valuable study which sheds light on European parliamentary elections in a novel way and will, I believe, be a most useful addition to the existing body of work about this subject, to the benefit of both students and politicians alike.

Introduction

Dominic Wring and Nathan Ritchie

The European Union has undergone substantial challenges and changes since it was originally launched as the European Economic Community (EEC). The six founders that signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957 would oversee a significant broadening and deepening of their activities that extended to the by then 28 member states sixty years later. The 'European Project' envisioned by influential figures such as Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman has grown to the point where 20 countries have agreed to the ultimate form of partnership through joining a common currency. This close working arrangement has followed decades of collaboration in which every member state has been increasingly involved in increasingly debating political and social as well as the economic forms of co-operation. Although not a conventional legislature of the kind found within its constituent nations, the European Parliament serves as an important forum for bringing together representatives to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the EU.

The Second World War was followed by a period of reflection in which many European states recovering from the conflict found themselves advocated for a more peaceful period of co-existence. Several countries began to discuss the need for greater economic co-operation following the division of the continent with the onset of the Cold War (Dinan, 2014). Politicians from various democratic states began joining associations like the European Parliamentary Union (EPU) and United Europe Movement (UEM) during the late 1940s to foster better co-operation in the face of the threat from the Soviet Bloc (Guerrieri, 2014). Significantly those involved began espousing different visions of what they hoped their joint enterprises might achieve: whereas the EPU favoured a speedier and more integrated relationship, the UEM sponsored by Winston Churchill preferred a more gradual approach.

The Hague Congress of 1948 was a major event that brought together a wide range of delegates to discuss potential forms of co-operation and while there was progress there were also disagreements over what any potential alliance might entail (Costa, 2016). In the ensuing years Schuman and Monnet were both instrumental in creating the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, in what proved to be a landmark agreement between the respective partners involved. The original six members of the ECSC – the so-called Benelux countries together with France, Italy, and West Germany - would go on to substantially deepen their relationship by forming the EEC (Jones, 2006). Central to this was a growing Franco-German axis that would shape and help further encourage the growth of the Community and its EU successor (Guerrieri, 2008).

An important legacy of the ECSC-EEC era was the creation of an institutional framework that has endured. This system consisted of several bodies: a supranational executive body, a council of ministers, a court of justice and a parliamentary forum. The latter branch, known as the Common Assembly, originally had the least powers of the four. During the early years of the ECSC the member countries appointed 78 part-time delegates from their home parliaments to serve for year-long terms (Guerrieri, 2008; Hix and Hoyland, 2013). Later there were subsequent attempts to bolster the EEC era Parliament through reforms, but major policy concerns such as the development of agricultural policy remained the preserve of the respective government representatives (Costa, 2016). The introduction of direct parliamentary elections in 1979 was followed by inevitable debates over the potential future role and powers of the body. Subsequent agreements, such as the Single European Act, gradually helped to further empower the legislature and its growing range of members (Neunreither, 1999).

The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s was a major point of transition which saw the relaunch of the European Community as an EU which initiated even greater forms of judicial, police and policy co-operation between partners (Corbett, 2001; Guerrieri, 2008; Guerrieri, 2014). The European Parliament was also a beneficiary of these changes, acquiring an enhanced scrutiny role and opportunities to debate policy developments and initiatives (Hix and Hoyland, 2013). With new countries joining the EU in successive waves of expansion, the number of elected Members inevitably increased and now drew in representatives from former Soviet satellite nations following the end of the Cold War. More recently the symbolism of the European Parliament as a democratic forum has been reinforced by President Zelenskyy addressing the assembly. During his speech the Ukrainian leader restated a desire for his country to join the EU as a vital means of sustaining its economic security given the conflict with Russia.

Electing the Parliament

The idea for direct elections to the European Parliament was initially proposed at the Hague Congress and in subsequent debates during the early proceedings of the ECSC Assembly. A dedicated working party was formed in 1959 but the resulting Dehousse Report's recommendation in favour of holding elections was thwarted by French President De Gaulle who advocated for the maintenance of an intergovernmental based approach towards debate and decision-making (Costa, 2016). De Gaulle's resignation in 1969 provided reformers with an opportunity to re-make the case for direct elections although the President's replacement George Pompidou opposed the move. But change was forthcoming from 1974 onwards when Helmut Schmidt took over from Willy Brandt as German Chancellor and Valery Giscard d'Estaing succeeded Pompidou five days later. The pair supported more European co-operation including the formal approval of direct parliamentary elections in 1976 (Lodge and Herman, 1980). The following year senior EEC official Laurens-Jan Brinkhorst argued giving citizens in member states the right to vote for their representatives was a positive development that would enhance democratisation, a sense of common identity and deeper integration within the then European Economic Community (Costa, 2016).

The inaugural EEC elections in 1979 created the first directly elected parliament in the world (Costa, 2016). Then as now voting in them ordinarily takes places every five years during a four-day period in late spring after campaigns that last approximately a month. Approaching the debut elections, the European Commission spent considerable amounts on advertising the vote was taking place fearful that a low turnout could weaken the legitimacy of the new democratic institutions (Lodge, 1979). Public apathy was not the only challenge for the new institution to overcome. From the opening election it was clear that many candidates and their national leaderships saw an opportunity to debate domestic policies to the exclusion of more specifically European related matters. The news media were also dismissive towards the ensuing campaigns and tended to present them (and the European Parliament) in a 'less than flattering image' (Lodge, 1986:2). Political scientists also characterised these elections as so-called 'second order' contests in comparison to their national governmental counterparts (Relf and Schmitt, 1980). Although an analytical definition, the term reinforced a perception that votes were far less consequential than those for their 'first order' counterparts. Nonetheless overall turnout in the 1979 European Parliamentary Elections did achieve a respectable level of over 60% (Figure 1).

Rates of participation in European Elections have varied, with some of the less populous countries such as Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece, Italy, and Malta tending to register more consistently higher

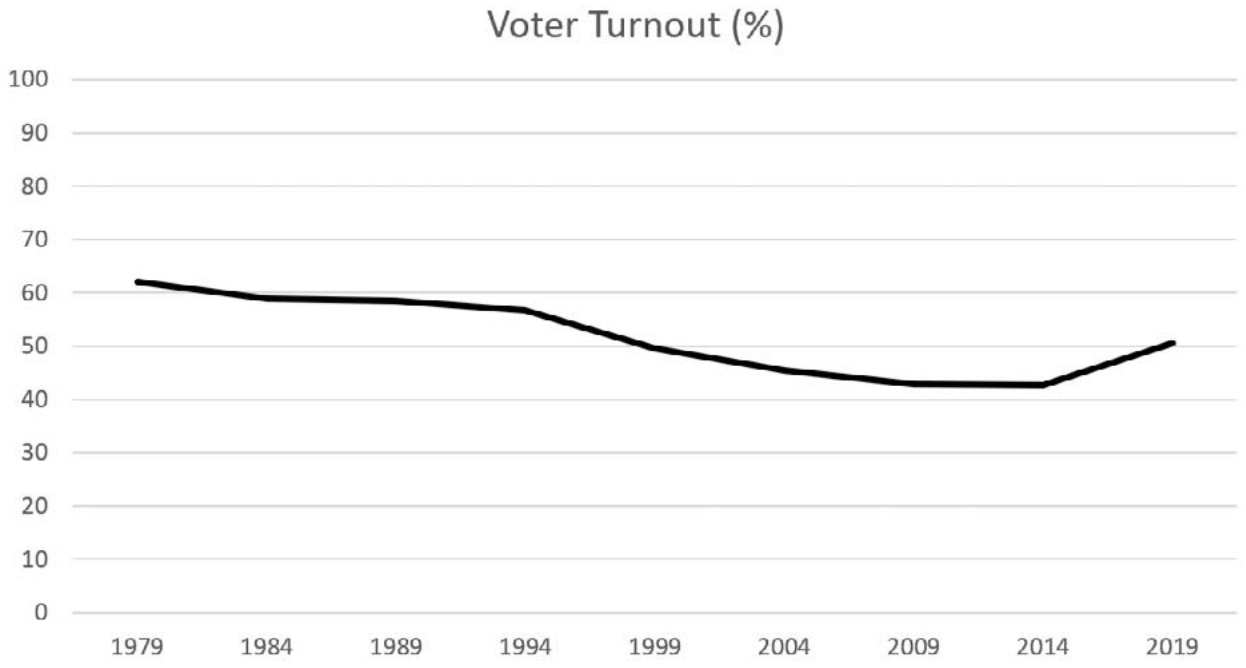


Figure 0.01: Voter turnout across all member states participating in the nine EEC/EU Parliamentary Elections held between 1979-2019 Source: Authors own figure based on data from: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/

levels of voting. Conversely more Eurosceptical states like the UK and Denmark have seen the lowest turnouts. Following a decline in participation at the 1984 election, European officials such as former French Prime Minister Pierre Pflimlin expressed concern about the supposed 'abysses of ignorance' about the Parliament among citizens (Lodge, 1984). But while there were existential concerns about the future of the European Project, the Community also welcomed new members during the 1980s and 1990s including several states with relatively recent experiences of authoritarian rule. Initially at least, the former military dictatorships in southern Europe along with ex-communist regimes to the east appeared keen to promote their democratic credentials through participating in the European Union electoral and parliamentary processes (Oltheten et al, 2003; Roy, 2007).

By 2004, the EU had significantly enlarged to accommodate 15 new member states including a further 58 million citizens. The elections that year were more visible in media terms in 10 of these countries than they were in 15 existing partners (de Vreese et al, 2006). Turnout was nevertheless depressed by historic standards and relatively low in some of the countries voting for the first time (Schmitt, 2005). Overall, there has been a noticeable decline in participation across several member states dating from 1994 to 2014 (Figure 0.01) (Smith, 1995; Teasdale, 1999; Gagatek, 2009; Holtz-Bacha et al, 2017). In the most recent poll of 2019, 400 million citizens in 28 member states were eligible to participate although in practice just over half of the electorate exercised their democratic right. This level of voting represented an increase in turnout, and some have suggested greater participation has been encouraged by a piqued interest in the elections following the Brexit controversy (Hosli et al, 2022). Reflecting this, recent polls have indicated that most citizens believe the 'EU is a good thing' for their own country and have done so for some time (Pew Research Center, 2023).

The Party System

The ECSC Assembly initially consisted of partners who were largely demarcated by their national origins rather than by partisanship. But increasing co-operation between colleagues from different members led to the eventual recognition of political groupings in 1953 and the foundation of three cross national bodies that would play significant roles within what later became the European Parliament (Brack and Wolfs, 2023). By 1958 the Socialists, Christian Democrats and Liberals were able to formally access allowances to support their activities and over time it became increasingly common for their members to speak on behalf of their grouping rather than just their country (Guerrieri, 2008). 1976 saw these now parliamentary bodies form transnational party federations in preparation for the first direct elections of 1979.

The European People's Party includes the main centre-right and Christian Democrat parties of government and has traditionally been one of the two major parliamentary parties. Their principal rivals to the left, the Confederation of European Socialists, had originally been founded in 1973 and similarly consisted of likeminded politicians from across the EEC. Once the electorally dominant forces, the two political groupings have both experienced a decline in the number of seats that they have won in recent years (Figure 0.02). Nevertheless, together the parties still enjoy positions of considerable influence, notably in nominating the most high-profile Spitzkandidaten contenders. Introduced in 2014 as part of an attempt to Europeanise the democratic process, the initiative has also helped personalise campaigns to a certain extent (Fotopoulos, 2019).

In 1979 the traditionally centrist third force Federation of Liberal and Democrat Parties in Europe (ELD) recruited 11 affiliates in eight of the then nine member states including France and Germany where both sister parties had considerable influence at the time (Brack and Wolfs, 2023). Currently the group sits as the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party (ALDE) and has been traditionally the most pro-integrationist tendency within the European Parliament.

Figure 0.02[1] provides an overview of the fluctuating levels of support for the major European political groupings between 1979-2019.

Initially a smallish team, the Greens have greatly benefitted from their growing presence within the European Parliament (Curtice, 1989; Rudig, 2019). The transnational forum has provided an important platform for the group to get their message across to voters who share their frustrations with the perceived inactions of national governments in respect of the environmental crisis. While initially

1 Centre-right in Figure 0.02 covers the European People's Party and other mainstream conservative groupings such as the European Conservatives and Reformists. Centre-left refers to the Socialists and their allies. The Centre includes the Liberals and most recently has gone by the name Renew. The Greens incorporates parties with that name and likeminded affiliates. The Left originally contained Communists but more recently tends to consist of various radical strands. The other major grouping of Nationalists/Eurosceptics refers to the growing and changeable alliance of likeminded parties that have been defined by their criticism of the EU. Further information on the most recent (and previous) European Parliamentary Elections can be found at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en/tools/comparative-tool/

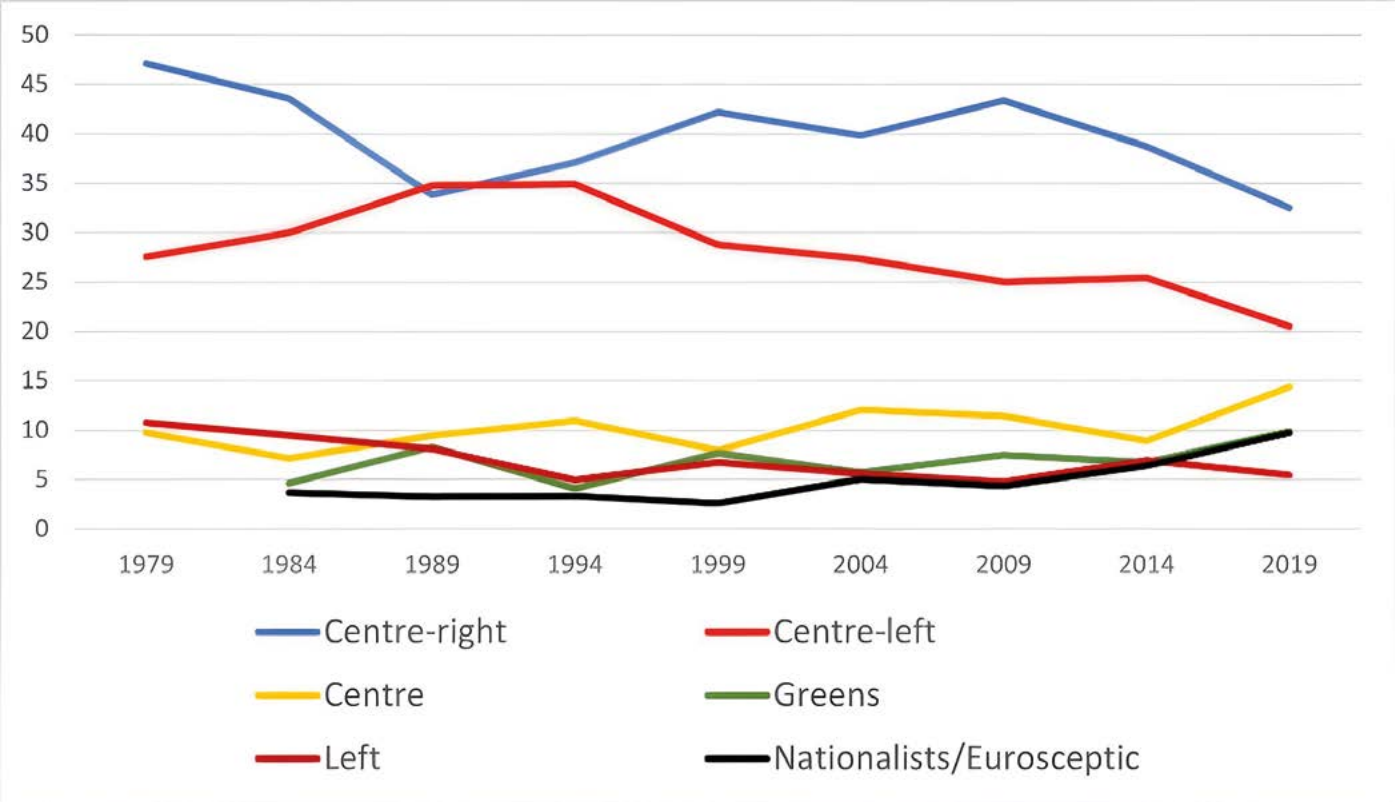


Figure 0.02: Major European political groupings between 1979-2019[1]

allied to regionalist politicians, the Greens eventually established their own distinct grouping after the highly successful elections of 1989 (Rudig, 1995). The breakthrough was followed by the creation of the European Federation of Green Parties in 1993 in an attempt to better foster and co-ordinate cross-national activities (Rudig, 2019). More recently the Greens have re-established a close working relationship with progressive regionalists who belong to the European Free Alliance (Pearson and Rudig, 2020).

An important change in the composition of the European Parliament from its inception has been the rise of so-called sceptics. The veteran Danish MEP Jens-Peter Bonde, a future leader of the Independence/Democracy alliance, was an isolated dissenting voice when he was first elected in 1979. Subsequent developments, notably the Maastricht Treaty, have helped change this (Usherwood and Startin, 2012). Since 1994 a range of sceptics from the Europe of Nations Group to the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy have won an increasing number of votes and seats. The level of support was not so different to that of rival groupings (Figure 0.02) but what the EFDD and its other incarnations did was to use their growing platform to oppose more (or any) EU integration with great effect (Treib, 2021). Many of the parties and leaders involved have been labelled populists who have successfully drawn support through articulating concerns over the perceived threat to national sovereignty from the European project in various policy areas including migration. Aside from the support they attracted in EP and other elections, the sceptics would also increasingly assert themselves within their respective countries. Nowhere was this influence more keenly felt than in the British political sphere where the Conservative party and governments found themselves divided over EU integration.

Although the designated names of the sceptics' parliamentary groupings may have been unfamiliar, leading figures belonging to them would become among the most prominent elected politicians in Brussels, Strasbourg and beyond. They include French presidential candidate Marine Le Pen and veteran UK Eurosceptic Nigel Farage, both of whose parties secured more European seats than any of their respective national rivals. Despite having similar policy positions on the European Union, the two leaders were unable to join forces due to existing enmities between their parties that are symptomatic of the wider divisions among sceptics. This has meant that recent parliaments have played host to more than one official grouping that has been convened precisely because those involved self-identify as being critical if not hostile towards Euro-federalism and integration. It remains to be seen to what extent the sceptics will make advances in the 2024 European elections.

Outline of the book

Contributions to this volume focus on developments in nine individual member states which together represent every region of the EU. Each chapter features examples of campaign material held by the European Elections Monitoring Center archive of the kind originally disseminated during the nine EP elections that have taken place. The countries included vary in terms of the length of their membership: three were integral to formation of the original EEC while the others joined in one of the successive waves of enlargement. The initial chapters cover the so-called 'Big Four' which participated in the first European elections of 1979, that is the founder members Germany, France, and Italy together with the United Kingdom. Five more contributions explore how campaigning has evolved in individual states that joined in one of the subsequent waves of enlargement. The final chapter is an exception in that it takes a more detailed look at a single election in a particular country, namely the extraordinary British campaign of 2019 held before the UK became the first member state to withdraw from the EU the following year.

Christina Holtz-Bacha's comprehensive study traces Germany's involvement in the European project from prior to the Treaty of Rome onwards. It covers a remarkable era of renewal in which the country re-emerged as a major economy both within the then EEC and beyond. The chapter also covers the momentous period in which the former German Democratic Republic was integrated into a re-unified state, thereby becoming the first of several ex-Soviet bloc countries which would join the European Union. The distinctive contributions made by the nation's politicians are also explored, notably those who played significant roles in shaping the European Parliament and other major institutions. Aside from Chancellors such as Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkel, other German leaders who proved influential include those belonging to parties such as Die Grünen and Alternative fur Deutschland. Despite their very different philosophies both have used the European elections as opportunities to mobilise support for their distinctive agendas and, with likeminded allies, helped to make a wider impact on the politics of the EU.

In their wide-ranging examination of how European campaigns have developed in France, Anne Jadot and Alexandre Borrell explore how the EEC/EU elections taken together map the realignment of the party system over decades. Fittingly for the country that first popularised the political notions of left and right, the chapter tracks how once dominant electoral forces on either side of this traditional divide like the Gaullists and Socialists have been challenged and even displaced. Particularly prominent here has been the rise of the Front National (FN) who, like other Eurosceptics across the EU, successfully campaigned to gain representation in the European Parliament and with it an invaluable platform from which to proselytize their cause. The FN has since been rebranded under the leadership of Marine Le Pen and, although the spectre of 'Frexit' might have receded, her party remains highly critical of Brussels. The chapter also notes that despite evidence of growing media interest in EU elections, the French public has not become noticeably more enthusiastic if judged by the relatively low levels of voter turnout in successive campaigns.

Following its role hosting the foundational Treaty of Rome, Italy has been one of the most committed member states and this is reflected by the high rates of electoral participation in the EP elections held during the First Republic. Edoardo Novelli and Melissa Stolfi explore this formative period and the subsequent constitutional crisis which later engulfed the nation and helped reset the country's relationship with Brussels. The upheaval proved to be the catalyst for the rise of Forza Italia, Lega Nord, M5C and other political formations which adopted more critical positions towards the EU. The new millennium saw leading Italian politicians espousing so-called 'strategic Euroscepticism', a term that usefully captures the repositioning of Giorgia Meloni following her victory in the country's most recent national elections. The Prime Minister's party had originally been highly antagonistic towards Brussels, but once in government her approach and policies towards the EU have been decidedly more pragmatic.

In their exploration of the British case, Nathan Ritchie and Dominic Wring divide the country's engagement in European elections (and Brussels for that matter) into two periods. The first era up to and including the 1994 campaign were largely preoccupied with domestic politics and collectively charted the shift of support from the Conservatives to Labour prior to the latter's landslide victory in the national election of 1997. The Blair administration proved supportive of greater co-operation with the EU and in doing so became a target of increasingly vocal criticism from Eurosceptics in rival parties. While the Conservatives rallied round opposition to UK joining the Single Currency, the United Kingdom Independence Party was created in 1993 to explicitly campaign for British withdrawal. UKIP's breakthrough came with the 1999 EP elections and its subsequent assent helped define the country's second era of membership, one which was characterised by Eurosceptic agitation for disengagement from the EU and eventually Brexit (Oliver, 2018). Symbolically the UKIP slogan 'Take Back' from the 2014 EP election

would be appropriated by the team of strategists who deployed it to help deliver the historic referendum vote to Leave two years later.

Stamatis Poulakidakos situates Greece's initial participation in the EEC as emblematic of the a desire to re-embrace democracy following major upheavals of the previous two decades. Symbolically national elections coincided with the new member state's first European campaign and helped ensure there was a larger than normal voter turnout in the latter poll. Thereafter Greece settled into a more familiar pattern whereby EP campaigns were dominated by domestic considerations and declining electoral participation. More recently the EU response to the country's destabilising financial problems led to increasing criticism from various politicians who have accused Brussels of indifference or worse in their reaction to the economic crisis.

Like Greece, Spain's return to democracy was followed by the country embracing the European project. Sergio Pérez Castaños, José Manuel Trujillo and Jonatan García-Rabadán explore how Spanish entry was fostered by both the PSOE and PP, the two dominant parties of government, and helped create a pro-EU consensus within the new member state. Later European elections have witnessed a more heterogeneous politics finding expression with the partial fragmentation of the country's left and right blocs following the growth of Podemos and VOX. Even the centre has experienced greater dynamic flux, most recently with the rise and fall of Ciudadanos over the past decade. It should however be noted that while VOX has given a more strident voice to Euroscepticism, it has not advocated withdrawal as others on the traditionalist right elsewhere in the EU have. Spanish politics has been further complicated by growing support for various regionally based parties that approach the EP elections as a valuable electoral opportunity with the potential for political gains.

Sweden did not pursue membership of the EU during the earlier waves of expansion. The then dominant Social Democrats were reticent to join an organisation because of the potential implications for the state's renowned welfare system. This reluctance to follow Brussels' perceived market-oriented agenda continued once the country became a member and, for instance, stayed outside of the Eurozone. More recently, the Social Democrats hold on government has been eroded, and in his chapter Bengt Johansson explores how EP elections have provided particularly valuable opportunities for different alternative political forces. Those who capitalised in this way and gained MEPs, if sometimes only briefly, have included the Eurosceptic Junilstan, maverick Pirate Party and the Feminist Initiative. More recently there has been a sustained ideological challenge to the country's political consensus with the emergence of the Sweden Democrats, a populist anti-immigrant movement of the kind that has had such an impact elsewhere in the EU. The party has, however, stepped back from embracing and campaigning for a so-called 'Swexit'.

Although the Czech electorate is largely committed to their country remaining a member of the EU, Marcela Konrádová and Anna Shavit demonstrate how EP elections have helped showcase the widespread scepticism that exists towards Brussels. Some of this is rooted in the country's political culture and a historical distrust that persists and is directed towards outside authorities seeking to impose themselves. Leading politicians have nonetheless restated their desire to stay within the EU in the belief that the trading partnership still brings welcome economic benefits, especially in the current geopolitical climate. The chapter beings with a review of the campaign that preceded entry and attempts by Brussels to encourage the Czech public to participate in EP elections. Subsequent campaigns have been dominated by the kinds of domestic priorities that characterise debates in other member states. The forces in the electoral ascendancy advocate what has been termed so-called 'Euro realism' but fall short of advocating withdrawal.

Fidesz dominates the contemporary Hungarian political landscape and has done since the collapse of the once governing Socialists. Norbert Merkovity, Péter Bence Stumpf, Orsolya Szabó Palócz and Fruzsina Csiby examine how the consolidation of the governing party's position has been reflected in its EU electoral performances. Fidesz is now one of if not the most successful party within any member state, having gained half of the total vote in the most recent EP contests. Such support dwarfs that of the opposition combined, from the highly nationalistic Jobbik to the more recently formed centrist party Momentum. Fidesz's dominance of Hungarian politics has meant their sceptical positioning has proved influential both at home and beyond. In the most recent EP elections, the party caused controversy when its campaign material targeted the then European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker for criticisms. This happened despite Juncker belonging to the same centre-right European Peoples' Party. Having been suspended from EPP membership, Fidesz has sought to forge links within the EU with other sceptically minded politicians who are similarly exercised over immigration and the protection of national sovereignty.

The final chapter authored by the editors and Cristian Vaccari is given over to the extraordinary UK European election in 2019, a campaign that happened due to the failure of the country to com-

plete the Brexit process. The vote split between the Remain and Leave camps but what was extraordinary was the marginalisation of the two parties, Labour and Conservative, that together had won over 80% support in the General Election two years previous. For the governing party, in particular, the election was a humiliating one and signalled the final blow to Theresa May who resigned after a defeat that had seen her party slump to fifth. This was the 'Brexit Election' that preceded the UK General Election that followed six months later and was similarly characterised in this way, and which saw Boris Johnson win a mandate to (in the words of his slogan) 'Get Brexit Done'. The 2019 EP result was not so decisive. Having run a campaign focused on making the case for respecting the democratic will of the people, as expressed in the 2016 referendum, the Brexit Party topped the poll. Pro-EU parties also asserted themselves with some success, the combined votes of the Liberal Democrats, Greens, SNP and Plaid Cymru underlining the scale of ongoing public support for the so-called 'Remain Alliance'. Overall, the UK's 2019 EP election may have been inconclusive, but one thing remained constant with the Referendum vote three years before: the country remained resolutely divided over Brexit.

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Chapter 1: Germany

Christina Holtz-Bacha

Introduction

Together with Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, Germany is a founding member of the European Economic Community (EEC). These six states had already been linked in the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) since 1951. The signing of the EEC Treaty of Rome and the Treaty on the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom or EAEC) on March 25, 1957, as well as the accession to NATO in May 1955, were part and parcel of the integration with the West pursued by Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, founded in May 1949.

Participation in the EEC was largely uncontroversial, not least because of the economic advantages of a common market. Despite having some reservations relating to the European Parliament's lack of powers, the opposition Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) was voted in favour of the treaty package together with the largest governing party, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), there was a clear majority in the Bundestag. Only two small parties in the governing coalition opposed the treaties because they feared a division of the European market and a further obstacle to the goal of German reunification. Görtemaker (1999: 348-349) notes that the negotiations on the Treaty of Rome took place almost in camera and were widely ignored by the public and the media.

This finding is symptomatic of the early days of the European Community (EC). It was not until 1974 that the European Commission decided to conduct regular surveys to assess public opinion in the Member States. Communication science, which could have investigated the emergence of public opinion and the role of the mass media in mediating the EEC to the public, only began to address this issue with the first direct elections to the European Parliament (EP). Consistent with this were the findings of the first Eurobarometer survey, which revealed that just short of a third of respondents across the community felt sufficiently informed about the issues of the Common Market. At 40%, the corresponding figure for Germany was well above the European average (Commission of the European Communities, 1974: 19).

On the way to the first European Elections in 1979

The role played by Germany in the introduction of the first direct elections to the European Parliament (EP) reflects the great interest in a deeper integration of the Community and ultimately the broad consensus in German politics with regard to the European project. Since the 1969 Bundestag elections, a social-liberal coalition of SPD and Free Democrats (FDP) under Chancellor Willy Brandt had been in power. Before Brandt entered federal politics as Foreign Minister in the first Grand Coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD under Chancellor Kurt-Georg Kiesinger (1966-69), he had been Governing Mayor of Berlin. Brandt had challenged the incumbents Konrad Adenauer (CDU) and Ludwig Erhard (CDU) in the 1961 and 1965 Bundestag elections as the SPD's chancellor candidate. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971 for his *Ostpolitik* and his commitment to forging a better diplomatic understanding with Eastern Europe. In its rationale for awarding the prize, the committee also emphasised Brandt's commitment to increased cooperation in the EC (Bundeskanzler Willy Brandt Stiftung, 2021). In his speech at the award ceremony (The Nobel Prize, 1971), Brandt also spoke of his vision for Europe, which he combined with the hope for a 'European Partnership for Peace':

'In the West it will grow beyond the European Economic Community and – in the way that Jean Monnet sees it – develop into a union which will be able to assume part of the responsibility for world affairs, independently of the United States, but – I am sure – firmly linked with it'.

After Brandt's resignation in May 1974, Helmut Schmidt, who had previously been Finance Minister in Brandt's cabinet, became Chancellor. After the Bundestag elections in 1976 and again after the elections in 1980, Schmidt formed a social-liberal coalition of SPD and FDP. Schmidt's time in office was marked by economic crises, the fight against the extreme left-wing terrorist organisation Red Army Faction (RAF), and the NATO Double-Track Decision, which provided for the deployment of nuclear-tipped medium-range missiles in Western Europe and triggered fierce resistance in Germany. Schmidt shared Brandt's hopes for greater political cooperation among the EC member states and the development towards a political union.

Schmidt's efforts towards European integration were particularly characterised by economic and financial policy measures, which he pursued together with the French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Having previously promoted the establishment of the

World Economic Summit, which later gave rise to the G7 group, they campaigned for the introduction of the European Monetary System and thus prepared the ground for monetary cooperation between Member States and ultimately for the introduction of a single currency.

Under the chancellorship of Brandt and Schmidt, the Federal Republic also became the driving force behind the institutionalisation of general and direct elections to the EP, while at the same time advocating an expansion of its competences. Until the legal act on direct elections was finally passed in 1978, compromises had to be sought with France and the UK in particular, with Germany showing the greatest willingness to compromise due to its interest in expanding the community and developing it into a political union that went beyond the economic and monetary union (Wintzer, 2011).

Different interests had to be considered regarding the organisation of the direct elections. The allocation of seats in the EP proved to be the most difficult problem. After the Parliament itself had submitted a proposal that gave Germany the highest number of seats and provided for fewer seats for France than for the UK and Italy (Wintzer, 2011: 103), the demands of the large member states had to be balanced. After numerous, mainly bilateral talks, the breakthrough finally came at a meeting of the European Council in Brussels in mid-July 1976 (Wintzer, 2011: 107). With regard to the number of seats France, Italy, and the United Kingdom were placed on an equal footing with Germany.

Divergences concerning the electoral system and the day of the election were resolved through compromises, considering national practices, and giving the member states leeway in the implementation of the election. As elections in Germany traditionally take place on a Sunday, European elections are also held on a Sunday. As no agreement could be reached among the Member States on a common electoral system for the direct elections, this decision was left to national regulations for the time being. In the discussion on European electoral law, the interests of the Free Democrats (FDP), which were represented in the Bundestag as a third party alongside the two major parties, had to be taken into account. Despite its mostly single-digit election results, the party was of great importance as a coalition partner that could provide either the CDU/CSU or the SPD with the necessary majority to form a government. It was therefore not in the interest of the two major parties to alienate the FDP by opting for an electoral law that disadvantaged this party.

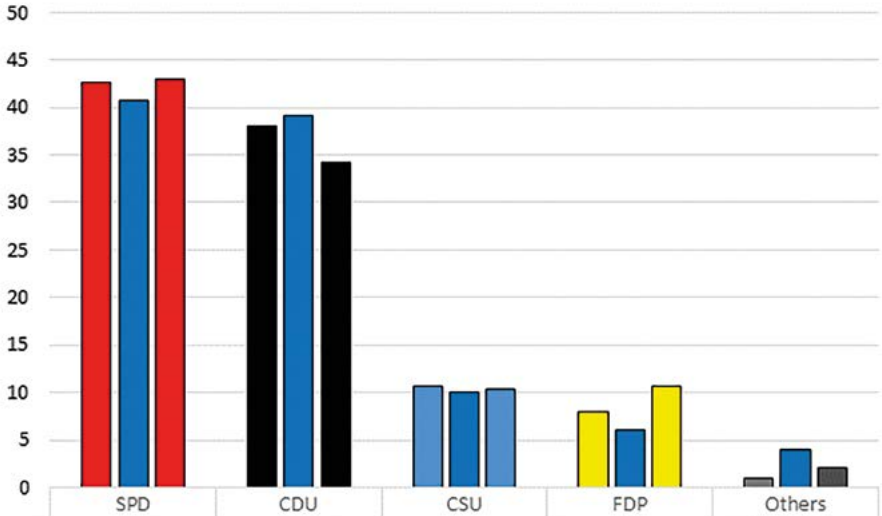
For the sister parties CDU and CSU, the latter of which only contests federal elections in Bavaria and the former only in the rest of Germany and which form a parliamentary group in the Bundestag, it was also important to avoid an electoral system that would have led to both parties standing for election nationwide. Finally, a solution had to be found that would lead to an appropriate representation of all federal states. After the draft bill of May 1977 had initially provided for proportional representation with federal lists, which was contrary to the interests of the CSU and thus ultimately also of the CDU, a compromise was reached in mid-March 1978 with the adoption of the European Elections Act, which was based on proportional representation with list proposals for one *Land* or joint lists for all *Länder* (Hrbek, 1978: 178). As with Bundestag elections, the European Elections Act provided for a 5% threshold.

Divided by East and West, Berlin had a special status determined by the Four Power Agreement of 1971 concluded by the US, the UK, France, and the Soviet Union, and so the Berlin members of parliament were not elected by the people in Bundestag elections, but by the Berlin House of Representatives. In order to include (West) Berlin in the European Elections an agreement with the Western Allies was therefore necessary, which resulted in the election procedure used for Bundestag elections being adopted for Berlin's MEPs.

The survey results in the years leading up to the first direct elections made evident that politics and the media would have to undertake a considerable information and mobilisation effort before the election date in June 1979. In July 1978, about a year before the first EP elections, an average of 45% of respondents in the then nine member states complained that newspapers, radio, and television did not report enough on European issues. In Germany, 36% agreed with this statement, 41% disagreed and just under a quarter could not decide (Commission of the European Communities, 1978: 22).

Opinion of community membership had deteriorated somewhat in the last few years before the first EP elections among respondents from the six founding members. On average, 63% of the six said their country's membership was a good thing in 1973, but by 1978 the figure had fallen to 60%. During the same period, the figure in Germany fell from 63% in 1973 to 58% in 1978, while support for direct elections to the EP grew. One year before the election, an average of 71% of respondents in the nine Member States were in favour of direct elections, and in Germany the approval rate was as high as 74% (Commission of the European Communities, 1978: 24, 35).

However, around a third were quite sceptical about the significance of the election. Taking all member states together, 30% called the election an unimportant event, because the national govern-



	SPD	CDU	CSU	FDP	Others
BE 1976	42,6	38	10,6	7,9	0,9
EE 1979	40,8	39,1	10,1	6	4
BE1980	42,9	34,2	10,3	10,6	2

Figure 1.01: Results of the 1976 Bundestag election (BE) (left column), European elections 1979 (middle column) and the 1980 BE (right column). Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

ments would not be bound by the votes in the EP. In Germany, as many as 34% agreed with this statement, while 44% considered the election to be an important event, which was certain to make Europe more politically unified. Furthermore, 42% of German respondents said that the election would give them a stronger feeling of being a European citizen (Commission of the European Communities, 1978: 38, 40).

The scepticism amongst a significant proportion of the population about the importance of the direct election and its consequences, and even more so the verdict on media coverage in the year before the first EP elections, reflect the challenge politicians and the media faced in making the election interesting and getting voters to the polls. To underline the importance of the European elections, prominent politicians stood as candidates for the EP in 1979. In addition to the former Chancellor, SPD Chairman, and MP Willy Brandt, candidates included the later Federal Minister of Economics and European Commissioner Martin Bangemann (FDP), the former Bavarian Minister President Alfons Goppel (CSU), the former Member of the Bundestag and Minister of Culture of Baden-Württemberg Wilhelm Hahn (CDU) and the later Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul (SPD).

Voter turnout in Germany was 65.7%, the highest behind the countries where voting was compulsory (e.g. Blumler, 1983: 182). In view of the great efforts made by the media and politicians in the election campaign, the turnout rate was disappointing, especially in comparison to the turnout in German parliamentary elections which was 90.7% in 1976 and 88.6% in 1980.[1]

Figure 1.01 shows that among the parties represented in the Bundestag at the time, only the CDU, which was in opposition, performed slightly better in the EP elections than in the previous elections and in the 1980 Bundestag elections. For the parties of the ruling social-liberal coalition, the vote share in the EP elections fell short of the results of the Bundestag elections. Including the seats determined by the Berlin House of Representatives, 35 of the 81 German seats in the EP went to the SPD and 34 to the CDU. This made the two parties the largest single parties in the EP after the British Conservatives (Reif and Schmitt, 1980: 4). The CSU won 8 seats and the FDP 4. Even before the federal party was founded, the Greens stood in the 1979 European elections as a political group, gaining 3.2% of the vote. With this vote share, the Greens were among the winners of the European elections and, based on the absolute number of votes, topped the list of absolute winners (Reif and Schmitt, 1980: 6-7). Nevertheless, they failed to reach the 5% threshold in effect at the time. At 3.2%, their share therefore accounted for the largest proportion of the 4% of the votes cast for other

1 All results of Bundestag and European elections mentioned here and in the following text, as well as information on voter turnout, are based on data provided by the Federal Returning Officer at https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

parties and groups.

The 1979 election campaign, voter turnout, and election results established the research questions that have been asked at every European election since then. This concerns, in particular, the dynamics between the party campaigns, the engagement of the media and the mobilisation of voters for a secondary election and its relation to the first order national arena. The results for Germany confirmed the characteristics of second-order elections as identified by Reif and Schmitt (1980: 9–10). Although voter turnout in Germany was comparatively good, it was still well below the level of national parliamentary elections. The outcome for the Greens, entering the race as a grouping rather than as a registered party, confirmed the special chances of a new and small party in the EP elections. In addition, the parties in the governing coalition lost votes compared to the previous Bundestag election. In contrast, the number of invalid votes, which according to Reif and Schmitt (1980: 9) could express dissatisfaction with the parties or candidates standing for election, was not conspicuous. The proportion of invalid votes in 1979 was at the level of just under one percent that can also be observed in Bundestag elections.

Since the first direct elections, it has been standard practice to ask how European the European elections are. This refers to the campaign of parties and candidates, to media coverage and to the electorate. When asked about the reasons for their voting decision in 1979, 50% pointed to domestic reasons, 28% mentioned European reasons and 16% claimed that domestic and European reasons were decisive for their voting decision (Blumler, 1983: 321).

The slogans, themes and motifs of the election posters reflect the strategies of the parties in canvassing for votes, which on the one hand refer to Europe and on the other hand want to use the EP elections as an indicator of national mood and for national political competition. This becomes evident in the link between the employment of election posters featuring candidates who are not standing for election to the EP.

In addition to issue posters, the CDU campaigned in 1979 with a picture of its party chairman Helmut Kohl and an appeal to German voters that clearly referred to Europe, but at the same time was directed against its main national rival, the SPD: 'Germans, vote for a free and social Europe. *Against* a socialist Europe'. (*Deutsche, wählt das freie und soziale Europa.* Gegen *ein sozialistisches Europa*) (Image 1.01). Visually, the poster combined the German with the European flag and also showed a 'CDU for Europe' logo that repeated the national colours. Blind (2012: 61) notes that the CDU had initially planned a more European campaign, but then changed its strategy to make the EP elections a kind of midterm election to settle accounts with the social-liberal coalition.

As a regional party, the CSU, the Bavarian sister party of the CDU, had to reconcile the regional and the European perspective and at the same time, like the CDU, juxtaposed freedom and socialism. That was done with the claim 'All our strength for freedom, peace and security in Bavaria, Germany and Europe – CSU' (*Unsere ganze Kraft für Freiheit, Frieden und Sicherheit in Bayern, Deutschland und Europa – CSU*) and 'Yes to freedom – no to socialism' (*Ja zur Freiheit – Nein zum Sozialismus*) (Kruke and Beule, 2011: 253). This demonstrated the close con-

Image 1.01: EP Elections 1979, CDU poster featuring Helmut Kohl. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

nection between the European elections campaign and Bundestag elections. In the 1976 Bundestag election campaign, the CDU had already used the claim 'Freedom instead of Socialism' or 'Freedom or Socialism' to canvass for votes (Holtz-Bacha and Lessinger, 2017: 172). The claim had been developed through public opinion research, which recommended the slogan for its motivating effectiveness (Noelle-Neumann, 1980). For the Bundestag elections in October 1980, CDU and CSU continued their battle against socialism and presented posters with the slogans 'Stopping Socialism' (*Den Sozialismus stoppen*) and 'For peace and freedom' (*Für Frieden und Freiheit*).

Even though issue posters dominated the European election campaign, the SPD also relied on familiar faces. One poster motif, which was used for various formats, showed former Chancellor Willy Brandt, who was running for the EP, together with his successor Helmut Schmidt, accompanied by the claim: 'Our voice counts in Europe'. This motif, as well as other advertising material, was adorned with an upward-pointing red chevron arrow, which was used by the European socialist party family (Kruke and Beule, 2011: 254). This red arrow, which was also used in variations with white inner arrows or filled with the flags of the member states, was a design by the German graphic designer Otl Aicher, who had become famous for the pictograms he created for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich (Lanzke, 2011: 119–120). It was an attempt to establish a common symbol for the socialist parties and thus demonstrate European unity.

While the two major parties relied predominantly on issue posters in 1979, the FDP opted for a personalisation strategy. In addition to the claim 'Europe liberal' (Europa liberal), which was also used by the other ELD parties (Lanzke, 2011: 126), its posters, designed in the distinctive party colours of yellow and blue, presented a photo of then Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher together with FDP top candidate Martin Bangemann, who had already been an MEP before the first direct elections.

In the early days of the party, the Greens rejected any personalisation strategy for their election campaigns. For this reason, the party only ran issue-oriented election advertising in the 1979 EP election campaign, which also introduced the sunflower as the Greens' logo. This included a poster with a child's drawing of a green meadow, blossoming flowers, and fruit trees under a bright sun, along with the claim 'We have only borrowed the earth from our children' (*Wie haben die Erde von unseren Kindern nur geborgt*).

The 1980s and 1990s – The Kohl era

Disputes between SPD and FDP over the government's economic and social policy and the resulting resignation of FDP ministers caused the break-up of the social-liberal coalition in the fall of 1982. A constructive vote of no confidence sealed the end of the government under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Helmut Kohl was elected Federal Chancellor, who now led a coalition of CDU/CSU and FDP. In order to legitimise the change of government, Kohl initiated a vote of confidence in the Bundestag, which was rejected, so that the Bundestag could be dissolved, and new elections called.

These were held on March 6, 1983. The election result secured broad support for the new coalition. With a share of 5.6%, the Greens passed the 5% hurdle, allowing them to enter the Bundestag for the first time. However, in E 1984, the Bonn coalition parties experienced a decrease in support compared to the 1983 election. The FDP, in particular, suffered a significant decline in votes and failed to meet the 5% threshold. On the other hand, the Greens continued their upward trajectory, garnering 8.6% of the vote.

This outcome signalled what was also to be seen in future European elections. Due to the relative inconsequentiality of voting in EP elections, voters are prepared to vote differently than in federal elections, which not only decide the strength of the parties, but also create coalition possibilities and indirectly determine who will lead the federal government as chancellor.

After the political change in 1982 and the snap Bundestag elections in 1983, the 1984 EP elections were another test of the mood for the new government and demonstrated the importance of these elections for the domestic political debate. In its campaign advertising, the CDU, now in the role of the incumbent, tried to link optimism for the future of Germany with its commitment to Europe. Their posters combined the party logo with the national colours and the European flag and the claim 'For Europe with us' (*Mit uns für Europa*), sometimes also in combination with 'Upwards with Germany' (*Aufwärts mit Deutschland*) (Image 1.03).

The poster in Image 1.02 shows Chancellor Kohl surrounded by young people, with part of the blue European flag in the background. On the issue posters, the claims were linked to various topics, including open borders and environmental protection. The fact that the CDU recommended itself on a poster for a clean environment can also be understood as a reaction to the emergence of the Greens and their entry into the Bundestag. With this advertising, the CDU not only presented itself as a pro-European party, but in its role as a governing party it was more moderate in tone than with its fear appeals of 1979, which campaigned against a socialist Europe. Nevertheless, the CDU once

Image 1.02: 1984 European Parliament elections, CDU poster featuring Helmut Kohl. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Image 1.03: 1984 European Parliament elections, CDU poster 'Vote freedom for Europe'. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

again took up the freedom theme with a poster motif (Image 1.03), which is ambiguous here with the reference to June 17. The 1984 EP elections were held on June 17. From 1954 until unification in 1990, June 17 was a national holiday in the Federal Republic of Germany as the 'Day of German Unity', which commemorated the popular uprising in the GDR in 1953.

With the appeal 'Yes to Europe', the CSU emphasised the reference to Europe in its advertising. This claim was also featured on a portrait poster with the Bavarian Minister President and CSU party chairman Franz Josef Strauß, which ultimately also established the link to Bavaria. Like the CDU, the CSU once again picked up on the theme of freedom from the 1979 EP elections campaign and presented a text poster with the claim 'Europe's task: peace. Europe's nature: freedom'. (*Europas Aufgabe: der Frieden. Europas Wesen: die Freiheit.),* accompanied by Strauß' signature.

After the SPD was thrust into the opposition role in the Bundestag by the political change brought about by the FDP, it tried to turn the European election campaign into a vote on the new government and called on voters to teach them a lesson (Blind, 2012: 87). With Katharina Focke the SPD made a woman its top candidate for the first time. The former federal minister had already been on the SPD list in the first direct election and had been an MEP since 1979. Focke presented a portrait poster with the slogan 'Make Europe strong' (*Macht Europa stark*). Focke was also at the centre of an unusual campaign with which the SPD tried to mobilise its supporters. The candidate toured the country with 'Katharina's Circus', which, as one poster put it, was intended to give a 'vision' of Europe. The idea was that in a circus, just as in Europe, the necessary cooperation between people from different nations would be demonstrated (Blind, 2012: 89; Wettig, 2022).

Together with the European and Liberal Democrats (ELD), the FDP ran a joint advertising initiative with a European focus. Campaign posters employed train metaphors including a drawing of a railroad carriage in various versions with the flags of the member states, and other material featured the slogan 'We are breaking ground for Europe' (*Wir brechen Bahn für Europa*) (Khodyeyev, 2016: 178–179; Kruke and Beule, 2011: 256). On national posters, the FDP positioned itself as the guarantor of a progressive era ahead, making the claim they wanted 'To give Europe a Future' (*Damit Europa eine Zukunft hat*), on which the expectations and hopes for Germany and fellow members states were expressed through use of children's writing in the associated imagery (Khodyeyev, 2016: 179).

In 1984, the Greens were primarily concerned with their entry into the EP. On posters, they graphically linked this goal 'The Greens into the European Parliament' (*Die Grünen ins Europaparlament*) with the sunflower logo (Khodyeyev, 2016: 174). The

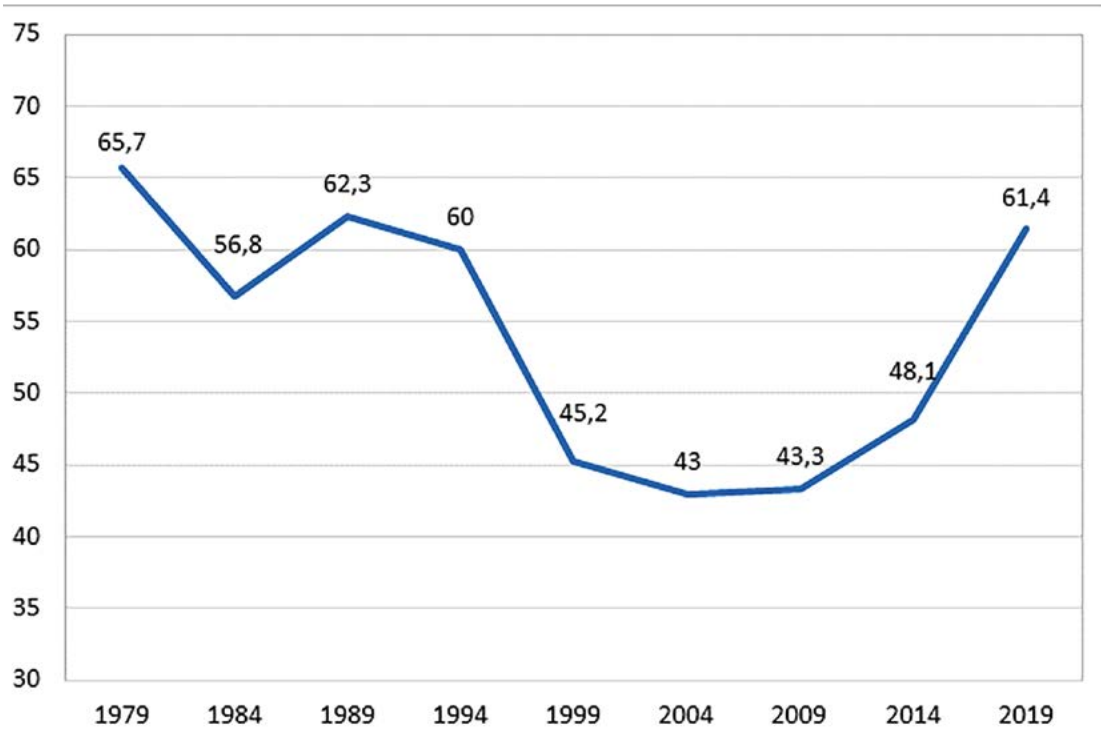


Figure 1.02: Turnout in European elections in Germany 1979 until 2019. Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

environmental issue as well as their commitment to gender equality were transnational goals that lent themselves to the EP elections campaign and at the same time emphasised the need for a Green Party to be represented in the EP. The 1984 EP elections campaign shows how the emergence of the Greens and their entry into the Bundestag the previous year also put the environment on the agenda for the established parties and prompted them to take up the issue in their electoral advertising.

Voter turnout fell to 56.8% in 1984. The certain euphoria that had characterised the 1979 EP elections campaign and had led to a voter turnout of around two thirds seemed to have evaporated (Figure 1.01). The interpretation of low voter turnout and its significance for the acceptance of the European project and the role of the European institutions thus became an ongoing issue.

In a comparison of turnout rates in Germany and in other member states for EP elections 1979 to 2009, Steinbrecher (2011, 2014) concludes that European-related attitudes play a role for turnout or abstention, but that they are not the only and usually not the most important explanatory factor. Pro-European attitudes go hand in hand with turnout, while Eurosceptic citizens rather tend to abstain from voting (p. 169). In addition, and more importantly, the usual explanatory factors prove to be influential for participating in European elections: party identification, endorsement of the electoral norm, media consumption, political interest, age, and education. Systemic factors such as Sunday as election day and the possibility of voting by mail are also of considerable importance (Steinbrecher, 2011: 170).

The EP elections in mid-June 1989 coincided with the beginning of the political awakening in Central and Eastern Europe. With glasnost and perestroika, Mikhail Gorbachev had initiated a reform policy in the Soviet Union that was to gradually affect the states in the Soviet sphere of influence. In May 1989, Hungary opened the border to Austria, thus also opening citizens of the GDR the way to the West. Less than five months after the 1989 EP elections, the Berlin Wall fell. At the time of the EP election, the further developments and the profound political upheaval that lay ahead for Europe could not be foreseen and were therefore not an issue for the election campaign.

The German turnout rate rose significantly compared to 1984 and reached 62.3%, the second highest level in the history of EP elections (Figure 1.02). However, Noelle-Neumann (1994: 285-286) states that the relatively high voter turnout had nothing to do with Europe but was due to a 'Gorbachev effect': His visit to Germany shortly before the 1989 EP elections had brought about an activation that

Image 1.04: 1989 European Parliament elections, Great Europe, great future. Christian Democrats are building Europe. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Image 1.05: One does not play with one's vote!. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

also had an impact on the willingness to participate in the election.

In Germany, the 1989 EP elections once again had considerable domestic significance. After the Bundestag elections in January 1987, the government under Chancellor Kohl had just reached half-time and the EP elections therefore offered a chance to test the political waters. The governing CDU had lost a significant number of votes in 1987 compared to 1983, but the opposition SPD had not been able to benefit from the trend. The election campaign in Germany was dominated by uncertainty about the electoral success of small far-right parties in state elections. The CDU, in particular, had to fear losing voters to the far-right, just as the SPD had experienced somewhat earlier with the Greens after 1979. Unlike the Greens, who took a critical view of Europe but were nevertheless committed to Europe and did not actually question membership, the far-right parties focused on 'Germany first'. Their central theme for the EP elections campaign was German asylum and immigration policy.

The CDU made 'future' the focus of its campaign and declared a greater Europe to be in the 'German interest' (Image 1.04). With the caption 'Christian Democrats are building Europe' and references to Helmut Kohl as 'Chancellor of European unification', they claimed credit for the further development of Europe.

The CDU's concern about the surprising growth particularly of the far-right Republicans and the expectation of losing votes in the EP elections due to dissatisfaction with the federal government led to a campaign that was not only unusual in its aggressiveness for an incumbent party, but also unusual in Germany (Blind, 2012: 112). The CDU took a stand against 'radicals and SPD'. By radicals, the party targeted the Republicans to its right and, on the left of the political spectrum, the Greens, with whom the SPD presumably would form a coalition. Under the heading 'One does not play with one's vote!' (*Mit seiner Stimme spielt man nicht!*) and together with the claim 'Radicals and SPD, farewell future and prosperity' (*Radikale und SPD, Zukunft und Wohlstand ade*), the CDU warned: 'Who votes radical right, will be governed by the left!' (*Wer rechtsradikal wählt, wird links regiert*) (Image 1.05).

The SPD, for its part, claimed 'We are Europe' and countered the aggressive CDU slogan with an appeal for votes: 'Go and vote! Not voting means voting for the right' (*Wählen gehen! Nicht wählen heißt rechts wählen*) (Blind, 2012: 114; Khodyeyev, 2016: 208).

The outcome of the 1989 elections once again confirmed the chances that small and new parties have in elections where 'nothing is at stake'. The Republicans achieved a 7.1% share of the vote and entered the EP with six MEPs. The Greens increased slightly to 8.4%. The FDP returned to the EP. The governing CDU, on the other hand, suffered significant losses. However, the SPD did not benefit from the CDU's weakness and its vote share remained almost the same as in 1984. Against the backdrop of the Republicans' surprising success, in particular, the 1989 EP elections was seen as a 'motor for a five-party system' (Feist and Hoffmann, 1994).

Less than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the two German states were united on October 3, 1990. Two months later, the first all-German Bundestag elections were held. Unification was the dominant issue of the election campaign. Due to his role in unification, 'Unity Chancellor' Kohl had gained fresh support, promising the five new federal states 'blooming landscapes'. The CDU was able to profit from this development to the extent that the party only suffered minor losses in the election. In contrast, the SPD, under its chancellor candidate Oskar Lafontaine, who had dampened the enthusiasm for reunification by addressing its costs, suffered a significant decline compared to its 1987 result.

The political developments in Europe changed the external and internal framework for the German attitude towards European integration. With unification, Germany had regained full sovereignty, and as the most populous and economically strongest EU member state, it had become a central power in Europe (Schmalz, 2001: 17). The external threat posed by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact had disappeared following their collapse, meaning that important reasons for Germany's interest in ever deeper integration no longer applied (Niedermayer, 2021: 195). The extended political integration resulting from the establishment of the Monetary Union, as well as the Common Foreign and Security Policy implemented by the Maastricht Treaty and cooperation in the areas of Justice and Home Affairs, led to uncertainty, which was expressed in declining support among the population.

The larger Germany had to find its new role in Europe but left no doubt about its commitment to European policy despite 'orientation difficulties' (Schmalz, 2001: 42). Against the background of a fundamental consensus among the German parties on the European project, however, a stronger consideration of German interests could be identified in German European policy, which particularly affected Germany's payments to the European Community (Schmalz, 2001: 40-41). In terms of the enlargement of the EU to Central and Eastern Europe, there were hardly any differences among the German parties, but there were concerning negotiations on the accession of Turkey, which were questioned by the CDU

Image 1.06: 1994 European Parliament elections, For Germany: Future instead of left front. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

(Niedermayer, 2021: 199)

Unification brought the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) onto the scene, which led to a further differentiation and expansion of the German party system. The PDS emerged as the successor to the GDR state party, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). After changing its name several times, the party has been known as The Left (*Die Linke*) since 2007.

In 1994, for the first time, EP elections and federal elections were held in the same year. As there were also state elections in eight and local elections in nine federal states, 1994 was declared a super election year. Seven federal states combined their local elections with the European elections on June 12. A few weeks before the EP elections, the election of a new Federal President had taken place. This election had been an embarrassment for Helmut Kohl because his preferred candidate had to withdraw, and the candidate pushed through by the CSU ultimately won the race. The SPD party chairman also emerged damaged from this election after having been criticised for his ill-advised performance in this matter, mainly because of his insistence on supporting an own candidate with no chances of being elected. (Blind, 2012: 136–137)

For the German parties, the priority was naturally the first-order election, which was to take place three months after the European elections. As state elections not only determine the composition of the state parliaments, but also of the Bundesrat (Federal Council), a second chamber of the parliament, these elections are also highly relevant. Although the signals that would be sent out by a poor performance in the European elections had to be feared, the European elections were overshadowed by the other elections, not least for financial reasons. What Reif had already noted after the 1984 European elections proved to be true here again: 'European elections are in danger of constituting a category of their own […]: 'third order national elections' with barely more relevance than that of an official opinion poll'. (1984: 253).

Representative of the subordinate reference to Europe and the national focus of the EP elections campaign is a CDU poster that was used in both campaigns (Image 1.06).

Above the CDU's general campaign slogan and under the headline 'For Germany:' 'Securely into the future' (*Sicher*[2] *in die Zukunft*), 'Future instead of left front' (*Zukunft statt Linksfront*) is

2 Security and safety are both translated with the German word Sicherheit.

written in bold letters, flanked by the German flag against a blue sky. The claim is directed against the PDS, which was initially particularly successful in the eastern German states. By warning of a left-wing front, the CDU insinuated that the SPD and the Greens were planning to team up with the PDS. The poster and claim were part of the CDU's famous red socks campaign in the 1994 election year, which alluded to the PDS's SED past.

Unification had created a mathematical problem for the CSU: its result in Bavaria was based on the whole of Germany in EP elections, and it had so far been able to overcome the five percent threshold. In the larger electoral area, the party was afraid of not making it over the hurdle and therefore had to focus primarily on mobilising its supporters (Blind, 2012: 157). For the CSU, which only runs in Bavaria and, as a permanent governing party, claims to be protecting Bavarian identity, mobilisation is always linked to an assurance that Bavarian interests would also be safeguarded in the wider European context. This was most clearly expressed on a simple poster with the call 'European elections on June 12: Voting for Bavaria'. (*Europawahl am 12. Juni: Für Bayern wählen*) The party also produced an unusual series of posters in green featuring Bavarian Minister President Edmund Stoiber and CSU party chairman and Federal Finance Minister Theo Waigel. On a poster showing the two politicians together, they affirmed: 'We make the best of Europe: for Bavaria'. (*Wir machen das Beste aus Europa: für Bayern*). On another poster, Stoiber assured: 'I guarantee: Bavaria will remain Bavaria. Even in Europe' (*Ich garantiere: Bayern bleibt Bayern. Auch in Europa*).

The SPD campaign, on the other hand, made a stronger reference to Europe and campaigned, for example, 'For a social Europe' (*Für ein soziales Europa*) (Kruke and Beule, 2011: 260). Like the CDU, the SPD took up the key word security with a claim 'Security instead of fear' (*Sicherheit statt Angst*), as on a poster with the slogan 'Work! Work! Work!' (*Arbeit! Arbeit! Arbeit!*) (Khodyeyev, 2016: 239). The FDP did not show much commitment in their poster campaign. Their main slogan linked their theme of freedom with Europe: 'In the name of freedom: we need Europe' (*Im Namen der Freiheit: Wir brauchen Europa*) (Khodyeyev, 2016: 245). Alliance '90/The Greens, as the merger of the West and East parties was called, took a decidedly European approach to the 1994 election campaign, their main topic being asylum and xenophobia (Kruke and Beule, 2011: 260). For example, they produced a poster calling for votes in seven EU languages with the argument 'Go vote! You can prevent xenophobic parties from entering the European Parliament'. (*Gehen Sie wählen! Sie können verhindern, daß fremdenfeindliche Parteien in das Europäische Parlament kommen*) (Khodyeyev, 2016: 242). In 1994, the PDS took part in an EP election for the first time, but its advertising campaign only referred to Europe with the European flag next to its party logo. The slogan 'Change begins with opposition' (*Veränderung beginnt mit Opposition*) was repeated on its posters on topics such as unemployment and xenophobia (Khodyeyev, 2016: 247).

In the federal elections in the fall of 1994, the two major parties performed better than in the EP elections in June (Figure 1.03). While SPD and CDU were almost on a par in the EP elections, the SPD came out ahead of the CDU in the Bundestag elections. As a parliamentary group together with the CSU, the Christian Democrats were able to continue their governing coalition with the FDP. The result for the Greens reflected the advantage the party has in EP elections, while the PDS won only a slightly larger vote share in the EP elections than in the Bundestag elections.

1998–2005: The Red-Green Government

The 1994 elections had already shown the increasing support for the SPD, while the CDU had to contend with a loss of votes. Helmut Kohl's popularity had begun to decline in the second half of the 1980s, although this had increased once again with reunification. The elections of the super election year 1994 demonstrated the SPD's new strength. The Bundestag elections in September 1998 finally led to a change of government and thus to the end of the Kohl era and his 16-year chancellorship. SPD and Greens formed the first red-green federal government under the new Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. With the FDP, Greens and PDS alongside the CDU/CSU and SPD, a multi-party system emerged in the Bundestag.

The 1999 EP elections took place nine months after the Bundestag elections and therefore represented a first test for the new government alliance. Even though the parties' advertising campaigns had a clear European reference, the posters also reflected the national political debate. CDU and FDP, now in opposition, used the EP elections campaign to settle accounts with the red-green coalition and went on the attack. As is often the case in German campaigns (Holtz-Bacha, 2000: 13–14), parts of the negative advertising were masked with humour.

The CDU placed its main slogan 'In the middle of life, in the middle of Europe' (*Mitten im Leben, mitten in Europa*) under its party logo and next to the German national colours and a cut-out European flag. One poster series used the appeal 'Europe must be done properly' (*Europa muß man richtig machen*), in a variant also with the addition 'From the beginning' (*Von Anfang an*). One motif (Image 1.07) addressed the Chancellor directly. The cap-

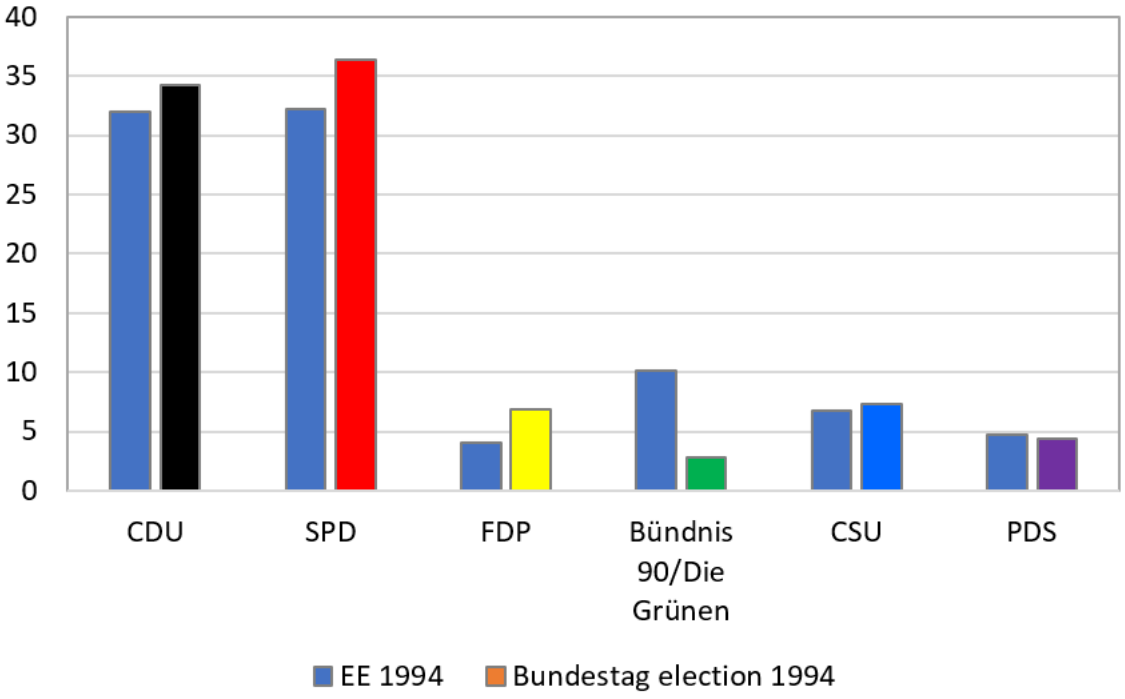


Figure 1.03: Share of votes in the 1994 European and Bundestag elections Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

tion accompanying the picture of three serious and concentrated-looking doctors in an operating theatre read: '*others* can't constantly make corrections either, Mr. Schröder' (andere *können auch nicht ständig nachbessern, Herr Schröder*).

The CSU again campaigned 'For a strong Bavaria in Europe', but also addressed European issues with claims such as 'Europe: Payments must be fair' (*Europa: Beim Zahlen muß es gerecht* zugehen) or 'For Europe: Being in touch with people instead of bureaucracy' (*Für Europa: Bürgernähe statt Bürokratie*). The FDP, on the other hand, made no reference to Europe at all, with only one poster showing its top candidate for the EP election calling him ambiguously 'A top performer for Europe' (Spitze[3] für Europa). Otherwise, the FDP focused entirely on attacking the red-green government coalition. Its top candidate showed the red-green government a 'yellow card'[4], while another poster listed 'five fouls' committed by the red-green government (Khodyeyev, 2016: 280). With the slogan 'Europe, we are coming' (*Europa, wir kommen*), the PDS established the European reference of its campaign and presented itself with the claim 'Strong locally, good for Europe' (*Stark vor Ort, gut für Europa*). A poster with the statement in bold print 'Bombs fall. Stock market prices rise'. (*Bomben fallen. Kurse steigen*) called for 'Building Europe without weapons!' (*Europa schaffen ohne Waffen!*), another, adorned with flashy red kissing lips, campaigned for gender equality with a play on words: 'Woman. Women. Women's power. Woman. Power!'[5] (*Frau. Frauen. Frauenmacht. Frau. Macht!*).

The parties in the governing coalition adopted an emphatically European stance and refrained from engaging with the opposition's attacks. The SPD chose 'Good for you, good for Europe' (*Gut für Sie, gut für Europa*) as the main slogan for its advertising campaign, addressed specific issues such as a 'common employment policy,' and made the connection between Europe and national politics with the assurance: 'Our European policy is not made for Brussels, but for Bochum, Chemnitz, Bamberg and Kiel'[6]. (*Unsere Europapolitik wird nicht für Brüssel gemacht, sondern für Bochum, Chemnitz, Bamberg und Kiel*) (Khodyeyev, 2016: 273). The Greens declared themselves as 'Decisively European' in their main slogan and topped this on one poster featuring a body with a red heart tattoo adorned with the word 'Europe' and a cupid's arrow to the claim 'Yours is my whole

3 Literally "Top for Germany". In German, Spitze can refer to the top position (on the electoral list) but also be understood as an appraisal of the candidate.

4 Yellow, together with blue, is also the party color of the FDP.

5 The German word *Macht* together with the exclamation mark can also be understood here as a call to women to get involved and take power.

6 Bochum, Chemnitz, Bamberg and Kiel are medium-sized cities in different federal states.

Image 1.07: 1999 European Parliament elections, Europe must be done properly. Right from the start. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Image 1.08: 2004 European Parliament elections, SPD and CDU posters for the 2004 European elections. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Source: Author's own image.

heart'. (*Dein ist mein ganzes Herz*) (Khodyeyev, 2016: 275; Kruke and Beule, 2011: 262).

While the FDP once again failed to enter the EP, the PDS was able to overcome the five percent hurdle and make its advertising slogan 'Europe, we are coming' (*Europa, wir kommen*) a reality. While the CDU gained about eleven percentage points compared to the 1998 Bundestag elections, the SPD lost around ten and thus recorded its worst result ever in an EP election (Niedermayer, 2005: 3). By contrast, its coalition partner suffered only minor losses compared to the result in the Bundestag election.

Bundestag elections were held a year and a half before the 2004 EP elections. With the campaigns of CDU/CSU and SPD focusing on their chancellor candidates, the 2002 campaign was characterised by strong personalisation (Holtz-Bacha, 2003). The challenger to 'media chancellor' Schröder was Bavarian Minister President Edmund Stoiber of the CSU, who had pushed through his candidacy against CDU party leader Angela Merkel. There were popularity gaps between the party and the chancellor candidate on both sides: while Schröder was considerably more popular with the electorate than his party, which had lost a lot of support over the course of 2002, the CDU/CSU was much more popular than its chancellor candidate. It came down to a neck-and-neck race between the two major parties which, despite considerable losses compared to the 1998 Bundestag election, the SPD was ultimately able to win and continue its coalition with the Greens. The result of the 2002 Bundestag election also showed that the multi-party system had become firmly established in the Bundestag and signalled the gradual loss of importance of the two major parties, which had to cede more and more votes to the smaller parties.

Soon after the federal elections, dissatisfaction with the red-green government grew because of its reform policy. The CDU took advantage of the trend and attacked the coalition in its advertising campaign for the EP election. With its slogan 'Better for the people'. (Besser für die Menschen.) next to the party logo, the CDU presented itself as the better alternative for the government. The claim 'Europe 2004: Germany can do more'. (*Europa 2004: Deutschland kann mehr*) made a reference to Europe, but nonetheless targeted the national government. The claim was also used, for example, on a poster featuring CDU party leader Angela Merkel, even though she was not a candidate in the EP elections (Image 1.08). For part of the poster advertising, the CDU once again relied on negative campaigning, which was packaged in double ambiguities and humour. One text poster stated, 'One does not do Europe left-handed' (*Europa macht man nicht mit links*) thus also aiming at the leftist government. Another poster showed a red and green apple with a maggot peeping out of it (*Ein anderes Plakat zeigte einen rot-grünen Apfel, aus dem eine Made herausguckte*) (Image 1.09). Warming to this critical theme one image presented a broken gingerbread heart with the inscription 'Trust me!' (*Vertrau mir!*) and the caption 'Red was love and green was hope' (*Rot war die Liebe und grün war die Hoffnung*). Another presented a broken gingerbread heart with the inscription 'Trust me!' (*Vertrau mir!*) and above it the caption 'Red was love and green was hope' (*Rot war die Liebe und grün war die Hoffnung*).

As usual, the CSU tried to make the connection between Bavaria and Europe with Bavarian visual motifs and appeals for votes such as 'For a strong Bavaria in Europe' (*Für ein starkes Bayern in Europa*) or 'Europe in view. Bavaria in the heart' (*Europa im Blick. Bayern im Herzen*). The FDP mainly produced posters with its top candidate for the European elections, Silvana Koch-Mehrin, and the party's main slogan 'We can do Europe better' (*Wir können Europa besser*), with the WE (WIR) emphasised by oversized letters above the candidate's head, thus also engaging the electorate (Picture 12). The party, which to this day refuses to accept a quota for women and has comparatively few female MPs in its parliamentary group, focused its campaign in an unusual way on a woman. The advertising agency responsible for the poster campaign admitted that it deliberately instrumentalised the candidate's appearance for the FDP ads (Holtz-Bacha, 2007b: 98). One poster used a play on words 'Whipping Europe into shape' (*Europa auf Vorderfrau bringen*) to caption the portrait of a candidate and emphasise their gender.[7]

The SPD produced a series of posters which, against the backdrop of the German flag, used catchwords such as 'Peace power' (*Friedensmacht*) or 'Fit for the future' (*Zukunftsgerecht*[8]) in large bold letters to attract the viewer's attention (Image 1.09). The posters only made a reference to Europe in the small print with the slogan 'Germany in Europe' (*Deutschland in Europa*). A second series of posters had a similar structure but used the European flag as a background (Dillenburger et al., 2005: 49–50). The (smeared) SPD poster in Image 1.09 bears the claim 'Peace power Europe. In the German interest' (*Friedensmacht Europa. Im deutschen Interesse*). Next

7 The play on words lies in the newly created word Vorderfrau, which cannot be translated into English. The claim "Europa auf Vorderfrau bringen" changes the common German expression "auf Vordermann bringen", thus replacing man with woman.
8 The term "zukunftsgerecht" can have a double meaning here: "just" (gerecht) can be associated with the SPD's core competence social justice.

© Holtz-Bacha, Mainz June 5, 2004

Image 1.09: Party posters for the 2004 European Parliament elections. Source: Author's own image.

to the party logo, the posters showed the optimistic slogan 'New strength' (*Neue Stärke*).

In 2004, the Greens took part in a pan-European campaign by the European Greens (Holtz-Bacha, 2007a), which used the same motifs and the main slogan 'You decide!' (*Du entscheidest*) in the respective national language (Image 1.09). Developing a joint campaign for the Green parties is made easier by the fact that their manifestos focus on transboundary issues such as the environment, peace, and gender equality. Unusual for the German Greens, however, was a personalised poster series that featured top Green politicians, including the then Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor Joschka Fischer, who points his finger at the viewer like on the legendary Lord Kitchener poster with the caption 'It's Yourope' (Image 1.09). The Greens thus continued a strategy of abandoning their traditional principles, to place candidates rather than issues rather at the centre of their campaign advertising (which they had already followed in the 2002 Bundestag elections) (Lessinger et al., 2003: 234; see also Dillenburger et al., 2005: 55–56).

The PDS campaign advertising advocated the party's usual issues and attacked national politics with an eye-catching series of posters under the heading 'Enough!' (*Es reicht!*), with which the party pleaded 'For a better policy' (*Für eine bessere Politik*). Even if the party tried to establish a connection with Europe, the PDS aimed at national politics, as for example on a poster with the appeal 'Do something for Europe – Justice at home' (*Was tun für Europa – Gerechtigkeit im eigenen Land*). (Dillenburger et al., 2005: 57–59)

The 2004 European elections were 'a black day for the SPD' (Niedermayer, 2005). With only 21.5% of the vote, the governing party recorded a historically low result. Compared to the 1999 EP elections, this was a loss of over nine percentage points, and compared to the 2002 Bundestag elections, the Social Democrats had even lost almost 13 percentage points. Their coalition partner in Berlin, on the other hand, emerged triumphant. The Greens, with 11.9%, achieved a double-digit result, more than four percentage points higher than in the federal election and 5.5 more than the 1999 EP elections. The CDU achieved 36.5%, almost nine percentage points better than in the 2002 federal election. FDP and PDS each received 6.1% of the vote, the CSU 8%. The SPD's poor performance was mainly due to dissatisfaction with the federal gov-

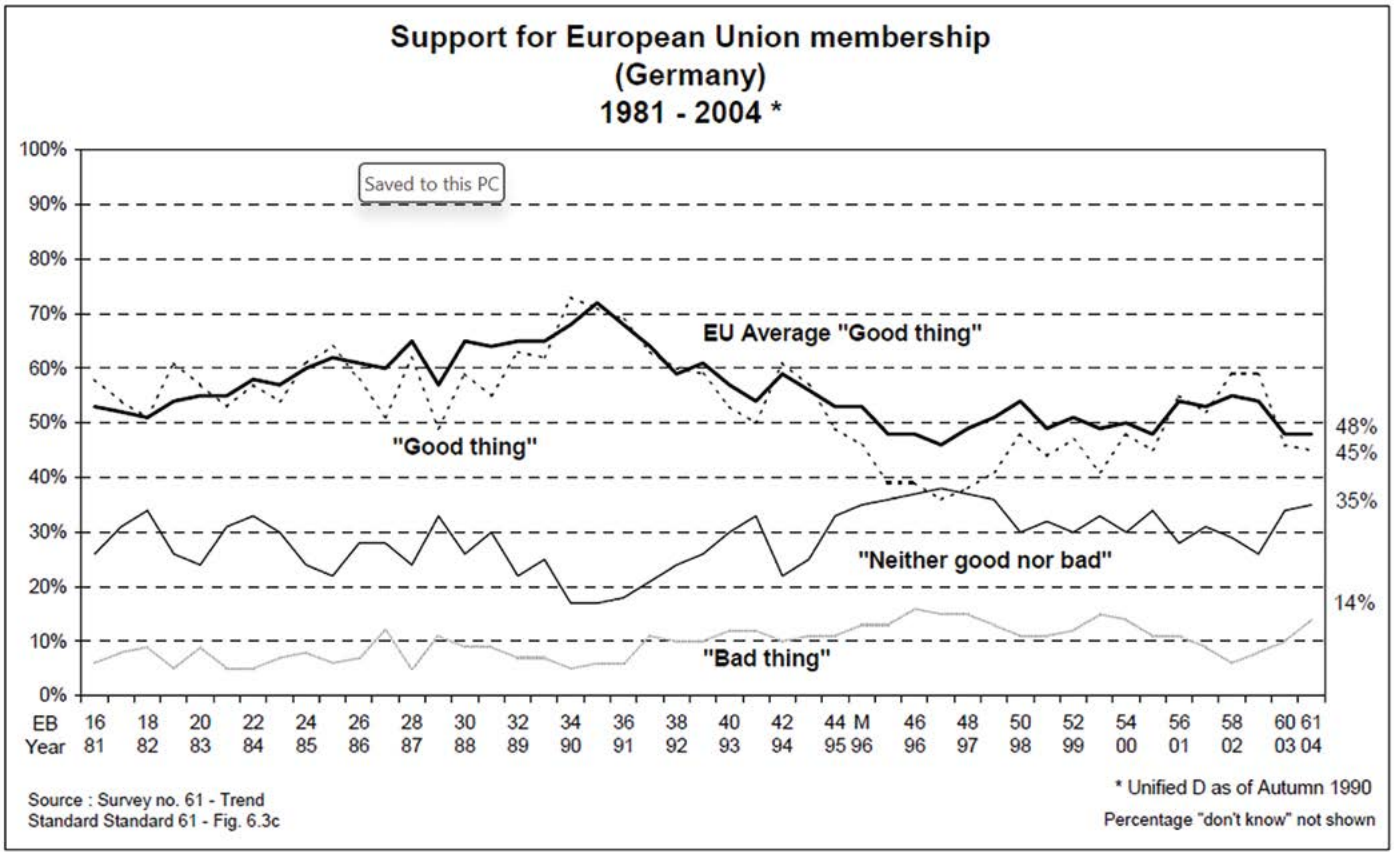


Figure 1.04: Support for Germany's EU membership 1981–2004.
Source: Commission of the European Communities (2004: B.39).

ernment and its reform policy, which was primarily blamed on the majority party due to the responsibility of social democratic ministries. Thanks to their European campaign and an electorate that was easy to mobilise for Europe, the Greens were able to distance themselves from their coalition partner (see also Niedermayer, 2005).

In 2004, the year of the EU enlargement with the accession of ten new member states, support for the country's EU membership fell significantly in Germany and even dropped below EU average (Figure 1.03). In the Eurobarometer, conducted in February and March 2004, only 45% of Germans said that their country's EU membership was 'a good thing'. At the beginning of the 1990s, this figure was above 70%. It had already fallen below 40% in 1997 but had recovered in the meantime. However, in the spring of 2004, only 39% of respondents thought that Germany benefited from its membership (Commission of the European Communities, 2004: B.39). This judgment could be explained by concerns about the freedom of movement within the EU that comes with membership but may also have had something to do with the expectation of high financial burdens as a result of the enlargement; in March 2003, German respondents were at the top of all member states with the expectation that the EU enlargement 'will be very expensive for our country' (EOS Gallup, 2003).

The Merkel Era

A snap Bundestag election was held on September 18, 2005. On the evening of the state election in North Rhine-Westphalia on May 22, 2005, in which the SPD had suffered a severe loss of votes and was relegated to opposition after almost 40 years, SPD party chairman Franz Müntefering and Chancellor Schröder surprisingly announced their intention to call new elections. Schröder justified this decision by saying that the red-green coalition had lost the trust of the electorate. In order to make a new election possible, Schröder called a vote of confidence in the Bundestag. Due to its—deliberate—failure, the Chancellor could then recommend the dissolution of the Bundestag to the Federal President, who followed this proposal and then set the date for the election. This procedure, which Helmut Kohl also chose in 1982, is legally controversial, but was declared constitutional by the Federal Constitutional Court in both cases (e.g., Jesse, 2005).

The announcement of the intention to bring about new elections was regarded as a lone decision by Schröder and Müntefering and caught parties and public unprepared. The parties had to launch an election campaign practically overnight, with barely four months to go until the election date. As an additional problem, the campaign would run over the summer holidays, when it is difficult to reach the electorate with party advertising (Holtz-Bacha, 2006).

As the challenger to the incumbent, Angela Merkel ran as CDU/CSU chancellor candidate, having had to step back behind Edmund Stoiber in the previous election. In the 2005 election, the CDU/CSU came out one percentage point ahead of the SPD and the red-green coalition lost its majority. After other options had failed, the result was a grand coalition of the two major parties under Chancellor Angela Merkel. Schröder announced that he did not want to be part of the new government and ended his political career.

With the reform policies of the Schröder government (Agenda 2010), the SPD had lost its social policy brand core. However, attempts at changes and the repositioning of the party did not have the hoped-for success with its electorate. This gave the PDS the opportunity to present itself as the only party of social justice. It contested the 2005 Bundestag elections together with WASG (*Arbeit & soziale Gerechtigkeit – Die Wahlalternative*), a recently founded party made up of former SPD and trade union members in protest against Agenda 2010 and offered the PDS the chance to establish itself in the West German states. A merger in mid-2007 resulted in the foundation of the party *Die Linke* (The Left). Further turbulence within the party was caused by multiple changes in the party's chairmanship, which was ultimately separated from the chancellor candidacy. (Niedermayer, 2009: 714-715)

When Merkel took office in November 2005, the EU was in a deep crisis after the Constitutional Treaty had been rejected in France and the Netherlands in May and June 2005. The treaty aimed to reform the EU in order to keep the community operational after it had grown to 25 states since the enlargement in 2004. Merkel soon gained recognition in her role as a mediator, not least between the interests of the larger and smaller EU member states. She played a key role in saving the Constitutional Treaty and bringing about the Treaty of Lisbon at the end of 2007, quickly assuming a leading role in Europe.

In 2009, another super election year was declared. For the second time since the introduction of direct EP elections, EP and Bundestag elections were held in the same year. In addition to the two nationwide elections and several local elections, which were scheduled on the same day as those of the EP, elections were held in five federal states in 2009, only one of which was scheduled before the EP elections. For the parties, the permanent election campaign in such a super election year is an organisational and not least a financial challenge. Only a limited effort could therefore be expected for the EP elections as a national secondary election, from which no government emerges.

Election year 2009 was dominated by the financial and economic crisis that began in the fall of 2008. The greatest problem-solving competence was attributed to CDU/CSU as well as Merkel and the Minister of Economic Affairs Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, who had only been in office since February 2009 (Niedermayer, 2009: 722–723). At the same time, the EU enjoyed broad support: The number of Germans who thought their country's membership was 'a good thing' was 61% in the election year, well above the EU average of 53% (Europäische Kommission, 2009: 20).

With its slogan 'We in Europe' (Image 1.10), the CDU combined the national with the European level and intended to associate community. In all poster series, the 'We' is underlaid with the German flag, an element that was also repeated on posters in the Bundestag election campaign. While Image 1.10 shows a poster that only used the slogan, this is supplemented on other posters by claims that could refer to both Europe and Germany: 'Protecting and creating work' (*Arbeit schützen und schaffen*), 'For the way out of the crisis' (*Für den Weg aus der Krise*), or 'For a social market economy that is humane' (*Für eine soziale Marktwirtschaft, die menschlich ist*). In addition to the issue posters, the CDU also produced posters with its top candidate for the EP election and also distributed a poster featuring Angela Merkel, along with the claim 'We have a strong voice in Europe' (*Wir haben eine starke Stimme in Europa*) (Lessinger and Holtz-Bacha, 2010).

Unusually for German election campaigns, the SPD campaign provided a surprise with attack advertising. They targeted the rival parties with three comic-style motifs, setting the mood for the Bundestag election campaign. A finely dressed shark with a treacherous grin, combined with the claim 'Financial sharks would vote FDP' (*Finanzhaie würden FDP wählen*) was aimed at the FDP. A similarly well-dressed hairdryer, together with the claim 'Hot air would vote for Die Linke' (*Heiße Luft würde Die Linke wählen*), mocked The Left, and an equally stylish 50-cent piece was accompanied by the caption 'Dumping wages would vote CDU' (*Dumpinglöhne würden CDU wählen*). The same bisarre team populated an also cartoon-like SPD television spot. Like the negative advertising, issue posters with motifs from the world of work tended to focus on the

KAS/ACDP 10-025 : 400 CC-BY-SA 3.0 DE
Image 1.10: 2009 European Parliament elections, CDU poster 'We in Europe'. Source: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Bundestag elections. Only the slogan 'More SPD for Europe' *(Mehr SPD für Europa*) was an effort to make a reference to the EP elections (Leidecker, 2010; Lessinger and Holtz-Bacha, 2010).

Their general, cross-border issues allowed the Greens to focus their advertising on both Europe and the Bundestag election, with some of their advertising devised as a negative campaign. The Greens' posters attracted attention with a bold 'WUMS!', which on the one hand is an onomatopoeic term standing for a powerful impact but was also explained in a footnote on the posters as the acronym of the party's slogan 'Economy & Environment, Human & Social' (*Wirtschaft & Umwelt, Menschlich & Sozial*). With their demands for 'Freedom', 'Equality', 'Equal pay for women!' (*Gleicher Lohn für Frauen!*), 'Make millionaires pay' (*Millionäre zur Kasse*) or 'Out of Afghanistan' (*Raus aus Afghanistan*), the advertising of the Left also focused on general and transborder issues. Only the call for 'Minimum wage across Europe' (*Mindestlohn europaweit*) made a direct reference to Europe.

The outcome of the 2009 European elections was another disaster for the SPD. At 20.8%, its vote share fell by a further 0.7 percentage points compared to EP elections 2009. However, the CDU also saw heavy declines. With only 30.7%, the party lost almost 6 percentage points compared to 2009. The winners of the EP elections were the smaller parties. The Greens achieved double-digit results with 12.1% and the FDP with 11%, while The Left reached 7.5%.

With a joint share of not even 60%, the 2009 EP elections impressively confirmed the dwindling dominance of the two major parties. As Figure 1.03 shows, their support has continued to decline since the first direct elections, when they together accounted for 90% of the vote. Mainly due to the growing vote shares of the smaller parties, the combined share of CDU/CSU and SPD has halved by 2019. Also noteworthy, however, is the development of the share of the 'Others', which here includes those parties and groups that remained below 5% and are not or were not represented in the Bundestag. Their share in 2009 was 10.8% and increased further in the next two elections.

Among the other parties, the Republicans, the Animal Welfare Party, and the Free Voters stood out in the 2009 EP elections with results above one percent. The Pirate Party, which ran in an EP election for the first time in 2009, achieved 0.9% and from then on embarked on a period of electoral success, albeit limited to a few years. This reflects what Reif already stated in 1984 (p. 246): unlike in first-order elections, where tactical considerations play a role, voters in second-order elections tend to vote 'with their heart' and are more willing to try out a different party, which works to the advantage of the smaller parties. However, the two major parties have also lost their dominant position at the national level. Until the mid-1980s, SPD and CDU/CSU together accounted

for over 80% of the vote in Bundestag elections. With the entry of the Greens into the Bundestag in 1983 and the emergence of other parties, their share of the vote gradually declined and has shrunk to under 50% in 2021 (Figure 1.04).

The 2009 Bundestag elections were held not even four months after the European elections. As Merkel's challenger, the SPD nominated Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who had been head of the Federal Chancellery under Chancellor Schröder and had served as Foreign Minister in Merkel's cabinet since 2005 and as Vice-Chancellor since 2007. For Steinmeier and the SPD, these were difficult conditions for the election campaign, because, as partners in the grand coalition, they could hardly go into confrontation with the CDU/CSU and Merkel in particular.

There were some small changes for the two major parties in the Bundestag elections compared to the outcome of the 2009 EP election. The CDU lost 3.4 percentage points and, together with the CSU, came in at 33.8%. The SPD gained 2.2 percentage points. The FDP reached a record vote share of 14.6%, the Greens 10.7% and The Left 11.9%. The election resulted in a coalition government of CDU/CSU and FDP under Chancellor Angela Merkel and the SPD went into opposition.

With the sovereign debt crisis, particularly in the southern European member states, developing into a crisis for the single currency, Merkel took on a leading role in crisis management to save the euro. While Merkel received great recognition for her efforts, her policies were also the target of fierce criticism, particularly from the affected countries, and revived fears of a German supremacy in Europe (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2021: 277-286).

Due to the four-year cycle, the next Bundestag elections were held in 2013 and thus before the 2014 EP elections. The SPD nominated Peer Steinbrück as its chancellor candidate, who had been Minister of Finance in Merkel's first cabinet and, together with the Chancellor, had been responsible for the reactions to the financial crisis that had been looming since 2007 and was made clearly manifest by the collapse of Lehman Brothers Bank in the fall of 2008. After the 2009 Bundestag elections, Steinbrück had largely withdrawn from politics, but remained in the spotlight due to his financial policy expertise. Apart from the fact that, as a former minister in Merkel's government, it was again difficult for the SPD chancellor candidate to confront the incumbent, Steinbrück undermined his initial popularity during the election campaign with numerous blunders. He also lacked the genuine backing of Sigmar Gabriel, who had been SPD chairman since 2009 and was toying with the chancellor candidacy himself.

With a 41.5% share of the vote, the CDU/CSU made significant gains compared to 2009, while its coalition partner, the FDP, remained below the five percent hurdle and was no longer represented in the Bundestag. The SPD made some gains and reached 25.7%. The Greens and the Left Party lost ground but had no problem overcoming the five percent threshold. As the Greens declined to go into a coalition with the CDU/CSU after initial exploratory talks, a grand coalition with the SPD was formed again.

The euro crisis triggered by the international financial market crisis and, in particular, the bailout policy for Greece, brought the anti-euro activists back onto the scene. In the fall of 2012, one year before the Bundestag elections, they founded 'Wahlalternative 2013', from which Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) emerged shortly afterwards. This was the first time that a truly Eurosceptic force became established in Germany. In the 2013 federal election, AfD came close to the five percent threshold with a 4.7% share of the vote.

The 2014 European elections were held eight months after the Bundestag elections and could have been a first test for the new government. However, the conditions for the European elections had changed significantly. In 2009, the Federal Constitutional Court initially declared the five-percent blocking clause and, in February 2014, the subsequently introduced three-percent hurdle to be unconstitutional. As a consequence, there was no longer any blocking clause in the 2014 EP elections in Germany. This opened up new opportunities for the many small parties and groups that usually run in European elections. It was to be expected that voters would be less strategic in their voting decisions and more likely to vote 'from the heart'.

Introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, the European party families nominated *Spitzenkandidaten*[9] to run for the office of the Commission President for the first time in the 2014 European elections. According to the Treaty on European Union, the heads of state and government of the Member States are required to consider the result of the EP elections and thus the vote of the citizens when proposing their candidate for the office of the Commission President to the EP. This was linked to the hope that voters would see their vote as gaining in importance if they could (indirectly) have a say in the nomination for this influential office.

The top candidates from two European party families came from Germany. The Party of European Socialists nominated Martin Schulz, who had been an MEP since 1994 and its President since 2012. The European Greens nominated Ska Keller. Surveys before and after the election showed that the Euro-

9 The German term Spitzenkandidaten (top candidates) also made its way into English-language literature.

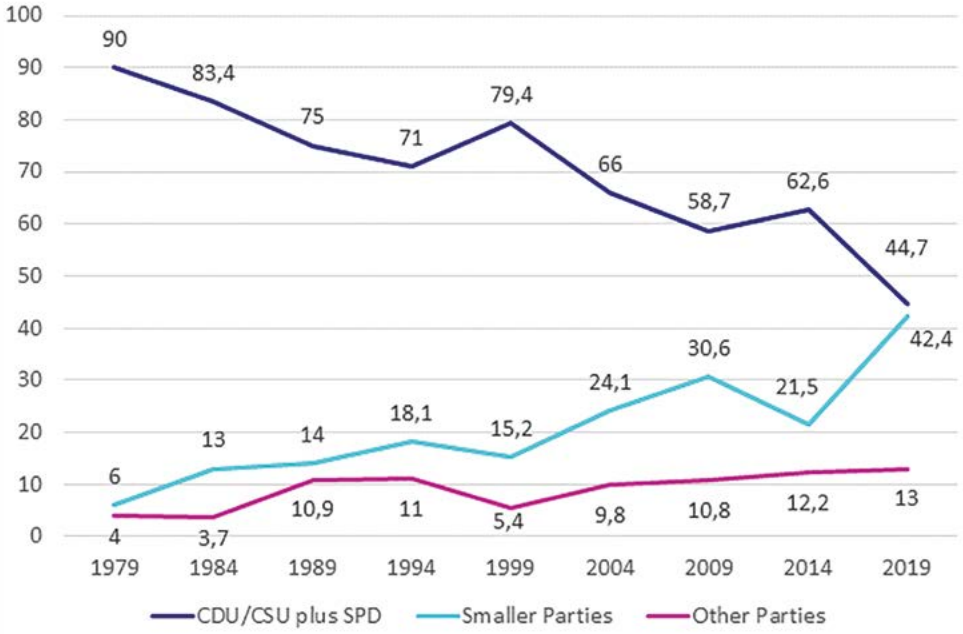


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Figure 1.05: Share of votes for CDU/CSU plus SPD and for the other parties in the European elections 1979–2019. Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

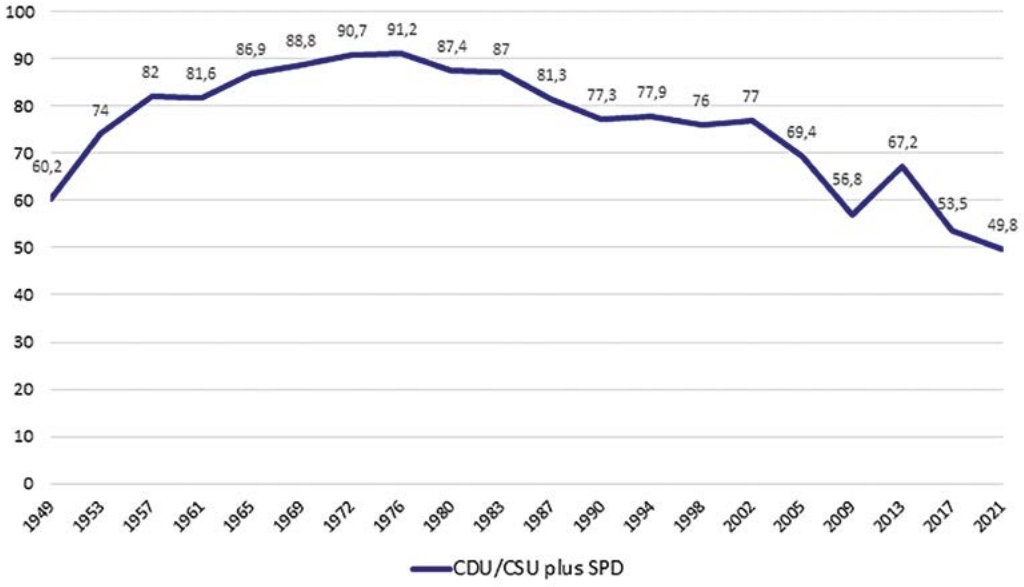

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Figure 1.06: Joint vote share of CDU/CSU and SPD in Bundestag elections 1949–2021. Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

pean top candidates achieved little recognition and that the election campaign did little to change this (Lessinger and Holtz-Bacha, 2016: 100). If at all, they were best known in their home countries. Martin Schulz was the most well-known of all the top candidates but was still only named by 30 percent of the respondents in a Europe-wide post-election survey, while the EPP's top candidate, Jean-Claude Juncker, only received 26 percent (AMR, 2014: 15). Under these conditions, a personalisation strategy that relied on the European top candidates represented a considerable risk. However, as Martin Schulz was also the SPD's top candidate, the party devised a personalisation strategy and put up his portrait together with the party's slogan for 2014 'Reimagining Europe' (*Europa neu denken*) as a simple candidate poster (Image 1.11), but also with Europe-related claims such as 'A Europe of growth. Not of stagnation' (*Ein Europa des Wachstums. Nicht des Stillstands*).

Similar to 2009, the CDU emphasised community with its slogan 'Together successful in Europe' (*Gemeinsam erfolgreich in Europa*) and visualised this by combining its party logo with a narrow bar in national colours and a truncated European flag. In addition to issue posters promoting topics such as work and growth or the euro, the CDU put up posters with Angela Merkel and with its top candidate McAllister. The FDP also relied on advertising with its top candidate, in combination with issues and the claim 'This is what Europe needs' (*Das braucht Europa*) or as a candidate poster with the caption 'He is what Europe needs' (*Den braucht Europa*).

The advertising of The Left focused on the party's social policy issues and called for 'securing peace, taxing millionaires, preventing old-age poverty, creating employment, strengthening democracy' (*Frieden sichern, Millionäre besteuern, Altersarmut verhindern, Beschäftigung schaffen, Demokratie stärken*) or specifically 'No tax money for gambler banks!' (*Keine Steuer-Gelder für Zocker-Banken!*) 'here and in Europe' (*hier und in Europa*) (Image 1.12).

Euroscepticism became visible on the streets with the posters of the AfD (Image 1.13), which contested the EP elections for the first time in 2014. With their party slogan 'Courage for Germany' (*Mut zu Deutschland*) and lots of exclamation marks, the posters of the anti-euro party called for a 'Solid currency instead of EURO debt mania!' (*Solide Währung statt EURO-Schuldenwahn!*) and 'More freedom. Less Brussels'. (*Mehr Freiheit. Weniger Brüssel*). However, the AfD also started to focus on the migration issue with 'Immigration requires clear rules!' (*Einwanderung braucht klare Regeln!*) , or, combining both issues, ranted about 'Con artists. Touts. EURO saviors' (*Nepper. Schlepper. EURO-Retter*).

In the election, CDU and CSU recorded slight losses compared to their result in the 2009 EP elections and together came in at 35.3%. Compared to their outcome in the 2013 Bundestag election, however, the CDU/CSU suffered a loss in votes of 6.2 percentage points. After the disastrous performance in 2009, the SPD made significant gains in 2014, reaching 27.3%. The SPD's EP election result was also a small improvement on the 2013 federal election. Despite a decrease of 1.9%, the Greens remained in double digits and achieved 10.7%, whereas the FDP lost drastically and only gained 3.4% of the vote but was nevertheless able to enter the EP thanks to the scrapping of the blocking clause. In addition to the established parties, eight other parties won seats in the EP elections. The AfD, which had been below the five percent threshold in the Bundestag elections the previous year, achieved 7.1%, giving it seven seats. In addition, seven smaller parties each won one seat in the EP.

After a low in 2004 and 2009, when voter turnout in Germany was only around 43%, more people participated in the EP elections again in 2014. Turnout rose to 48.1% but was a far cry from the turnout rates between 1979 and 1994 (Figure 1.01).

As the EPP had emerged as the strongest group from the EP elections, the EP called on the governments of the member states to put forward their lead candidate Jean-Claude Juncker for election as Commission President. Nevertheless, some heads of government, and Angela Merkel in particular, who, like David Cameron, feared Juncker as too strong a candidate, did not want to see the Spitzenkandidaten regulation as an automatism. However, they had to bow to pressure from the EP, with the consequence that Juncker was finally elected the new Commission President by a majority, with the UK and Hungary maintaining their rejection (see e.g., Schenuit, 2016).

Merkel did not comply with the SPD's demand to appoint Schulz as the German member of the European Commission and instead nominated a CDU party colleague. Schulz, on the other hand, was re-elected as EP President. He was supposed to hold the office for half of the term and then hand it over to an EPP member. Speculation that he wanted to remain in office as EP President afterwards was dispelled when he announced his switch to federal politics in November 2016. SPD party chairman Sigmar Gabriel offered Schulz the chancellor candidacy after he himself had given up the idea of running for chancellor. Instead, Gabriel became Foreign Minister as successor to Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who was standing for the office of Federal President.

In March 2017, Schulz took over the party chairmanship. After announcing his candidacy, a real hype set in within the party and in the media, which

was also reflected in the polls. Schulz briefly drew level with Merkel in the polls but soon lost support again due to poor results in several state elections, obstructive cross-firing from Gabriel, and a poorly conceived election campaign.

At the end of 2014, the topic of 'foreigners/integration/refugees' began a steep climb up the agenda of important issues in Germany. The number of asylum applications in Germany doubled in 2015 compared to the previous year and rose to more than 745,000 in 2016. Immigrants from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq accounted for the largest share by far (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2021: 13, 21). Although mentions as an important topic declined until the 2017 federal election, it remained at the top of the public agenda until the end of 2018, when it was replaced by 'energy/supply/climate' (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2023). While the CDU/CSU tried to avoid the issue in the 2017 election campaign, it nevertheless began to dominate the election as a key topic through its thematisation by Martin Schulz and ultimately also in the television duel. However, the AfD in particular used the issue to target Angela Merkel and at the same time identified the Greens as their main political opponent due to their liberal values (Holtz-Bacha, 2019: 7, 11, 13-16).

While the outcome of the 2013 Bundestag election had interrupted the erosion in the importance of CDU/CSU and SPD, the Bundestag election in September 2017 resulted in considerable losses for the two major parties and continued the decline in their integrative power (Figure 1.04). The CDU lost 55 seats, CSU 10, and SPD 40. The Left Party (9.2%, 69 seats) and the Greens (8.9%, 67 seats) only made slight gains compared to the 2013 federal election. The result for the Greens was disappointing after they had achieved double-digit results in the polls in the second half of 2016. The winners of the election were FDP and AfD. The FDP returned to the Bundestag with a 10.7% share of the vote, giving it 80 seats. The AfD, which had failed to reach the 5% threshold in 2013, achieved 12.6% and thus 94 seats. The prospects for the AfD had initially not been good, not least due to internal party disputes, but the party benefited from the fact that the refugee issue re-emerged on the agenda in the final phase of the election campaign (Niedermayer, 2020: 21-23).

On election night, the SPD announced that the party would go into opposition, not only because of its poor result, but also to prevent the AfD from becoming the largest opposition party. However, exploratory negotiations for a 'Jamaica coalition' of CDU/CSU, FDP and Greens failed, leaving a grand coalition as the only option for forming a government, which then came about, not least under pressure from the Federal President on the SPD.

© C. Holtz-Bacha, Nürnberg April 27, 2014
Image 1.11: 2014 European Parliament elections, SPD Candidate Poster for Martin Schulz. Source: Author's own image.

© C. Holtz-Bacha, Nürnberg April 27, 2014
Image 1.12: 2014 European Parliament elections, The Left, No tax money for gambler banks! Source: Author's own image.

© C. Holtz-Bacha, Nürnberg April 19, 2014
Image 1.13: 2014 European Parliament elections, AfD, Solid currency instead of time bombs. Source: Author's own image.

© C. Holtz-Bacha, Berlin May 26, 2019
Image 1.14: 2019 European Parliament elections, CDU-Poster for *Spitzenkandidat* Manfred Weber. Source: Author's own image.

In the fall of 2018, following her party's losses in state elections, Angela Merkel announced that she would not be standing for the party chairmanship again at the CDU convention in December 2018 and announced that she would not be running for chancellor again in the 2021 federal elections. Consequently, a competition began for her successor within the party, which was narrowly won by Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, aka AKK, the candidate supported by Merkel and until then CDU Secretary General. AKK succeeded in winning over the CSU for a joint program for the 2019 EP elections and the two parties jointly supported the EPP's lead candidate Manfred Weber (CSU).

The 2019 EP elections were held a year and a half after the 2017 Bundestag elections and represented a test not only for the federal government, but even more so for the new CDU party leader. While voter turnout rose by a good 13 percentage points compared to the 2014 EP elections (see Figure 1.01), the coalition parties drastically lost votes and seats. The CDU and CSU together only reached 28.6%, while the SPD lost more than 11 percentage points compared to the 2014 EP elections and ended up with 15.8%. The winners of the election were the Greens, who achieved a 20% vote share. Apart from The Left, the smaller Bundestag parties gained votes. The AfD even made double-digit gains making for eleven MEPs. As there was still no threshold clause, seven other parties were able to win seats in the EP, with the Free Voters and the satirical party, The Party, each gaining two seats.

Despite suffering heavy losses, EPP again became the strongest political group in the EP. Although the EP insisted on applying the *Spitzenkandidaten* principle and proposing Manfred Weber for election as Commission President (see Images 1.14 and 1.15), the European Council overrode the EP's demand and opted for the then German Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen.

The 2019 EP elections had far-reaching consequences for German national politics. The result for the CDU was blamed on AKK, who, also because of other faults, quickly lost support in the party and among the electorate and was unable to prevent a discussion about her suitability as a chancellor candidate. Shortly after the 2019 EP elections, she became Minister of Defence, succeeding Ursula von der Leyen. In February 2020, AKK finally announced her resignation as party chairwoman and her decision not to run for chancellor. She had to remain in office for another year due to the pandemic and until a new party conference could be held. In January 2021, Armin Laschet was elected as the new CDU chairman and ran as the CDU's chancellor candidate in the Bundestag elections in the fall of the same year.

In the SPD, the disastrous result drew criticism from within the party, which prompted the resignation of the first female party and parliamentary group leader Andrea Nahles and her withdrawal from politics. After a transitional period, the SPD organised a member vote on a dual leadership, which turned out in favor of Saskia Esken and Norbert Walter-Borjans. The latter retired after the 2021 Bundestag elections and was succeeded by Lars Klingbeil alongside Esken.

The timing of the 2019 EP elections proved to be extremely favourable for the Greens (Image 1.16). The hot summer of 2018 made climate change tangible, the demonstrations of the Fridays for Future movement raised awareness of the Greens' core issue, and Greta Thunberg had become a popular figure. 'Environmental and climate protection' stood at the top of the list of issues that Germans said would influence their voting decision (e.g., infratest dimap, 2019). The Greens had made steady gains in the previous year, and in January 2019 the party already achieved a 21% vote share in the polls referring to the Bundestag election (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2019). After the 2019 EP elections, the poll figures for the Greens rose even further. Co-party leader Robert Habeck ranked high in the assessment of the ten most important German politicians, while Annalena Baerbock only appeared in the top ten in February 2020 but came in third place right away behind Merkel and Habeck in terms of popularity and performance.

The Greens' soaring performance in the 2019 EP elections (Figure 1.03) and in the following months, as well as the favourable ratings of their leaders, ultimately led the party to nominate a chancellor candidate for the first time, although polls indicated clear doubts about their capability to assume the chancellorship. Based on an agreement between the two co-leaders and the Green Party's statutes, which assigns women first place when filling offices, Annalena Baerbock stood as the candidate for chancellor in the 2021 Bundestag elections.

AfD has established itself in Europe and in the Bundestag (Figure 1.05). After the party fell just short of the 5% threshold in the 2013 Bundestag elections only a few months after it was founded, its vote share in the 2014 EP elections was already 7.1%. Buoyed by opposition to Merkel's refugee policy from 2015 onwards, AfD achieved 12.6% of the vote in the 2017 Bundestag election but recorded a slight decline to 10.3% in the 2021 Bundestag election.

The results of the 2014 and 2019 EP elections for the smaller Bundestag parties show that voting behaviour differs in the old and new German states. While the Greens are struggling in the eastern states, the vote shares for The Left in the East are far ahead of those in the old states. In the 2019 EP elections, however, The Left recorded a considerable drop in votes in the East, while at the same time the AfD's vote share in the eastern states took off. Whereas in the West the politicisation of the environmental issue is reflected in votes for the Greens in the 2019 EP elections, the migration issue determines support for AfD in the East (Figure 1.06).

At the beginning of the 2019 EP election campaign, the AfD included the possibility of Germany leaving the EU in its election manifesto, but soon backtracked on this in view of the broad consensus on German EU membership among the electorate (Partheymüller et al., 2020: 153).

The 2021 Bundestag election campaign had some special features. It was an election campaign

© C. Holtz-Bacha, Nürnberg May 30, 2019
Image 1.15: 2019 European Parliament elections, CSU-Poster for Spitzenkandidat Manfred Weber. Source: Author's own image.

without an incumbent. The strong performance in the polls and in the 2019 EP elections prompted the Greens to nominate a chancellor candidate, resulting in a three-candidate contest for the first time in Germany. The most visible sign of this was in the TV debates, which mutated from duels to Triells. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic presented the parties with unprecedented problems for the organisation of their campaigns and at the same time provided a topic for the election campaign. And the floods at the beginning of July, which inundated areas of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, were a natural disaster that challenged politicians and demanded particular sensitivity from campaigners. In August, the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and the dramatic evacuation mission for civilians dominated the news, which also led to criticism targeting the German government.

The SPD had already nominated Olaf Scholz as its candidate for chancellor in mid-August 2020, who had excelled in crisis management as finance minister in the Merkel cabinet at the start of the pandemic. The CDU did not nominate its candidate for chancellor, Armin Laschet, until mid-April 2021. Surprisingly, Bavarian Minister President Markus Söder also developed ambitions for the chancellorship. A power struggle between the CSU and CDU leader developed in and through the public arena. When Söder finally stepped aside, the CDU/CSU was left with the image of a party torn apart. The poll ratings for the Christian Democrats fell, while support for the Greens increased and they even briefly overtook the CDU/CSU. The Greens' high was probably also influenced by the announcement of the decision on their chancellor candidate in mid-April.

In a comparison of the three candidates for chancellor, only Olaf Scholz was able to significantly increase his suitability as chancellor and his popularity in the polls by the election date in September, while the CDU candidate in particular had to accept a drastic decline in the polls in both suitability and popularity.

The SPD emerged from the Bundestag election as the strongest party with a 25.7% vote share, while CDU and CSU together reached 24.1%. The Greens were unable to maintain their strong poll ratings and came out with 14.8%. The FDP increased its vote share slightly compared to 2017, reaching 11.5%. AfD lost more than two percentage points compared to 2017 and came in at 10.3%. The Left Party failed to overcome the 5% threshold but was still able to enter the Bundestag due to a special provision of the personalised proportional representation. The SPD, Greens, and FDP formed a so-called traffic light coalition under Chancellor Scholz.

© C. Holtz-Bacha, Berlin May 26, 2019
Image 1.16: 2019 European Parliament elections, The Greens, Europe needs solidarity, climate protection and your vote! Source: Author's own image.

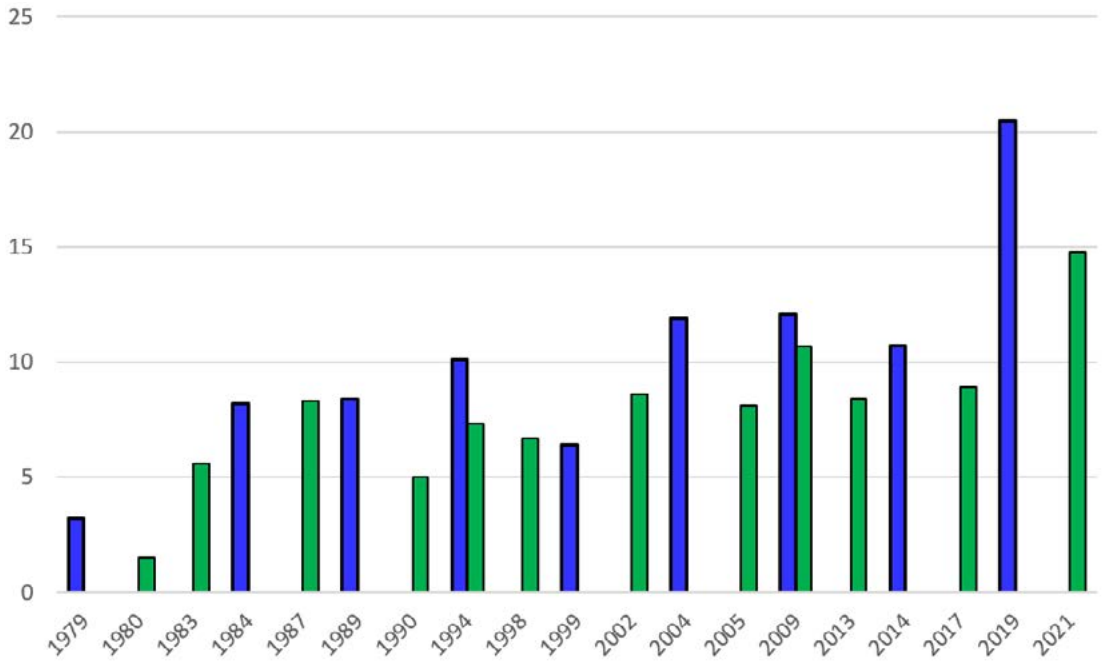

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Figure 1.07: Vote shares for The Greens in European elections and Bundestag elections over time. Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

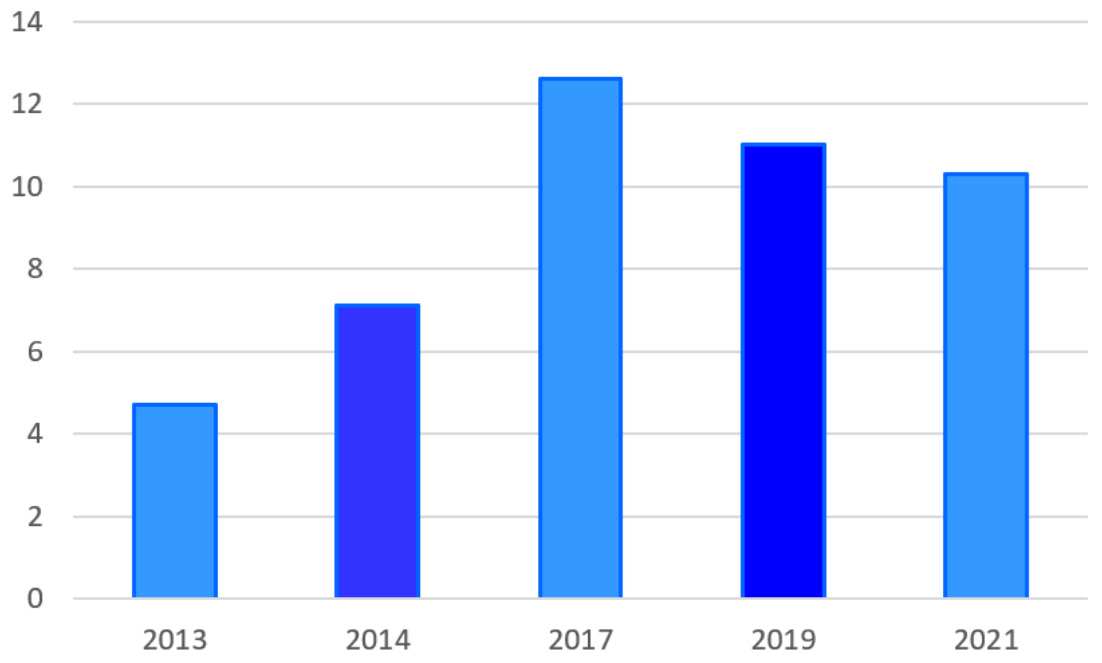

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Figure 1.08: Vote shares for AfD in the 2014 and 2019 EP elections and in Bundestag elections 2013, 2017 and 2021. Source: Author's own figure based on data from https://www.bundeswahlleiterin.de

Conclusion and prospects for the 2024 European elections

Since the 1980s, the German party landscape has become more differentiated. Electoral and parliamentary fragmentation has increased. This applies to both federal and European elections. However, the trend for fragmentation in EP elections has intensified after the blocking clause was first lowered and then lifted completely.

The German parties have a basic pro-European consensus on European policy. Differences regarding the depth of integration and EU enlargement became apparent with the emergence of new parties from the 1980s onwards and ultimately as a result of changed framework conditions since 1989/90. Euroscepticism developed on the right of the party spectrum as a result of EU reactions to the economic, financial and euro crisis from around 2008 and ultimately led to the founding of the AfD in early 2013 which has since then moved to the extreme right.

Membership of the EU is also uncontroversial among the population. In spring 2023 (European Parliament, 2023), 67% of the Germans saw Germany's EU membership as 'a good thing' and only 9% thought it was 'a bad thing'. The majority of Germans also see the EU as a community of values (European Commission, 2023). Asked which values the EP should defend as a matter of priority, there is above-average approval in Germany compared to the EU average for 'democracy', 'protection of human rights in the EU and worldwide', 'freedom of speech and thought', and 'rule of law'.

European elections are elections of a special kind. As secondary elections, they are not on the same level as German state elections, which have also been referred to as secondary elections, since EP elections do not decide on the party strength in a parliament and therefore on a government, as is the case with state elections.

Since the new federal government took office in early December 2021, it has been in permanent crisis mode. This is driven by internal and external factors. One key factor is the war in Ukraine, which began two months later, the ensuing energy crisis, and rising inflation. Internally, there are also differences among the parties in the three-party coalition, particularly between Greens and FDP, and with regard to the political priorities for responding to climate change, the energy transition, and migration policy.

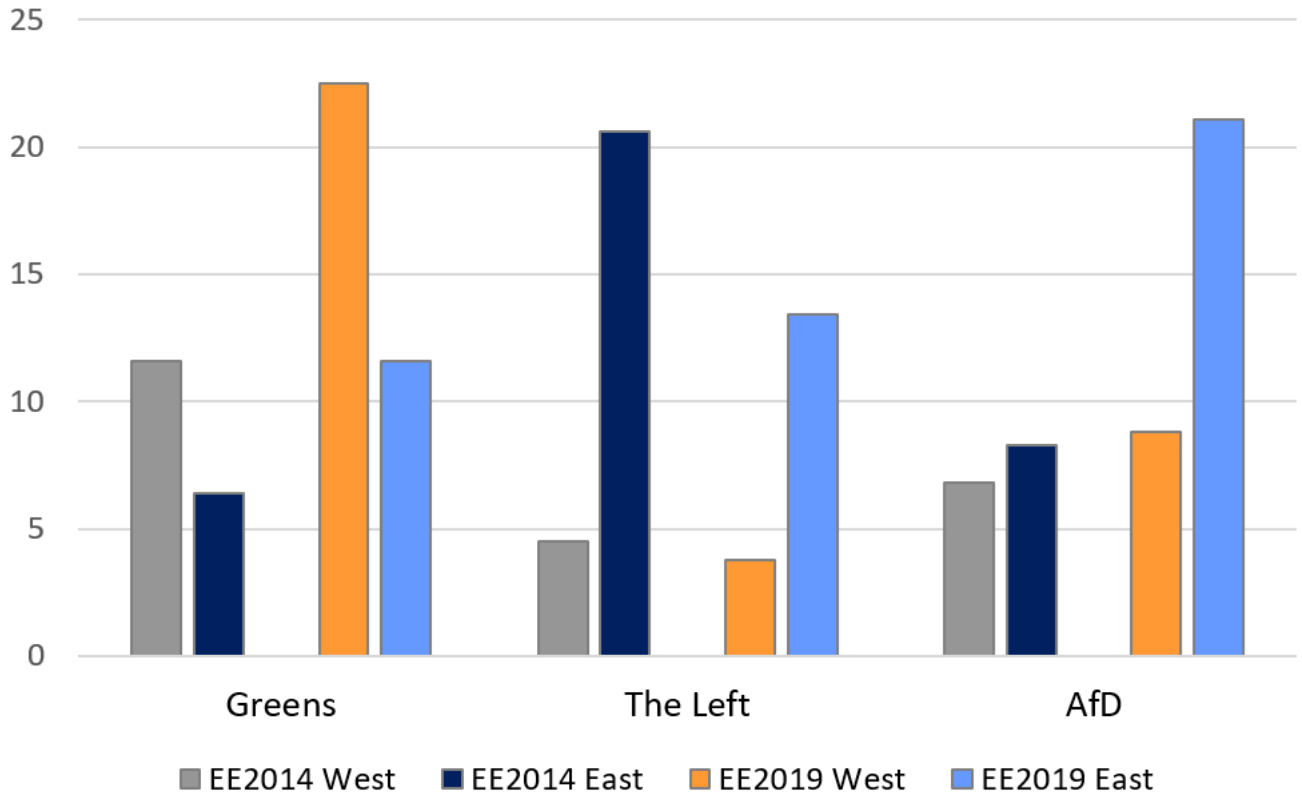

Figure 1.09: Vote shares of Greens, The Left and AfD in the 2014 and 2019 EP elections, West (old states and West Berlin) and East (new states and East Berlin) in comparison. Source: Author's own figure based on data from: Der Bundeswahlleiter (2019: 13)

Satisfaction with the government and the three coalition parties has continued to deteriorate since the end of 2022. By December 2023, SPD and Greens have dropped to 14% in the polls, with the FDP hovering close to the 5% threshold (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2023). The CDU/CSU, on the other hand, made gains in voter support and is pushing for snap elections in view of the coalition government's poor poll ratings. However, given the weak popularity ratings for CDU chairman Friedrich Merz and internal rivalries, the party could be facing a renewed discussion about the chancellor candidacy. In addition, the party remains ambiguous in its demarcation from the AfD. In fact, 46% of voters are convinced that a CDU-led government would make no difference (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2023).

The Left has not been able to recover since the 2021 federal elections and is polling well below 5% nationwide. The party has also lost support in the eastern German states, where it had its strongest voter base. In the fall of 2023, the party split, which also led to the dissolution of the parliamentary group and made further developments uncertain.

However, dissatisfaction with the federal government among the electorate and the image of internal conflict that the three coalition partners publicly project of their government's work are playing in favour of AfD in particular, which currently emerges as the second strongest party in the polls. State elections are due to be held in three eastern German states in September 2024. In all three states, the AfD is currently polling at over 30%, and in two of them the party ranks first by a significant margin.

As a consequence of the war in Ukraine, more than one million war refugees have come to Germany. In addition, the number of asylum applications in Germany rose again in 2023, but at around 35,000 is far below the almost 90,000 applications in the crisis year of 2015. Nevertheless, the issue of 'foreigners/integration/refugees' has moved to the top of the list of Germany's most important problems in 2023 (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2023). This directly touches upon the AfD's core brand and also provides the party with a good starting position for the 2024 EP elections. However, at 47% (Sonnenberg, 2013), the interest of AfD supporters in the election is the lowest compared to the other parties, meaning that the outcome of the election will also depend on how far the AfD can mobilise its supporters.

The outcome of the European elections in June 2024 will send a signal for the state elections, which will take place just three months later. It is to be expected that the election will confirm the currently poor poll results for the parties in the traffic light coalition and that the outcome for the AfD will be even better than the polls anticipate six months earlier due to the special conditions of EP elections.

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Chapter 2: France

Anne Jadot and Alexandre Borrell

Introduction

France is one of the founding members of the European Economic Community, often presented as a leader, together with Germany, in the European building process. Several French political personalities have played a prominent role within it. These include Robert Schuman, famous for his Declaration on May 9th 1950 (later chosen by the EEC as its 'European Day'), advocating practical economic steps towards a broader cooperation building, starting with the pooling of coal and steel productions so that France and Germany would never again fight a war against each other. Jacques Delors, also, was the head of the Brussels Commission between 1985 and 1995, playing a significant role in the Maastricht Treaty's negotiations and adoption. Simone Veil was the first European Parliament (hereafter EP) Speaker in 1979 and ran again as a list head in 1989. In this respect, the French case is an interesting one. But has Europe played an important role in French politics, as an issue and within the parties' strategies and communication choices? How has the European building process affected French politics, as studied here, through the lenses of EP elections? How did parties try to get French MEPs elected by running national election campaigns? Did the media pay sustained or secondary attention to these issues and campaigns?

Since the publication of Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt's seminal article (1980), EP elections are considered 'simultaneous national second order elections' rather than a pan European contest *per se*. Two facts are decisive in this reasoning: the same main parties compete against each other in both their respective national arena and in the lists they present within their country (and not on a Europe wide scale) for the EP; there is far less at stake in these direct EP elections. On the one hand, who holds the national power is independent from them. On the other hand, the European policies—at least at first—were largely independent from the EP composition, both the European Commission and the European Council being the key players in Europe. Reif and Schmitt thus predicted that European elections would display several main features: turnout would be lower; mainstream parties, especially the ones in power at times of the EP elections, would fare worse than usual; new, small and more radical parties would seize these EP elections as an opportunity, also thanks to the proportional rule, to surge and to take political stances, helping to build their electorate for subsequent national or local elections. Has this analytical view, labelled the Second Order Elections Model (hereafter SOEM) been confirmed when applied to France? How do the characteristics of its institutional, electoral, and political system possibly help us refine the model? To what extent do parties' communication and media coverage of these European campaigns also reveal a secondary interest and investment from the involved actors?

Are EP elections in France second order, mid-terms, or even secondary?

In the SOEM, the EP elections, even though always less important, still have a varying saliency depending on their timing within the respective national electoral cycles (Reif, 1984). It is coherent with a pattern, well documented in many countries, about governments' popularity cycle, as measured by regular opinion polls about power holders: there is an initial 'honeymoon', lasting at most for a few months after a win in a national election. Popularity declines, when difficult political measures are enforced, which can both disappoint the government's supporters and further antagonise its opponents, down to a low point, usually reached in the second or third year of the cycle. Incumbents' popularity starts to improve at least a bit when the next national election approaches because citizens resume comparison between parties, considering their alternative political options, and acting less as if elections were a mere referendum on the governmental performance. In this respect, the timing of EP elections within a national electoral cycle affects the prospects for both incumbent and opposition parties. To operationalise timing, researchers usually calculate a percentage of the length of the national cycle spent until the EP elections. But in order to do so, the starting point of the cycle needs to be clear, i.e. when the previous national elections were held.

In most EEC/EU member countries, there is no doubt about which are these national elections, i.e., those for the main legislative body. France is also, from an institutional point of view, a Parliamentary system where the party which has the most seats in the National Assembly governs and where the government can be forced to resign if an absolute majority of MPs vote in order to oust it. But there are also presidential elections, which attract huge attention from political actors, medias and citizens alike, are the most mobilising ones in terms of turnout, and

are usually perceived as the most important ones given the President's major powers and its role as embodiment of the country. Hence, there are somewhat 'two-tier national principal elections', making the French electoral cycle a bit more complex to decipher. All the more since, from 1958 until 1995 included, the president was elected for seven years (reduced to five years from 2002 onwards) whereas the MPs have a theoretical mandate of five years. And the National Assembly has been dissolved several times, with General Elections called in advance, after a president was (re)elected (to try to adjust the two majorities, presidential and legislative), for strategic considerations or to put an end to a social or political crisis. Hence it is a bit difficult to locate each of the nine EP elections within a French cycle.

The European results can also be interpreted in France in light of the *forthcoming* presidential election, when the EP elections happen not too long before one, especially when there still was a seven-year mandate. In this respect, it is the time remaining until the next presidential election which would become a key element, a French deviation from the SOEM. In this framework, the EP elections can boost a politician's image, as if it was a rehearsal for prospective presidential candidates who choose to be heads of list for the EP. Sometimes, EP successes are also used to claim the position of the main party contender within a political bloc (between e.g., socialists and communists, or between centre right UDF and right RPR), which can in turn influence future negotiations about common candidacies (either in some legislative constituencies or with a candidate endorsed by more than one party at the following presidential election). All these strategic anticipations are a concern for political actors and media commentators alike. The average French voter probably does not pay enough attention to the EP elections to decide to use them consciously as a way to promote a future national candidate, or to put a blow to his/her presidential prospects.

Another French characteristic, which does complexify the perception of the electoral cycle and the importance of EP contests within it, is the fact that there are numerous sub-national elections. All the more since whenever some local administrative level became fully political, there was no concurrent suppression of another political tier. For instance, when Regions' representatives became elected by direct suffrage, from 1986 on, the Departmental ones were kept; where inter-municipality were installed, the communal level was maintained. On top of those several opportunities to vote locally, all French citizens were invited to vote in referendum on internal institutional features (the independence of New Caledonia in 1988, the length of the presidential mandate in 2000) or even directly on European issues (the Maastricht treaty in 1992, the Constitutional Treaty in 2005). Sometimes a referendum is treated by voters more as a plebiscite, providing a 'yes' or a 'no' to the incumbent President rather than a direct answer on the issue. From a strictly institutional point of view, all of these elections are 'non-national principal' in so far as the national power is not directly at stake, just like for the EP ones. However, in several cases, poor performance by the incumbent President's party have triggered a change of Prime Minister, acknowledging the discontent of voters. Thus, EP elections in France are directly in competition with several other types of contests for fulfilling the role of a quasi-referendum on the current national power, which we could label for the sake of this chapter 'midterms' (whereas French psephologists call them 'intermediary').

Since 2002 and the five year-term enforcement, no president resigned or died, neither has the National Assembly been dissolved, hence their respective mandates were not shortened. The EP elections thus happened systematically two years after what we can define as the new 'key national sequence', i.e., the two rounds of the presidential contest and the two rounds of the General Elections held within a few weeks, all mandates starting (in theory) for five years. The beginning of the national cycle is, in this respect, clearer now, and one could assume the EP elections would become, in essence, midterms in the long run, always happening two years after such a national sequence. However, even under these conditions, the European elections are not necessarily the first opportunity for voters to punish national incumbents, with the wealth of various types of elections and their respective pace. Since 1979, EP elections were the first non-national principal contest after a national election only in 2019. This was also the case in 1979 if one takes the GE of 1978 as the starting national point, but not if one considers the 1974 presidential election as the relevant previous national reference. EP elections have indeed been preceded by municipal elections in 1977, 1983, 1989, 2008, and 2014; they have been preceded by elections for Departments' representatives in 1988, 1994, and 1998; and there were before them regional elections both in 1998 and 2004. One can note that some of these local elections were held concurrently, during spring, and others postponed by a few months or even by a whole year to avoid voters' fatigue (otherwise there would have been up to six different rounds in a short time span). In other words, most often, either one year or just a few months before electing their MEPs, French citizens were called to vote, reducing the midterm prospective nature of these European contests.

The third French characteristic that makes the EP elections all the more interesting to study for their impact on national politics is the fact that they are held with the proportional rule (hereafter PR) and in only one round. From 1979 to 1999 included, and again from 2019 onwards, there were national lists presented by parties, with the requirement to put forth the same number of candidates as there were French seats to allocate within the EP. In 2004, 2009 and 2014, France was divided into eight big so-called 'Euro regions' used only as these constituencies for electing MEPs, without any territorial match to an administrative body. The purpose was to bring candidates closer to the citizens from a geographical point of view, so as to enhance the representative link between voters and MEPs. But the impact of this reform both on turnout and on the dynamics of electoral campaigns (that we will cover hereafter) was negative, leading to the reform's reversal and the EP lists becoming nation-wide again. Apart from this temporary technicality, the key element here is that PR rule applies for all European elections. This is in sharp contrast with the two-round majority rule applied both in Presidential contests and in GE, which has given rise to a common saying in French political science: 'in the first round, voters choose their candidate; in the second, they bar another candidate'. In other words, in national principal elections, there is a tendency for the electorate to take into account parties' or candidates' respective chances, to avoid a 'wasted vote'. If they are in favour of a small candidate without any serious chances, some voters do not necessarily choose this truly preferred option in the first round but opt for a second best, usually within a political bloc, and later decide which of the final runners in the second round they like most or dislike least. In EP elections, because there is less at stake, there is less pressure to apply such tactical concerns. As Mark Franklin states (2004), in EP elections, citizens can vote 'with the heart' (for their favourite option, however small or chanceless) or 'with the boot' (if they want to send a discontent message to the incumbents or even to the whole political system) and are less compelled to vote 'with the head' (taking into account respective chances). Expressive voting, both negative and positive, is hence maximised in EP elections. Instrumental voting, both negative (preventing a disliked candidate from winning) and positive (choosing the option with the best chances within a range of liked candidates) happens much more often in national contests. Given the structural nature and contextual salience of the various types of elections, their timing within the French electoral cycle, and the majoritarian or proportional electoral rule applied in them, political pressure can vary widely. Jean-Luc Parodi offers the analogy of an accordion, explaining that periodically there is reduced pressure on voters, which is then increased again as constraints set back in (see Jadot, 2001). Applying this theoretical framework, and turning to the actual results of the EP elections in France since 1979, we ask: have these non-national principal elections been second order, midterms, or even secondary elections? And to what extent do citizens care about them?

A low and even declining turnout, until 2019

For most of France's nine EP elections, Reif and Schmitt's prediction about them being second order and less mobilising elections is true (see figure 2.01). Admittedly, in the very first 1979 EP contest, more than 60% registered voters still went to the polls. One can assume there was a kind of enthusiasm for the first occurrence of a newly directly elected body, as in 1986 for the initial regional elections which are also held with PR (turnout of 75%, with the 'boosting' effect of being coupled to a traditionally highly mobilising local contest). But from the 1960s to the early 80s, turnout was roughly 15-20% higher in all other types of elections.

Afterwards, there has been a steady and quasi-continuous European participation decline. Even though it was in line with all the other elections also becoming less and less mobilising. It was even lower in the European contests: about 15 to 32 points less in the 1990s. This 'European turnout gap' was at its maximum when an EP election was held only a few months after another non-national principal election. In those circumstances, one can assume both a voters' fatigue and a disincentive to use the EP contest as a referendum soon after a preceding opportunity to punish the government. This is also despite the fact that, by then, French public opinion towards the European building process was broadly positive. As Eurobarometer results show, there was in the first place what Annick Percheron called a 'permissive consensus' towards European building: positive views were higher than negative ones, albeit with a high level of 'Don't' Knows'. When Euroscepticism later rose in France, it was mostly due to the fall of 'Don't Knows' and the rise of negative views, not a drastic fall of positive answers (Belot & Cautrès, 2006).

From the EU and electoral rule perspectives, this turnout decline is nonetheless a double paradox. Firstly, the more the EP accrued power, given the complex balance between the European institutions and the new European Commission investiture mechanism, the fewer French people were voting for their representatives in Brussels and Strasbourg. Secondly, with PR, the fear of a 'wasted' vote is diminished, and citizens could hope to see their favourite small parties securing MEPs if the threshold of 5%

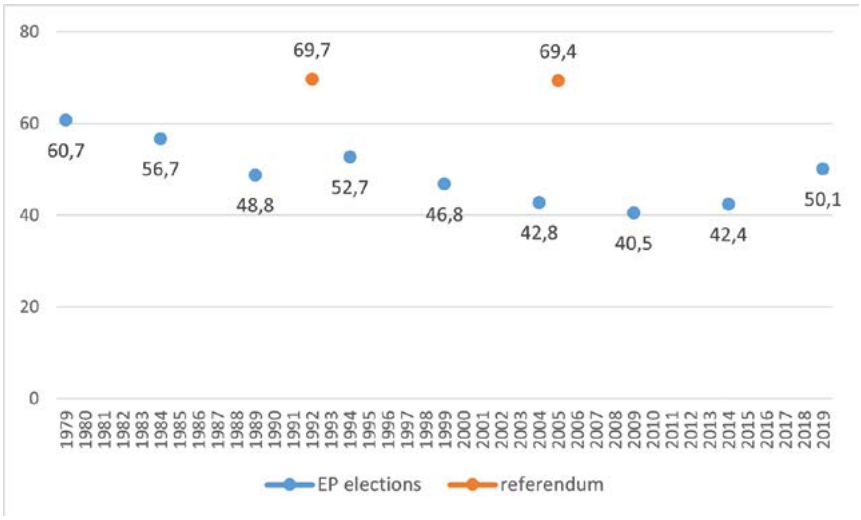


Figure 2.01: Turnout (%) at European elections and at CEE/EU referenda. Source: Home Office

share of the expressed votes was reached. Yet less and less people were voting, with a turnout of roughly 40% the 3 times France enforced regionalised lists, from 2004 to 2014 included. Even though the aim of this reform was to bring candidates (and, once elected, MEPs) closer to their constituents, participation was badly affected by the chosen Euro-regions boundaries—irrelevant for most citizens—and by the lack of a national campaign dynamic. Without a single list head per party well-known and identified at a national level, French voters seemed to care less and less about EP elections. The turnout gap extended to 25, 30, and 43 points, compared respectively to local, regional, and national contests.

However, European issues *per se* can mobilise French voters when the electoral question asked directly pertains to the future of the European building process, rather than to electing MEPs. In this respect, both referenda on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and on the European Constitution Treaty in 2005 mobilised a significant number of voters, about 70% of registered voters, as also shown in figure 2.01. Their campaigns were heated, the public debate intense, with some parties badly divided. In 1992, the 'yes' narrowly won by 51 *vs*. 49%; in 2005, the 'no' won by 55 *vs*. 45%. Especially in the latter case, it was not only, nor mainly, a question of being for or against Europe as an integration process, but *of which Europe* one was potentially in favour. Among the 'no' advocates, some were not long-time Eurosceptics, and they could be from Left or Right, it cut the traditional cleavages as well as within parties. The fact that an only slightly revised Lisbon Treaty was later adopted by the French Parliament created a resentment in some citizens about the democratic process. In light of these referenda, one could possibly understand the first exception within the continuous participation decline: in 1994, EP turnout rose by about four points, reaching again more than 50%. Two years after the 'no' at Maastricht was defeated by a very small margin, the presence of a list with prominent figures of its campaign, like Philippe Séguin and Philippe de Villiers who offered an alternative to the main Gaullist party, probably attracted to the polls many disappointed rightist voters. There was a meaningful option to them, at a time when the European building process had gained saliency through the referendum.

Apart from this 1994 peculiar case, are the EP elections doomed to mobilise less and less French voters? Actually, the 2019 election registered again a turnout boost: gaining nearly 8 points, it overcame again the symbolic bar of 50%. Furthermore, for the first time, this election mobilised 1.4 points *more* than the previous GE in 2017! Admittedly, the legislative competition has suffered a lot in terms of saliency of what we could call, inspired by the US calendar's analyses, a 'coat-tail effect'. Since 2002, GE are indeed regularly held 5 years apart, at their regular timing and most importantly, only a few weeks after the Presidential election leading to a turnout drop between the respective first rounds of up to 29 points. Even taking this into account, it is worth exploring how the last EP election mobilised (comparatively) so much.

The answer is found in a confluence of factors. Firstly, re-establishing a nation-wide single constituency — and hence a more intense campaign — was probably decisive. Furthermore, the 2017 national sequence had been disruptive for the political system: *both* the traditionally mainstream Socialist and Gaullist parties (which had alternated

Political nuances from the Home Office	1979	1984	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
Extreme Left	3.1	3.7	2	2.7	5.2	3,3	6.1	1.6	7.1
Communist Party	20.6	11.2	7.7	6.9	6.8	5.2	6	6.3	2.5
Socialist Party	23.7	**20.8**	**23.6**	14.5	**21.9**	28.9	16.5	**14**	6.2
Other Left	-	.-	-	16.2	1	-	0.5	3.2	3.3
Ecologists	4.5	6.7	10.7	5	11.3	7.4	16.3	8.9	13.5
Non-Gaullist Right	**29.3**	-	8.4	12.4	9.2	12	8.5	9.9	**22.4**
Gaullist Right	16.1	42.7	28.7	**25.4**	12.5	**16.6**	**27.9**	20.8	8.5
Other Right	1.4	3.8	1.3	1	14.9	8.8	6.7	6	7.1
Extreme Right	1.3	11.1	11.8	10.9	9.1	9.8	6.8	24.9	23.4
Others, unclassified	0	-	5.4	4.9	7.3	7.9	4.7	4.4	6

Figure 2.02: European elections results in France, 1979-2019. Source: French Home Office.

in power since 1981) lost as early as the Presidential first round; a new party won, built for its leader Emmanuel Macron, who claimed to be 'both left and right'. Some disappointed voters might have been seeking revenge two years after. On top of this, a major social movement occurred from autumn 2018 to spring 2019, the 'Yellow Vests' (hereafter YV). Last but not least, in 2019 the European contest was the first non-national principal election since 2017 and was hence a clear opportunity for unhappy citizens to punish the incumbent (incidentally, we are in 2024 in exactly the same electoral configuration, this time following major social unrest in 2023 against an unpopular pension scheme reform). However, the 2019 turnout surge is probably not due to YV supporters turning up in high proportions to the polls: one has to be reminded that, beyond a global turnout figure, there are major sociological discrepancies. And the YV ranks were disproportionately formed from demographics experiencing social and economic hardship, such as being jobless and/or living in peri-urban or suburban areas, anchorages which are regularly strong predictors of a smaller propensity to vote (Jadot, 2002).

The SOEM is probably too encompassing by ignoring the electorate heterogeneity, in so far as it postulates there is 'less at stake' in all European elections at all times and for all citizens. Our previous studies (Jadot, 2006) showed that it is the subjective nature of a given contest, perceived as (un)important (something which can evolve across time), with strong sociological and politicisation effects, that can better explain participation trajectories between diverse elections. Intermittent voting is the new norm in France, as INSEE turnout studies show (2022). And it is not only sociologically but also politically differential: from an EP election to the subsequent one, parties are more or less hindered by abstention within their own electorate, especially according to whether they are (or are not) the incumbent.

Figure 2.02 presents considerably reduced information as the numerous lists have been classified according to political nuances enforced by the Home Office, responsible both for candidacies' regis-

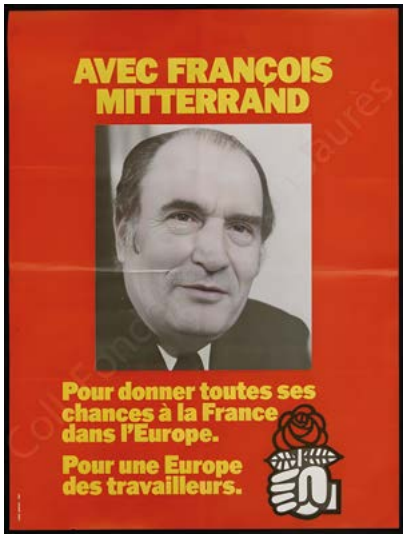
trations and results diffusion. We've tried to be synthetical, without names of parties in the table since, in France, those change quite often. Highlighted in bold are the scores of those we consider as incumbent at each European election: either the party of the President, or the one holding the most seats in the National Assembly at times of divided government, called 'cohabitations'. Depending on the legislature, the leading party can either form a government on its own, or require backup from allies within a political bloc; in the latter case, their allies are not specified in figure 2.02, nor their results added up, to keep political categories constant since 1979.

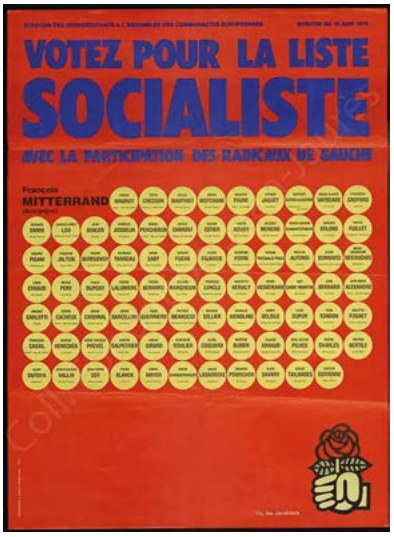
Contrary to the SOEM predictions, the incumbent party does not lose systematically: actually, it happened only four times out of nine European elections. In 2004, the Gaullist right suffered a loss while in the third year of a national electoral cycle, after social unrest following an unpopular pensions' scheme reform—a French recurrent issue. Furthermore, it was then in competition with a non-Gaullist centre right list (Modem) with clearer, and more positive, stances on European issues than its own internal divisions. But it is especially the Socialists, the left mainstream party, which have suffered European backlashes while in power, in 1984, 1989, and 2014. This is most likely because their electorate is more popular (especially so in the 1980s) and therefore less prone to vote systematically; and because European contests are not very mobilising for these categories of citizens, especially when the government disappoints them. It is also more difficult for a left government to put forth in a European campaign its record within an EP 'grand coalition' between Left and Right. It is especially true when the public policies enforced by such a European grand coalition are economically liberal, not well in line with what these left governments were advocating within France, about national policies.

In the first case when an EP election happened during a cohabitation, in 1994, both the left President and the right Prime Minister's parties regressed compared to the previous EP election, the left suffering again much more strongly. The common UDF-RPR list managed to finish first, even though Sovereignists enjoyed a good score, 2 years after the Maastricht referendum. In the left camp, former Prime Minister (1988-1991) Michel Rocard headed the PS list, with the hope of running the following year as President François Mitterrand's heir, after a long internal concurrence between these two leaders. He was hindered by a competing list from the Parti Radical de Gauche, headed by Bernard Tapie. This former businessman and football tycoon, appointed by Mitterrand as Urban Minister, scored almost as high as the Socialists' list (even overtaking it, if we add up other various small left lists). After this deception, Rocard stepped down from the PS direction and gave up on his presidential prospects. In this respect, mostly because of political actors and medias' comments, EP elections bear a risk for leaders in so far as they have 'spill-over effects' in the national arena. For instance, the bad score of the RPR in 1999 also endangered for a while Nicolas Sarkozy, who too stepped down from his party direction, but he later bounced back and was elected President in 2007.

Hence, in France, the most frequent case so far is the incumbent party winning the EP elections. It happened once in 1999 while in a cohabitation between the Gaullist president Jacques Chirac and the 'pluralist left', a legislative coalition in power for 2 years by then, under Lionel Jospin's leadership. The government had already suffered adverse results one year prior, despite positive economy statistics, especially in terms of declining unemployment rates. The right in turn managed to win in 2009, during President Sarkozy's term, also after suffering some losses a year before in municipal elections, somehow deflating again the referendum nature of the EP contest. But, most probably, it is sociology which helped them: their electorate is generally older, more affluent, more likely to be practising Catholics, and habitual voters, who possess a perception of voting as a civic duty. These wealthy categories of citizens were also possibly approving how the EU dealt with the beginning of the 2008 financial crisis.

But the two most relevant victories, in our view, were probably experienced by the centre right. In 1979, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, elected President in 1974, was not in a strong position within the National Assembly, because his ally/competitor RPR won more seats than his own UDF party in the 1978 GE. However, he was very keen on the European building process, part of his party's political identity, and the enthusiasm of the first direct EP election may have helped him manage a clear victory. One of his prominent ministers, Simone Veil, became the first EP Speaker. In 2019, Renaissance (the third name in two years for Macron's party) was symbolically 0.9 points *behind* the Rassemblement National alone in vote shares, but both parties equally won 23 MEPs seats. It is more 'damage control' than a clear victory, but it is noteworthy at a time when the EP election was widely perceived (and fought as such by several opposition parties during the campaign) as a referendum on the national incumbent, which enjoyed by then an absolute majority in the National Assembly. Macron holds strong positions in favour of the UE, symbolised by his singled-out use of both national and European flags during his 2017 presidential meetings. In 2019, he decided his Minister of Europe-





Promoting front runners in 1979.
Image 2.01: Front page of a leaflet for the list led by Simone Veil (UDF). Source: Sciences Po - Fonds Cevipof.
Images 2.02a, 2.02b: The Socialist Party puts forward its leader, François Mitterrand, a front-runner who will not be taking a seat. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

an Affairs, Nathalie Loiseau, would be the list head for Renaissance. Even though she is not considered very charismatic, it did not result in a patent defeat, almost a draw. 2024 might very well be strikingly different for him.

It is not only the incumbent/opposition status of a party which matters when an EP election comes. Parties' stances on European issues matter too. New, (previously) small and/or radical parties can benefit from holding a clear position about the European process, whether negative or positive. Actually, the EP elections and its PR rule have been an opportunity for the surge of the Front National (later called RN) from 1984 on, and for the Ecologists (various names) from 1989 on. They fared relatively well in some later EP contests, as figure 2.02 shows. It provided them with seats, political credit, and a position within European alliances—all of which helped them at subsequent elections in the national arena, be they national, regional or municipal. In this regard, Reif and Schmitt's prediction was given credibility, as was Parodi's analogy of the 'opening up of the accordion'. However, if good EP elections scores have helped build political careers for some leaders, such as the Le Pen family's, they do not necessarily predict later successes for what matters most for French politicians, i.e., the Presidential contest. The Sovereignist de Villiers fared well in 1994, together with Séguin, but his presidential score one year after was very small; the Ecologist Yannick Jadot, whose party came third in 2019—even overtaking the PS endorsed Raphael Gluckmann's list—did not translate to the 2022 Presidential election.

Another European paradox is that Eurosceptic parties took advantage of the EP elections to get seats, financial means, and a political tribune while criticising a lot the European building process. But it isn't only the extreme right which behaved cynically with the EEC/UE. Across the political spectrum, most parties chose prominent politicians as list heads (and sometimes up to several candidates below them), assuming that national figures might attract voters. These were never intended to occupy an MEP seat, which can be considered as misleading voters and contributing to the EP election's reputation as having 'less at stake'. They indeed already had a national parliamentary mandate and holding both would be legally impossible. Since the national arena offered them, in their views, better prospects, they chose not to seat in Brussels and Strasbourg, letting less well-placed candidates step in since elected French MEPs had, until 2014, a whole month after the EP elections to choose between their two non-compatible mandates. From 2019 on, the situation changed: it is no longer their choice, the oldest of the incompatible mandates is automatically taken from them. That's why prominent figures, such as Jean-Luc Mélenchon or Marine Le Pen, both French MPs by then, were deliberately not in European eligible positions in 2019; and, instead, most of the 2019 EP election lists' heads were young and relatively unknown (Borrell et al., 2019 EEMC report).

French parties have also a somewhat cynical use of the European elections in so far as the candidates who would actually hold a seat in the EP were often seeking this mandate as a refuge after a loss in other French elections. They were sometimes better placed on their respective European lists than incumbent MEPs, who were not put forth in assured eligible positions despite hard work within the EP. This cre-

ated a turn-over among French MEPs, not in favour of France's standing within this parliamentary arena, since holding key positions, such as being a law or report rapporteur, or a (vice) president of a commission, is most often a reward for long-term investment in EP matters, in a second or third term. Even if a few French 'backbenchers' did build strong European careers, they were seldom promoted within the first ranks of their lists at the following EP election.

Taking all these turnouts, results and list features into account, the SOEM is only partially true in France since 1979. What seems to matter a lot is the pro or anti-European stance, internal divisions within parties and blocs, referendum aftermaths, and the timing within the national electoral cycle, bearing losses or successes for incumbent and opposition parties. But the results we briefly commented upon are also the outcome of other campaigns' features: their saliency (or lack of) within media coverage; and the contrasting political communication strategies by parties.

Growing media coverage

The EU itself occupies very little space in the news media outside election or referendum campaigns (Peter & de Vreese, 2004). For instance, in non-election years, the evening newscasts of France's six historical channels devote fewer items to European institutions (from 2.2% to 2.7% in 2000, 2007 and 2018) than to their closest and most populous European neighbours Germany and Great Britain (INA, 2008; 2019).

Despite their novelty, the first EP elections in 1979 were virtually absent from national TV news before the start of the campaign, which turned out to be longer (four weeks) in France than in three of the other eight countries. Overall, with more than 200 minutes devoted to it in the news and 520 minutes to debates, press conferences, and interviews, it was nonetheless one of the four most heavily televised campaigns in the EEC (Kelly & Siune, 1983). Speaking time was almost exclusively divided between national players: adding evening news and TV ads, journalists occupied 50% of it, the European parliamentary candidates 38%, giving only a minimal amount of coverage for other national politicians (4%). Just like the official campaign, TV news had a particularly personalised focus compared to other countries, and 42% of issues were framed in a mostly domestic way by journalists (Siune, 1983). In 1984, these trends were repeated, albeit with less television coverage (Siune, McQuail and Blumler, 1984). As a relative newcomer to national politics (JM Le Pen had been able to run for president in 1974 but not in 1981), the FN advertised its spots' slots on TV (image 2.03).

A detailed examination of the television agenda and the place occupied by election campaigns in the evening newscasts of the two main TV channels shows that European elections are the contest that occupies the least time on the news. On average, from 1981 to 2007, in the ten weeks leading up to any election, these JTs devoted 10.7% to an EP campaign, compared to 24.8% when it's presidential elections, 22% for GE, 17.2% for referendums on EEC/EU and 12.4% for regional elections. Coverage was stable from 1984 to 1999 but interest dropped in 2004 (5.8%), i.e., the first occurrence of the eight Euro-constituencies (Piar 2012).

In 1999, this visibility was concentrated in the last four weeks of the campaign (18 minutes per day, rising from eight minutes during the previous six weeks) (Gerstlé et al. 2000; Gestlé et al. 2004). The main evening news (on TF1 and France 2) devoted 10% of its airtime to the campaign in 1999 and 6% in 2004, during the two weeks before the vote, and 8.5% during the last three weeks in 2009. For the same three elections, the European average on comparable evening news was 7, 9 and 16.3% respectively, placing France successively in 4th, 18th and 24th place in Europe (De Vreese et al., 2006 ; Schuck et al., 2011). Once again in 2004, TV news showed a late interest in the campaign, giving the floor mainly to candidates and their supporters in the last two weeks,

Image 2.03. FN 1984. Source: Belhaïdi (2022).

		1999 (JT + mag) 10 weeks	2004 (JT + mag) 7 weeks	2009 (all prog) 7 weeks	2014 (all prog) 6 weeks	2019 (all prog) 6 weeks
generalist TV channels	speaking time	6h40 + 25h18	4h25 + 16h	20h	14h	28h
	Airtime	19h56 + 30h22	9h18 + 20h			
all-news channels	speaking time		12h	45h	73h	162h
generalist radios	speaking time			47,5h	68h	104h
total	speaking time			112h	155h	294h

Figure 2.03: Television and radio speaking time and airtime for candidates and their supporters (1999-2019). Source: Author's own figure based on data from CSA (2004; 2009; 2019).

accounting for 71% of the speaking time allocated to them on TF1, 63% on France 2 and 44% on France 3 (CSA, 2004). By then, television seemed to be gradually abandoning these elections.

Data collected by the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (the independent agency supervising the entire audiovisual sector) from 1999 onwards show changes in the distribution of speaking time (figure 2.03). All channels are obliged to declare several times during the campaign the airtime they devote to it and, among it, the speaking time they granted to candidates and their supporters. The fall in airtime allocated to the campaign in 2004 is confirmed, and figures would be even lower in 2014 if they weren't compensated by the all-news channels, newcomers which have become numerous, and which devote more and more time to it (twelve to seventeen hours of airtime on each of the three channels concerned in 2009). On the other hand, the amount of time devoted to European campaigns on general-interest radio stations increased significantly from 2009 to 2019, while the number of stations concerned by declarations' rules remained unchanged.

At least from 1994 onwards, the general-interest channels organised two or three debates, with one representative from the left and one from the right, and debates with up to seven candidates at the top of their respective list (Gerstlé, 1995; Gerstlé et al., 2000). The shortfall in 2004 can be partly explained by the absence of debates organised by TF1, the leading private channel in terms of audience. The public channel France 3, on the other hand, devoted several editions of its magazine 'France Europe Express' to the campaign. And its 24 regional editions (evening news and specific programs broadcast by each regional station) doubled the speaking time it allocated to the candidates and their supporters. However, this attention was focused on the national players, who accounted for 94.5% of TV and radio airtime in 2014, even at a time of regionalised Euro-constituencies. National newscasts do not cover all the lists: four lists were not mentioned once by TF1, six by France 2, twelve by France 3's national newscasts in 2004 (CSA, 2004).

In 2014, while the public France Télévisions group had planned to broadcast the May 15 debate between the *Spitzenkandidaten* only on its website, a letter from the Minister of Culture and Communication led LCP, the public parliamentary channel, to broadcast this debate live on its airwaves, eventually followed by two private all-news channels. In 2019, in addition to a duel between the heads of the Renaissance and RN lists, nine televised debates bringing together six to twelve guests were organised, including five debates between top list candidates during the week preceding the election.

While private channels had partly abandoned the European campaign in the early 2000s, they (along with all-news channels) have since boosted its visibility to an unprecedented degree. The debates between the candidates, which are potentially more spectacular, contribute significatively to this. On the whole, television focuses its attention on the front-runners, reducing their active campaign coverage to the two or three weeks preceding the vote, assuming voters would 'tune in' to EP elections only in the last phases, which is in line with parties' own strategies in terms of intensification (Borrell et al., 2022).

		1979	1989	1994	1999	2004	2009	2014	2019
parties with a parliamentary group*	number of parties:	4	4	3	4	5	6	6	13
	allocated airtime:	30′	30′	40′	30′	24′	20′	20′	3′58 to 55′33
other parties	number of parties:		11	17	15	16	17	21	21
	allocated airtime:	< 5′	2′45	1′25	1′52	3′45	3′32	2′52	3′33

*Including the European Parliament in 2019

Figure 2.04: Allocation of airtime per party. Source: Author's own figure based on data from Gerstlé et al. (2004) and CSA (2004; 2009; 2019).

In the press, which is not governed by equitable coverage rules, the editorial long-term line prevails in campaign editorial choices. The three national dailies studied (*Le Monde*, *Libération*, *Le Figaro*) mentioned these elections on 12% of their front pages in 1999 and 9% in 2004 during the last fifteen days of the campaign, and 12% during the last three weeks in 2009, placing them respectively in second, fifth, and fourth place in Europe, well above coverage in other countries (De Vreese et al. 2006 ; Schuck et al. 2011). Adding *Les Echos* to his analysis, J. Gerstlé notes that these titles mainly cover the campaign in the three weeks leading up to the vote in 1999. And while the articles are very clearly focused on national considerations, the last two weeks see the appearance of articles devoted to European institutions and issues, as well as to the campaign in other EU countries (Gerstlé et al. 2000). This observation also applies to the people mentioned. European players—including MEPs candidates—accounted for around 5% of those mentioned in 1999, compared with 70% from national political life; by contrast, the former was more numerous than the latter (45% versus 30%) in 2004 (De Vreese et al., 2006), a fact also confirmed in other European countries. In 2009, conversely, the same three titles focused two-thirds of their articles on national players in the current campaign. But 38% of articles were mainly devoted to European issues, three times as many as articles on strictly national issues, and 17% dealt with the campaign in other countries (Brack et al., 2010).

Media coverage of EP campaigns thus contributes to their Europeanisation in a moderate way, more strongly on newspapers than on TV news, but through different channels. While non-national players are given little space, there are also many articles devoted to European issues, or campaigns in other countries. But the dynamics of a campaign also depends on parties' strategies.

Campaigns' communication opportunities: visibility, personalisation, nationalisation of European issues

Our view of the French European campaigns since 1979 is mainly based on monographic or comparative studies examining specific formal or strategic aspects of TV spots, and more recently party communication via posters or social networks. They do provide an outline of the general features of political communication implemented by French parties for the EP elections.

Political parties' activists put posters up—rather anarchically—, on walls and roadsides. There are also two official posters, whose size and placement are precisely ruled, the smaller one meant to announce public meetings or advertise links to a website. Local authorities set up notice boards in front of all polling stations, allowing two slots for each list, free of charge. However, only the lists getting more than 3% of the votes are later reimbursed for their posters' costs (paper and printing). Hence small parties with limited financial means are not necessarily able to support costs for a nation-wide coverage and can't even provide their ballot papers to all stations! Those are less visible, and part of their communication effort is actually devoted to explaining to potential voters how to print their own ballot.

Regarding audiovisual official campaign spots, rules differ: they are aired for free on public television and radio during the two weeks preceding voting day. Allocation criteria changed over time. From 1979 to 2014, parties holding seats in the National Assembly or Senate shared altogether two hours of free airtime, with or even without an EP list; all other parties shared one hour (Figure 2.04), provided, from 2004 to 2014, that they presented lists in at least five of the eight Euro-constituencies (Borrell & Dakhlia, 2017). In 2019, the number of seats at the European Parliament was also taken into account to allocate share of airtime, to ensure a more equita-

Images 2.04a, 2.04b 2.04c. Thematic lists in 2019. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

ble distribution. Furthermore, no list would benefit from less than three minutes of airtime (CSA, 2019). Macron's Renaissance and the extreme right RN mainly benefited from this shift from the principle of equality to fairness.

Some spots are particularly short, compared to other French electoral campaigns, hence focus on a single and straightforward message. In 2014, twelve of the campaign spots were 3:45 minutes long, while the remaining 104 were shorter, lasting less than 1:30 minutes each. The spots enjoy significant visibility: they broadcast once on each of the public television and radio stations, i.e. the only three existing TV channels in 1979 and 1984, but four national channels (France 2, France 3, franceinfo:, France Ô), nine overseas regional stations, and three national radios (France Inter, France 24, RFI) in 2019. While some slots attract small audiences, the shortest spots aired after the France 2 evening news gathered daily more than 3 million viewers in 2014 and almost 2.5 million (11% of the audience share) in 2019 (CSA, 2014; 2019).

These spots are especially strategic for small lists: their posters are barely visible in public spaces; they are somehow lost among a high number of lists running; they often have no prior notoriety; main TV evening news do not even mention them. We hypothesise that the assurance of national visibility through these spots created vocations—once a cause or political movement manages bringing together the required number of candidates to fill an EP list, it benefits from several minutes of national airtime, without journalistic mediation, which constitutes for them an unhoped-for audience considering their results. Indeed, in 2019, twenty-three of the thirty-four lists won less than 1% of the expressed votes, including twelve that did not even obtain 10,000 votes nationally. The primary goal of these smaller lists in participating in an EP election is likely more focused on promoting a cause rather than securing seats.

Several examples highlight the diversity of causes seeking visibility through this medium. In 1994, in reaction to the Sarajevo siege and for supporting Bosnians, public figures filed a 'Europe begins in Sarajevo' list with significant media coverage (Gerstlé 1995). The Natural Law Party promoted transcendental meditation and yogic flight for establishing peace and prosperity, which attracted amused media attention. Other lists correspond to identified, albeit marginal, political ideologies: in 2009, an 'anti-Zionist' list was led in the Ile-de-France region by comedian Dieudonné and far-right activist Alain Soral. In 2014 and 2019, some lists advocated specifically feminism, animal rights, royalty, Esperanto, or the legal acknowledgement of blank votes as expressed ballots (Images 2.04). In 2019, the Yellow Vest mobilisation led to two

dedicated lists, while several others welcomed YV figures, sometimes focusing their communication on this point (images 2.05).

Even among the 'thematic' lists, some mainly promote a personality while others primarily advocate a cause. Hints of these contrasted strategies can be found in the presence or absence of portraits on posters, and in the distribution of speaking time within the spots (monopolisation by a single person or fairer distribution between several EP candidates). For the bigger parties, especially those alternating in power, the question of the personalisation of campaigns is salient, especially with the issue of who is the head of the nationwide list, sometimes in the perspective of the forthcoming presidential election, as explained earlier.

As soon as the first 1979 European elections, Suine underlined that 'the overall level of personalization was low everywhere except in France, where it was markedly higher than average' (1983, p. 235). In the spots aired in 2004 and 2009, again, authors noted the significant presence of leaders, although they were not necessarily EP candidates themselves (Bras and Maarek, 2007; Maarek et al., 2012). More precisely, party representatives or candidates appeared in 61% of the sequences of the French spots but there were only a few different persons implied, leading to the conclusion that French spots had 'the highest amount of personalization' among the four studied countries (Holtz-Bacha et al., 2012). If the ads' personalisation varied across parties, it was notable for the leaders of the Modem (François Bayrou) and the Socialist Party (Martine Aubry), who systematically appeared in their party ads—even though the latter was not running. They were both preparing their potential 2012 presidential candidacy: any visibility seems worthwhile, at the risk of a poor result compromising future national ambitions, as explained earlier. In 2014, French parties were still at the upper end of the scale, with 83% of spots featuring national leaders (74% at EU level), accompanied in only 13% of cases by European personalities (Borrell et al., 2017). This is particularly true for right-wing parties, such as the UMP, whose president, J. F. Coppé, contested internally and not a candidate himself, appeared in all twelve of the party's spots, while the regional heads of list shared the remaining speaking time. EELV, the main ecologist party, reflected the horizontality of its internal structure in its audiovisual communication, giving the mic to a large number of leaders and candidates, even if it meant only having them say part of a sentence.

Some posters also illustrate this personalisation strategy, for instance when the party majoritarian in the National Assembly promotes its incum-

Images 2.05a, 2.05b, 2.05c. Visibility of 'yellow vests' in 2019. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Images 2.06a, 2.06b, 2.06c, 2.06d. Visibility for leaders who are not eligible or not even candidates. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

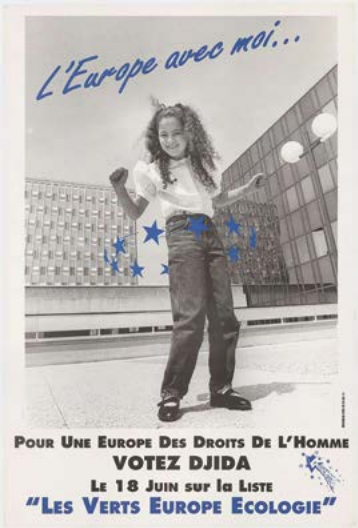
bent President (N. Sarkozy in 2009, E. Macron in 2019, images 2.06a and 2.06b), who is obviously not running himself, with the risk of reinforcing the national referendum rationale of those EP elections. In 2019, there were dual portraits (images 2.06c and 2.06d): a still little-known head of list was shown with the longtime famous party leader, who was on purpose in a non-eligible place, as explained earlier. Both J-L. Mélenchon and M. Le Pen thus endorsed their young choices for leading their respective list, but also maintained their saliency in light of their next repeated presidential bid in 2022.

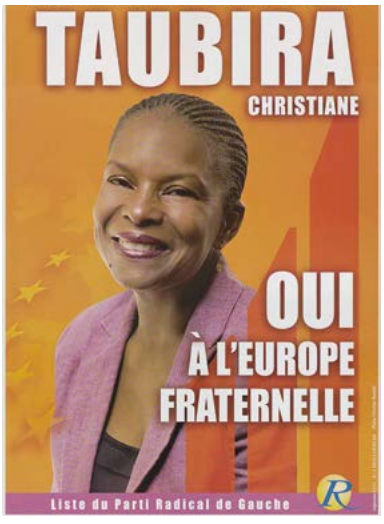
The Franco-centric focus also applies to the topics addressed in the spots and the way in which they are considered. Already by 1979, only a third of the themes were presented from a European perspective; 52% of issues were framed in a mainly or purely domestic way by politicians. France was the exception, along with Ireland (Siune, 1983). In the spots aired in 2004 and 2009, again, a majority of parties dealt with national issues much more than European ones (Bras & Maarek, 2007; Maarek et al., 2012). With the 2008 financial crisis, a third of the footage was devoted to the economy in 2009. But a national agenda can have a European framework: topics about France (43% of the sequences) were often discussed from a European perspective, yet a mixed perspective could also be observed in a notable portion of sequences (Holtz- Bacha et al., 2012).

We cannot detail quantitatively the evolution of the degree of negativity towards European construction or institutions, as this has been assessed using very different and hardly comparable methods over the decades. The most we can say is that two thirds of the sequences contained negative evaluations in 2009 (Holtz-Bacha et al., 2012). In 2014, negativity towards EU characterised very little of the spots but there was still a dominant tone against European institutions on posters, as if the more European the campaigns are, the more negative they go (Raycheva and Šuminas, 2017).

To illustrate this Europeanisation issue, with a pro or anti stance, a selection of posters (images 2.07 to 2.13) highlights a continuum of communication. At one end, there has been a long-running euro-enthusiasm from ecologists (images 2.08) and centre-right parties (images 2.09), with a message distinctively optimistic, even idealistic in the 1980s (images 2.07). At the other end, some parties rejected the EU and its construction as a whole (images 2.10), or criticised specific policies such as the Schengen area or the Euro currency. In 2019, leaving the EU altogether was the purpose of the UPR, a party founded on a simple slogan, 'Frexit', modelled upon Brexit (image 2.11b). Between these two ends of the continuum, a wide range of positions exist, synthe-

Images 2.07a, 2.07b, 2.07c. The 1980s: an abstract or an idealised approach of Europe? PS (1984; 1989) and PCF (1989). Source: European Election Monitoring Center





Images 2.08a, 2.08b, 2.08c. The Ecologist and Left for Europe. Les Verts (1989, 1994), PRG (2004). Source: European Election Monitoring Center

2.09a, 2.09b, 2.09c. A Euro optimistic and wilful centre-right. Modem (2009, 2014), Renaissance (2019). Source: European Election Monitoring Center

Images 2.10a, 2.10b, 2.10c, 2.10d. A variety of specific or global 'NOs'. PCF (1984), FN (1992 (Maastricht treaty's referendum campaign, source Belhaïdi), 2004 and 2014). Source for 2.10a, 2.10c and 2.10d: European Election Monitoring Center

Images 2.11a, 2.11b. Two other forms of EU rejection in 2014: abstention (MRC) or Frexit (UPR). Source: European Election Monitoring Center

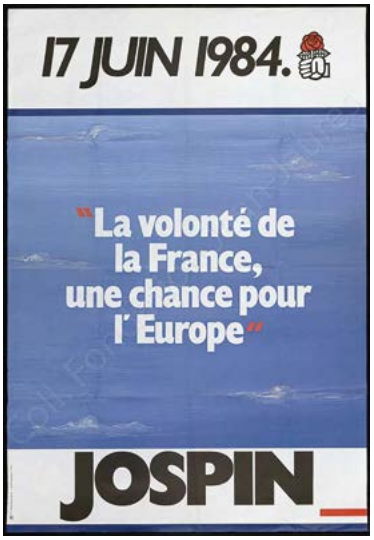
sised in slogans that prioritise French or European issues (images 2.13), or call for a more or less radical 'alternative' to the current EU construction (images 2.12).

Ambivalence also sometimes characterises the two main governing parties (PS and Gaullists) which took part in coalitions in the EP and shared positions within the Commission since 1979. Concerns about the consequences of the EU process on France were strong in 1979 for the list led by Gaullist and former Prime Minister Jacques Chirac (who was in fierce competition with the UDF pro-European President Giscard d'Estaing), with its motto 'Defending French interests within Europe'. Negativity later declined, down to 10% of items in their parties' manifestos from 1989 on. These shades of doubt became more frequent and pronounced from 1994 onwards, after the Maastricht Treaty was only narrowly ratified by referendum in 1992. It is nowadays mostly sovereignist and extreme right parties that mobilise such a negative European scheme (Reungoat, 2011; 2012).

As covered by the EEMC project, campaign strategies have expanded to digital platforms, as evident in a study of the Facebook accounts of the seven French parties with the best results in 2019, confirming previous findings in this complementary arena of controlled political communication. Europe was not the main focus in many cases, with the exception of right-wing LR. A national dimension in posts seemed to prevail during this EP campaign—except again for LR. This referendum focus was especially true for LFI which often attacked the President and ended up calling to say '(Ma)non to Macron', a play on words incorporating the first name of their list leader, Manon Aubry. In contrast, the PS and EELV did not participate in this nationalised view, and focused on their own agenda: their candidates, their campaign events and also, for EELV, past achievements of their MEPs and pledges for the next European legislature (Borrell et al., 2019).

Since negative ads are forbidden during the official televised campaign for any election, French political parties have not really developed a tradition of formal and organised attack against their opponents. Renaissance stands out as a Europeanist party that repeatedly claimed its love for the EU. Such a positive tone also prevailed over the PS account, while the LFI account was clearly negative, proposing to renegotiate the European treaties, as the LR and RN accounts, even though the latter somehow mitigated its 2017 elections call for France to leave the Eurozone. Environmental issues (biodiversity, climate change, air pollution, and their impact on health) were especially salient. As well as the EELV, several parties now also present themselves as ecologist, combining these issues differently with social and economic stands for PS and LFI. Some parties, especially LREM and RN, also devoted numerous posts to brief biographies of their candidates. Except for EELV, few parties used FB to develop specific programmatic points: they mainly used it to report on the campaign as it was being carried out, whether to announce or report on an event (field visit, meeting) or a media intervention (radio, TV), so that European issues would very likely be at the heart of the candidates' statements they promoted (Borrell et al., 2022). Facebook was used to call for online interactions (liking, sharing a publication, and so on) in 10% of posts, the highest average of all the 12

Image 2.12a, 2.12b, 2.12c. Building an alternative Europe. PCF (2004), PS and allies (2009, 2014). Source: European Election Monitoring Center



Images 2.13a, 2.13b, 2.13c, 2.13d. A dialectical relation between France and Europe. PS (1984, 1994), UMP (2004), LR and allies (2019). Source: European Election Monitoring Center

countries studied, or to target a repertoire of offline actions (attending a public meeting, donating money, voting) in 32% of posts (Maurer & Bellanger, 2021).

Conclusion

As we have shown, there has been a growing media coverage of EP elections, without any systematic consequence on turnout. Beyond saliency, it is the framing of the EP campaigns which matters a lot. In this respect, media and political actors alike have developed frames, which evolved across time, in terms of Europeanisation, negativity, and personalisation. Europe represents opportunities for its opponents as well as its supporters. Small parties and causes' promoters can even seize these campaigns as opportunities to advocate for a topic or ideology, without any hope of getting seats, taking advantage of the official campaign. Whereas mainstream parties—those seeking as many MEPs as possible and alternating in power in the French arena—can be ambivalent in their communication when EP elections are held. They are sharing power in Europe, with the culture (estranged from the French political habits) of building coalitions within the EP, but do not fully endorse their common incumbents' record when competing against each other.

More generally, we postulate that, although secondary, these elections have intensely divided political blocs and parties themselves, and durably affected the substance of French public debate. It has become more Europeanised, including beyond EP elections, even if the organisation of EP campaigns and forms of political communication, the framework for interpreting issues and results—both for parties and national political leaders competing—have remained fundamentally national.

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Chapter 3: Italy

Edoardo Novelli and Melissa Stolfi

Introduction

Italy has been historically characterised by a strong and widespread European vocation evident among the political elite as in public opinion, from the ratification of the Treaties of Rome (1957) until the signing of the Maastricht Treaty (1992). Two prominent political figures from different ideological positions, Alcide De Gasperi - secretary of the Christian Democrats for two terms (1944-1946 and 1953-1954) and Prime Minister of eight governments - and Altiero Spinelli - one of the authors of the Ventotene Manifesto and member of the Communist Party in the Italian and European Parliaments - were among the supporters and fathers of the European integration project. This pro-European spirit, supported by the different political parties for different reasons, was reflected in a high turnout to vote in European elections.

The issue of EU membership and its explicit link to domestic political issues have characterised the attitude of Italian political forces during forty years of European elections. Additionally, due to their second-order status (Reif & Schmitt, 1980), also the Italian elections have been affected by the transformations of the country's political and economic system.

From 1979 to 2019, Italy went through some vastly different political phases.

The first period (1979-1989) coincided with the conclusive decade of the political party system of the First Republic which followed the Second World War. It was characterised by the strong ideological opposition between the *Christian Democrats* (*Democrazia Cristiana* or DC) and some minor centralist parties on one hand and the strongest communist party in the West on the other. This period also saw the reorganisation of the political system following the *Moro case*[1] and the re-alignment of the stances taken by the *Italian Communist Party* (*Partito Comunista Italiano* or PCI) and the *Italian Socialist Party* (*Partito Socialista Italiano* or PSI) on the issue of Europe.

The second period (1990-2000) began with the re-organisation of the party system of the Second Republic, after the old political system collapsed following the *Tangentopoli* investigation[2] and Silvio Berlusconi's subsequent entry into politics. Despite being developed in a narrative linked to the domestic context, European affairs became part of the electoral debate and contributed to polarising attitudes. This was especially evident due to the anti-European stances of the newly formed parties, *Forza Italia* and *Alleanza Nazionale*, which criticised the old political class for accepting the EU challenges, in particular membership of the EMS and EMU, as an 'act of faith', without assessing either the medium- and long-term implications on the domestic context or the country's real capacity to face the new economic challenges.

In the third period (2001-2010), covering the European elections of 2004 and 2009, a phase of stability was followed by one marked by alternating centre-right and centre-left coalitions in government. The introduction of the single currency in 2001 and the economic recession of 2008 stimulated the development of anti-European sentiments in the centre-right coalition, particularly the *Lega Nord*, and in the extreme left with *Rifondazione Comunista* (PRC), prompting the spread of Eurosceptic sentiment among the public. Meanwhile, the centre-left forces, in government in the second half of the decade, continued to openly support the EU project.

The fourth period (2011-2020), covering the elections from 2014 to 2019, was characterised by the electoral success recorded by nationalist, populist and Eurosceptic forces reflecting trends seen in other EU member states. The prolonged effects of the economic recession and the migratory crisis contributed to polarising attitudes and injecting tension into the political and electoral debate. Italy faced strong and widespread opposition to the EU for the first time, gaining centrality following the success of the *Lega Nord* and *Movimento 5 Stelle* in the general and European elections.

In the space of forty years and nine European elections, only in two cases were the latter held close to the general elections: the following week in 1979 and three months later in 1994. This meant that the campaigns for national elections almost never overshadowed the European elections, as was often the case in other countries. Instead, they served more as a test of the stability of executives and the strength of opposition parties.

1 The kidnapping and murder of the Secretary of the DC, Aldo Moro, by the Brigate Rosse (BR) terrorist group in 1978.

2 The journalistic definition of a series of judicial investigations conducted by various public prosecutors, from which a system of corruption and illicit funding of parties involving prominent members of the country's political and business class emerged, undermining its credibility with the public and leading to the disbanding of many of the historic parties.

The Europeanism of the First Republic (1979-1989)

From the 1970s onwards, the stance adopted by Italian political parties on Europe involved the support of the *Christian Democrats* (DC), the main governing force, and the minor formations supporting the executive (*Liberal Party, Republican Party, Social Democratic Party.* There was ambiguity surrounding the position of both the Socialist Party (PSI), which was part of the government but abstained from voting on joining the EEC, and the neo-fascist inspired Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). Additionally, there was the movement of the main opposition party, the Communist Party (PCI), which leaned towards European social democracy and the integration process.

The prolonged era of Christian Democratic hegemony (Giovagnoli, 2004), during which the DC held uninterrupted government power from 1946 to 1992, normalised stagnation and absence of change in the political landscape in terms of political forces and personalities. This entrenched the Italian political system into an imperfect bipartisanship (Galli, 1996) or polarised pluralism (Sartori, 1982)

The Seventies represented a decade of massive social change and attempts to transform the country's political order. A phase opened by the prospect of historic compromise which led to an initial form of collaboration between the DC and the PCI, in an attempt to respond to the new needs and the new configuration of Italian society. A project that ended abruptly with the murder of Aldo Moro in 1978. In the years that followed, the parties had to cope with a phase of intra- and inter-party reorganisation and redefinition of the elements on which to build a renewed relationship with their electoral community, which coincided with the slow decline of the political and party system of the First Republic.

Widespread pro-Europeanism does not underscore the significance of the European question in the political-electoral debate, where the conflict instead focuses on national problems with political parties proposing solutions in keeping with their respective ideological currents. This diversity also emerges in the different conceptions of 'Europe' to be aspired to and in the different model of European integration to be constructed.

The DC's pro-Europeanism gained strength and credibility based on its role as 'leader' of the Catholic Democratic formations in initiating the process of European integration, undertaking to confirm the political choices of the founding fathers. The party's Europeanism is a widely recognised distinctive trait and the Christian Democratic design of a 'united Europe' was already on the road to completion (Durand, 2002).

In the socialist sphere, the political-ideological project of Euro-socialism, strongly supported by PSI leader Bettino Craxi, was gaining ground, assigning Europe a central role in strengthening the debate on peace and the implementation of international disarmament policies. Its aims also included the creation of a united and independent area capable of guaranteeing human rights, safeguarding all forms of freedom and containing economic and social inequalities (Varsori, 1998).

The political-ideological project of Euro-communism, championed by the PCI together with the *French Communist Party* (PCF) and the *Communist Party of Spain* (PCE), with PCI secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, as one of the main promoters and representatives, steered towards a more 'reformist' and 'democratic' design of communism. This provided the party the chance to move away from the leadership role of the *Soviet Communist Party*, to define an independent foreign policy and to accept the formation of supranational organisations based on the model of western capitalism (Bell, 1996; Maggiorani, 1998).

The political scenario electoral debates and protagonists remained virtually unchanged for the European elections in the decade from 1979 to 1989. These elections were influenced by significant historical-political events of the period, characterised by the Pentapartite government comprising DC, PSI, PSDI, PRI, PLI. The three main parties of the First Republic, the DC, the PCI, and the PSI were preoccupied with national political and policy issues rather than on European campaign issues.The first European elections of 1979 were held a week after the national political campaign. Because the European election was conducted in the wake of the general elections, prominence was granted to national issues central to the political-electoral debate. The results of the vote confirmed what had been recorded a week earlier at the general election, with the DC (36%) confirming its position as the leading party in the country, maintaining distance from the PCI (29%) and the PSI (11%). In terms of European matters, the electoral campaign took place in a relatively 'relaxed' climate and the issue of Europe produced no conflict or polarisation either between the parties or among the public. The 1979 European elections recorded a high turnout (85.6%), which was to remain a constant for European elections in the 1980s. In particular, the 1979 electoral campaign was influenced by the severe political crisis triggered by the assassination of Aldo Moro, while 1984 was marked by the death of Enrico Berlinguer on 11 June during a rally for the upcoming European elections in Padua just days before the 17 June vote. At the 1989 elections, 1.83% of the votes went to the *Lega Lombarda Alleanza Nord*, which brought together the regionalist

Image 3.01. If you speak socialist in Europe they will understand you, PSI, 1979. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.02: For a left-wing Europe Italy votes communist, PCI, 1979. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.03: A safe guide at the helm of Europe, DC, 1984. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

movements of northern Italy and marked the first step towards the subsequent formation of the *Lega Nord* in 1991 and the emergence of autonomist and federalist instances.

The Europeanist election campaign followed two different narratives. On one hand, the parties saw Europe as being an unprecedented space for the pursuit of national and ideological demands. The PSI call for a 'united and prosperous Europe' that could be achieved with 'European socialism', convinced that 'if you speak socialist in Europe they will understand you' (Image 3.01); the PCI invited people to vote communist in order to form a 'left-wing Europe' (Image 3.02). While the DC presented itself as the only 'safe guide at the helm of Europe' (image 3.03) and being capable of 'bringing Italy to the centre of Europe '.

On the other hand, especially in the PCI's campaign, Europe was a place 'of peace and work, for those who will be twenty in the year 2000' and a space to implement the 'need for the future' expressed by the new generations. The process of modernisation and reconstruction of the country, in keeping with the image of a party undergoing renewal, emerged in the image of a new Europe in which rights are guaranteed, freedoms respected, and diversity tolerated. Exemplary in this sense is the communist campaign of 1989, which imagined 'the Europe to come without racism', 'of citizens' rights', 'without unfair taxes', 'also of the South' and 'increasingly of women'.

Europeanism also retained a strictly 'ideological' character expressed through the idea of a Europe opposed to the USSR, 'to avoid joining the wrong Europe' (DC) (image 3.04), as a centre of mediation between the two superpowers engaged in the Cold War, but also as a driver of the disarmament policy, 'For a Europe in a world of peace and collaboration' (PCI), 'In Europe on the wings of freedom' (PSI), 'The wind of freedom throughout Europe' (DC).

The general Europeanist attitude was accompanied by the Eurosceptic positions of certain parties at the extreme ends of the political spectrum, including the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* on the right and *Democrazia Proletaria* on the left.

The Second Republic and the birth of Forza Italia (1990-2000)

The Nineties witnessed the disappearance of almost all the historical parties and, the birth and success of new political forces such as the *Lega Nord* (LN) and *Forza Italia* (FI). It also saw the fragmentation of large political families such as the *Communist party*, and the reform of the electoral system on a majority basis, aimed at bipolarity with the aggregation of parties into stable pre-electoral coalitions (Laws No. 276 and No. 277, 4 August 1993). The crisis of the previous national party system, which decreed the end of the First Republic and the beginning of the Second (Gundle and Parker, 1996; Koff and Koff, 2000), reached its climax with the *Tangentopoli* case in the early '90, when investigations lead to a series of successful convictions against prominent politicians in the domestic political system

The transition to the Second Republic took place, not only symbolically, during the 1994 political

Image 3.04: Give the DC your vote to avoid joining the wrong Europe, DC, 1979. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.05: Head held high for change, AN, 1999. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

elections with the success of the new *Forza Italia* (FI) party, the rise of the *Lega Nord* (LN) and the explosion of new forms, languages and instruments in electoral campaigning (Mancini & Mazzoleni, 1995; Novelli, 2018; Roncarlo, 2008). The undisputed protagonist was Silvio Berlusconi, owner of the leading private television station with three national channels, founder, and leader of FI and a businessman who presented himself as an 'outsider' and 'man of action' with a programme based on the fight against communism and the country's economic relaunch, with anti-political overtones. Berlusconi's intense and deregulated use of television shifted the debate from content to tools, highlighting the clear advantage that the owner of Mediaset had at his disposal to carry out a hyper-media campaign, supported by uncontrolled use of election tv-ads, appearances on television programmes and endorsements by popular show business celebrities (Bentivegna, 2001; Mazzoleni, 2012; Novelli, 2018). The allies of the centre-right coalition built by Berlusconi included the southern-based *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), heir to the historical neo-fascist party MSI, which began a slow and laboured process of transformation; and *LN,* the evolution of the *Lega Lombarda*, in the north. The LN focused on the 'separatist' issue and identified its political adversary as the entire Italian political class, 'Roma ladrona' ('thieving Rome'), accused of robbing the citizens of northern Italy with taxes, while the 'Europe of the peoples' was seen as a growth opportunity for the northern part of the Italian peninsula. Accession to the European Monetary Union

Image 3.06: To carry more weight in Europe, FI, 1994. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

(EMU) had the potential to accelerate the separation process, as Northern Italy would have been able to independently meet the criteria outlined in the Maastricht Treaty with regard to the introduction of the single currency, once it had freed itself from the public debt and economic instability resulting from the precarious conditions of the southern regions (Quaglia, 2009; Woods, 2009).

The changes in the national political scene were reflected in the campaign and the results of the 1994 and 1999 European parliamentary elections, for which there was a drop in turnout to 70% compared to the elections of the previous decade (1979-1989). A trend that followed the drop in turnout at the national elections due to the general decline in the political participation, the growing distance of citizens from politics, and the increasing mistrust in politics. FI's victory in the 1994 and 1999 European elections confirmed the success of Silvio Berlusconi's new political project.

The widespread Europeanism of the First Republic gradually gave way to critical attitudes towards Europe expressed by the new formations: on the right, FI and AN; on the far left, *Rifondazione Comunista*.

Even though the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 raised many doubts about the constraints imposed by the EU (Pasquinucci, 2016), the Nineties did not seem to initiate a real debate on European issues, partly due to the need of the new political forces to position themselves in the domestic context first to cope with strong internal instability. The campaign of the centre-right was characterised by timid Eurosceptic sentiments detectable in the call for 'change' (Image 3.05) and the desire to 'carry more weight in Europe' (image 3.06).

The Europeanism of the heterogeneous centre-left, made up of political forces that were heirs of the PCI such as the *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PDS) in 1994 and the *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS) and the *Democratici* (Dem) in 1999, emphasised the confidence in and support for the integration project that would give Italy greater strength and prestige in the European and international context – 'Stronger in a more united Europe' and 'Take Italy to the heart of Europe' (Image 3.07) in 1994 - and take the lead in the European integration process – 'The left took you to Europe. Don't stop now' in 1999.

Romano Prodi, leader of the centre-left and Dem coalition and the President of the European Commission from September 1999 to November 2004, was a central figure in the management of relations with other European leaders and in negotiations for the adoption of the single currency. He became the symbol of 'reformist' Europeanism, contrasted by Silvio Berlusconi's criticism of the impositions of Brussels, which was, however, still little expressed in the election campaign. This polarisation was to be a feature of the confrontation between the centre-left and centre-right and helped to personalise the election campaign.

The introduction of the euro and the Eurosceptic shift (2001-2010)

The first decade of the new century witnessed the ongoing opposition between centre-left and centre-right in an electorally fluctuating environment and growing mistrust of EU institutions and opposition to the Union.

The 2001 general elections delivered a very solid majority to the centre-right alliance and its

Image 3.07: Take Italy to the heart of Europe. Secure in Europe with the PDS, PDS, 1994. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.08: Europe takes care of small businesses. Berlusconi Doesn't, PD, 2009. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

leader Silvio Berlusconi who, five years later, lost the elections by a handful of votes. The new centre-left majority (2006), led by Romano Prodi, which failed to form a strong coalition, was considered weak and encountered considerable difficulty in identifying solutions in Parliament to lift the country out of its economic and political doldrums. The fall of the government led to early elections in 2008, which saw the centre-left coalition, led by the *Partito Democratico* (PD), founded in 2007, pitted against the successful centre-right coalition, comprising *Forza Italia*, *Lega Nord* and *Alleanza Nazionale*, led by Silvio Berlusconi. At the end of the decade, the effects of the economic recession started to be felt in the eurozone as well. The Italian government's lack of practical and effective responses, despite the European Central Bank's (ECB) warnings on public debt, contributed to spreading a perceived image of a weak Italy with little credibility and to deteriorating relations with other European leaders.

These were also the years of an acceleration in European integration, with national states ceding part of their sovereignty and the EU becoming a supranational entity capable of taking tangible action on the country's legislative and economic system (Gervasoni, 2012). In light of the requests from Brussels that were necessary for the implementation of the single market and the creation of the eurozone, harsh financial manoeuvres were implemented. This led to a further widening of social inequalities which fuelled a malaise among Italian people. For some political forces, Europe became the 'new' enemy to fight and the institutional subject to blame for the country's difficulties. The Eurosceptic shift was evident from the second government of Berlusconi, the first Italian political leader to demand the country's self-sufficiency, effectively purging Europe of its 'leadership' role that had accompanied the choices of the political class during the First Republic (Pasquinucci, 2016).

In the early 2000s, the *Lega Nord*'s previous Europeanism finally gave way to a 'strategic' Euroscepticism in order to attract consensus by exploiting the concerns of the Italians. In the process, Lega Nord differentiated itself from the other parties on the political scene and identified the EU as responsible for the country's economic decline and social discontent. The party realised that the EU would be unable to create the necessary conditions for the implementation of fiscal federalism and the independence of the North, so the new battles became opposition to the single currency, the demand for the re-nationalisation of certain powers delegated to EU institutions, the fight against migration policies at national and European level, and opposition to expansion of the Union towards the East (Albertazzi et al., 2011).

The European campaigns during this phase, 2004 and 2009, acted as mid-term elections and offered the chance to measure the change in consensus of the electorate within a variable political scene that failed to express clear and stable majorities. This meant that, rather than on the comparison and analysis of the various parties' proposals, electoral support was based on the assessment of the government's performance (Rocarolo, 2008; Natale, 2010). The 2004 European elections witnessed the presence of *Uniti nell'Ulivo*, a list made up of the *Democratici di Sinistra* party and the other left-wing parties, which achieved a good electoral result (31.8%). This situation was reversed at the following Euro-

Image 3.09:To carry more and more weight in Europe, PdL, 2009. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.10: They put up with immigration. Now they're living in reserves! LN, 2009. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.11: Changing Europe to change Italy. We are not paying for your recession, PRC, 2009. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.12: DS. The Italy that doesn't stand by and watch, DS, 2004. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.13: Education: an open book for Europe, SEL, 2009. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

pean elections in 2009, when the centre-right won the elections obtaining the 35.3% of votes and the centre-left, particularly the new political party, the *Partito Democratico*, got 26% of votes.

Campaigns for the European elections continued to be less focused on Europe and more on the domestic context, 'Europe takes care of small businesses. Berlusconi Doesn't' (Image 3.08), 'Europe takes care of those who lose their jobs. Berlusconi Doesn't' and 'One big party can stop the right' (PD).

'Utilitarian' anti-Europeanism on specific issues, such as immigration and the single currency began growing among the right-wing and centre-right formations, along with a desire to strengthen the country's role in the European scenario to regain sovereignty and defend national interests (Quaglia, 2009). *Forza Italia* sustained the need to 'carry more and more weight in Europe' (Image 3.09), muting the more heated anti-EU tones of the campaigns run by *Lega Nord*, which looked at the issue of immigration (Image 3.10), and *Alleanza Nazionale*. Eurosceptic demands on the economy, labour and employment were present in the 2009 *Rifondazione Comunista* election campaign – 'We are not paying for your recession' (Image 3.11) and 'Changing Europe to change Italy' - which produced an effective advert featuring the face of a young girl streaked with tears that ended with 'If you were a bank, you'd already have been saved'.

The centre-left formations that still supported the European integration project combined the defence of the EU project with the national dimension, presenting Europe as a solution to the country's various problems, 'Italy doesn't stand by and watch' (DS) (Image 3.12), 'Education: an open book for Europe" (SEL, *Sinistra e Libertà*) (Image 3.13), 'For a Europe of labour. There is no future without employment' (IdV, *Italia dei Valori*).

From anti-politics to anti-Europeanism: the rise of the M5S and Lega (2011-2020)

In Italy, too, the long-term effects of the economic recession on the real economy which became noticeable from 2012 onwards (Kroh, 2014; Kriesi & Grande, 2014) and the migratory emergency triggered by the Arab Spring in 2010-2011 fuelled the anti-European agenda of the political class and Eurosceptic sentiment. At the domestic level, a new phase of Italian politics began, marked by the abandonment of the traditional bipolarity, centre-left and centre-right factions. There was a restructuring of alliances following the entry into Parliament of the new political force of the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S), the strong growth of the political weight of certain minor formations, such as the *Lega*, and the crisis of *Forza Italia*, whose leader Silvio Berlusconi resigned as Prime Minister in November 2011, partly due to pressure from the EU regarding economic and budgetary policies.

Anti-European sentiments found fertile ground in the actions of comedian Beppe Grillo who, transitioned from success in show business to politics. Grillo led a series of popular demonstrations in protest against the corruption of the political class and against the 'European masters' *Vaffa Day* in 2007 and *No Berlusconi Day* in 2009 - which led to the birth of the M5S. M5S combined personalised leadership, a programme focused on environmental and community issues and a futuristic perspective of direct democracy via the web (Biorcio and Natale 2018; Gerbaudo 2019). The decisive shift from public support to electoral consensus took place in the 2013 general election, when the two major coalitions, the centre-left wing '*Italia. Bene Comune*' (29.5%) led by Pierluigi Bersani and the centre-right wing 'Centro-destra' (29.2%), still led by Silvio Berlusconi, were joined by M5S as a third party, securing 25.6% of the vote.

Image 3.14: No more euro, LN, 2014. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.15: More Italy in Europe, less Europe in Italy, FI, 2014. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.16: Raise your head in Europe. The best vote for Italy, FdI, 2014. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.17: We will make Italy respected in Europe, FdI, 2019. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.18: Italy first!, LN, 2019. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

The Europe issue assumed unprecedented significance in both national and European electoral debates. It was, however, a primarily negative Europeanisation (Genga, 2015; Belluati, 2016; Bobba & Seddone, 2018; Johansson et al., 2022) linked to the development of the more openly Eurosceptic positions of the M5S and *Lega*. The former, a proponent of soft Euroscepticism (Taggart, 1998; Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2004), focused its campaign against 'impositions' from Brussels in the economic sphere and on the EU institutions' apparent mismanagement of migratory flows. While Lega criticised the eurozone, the institutions and the bureaucratic system of Europe, even going so far as to speculate on a possible exit of the country from the EU and the single currency.

At the next general election in 2018, the M5S gained over 30% of the vote. In the centre-right coalition, the *Lega*'s overtaking of *Forza Italia* led Silvio Berlusconi to cede leadership to Matteo Salvini, the new leader of a *Lega* that was now decreasingly 'regionalist' and 'secessionist' and increasingly 'national and nationalist' (Passarelli & Tuorto, 2018. The party removed the term 'Nord' ('north') from its name, symbolising its growing focus on central and southern Italy. This unexpected development led to the formation of a government led by the new alliance between the *Movimento 5 Stelle* and *Lega*. Europe's first populist and Eurosceptic executive.

The European elections during this period show a sharp decline in turnout - 57.2% in 2014 and 54.5% in 2019 - confirming a widespread trend in all member states (Rombi, 2016). In the 2014 European elections, the *Partito Democratico* - the majority force in the governing coalition, led by the new and dynamic leader Matteo Renzi, who had initiated a radical renewal of the party's image and political positioning - obtained 40% of the vote; the emerging M5S gained 21%, *Forza Italia* 16.8% and *Lega* 6%.

The campaign was characterised by the reinvigoration of Eurosceptic positions, widely spread among old formations such as *Lega* on the right and *Rifondazione* and *Comunista* on the left, and new formations such as Angelino Alfano's *Nuovo Centro Destra* (NCD) and the newly formed far-right party *Fratelli d'Italia* (FdI), heir to the neo-fascist party *Movimento Sociale*, led by Giorgia Meloni. Criticism primarily centred on austerity measures and the monetary union and decisions made by the ECB. Slogans such as 'Against austerity and the Europe run by the banks' (PRC), 'People first' (AET, *L'Altra Europa con Tsipras*), 'Against the Europe of the bureaucrats' (NCD) and 'No more Euro' (LN) (Image 3.14) featured during the campaign. The need to regain that national sovereignty that had been relinquished too often to the Union emerged 'More Italy in Europe,

Image 3.19: Let's build hope, not walls, PD, 2019. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 3.20: Europe will be changed by those who love it most, +EU, 2019. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

less Europe in Italy' (FI) (Image 3.15), along with the need to start looking after the national interest again without being crushed by diktats from Brussels 'Raise your head in Europe' (Image 3.16) (FdI).

The subsequent European elections in 2019 marked a further spread of populist and Eurosceptic or explicitly Eurocritical positions and an intensification of their rhetoric. While the 2014 campaign had focused mainly on criticism of the EU institutions' handling of the economic crisis (Novelli et al., 2017), in 2019, the theme of defending and rediscovering the value of national identity emerged, linked to criticism of the handling of the migratory emergency that was affecting the entire European area. The safeguarding of national interest and identity were emphasised, with slogans such as 'We will make Italy respected in Europe' (FdI) (Image 3.17) and 'Italy first!' (LN) (Image 3.18), the defence of borders, 'Stop invasion' (LN), values and traditions, 'Defending excellence made in Italy' (M5S), together with opposition to the obligations of the single market and monetary union, were the central issues.

Europeanist forces, represented by parties PD and *+Europa* (+Eu), countered the anti-European narrative with a campaign that emphasised the values and opportunities offered by the Union. They emphasised pro-EU arguments such as freedom of movement and peacekeeping, acceptance and integration between cultures, with slogans such as 'A united Europe will be a solid Europe' and 'Let's build hope, not walls' (PD) (Image 3.19), opportunities and trust in the future, 'Let's invest in education, not fear' (PD) and 'Europe will be changed by those who love it most' (+Eu) (Image 3.20), civil rights and the environment, 'Change the climate, change Europe' (EV, *Europa Verde*).

The victory of the *Lega* with 28.1%, surpassed the alliance between the *Partito Democratico* and *Siamo europei* (22.7%) and the *Movimento 5 stelle* (17%), altering Italy's stance in relation to the Union and its institutions.

The success of the centre-right coalition and particularly the far-right party *Fratelli d'Italia*, in the 2022 general election led to the election of *FdI*'s leader Giorgia Meloni as Prime Minister. Presenting herself with a traditionalist and nationalist programme in domestic politics, with slogans such as 'God, country and family', and strongly critical of the European Union in terms of foreign policy, 'the fun is over'. In her first year of government Giorgia Meloni completely changed her attitude towards European Union and its institutions. She no longer viewed them solely as Euro-bureaucrats and a threat to national identity but rather as potential allies with whom to cooperate for the common interest. This repositioning stands out as one of the focal points in the forthcoming European election campaign in Italy.

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Chapter 4: United Kingdom

Nathan Ritchie and Dominic Wring

Introduction

The United Kingdom's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 would have a profound impact on the country's politics as well as its economy. The unprecedented nationwide referendum of 1975 confirmed parliament's contentious decision to join four years earlier, with a decisive two thirds of voters endorsing 'the Common Market'. This was the culmination of a concerted British campaign that had been undeterred by the French President De Gaulle twice vetoing previous UK attempts to join the EEC during the 1960s. The decisive margin of the 1975 vote initially stymied further debate over the issue, although the main opposition party did briefly advocate withdrawal from the EEC in the early 1980s. The UK's inaugural European parliamentary campaigns were dominated by primarily domestic considerations and gave the electorate an opportunity to register their discontent with the government at Westminster (Heath et al, 1999). The results of the first four elections held between 1979 and 1994 track the gradual move of voters away from the Conservatives and towards Labour, though the former persisted in renewing their mandate to run the country three times during this period.

The Tories' landslide victory in the inaugural European Parliamentary elections of 1979 came within weeks of Margaret Thatcher's first entrance into Downing Street. The next triumph on this scale followed with Labour's win in 1994 in an outcome that presaged the party's national triumph three years later. And although the results of the two intervening European elections were closer, they also mirrored each other with the Conservatives and Labour winning by a similarly modest margin in 1984 and 1989 respectively (Figure 4.01). From 1999 onwards subsequent electoral outcomes proved different because the UK had been obliged to adopt a more proportional system of voting in place of its traditional majoritarian method. The change favoured smaller parties such as the Greens who had previously been denied European parliamentary representation despite attracting meaningful electoral support. Formed in 1993, the pro-withdrawal United Kingdom Independence Party also benefitted from the revised voting system introduced. Somewhat paradoxically, the elections to a parliament whose existence it strenuously opposed would provide this party with the ideal platform from which to espouse its cause.

Future leader Nigel Farage was among three UK Independence Party (UKIP) MEPs returned in a modest but nonetheless significant breakthrough for his party. The party's support grew in successive European elections and helped bring the issue of EU membership to the forefront of British politics (Figure 4.02). This was in an era when the Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were pursuing an avowedly integrationist agenda—albeit one that did not embrace the case for UK adoption of the single currency. The prospect of Britain joining the Euro at the turn of the millennium provided the Conservative opposition with a strong theme to rally around; however, the party remained divided between those who wanted to leave the EU and those who sought to stay and reform the partnership. UKIP capitalised upon the fractures within the Conservative party by offering a stridently unambiguous voice on the issue of Britain's involvement in Europe. In the elections held between 2004 and 2014, Farage and his colleagues played a decisive role in ensuring Brussels was perceived as a growing threat to national sovereignty. By the end of this period UKIP was winning the most European parliamentary seats, further pressurising the Conservative government to hold a referendum on British membership of the EU. Fatefully, this would happen in 2016.

Awkward Partner: Thatcher's Britain, 1979-1994

The inaugural 1979 election was treated with relative indifference by both the media and the public, with limited coverage and low turnout at the polls (Blumler, 1979). Voter fatigue might have been a factor given the recency of the General Election that had brought Margaret Thatcher to power, combined with widespread uncertainty about what the European Parliament could and would do. Anticipating this problem, the EEC had spent £600,000 on advertising in various UK national newspapers to explain the role and functions of the Community and its institutions (Image 4.01). Turnout was still disappointing despite public awareness of the impending election growing from an estimated 13% of the population at the start of this promotional initiative to 56% in a follow-up study (Butler and Marquand, 1981). Subsequent voter participation remained modest with barely a third exercising their democratic right in 1984. Later elections fared little better, with voter turnout fluctuating between 35-38% except for in 1999 when the figure plummeted to 24% (Figure

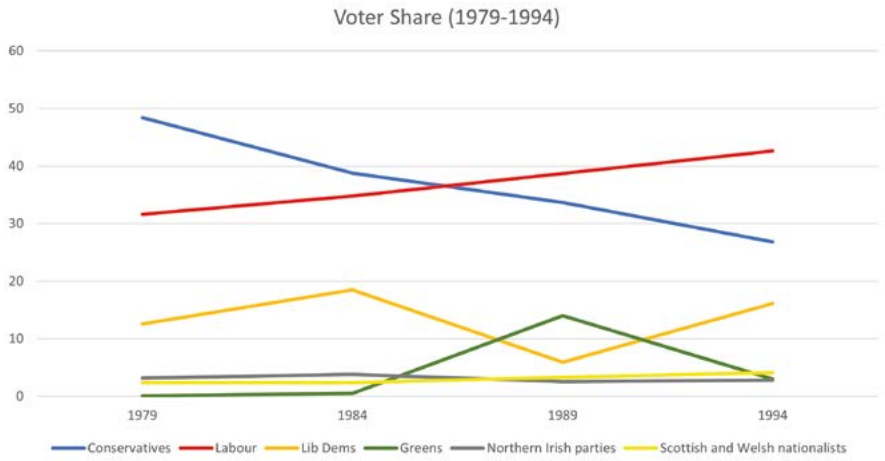


Figure 4.01: main party vote shares in UK European Parliamentary Elections 1979-1994. Source: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/

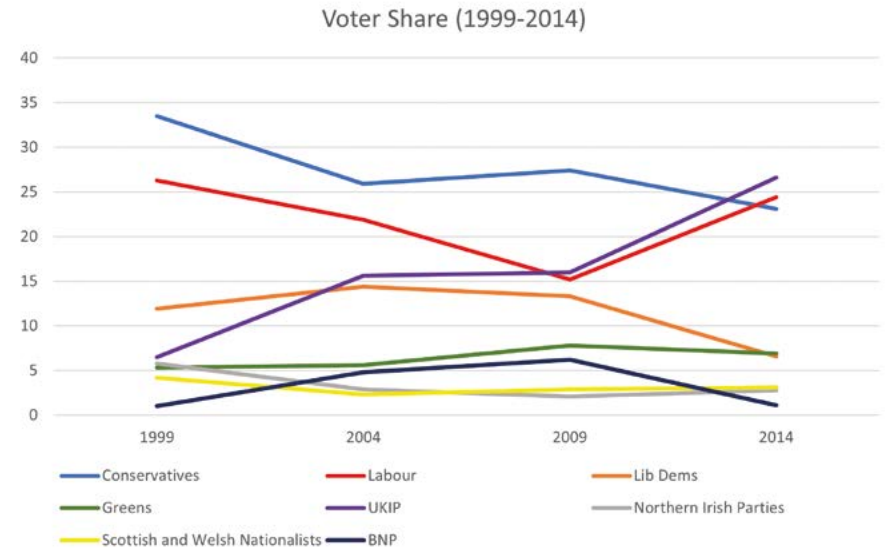


Figure 4.02: main party vote shares in UK European Parliamentary Elections 1999-2014. Source: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/

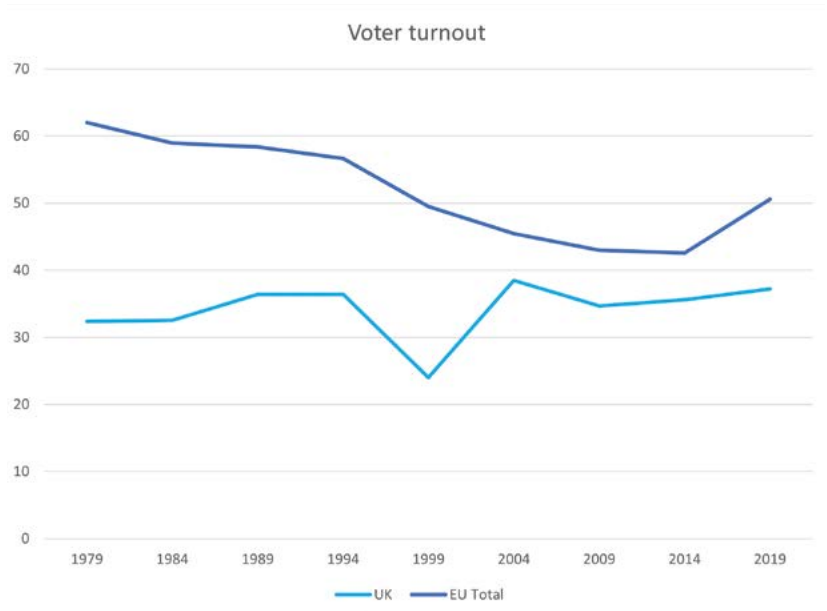


Figure 4.03: Voter turnout In European Parliamentary Elections from 1979 to 2019 in the United Kingdom. Source: www.europarl.europa.eu

4.03). UK turnout has been persistently low by continental standards with the European election 'regarded as the nadir of voter interest in Great Britain' (Barbrook, 1986: 1086).

Public indifference towards European elections has been explained by them being 'second order' affairs in contrast to the far more consequential so-called 'first order' votes for national governments (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). The 1984 campaign appeared to support this interpretation given they witnessed only a modest increase in turnout after another contest dominated by largely domestic concerns (Butler and Jowett, 1985). This happened despite the more concerted electioneering of rival parties—admittedly efforts that were routinely ignored by the television news media (Siune et al., 1984). The press was similarly indifferent with no major title publishing a lead story during the campaign. Among the best-selling popular newspapers only seventeen election related news items appeared in the fortnight leading up to polling day (Butler and Jowett, 1985).

The Conservatives' 1979 slogan 'Don't hope for a better deal in Europe- vote for one' reflected the new government's determination to pursue a 'Britain-first' approach dedicated to reducing the UK's financial contribution to the EEC. Margaret Thatcher subsequently secured a rebate and her desire to

What you need to know before you have your say in the European Elections.

The European Community.

1. Belgium
2. Denmark
3. Fed. Rep. of Germany
4. France
5. Ireland
6. Italy
7. Luxembourg
8. Netherlands
9. United Kingdom

You have a new vote. A vote you can use on Thursday June 7.

You will then be able to elect your Member of the European Parliament (also known as the European Assembly).

Before you use your vote, here are some facts you need to know.

Why is this a new vote?

Up to now the members of the European Parliament have been nominated from the national parliaments of the European Community countries.

Now they will be directly elected – by voters in each of the nine Community countries.

In June, 180 million Europeans will be able to vote together for the first time.

In fact, June 7-10 will see the worlds first international elections.

What will my vote do?

It will give you a say about who represents you in the European Parliament – your own European MP, who will have an influence on Community matters which affect you.

What does the European Parliament do?

It helps shape decisions taken by the Community. It has an important say about how much it spends, and on what.

It keeps a close eye on those who take decisions, and on those who carry them out – the Council of Ministers and the Commission.

Image 4.01: European Commission funded newspaper advertisement 'What you need to know before you have your say in the European Elections'. 1979 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: *Daily Mail*, 18 May 1979: 20.

provide 'a strong voice in Europe' formed the party's 1984 pitch (Image 4.02) in a campaign that recognised apathy among supporters could damage the Conservatives' chances in the way it had Labour's in 1979 (Linton, 1984).

By 1989 Thatcher had been premier for a decade and Conservative differences over European policy had become increasingly public. Although her government had previously encouraged closer economic engagement by supporting the 1986 Single European Act, the Prime Minister had warned against further political union in her influential Bruges Speech of 1988 (Bogdanor, 1989). During this period the UK was characterised as an 'awkward partner' keen to benefit from membership but also against the kind of integration that other leading states felt essential to the future success of their joint enterprise (George, 1990). While Thatcher was

expressing frustration with European colleagues, she received criticism from Europhiles in her party including her immediate predecessor as leader, Edward Heath—the architect of the UK's entry into the EEC. A leading pro-Conservative newspaper warned 'Tory disarray' could lead to defeat: 'it really is time that the Tories got their act together and found a common approach towards Europe, especially with the elections to the European Parliament coming in July' (*Daily Mail*, 1989: 6). But Heath was increasingly resolute in his position, and accused Thatcher of 'patronising, self-serving hypocrisy' and 'distorting the truth' during the campaign (Clarke, 1989). Despite party advertising warning of the 'socialist' threat from Labour, the Conservatives succumbed to defeat in a nationwide election for the first time in fifteen years (Image 4.03).

If 1989 marked a setback for the Conservatives, 1994 proved to be a complete rout. In between these elections Thatcher's successor John Major convincingly won the 1992 General Election but, within months, his authority was seriously undermined by the dramatic events of 'Black Wednesday'. This single day in autumn 1992 saw the UK forced out of the European Exchange Mechanism having devalued sterling to prevent further damage to the British economy. The Conservatives' 1994 campaign tried to revive the familiar notion that Labour was wedded to socialism and link this to the development of an overbearing federalist EU superstate. In contrast, the government pledged to resist this kind of integration while articulating a vision of an EU based on free trade in which members retained sovereignty through powers of veto (Butler and Westlake, 1995). But Major's efforts were insufficient to prevent his party suffering a major loss of support and defeat by Labour.

Labour's defeat in the 1979 General Election led to significant internal recriminations that overshadowed preparations for the European campaign only weeks later. The debate intensified and caused a major split in 1981 that resulted in the creation of the rival Social Democratic Party, partly in response to Labour's adoption of a policy in favour of UK withdrawal from the EEC. 1984 was the first major electoral test for Neil Kinnock, the leader who took over following the party's landslide defeat by the Conservatives the previous year. Labour chose to focus its campaign on domestic issues including rising unemployment and the state of the NHS rather than European concerns. While Kinnock lost his first national election as leader in 1987, he argued the result underlined the need for Labour to further overhaul its programme. Having already abandoned the commitment to withdraw Britain from the EEC, the party now positively embraced 'Social Europe', Commission President Jacques Delors' plan for tack-

Image 4.02: Conservative Party political poster 'NOT VOTING TOMORROW IS THE SAME AS GIVING YOUR VOTE TO LABOUR'. 1984 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: Conservative Party Trust.

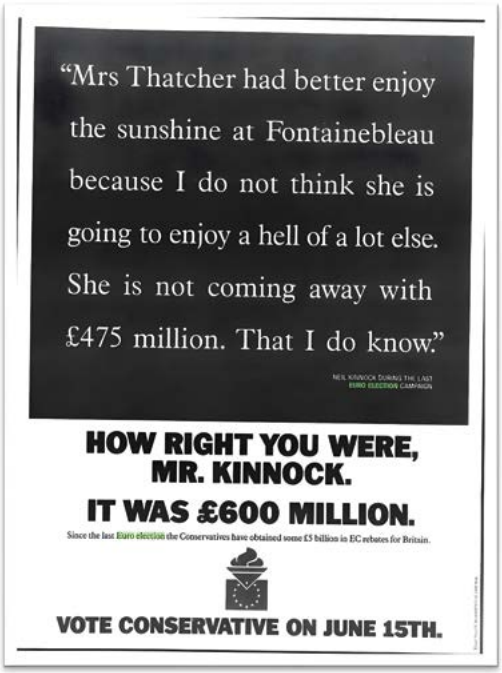


Image 4.03: Conservative Party newspaper advertisement 'HOW RIGHT YOU WERE, MR KINNOCK. IT WAS £600 MILLION'. 1989 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: *Daily Mail*, 13 June 1989: 11.

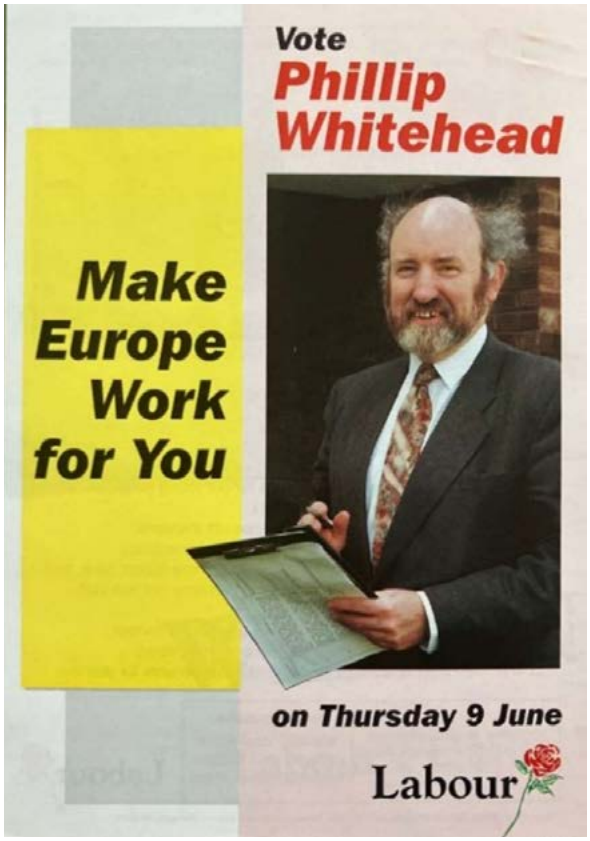


Image 4.04: Labour political party leaflet 'Make Europe work for you'. 1994 European Parliamentary elections. Source: People's History Museum.

Image 4.05: still taken from 'Slime Child' from the Green Party Election Broadcast. 1989 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

ling unemployment and preventing environmental degradation through greater collaboration between member states.

Labour's policy shift came during a period when British public opinion had become more favourable towards the European Community (Curtice, 1989). Turnout in the 1989 election nevertheless remained the lowest of any member state after a campaign in which Kinnock had focused on domestic concerns. The Labour leader stressed that voting presented an ideal opportunity to the electorate to offer their verdict on an increasingly unpopular government (Image 4.03). Kinnock's party won the election and added to growing pressure on Margaret Thatcher that led to her dramatic departure from office in late 1990. Although Labour lost the subsequent national election in 1992, the party swiftly recovered to convincingly win the 1994 EU campaign. Although Labour urged the public to 'Make Europe Work for You' (Image 4.04) it once again promoted the European election as a referendum on the Conservatives' domestic failures (Butler and Westlake, 1995). The wisdom of the strategy was reflected in polling indicating that voters were motivated by 'national' rather than 'European' considerations (McLean et al., 1996).

The Liberals, the UK's third electoral force, have traditionally positioned themselves between their two larger rivals on most major issues with the exceptions of Europe and electoral reform. The party has long campaigned to overhaul the UK's majoritarian voting system having been particularly ill-served by it. These electoral arrangements meant they and their successors were unable to secure representation in the European parliament prior to 1994. And while Liberals efforts in 1979 were understandably overshadowed by the Conservatives' recent accession to government, the party subsequently established a close and initially formidable relationship with the Social Democratic Party. Collectively known as the Alliance, their partnership won more than a sixth of the total vote in the 1984 election campaigning on the most pro-EEC platform which extended to supporting British entry into the European monetary system. Despite their resolve, the Liberal/SDP campaign was constrained by rivalries as well as a lack of financial resources (Butler and Jowett, 1985).

The Alliance was relaunched as the Liberal Democrats just prior to the 1989 European campaign but they struggled to make an impact. Although the party continued to style itself as more pro-EU than their principal opponents, the 1994 election slogan 'Unlocking Britain's Potential: Making Europe Work for Us' could have conceivably come from either major rival (Nugent, 1995). The theme created internal tensions with former leader David Steel encouraging his successor Charles Kennedy to adopt a more

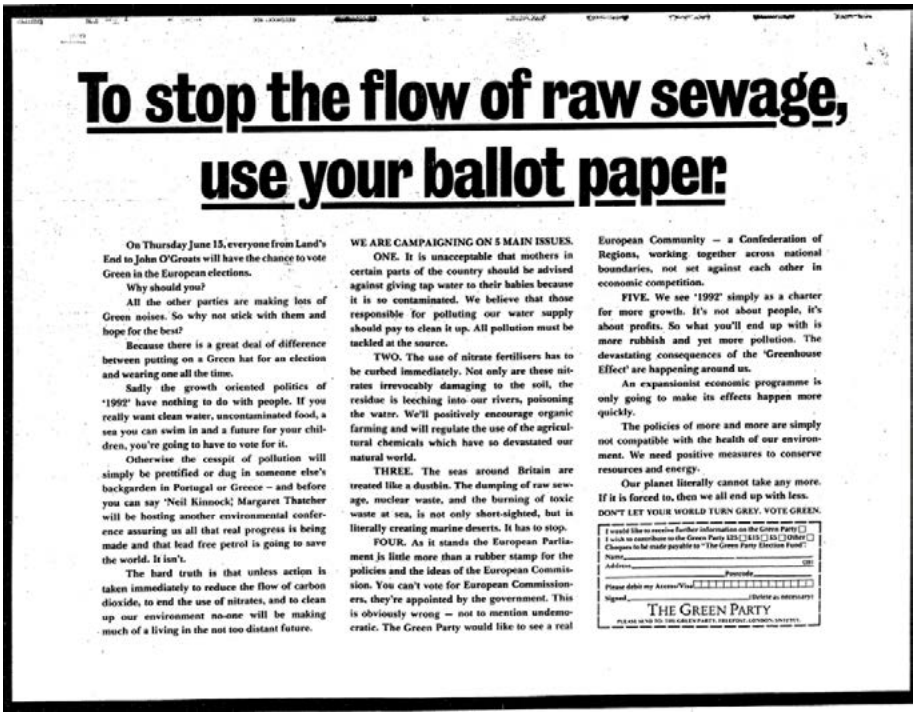
avowedly Europhile position. Kennedy and his party were nevertheless able to celebrate winning their first MEPs. Aside from the Liberal Democrats, their two larger rivals and those from Northern Ireland, the only other UK party to secure European representation were the Scottish Nationalists. During the 1975 referendum the Scottish National Party (SNP) had campaigned against membership of the EEC but radically changed their position to the extent that by the later 1980s Scotland's 'independence in Europe' became a familiar slogan and representation of how central the EU had become to their identity. And despite fluctuating domestic electoral fortunes, Winnie Ewing became the party's sole MEP in 1979 and a high-profile advocate for their cause over her twenty-year European parliamentary career (Bochel and Denver, 1985).

One of the most dramatic European-related electoral developments in British politics came with the rapid rise of the Green Party in 1989. In 1984, the Ecologists had received a thirtieth of the support that its now rebranded successors achieved in a remarkable advance that saw the Greens secure third place overall. Despite backing from a sixth of voters, the Greens failed to win any seats. But this spectacular performance underlined the extent to which less established parties could make advances through European elections (Curtice, 1989). The Green surge capitalised on a changing public mood. In a memorable Party Election Broadcast entitled 'Slime-Child', the party used several school-aged actors to illustrate the varied harms being done to the environment. The film featured children explaining the environmental threats to Britain while simultaneously being covered by various noxious looking liquids (Image 4.05). The video was applauded for having broken 'new ground in television advertising' (Travis, 1989: 5).

In press adverts, the Greens identified assorted threats to public health emanating from the use of nitrate fertilisers, nuclear waste, and the discharge of raw sewage (Image 4.06). The campaign also questioned the sincerity of rival politicians' pro-environmental credentials because as one supporter put it: 'there is a great deal of difference between putting on a Green hat for an election and wearing one all the time'. Success like this meant the party attracted greater scrutiny: their electoral surge in 1989 proved fleeting and they were once again polling in single figures by the end of the following year (Pattie et al., 1991).

The Era of Blair… and UKIP: Debate and Discord, 1999-2014

Following Labour's triumph in the 1994 European elections, the party returned to government with a landslide victory in 1997. Tony Blair's popularity was reflected in the party's 1999 EU campaign slogan



To stop the flow of raw sewage, use your ballot paper.

On Thursday June 15, everyone from Land's End to John O'Groats will have the chance to vote Green in the European elections.

Why should you?

All the other parties are making lots of Green noises. So why not stick with them and hope for the best?

Because there is a great deal of difference between putting on a Green hat for an election and wearing one all the time.

Sadly the growth oriented politics of '1992' have nothing to do with people. If you really want clean water, uncontaminated food, a sea you can swim in and a future for your children, you're going to have to vote for it.

Otherwise the cesspit of pollution will simply be prettified or dug in someone else's backgarden in Portugal or Greece – and before you can say 'Neil Kinnock,' Margaret Thatcher will be hosting another environmental conference assuring us all that real progress is being made and that lead free petrol is going to save the world. It isn't.

The hard truth is that unless action is taken immediately to reduce the flow of carbon dioxide, to end the use of nitrates, and to clean up our environment no-one will be making much of a living in the not too distant future.

WE ARE CAMPAIGNING ON 5 MAIN ISSUES.

ONE. It is unacceptable that mothers in certain parts of the country should be advised against giving tap water to their babies because it is so contaminated. We believe that those responsible for polluting our water supply should pay to clean it up. All pollution must be tackled at the source.

TWO. The use of nitrate fertilisers has to be curbed immediately. Not only are these nitrates irrevocably damaging to the soil, the residue is leeching into our rivers, poisoning the water. We'll positively encourage organic farming and will regulate the use of the agricultural chemicals which have so devastated our natural world.

THREE. The seas around Britain are treated like a dustbin. The dumping of raw sewage, nuclear waste, and the burning of toxic waste at sea, is not only short-sighted, but is literally creating marine deserts. It has to stop.

FOUR. As it stands the European Parliament is little more than a rubber stamp for the policies and the ideas of the European Commission. You can't vote for European Commissioners, they're appointed by the government. This is obviously wrong – not to mention undemocratic. The Green Party would like to see a real European Community – a Confederation of Regions, working together across national boundaries, not set against each other in economic competition.

FIVE. We see '1992' simply as a charter for more growth. It's not about people, it's about profits. So what you'll end up with is more rubbish and yet more pollution. The devastating consequences of the 'Greenhouse Effect' are happening around us.

An expansionist economic programme is only going to make its effects happen more quickly.

The policies of more and more are simply not compatible with the health of our environment. We need positive measures to conserve resources and energy.

Our planet literally cannot take any more. If it is forced to, then we all end up with less.

DON'T LET YOUR WORLD TURN GREY. VOTE GREEN.

I would like to receive further information on the Green Party ☐
I wish to contribute to the Green Party £25 ☐ £10 ☐ £5 ☐ £OTHER ☐
Cheques to be made payable to "The Green Party Election Fund".

Name_____

Address_____

_____ Postcode_____

Please debit my Access/Visa ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Signed_____ (Delete as necessary)

THE GREEN PARTY

PLEASE SEND TO: THE GREEN PARTY, FREEPOST, LONDON, SW19 7BR.

Image 4.06: Green Party press advertisement during the 1989 European Parliamentary elections. Source: *The Times*, 12 June 1989: 2.

'Leadership in Europe' and an election broadcast in which various personalities and voters applauded the Prime Minister for his work. The Labour efforts were nonetheless described as 'lacklustre', 'lacking direction', and 'pathetic' by media commentators and candidates, reflecting a sense that Labour had ceded the initiative to their increasingly Eurosceptical Conservative rivals (Butler and Westlake, 2000). By the 2004 elections Blair was less of a presence in Labour's campaign following a marked decline in his popularity in the aftermath of his controversial support for the Iraq war. The party's slogan 'Britain is working—don't let the Tories wreck it again' reflected its strategic focus on domestic issues rather than European-related policies. Labour did, however, concede the case for holding a referendum over the possible ratification of the European constitution as part of an attempt to counter the Conservatives' sceptical narrative.

Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair as Prime Minister in 2007. His time in office was soon dominated by the fallout from the global economic crisis (Hayton, 2010). Brown's government also suffered from the 'tidal wave of public fury' provoked by a major expenses scandal involving numerous British politicians that broke just prior to the 2009 European elections (Winnett and Rayner, 2009:173). Labour's strategy acknowledged the crises engulfing the country and sought to reassure the public by presenting the Prime Minister as a hard-working and energetic leader. Brown's economic expertise was reflected in a campaign that stressed better cooperation with European partners would provide greater security and help to tackle the credit crunch. But the lurid expenses scandal dominated the news agenda and overshadowed an election in which disillusioned citizens either didn't vote or turned to previously marginal electoral alternatives (Mathers, 2010). Labour, the incumbent government, came third in a UK wide poll for the first time in over ninety years, portending their General Election defeat the following year.

Ed Miliband succeeded Gordon Brown as Labour leader and adopted a similar, personalised approach to the 2014 European campaign. Miliband's efforts were undermined by minor gaffes, including a notable image of him eating a bacon sandwich, which would gain notoriety when it was recycled to ridicule him in the following year's national elections (Jones, 2015). In anticipation of the latter campaign, the Conservatives had already committed themselves to holding an 'in/out' referendum should they be re-elected to govern. Labour stopped short of making the same pledge but promised that no additional transfer of power to Brussels would happen without a plebiscite. Although the party made some electoral progress in 2014 and outperformed the Conservatives, the success of UKIP underlined the growing potency of Euroscepticism. Some Labour figures began to argue the case for matching the Prime Minister David Cameron's pledge to hold a referendum on EU membership to diffuse the issue (Grice, 2014).

In opposing the Blair and Brown governments, the Conservatives made questioning further European integration a policy priority. Leader

Image 4.07: Conservative Party poster 'There is a Labour Policy on a European Referendum', 2004 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: Conservative Party Trust.

Image 4.08: Conservative Party advert 'An In-Out Referendum on Europe'. 2014 European Parliamentary Election. Source: European Election Monitoring Center

William Hague styled himself as a 'Euro-realist' rather than 'sceptic' when opposing the UK joining the single currency while supporting continuing EU membership. Adopting a 'docudrama'-style approach, a 1999 Conservative European election broadcast featured actors playing a couple called Debbie and Chris discussing the implications of joining the Euro in their bedroom (Butler and Westlake, 2005). The film acknowledged Blair's popularity, with the woman gently mocking her partner for previously supporting 'your mate, Tony' before they both agree that the single currency was a bad idea. While Hague's opposition to the Euro upset some pro-EU Conservatives, the stance defined his leadership and appeared to resonate with voters, if judged by the party's modest recovery and success in coming first in the 1999 European elections. The campaign was also notable for the way consideration of actual EU policies, rather than just domestic issues, began to inform substantive electoral debate.

By the time of the 2004 campaign, the Conservatives had lost another General Election but had become even more emboldened in their Euroscepticism under new leader Michael Howard. The party mocked the Labour government's apparent equivocation on allowing a referendum on the forthcoming European constitution (Lusoli and Ward, 2005). They did so mindful of declining public trust in the Prime Minister and featured Blair's image in adverts that urged voters 'Don't get mad, get even' (Image 4.07). During the campaign, Howard celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Margaret Thatcher becoming Prime Minister and praised her tenacity in securing a British rebate from the EEC while restating his support for her 'vision for Britain' as a sovereign country distinct from the UK's EU partners. The Tory leader committed his party to withdrawing from the Common Fisheries Policy and, more generally, the embrace of a 'multi-track' approach by which member states could decide whether and how to further integrate themselves with others. Although Howard failed to win the national election the following year, 2004 saw the party once again top the poll having promoted an avowedly sceptical attitude towards the EU.

Howard's successor David Cameron became leader in 2005 after having pledged to withdraw Conservative MEPs from the major centre-right parliamentary grouping, the European Peoples Party. Cameron had made this specific promise to underline his sceptical credentials and reassure colleagues who were increasingly vocal in their criticisms of what they perceived to be Brussels' erosion of British sovereignty. 2009 saw the party slightly increase its vote in European elections before Cameron became the first Conservative since John Major to become Prime Minister the following year. During his premiership, Cameron continued to respond to the increasing potency of Euroscepticism, most notably when he made his fateful pledge to hold a plebiscite on continuing British membership of the EU. Party advertising in the European elections of 2014 stated this 'in/out referendum' would be held by 2017 at the latest (Image 4.08). An accompanying campaign broadcast made the more generic promise that the Conservatives would 'make Europe work for Britain'.

Image 4.09: UKIP leaflet, 'Say No to the EU and Mass Immigration' during the European Parliamentary Elections 2009. Source: Bodleian Archives.

Ominously for Cameron, who was facing re-election the following year, he and his party dropped to third place. Even the Conservative promise of a UK referendum on EU membership failed to stem the defection of many sceptical voters to the UKIP cause (Kellner, 2014).

Once dismissed as 'cranks and gadflies' by David Cameron, UKIP would go on to fundamentally reshape British politics and thereby underline the significance of the EU Parliament and its elections as platforms from which to campaign. Ironically, as has already been noted, the very same European institutions that gave the party a voice were the very same ones they believed the UK must escape if the country was to maintain itself as a politically and economically independent free trading nation. For UKIP the EU represented an existential threat to the 'British way of life' (Light and Young, 2009). In 1999 three MEPs including Nigel Farage were returned for the first time, the party having benefitted from the adoption of a more proportional regional list system of voting. 2004 saw support for UKIP increase with former Westminster politician turned television presenter Robert Kilroy-Silk among those who secured parliamentary seats (Happold, 2004). In a campaign video, Kilroy-Silk blamed 'politicians in London' for opening 'our doors to a potential 73 million migrants from Eastern Europe, *that's 73 million*', a move he claimed had been endorsed by every British MEP save his UKIP colleagues.

Kilroy-Silk had parted company with UKIP long before the 2009 European elections, but this failed to undermine support for the now formidable Eurosceptic force. Nigel Farage promoted his party's strong anti-immigration stance, even using wartime imagery of Winston Churchill to reinforce this message (Image 4.09). UKIP also began advocating libertarian positions on taxation and identity cards that were not primarily about the EU (Whittaker and Lynch, 2011). Farage also launched trenchant attacks on a British political establishment he accused of being out of touch as well as corrupt following the hugely damaging Westminster expenses scandal in 2009. It proved the ideal springboard for the party to claim second place in that year's EP poll, but this impressive result was not replicated in the 2010 General Election.

Nigel Farage generated a large amount of media interest prior to and during a 2014 European campaign that culminated with both major parties being displaced by another, UKIP, in a nationwide election for the first time ever. Farage's campaign criticised immigration policy in a poster showing an escalator embedded in Dover's iconic white cliffs, captioned 'No Border, No Control' The EU has opened our borders to 4,000 people per week'

Image 4.10: UKIP webcard 'No Border. No Control'. European Parliamentary elections 2014. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

(Image 4.10). Significantly the advert also incorporated the slogan 'Take Back Control of Our Country', that would become a central catchphrase of the debate in the EU referendum two years later. In this, UKIP provided the messaging that would be successfully appropriated by Boris Johnson to help deliver victory for Leave campaigners. The party's first place in the 2014 European elections was a historic feat and underlined the extent to which British politics was now in flux. Despite Foreign Secretary Hague's claims that the victory reflected a 'protest vote', it alarmed the major parties ahead of the 2015 General Election. UKIP won an eighth of that vote having drawn support from voters impressed by its scepticism and who wanted to upend a status quo at Westminster that now included the Liberal Democrats who were junior partners in government (Evans and Mellon, 2016).

Although UKIP and Liberal Democrat policies on Europe were diametrically opposed, they shared a commitment to electoral reform. Both parties were also the main beneficiaries of the 1999 change to the electoral system with the LibDems substantially increasing their number of MEPs despite a reduced vote share. The party maintained third place in 2004 but ceded this to UKIP in 2009 before experiencing a rapid decline in fortunes following their leader Nick Clegg's decision to join the Cameron government as Deputy Prime Minister. Several other colleagues took ministerial portfolios as part of the 2010 deal to form the Coalition. This experience proved costly from an electoral perspective with the LibDems losing all but one of their eleven MEPs in 2014. The spectacular collapse of the party's support was linked to their endorsement of unpopular government policies, some of which contradicted their own positions. The crisis that ensued after their taking office meant the LibDems were less well placed to defend and promote the EU in this critical period.

The misfortunes of the Liberal Democrats meant the news attention they attracted was increasingly unfavourable. The party also had to compete with rivals, including the insurgent UKIP, to influence the media agenda. The LibDems also faced growing criticism and a challenge for their votes from other pro-EU parties who had similarly benefitted from the electoral system introduced for the 1999 campaign. The European sympathies of the SNP and Greens proved no barrier to their winning MEPs and their fortunes further improved following the implementation of the Blair government's devolution programme around the turn of the millennium. Both parties first formed a working arrangement in 2007 and would subsequently go on to dominate Scottish Parliamentary business as their vote in the Holyrood elections increased. Their partnership endured and was strengthened due to their shared commitment to Scotland not only leaving the UK but remaining part of the EU.

While pro-European politicians periodically worked together in the pursuit of common goals, anti-EU Conservatives tended to be more wary of collaborating with UKIP despite their shared outlook and objectives. These politicians regarded themselves as mainstream and therefore took great care to distance themselves from the third and most extreme Eurosceptic party to gain MEPs. The British National Party (BNP) had emerged as the UK's most successful far right electoral force having won representation at local government level from the early 1990s

onwards. The party had always been fiercely anti-EU and the European elections provided an ideal opportunity to campaign against Brussels and multiculturalism, amongst other things. In 2009, leader Nick Griffin became one of the BNP's two MEPs, although the party's success proved fleeting, imploding amid internal recriminations well before the 2014 campaign in which it lost both seats (Hayton, 2010).

Conclusion

The European parliamentary elections were initially not taken seriously by British politicians, journalists and, critically, the electorate at large. Things began to change as the European Economic Community transitioned to become a broader and deeper partnership. This process had required closer co-operation between a growing number of members from across the continent who were prepared to accept more standardised trading arrangements. The European Union that emerged from this provided economic benefits for participating states as well as a political dilemma for some. Nowhere was the resentment towards the so-called 'Brussels bureaucrats' more pronounced than in the UK. Somewhat paradoxically, the European parliament became the ideal platform for those most hostile towards the EU and its perceived threat to British sovereignty. Foremost among these critics was the United Kingdom Independence Party. UKIP didn't exist until 1993 but as its vote grew in successive EP elections so did its parliamentary representation. Although his party never replicated this success at Westminster, leader Nigel Farage became widely regarded as the most influential British politician to have never been elected to the House of Commons.

The influence of Farage and UKIP helped ensure that EP elections were increasingly concerned with European rather than largely domestic affairs. The ensuing debate was, however, increasingly framed in ways that forced Europhiles, particularly in the governing Conservative and Labour parties on to the defensive over the possibility of the UK's further integration within Europe. Leading politicians who were sympathetic towards the EU oversaw campaigns that qualified their support in a wider political context where substantial numbers of voters began to embrace the sceptical cause regardless of how they voted. Labour reacted by promising, if elected, to hold a plebiscite before endorsing further British integration within the EU; the Conservative response took this to another, fateful level when their leader and Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to call a referendum on the more fundamental question of whether the UK should remain members. Cameron was obliged to deliver on his commitment when he won the UK's General Election in 2015. The vote signalled the end of the Coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, with the former winning enough parliamentary seats to enable them to govern alone. By contrast, the election proved disastrous for the Liberal Democrats who were reduced to a rump. In a portent of what was to come, the party lost all but one of its MEPs in the preceding year's EP elections. Their demise proved another significant blow to the pro-EU cause within Britain from which it was unable to sufficiently recover in time for the fateful 2016 vote for Brexit.

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Chapter 5: Greece

Stamatis Poulakidakos

Introduction

Greece was accepted as the tenth member of the European Union (then the European Economic Community-EEC) in 1979 and joined officially on 1 January 1981. Since then, Greece has become a member of the Eurozone and has ratified the Lisbon Treaty. It has striven to be included in the European 'family' from as early as 1961. The country's cultural and geopolitical position at the crossroads between East and West, and currently at the EU's South-Eastern border, has contributed to the formation of a rather peculiar sense of 'belonging to the West', which is injected with Eastern (non-European) cultural attributes (Diamandouros, 1994; Demertzis, 1997; Sarikakis, 2010). In political terms, EU membership, especially early on, served to stabilise the political situation after two military coups (1940 and 1967) and a civil war in the post-war period, between the Left and the Right. It also served—in geopolitical terms—to strengthen Greece's affiliation to the Western Europe (as opposed to the former Eastern Bloc) (Sarikakis, 2010: 136-137), within the cold-war context.

The history of European elections (from now on EP elections) in Greece does not seem to differ significantly from similar domestication stories of other countries. Throughout the years, EP elections in Greece have confirmed their character as second order elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1997; Sarikakis, 2010), being diachronically in the shadow of national elections. This condition is evident in three major aspects of the EP elections. Firstly, the themes that have been dominating the public (political and journalistic) discourse over the years in the pre-electoral periods of the EP elections are almost identical to the themes that dominate the public discussion during national elections. Secondly, most political parties—especially of the governing and major opposition parties—strive either to praise their governmental achievements (the former), or to undermine the governing party (the latter). Thirdly, in a strategic rationale that combines party and personal political strategy, the EP elections act rather frequently as a steppingstone for a more 'prestigious' national political career. It is a common practice for high-ranked politicians that initially get elected as MEPs, to be replaced by other, less well-known, party members, to run as candidates in forthcoming national elections. In the Greek public sphere, the discussion surrounding the results of the EP elections is being conducted in a nation-centric win-loss rationale (i.e., which party won or lost the elections), and not in a 'Europeanised' approach (i.e., which political alliance won or lost seats in the European Parliament). Moreover, Greek MEPs in their public announcements to the press tend to affiliate themselves more closely with their national party than with their EP Party Group (Sarikakis, 2010:137). In this rationale, the formation of an EU-centric 'public sphere' has never been actually achieved in Greece, and EU-related issues have been predominantly discussed rather superficially and in a 'fragmented' and nation-centric rationale (Poulakidakos and Frangonikolopoulos, 2019).

The 1980s: the PASOK era

The first elections that Greece participated in as a full member of the European Economic Community (EEC) took place on October 18, 1981. The high turnout (almost 78.5%) in these first EP elections was the result of the fact that the European elections were taking place concurrently with the national elections. The focal points of each election reflected the significant disagreements between the incumbent right-wing party of New Democracy (led by Konstantinos Karamanlis) and the insurgent socio-democratic party of PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Party, led by Andreas Papandreou) in a wide range of domestic (e.g., economy, civic rights) and foreign (participation in NATO, the Greco-Turkish relations) issues (Clogg, 1978). Self-proclaimed as a socialist party, PASOK managed to gain majority in both elections (with a clear majority especially in national elections), marking a significant milestone in the Greek Third Republic (also called Metapolitefsi which had never seen a socio-democratic party in power before). In addition, this election initiated an almost decade-long prevalence of (quasi)leftist political parties (PASOK, Greek Communist Party-KKE and other minor left-wing parties). Among others, as regards the participation of Greece in the EEC, PASOK initially rejected Karamanlis' total commitment to a full Greek membership in the EEC, arguing instead for a loose association agreement. Having won both elections, Papandreou finally opted for the continuation of the full membership of Greece in the EEC.

The 1984 EP elections were the first ones with PASOK in power, and the second consecutive European election won by the governing party. In Greece, the 1984 EP elections were seen as a major test of the socialist government's popularity and

offered a chance to re-debate Greece's recent accession to the EEC (Lodge, 1984:44). The strategy of the main opposition party (New Democracy) was aimed at revealing the extent to which PASOK had lost the confidence of voters. Under these circumstances the European elections could be compared to a full-blown general election campaign. In a heavily polarised contest for votes (stimulated by the prospect of a general election in October 1985), the campaign in Greece gave rise to a level of verbal and physical violence unprecedented even in national general elections (Jowett, 1985:109). New Democracy during its campaign used to blame PASOK for corruption and for giving away the funding from the EEC in non-transparent ways (see Image 5.01). In the 1984 EP election, the progressive political forces of 1981 were replaced by the National Political Union (Ethniki Politiki Enosi-EPEN), a far-right and fiercely anti-communist party, nominally led by the then imprisoned former colonel and dictator George Papadopoulos. The party secured a single European Parliament seat in 1984 and participated in several national elections in the 1980s and 1990s, receiving between 0.1% and 0.6% and no seats in the Greek parliament. EPEN's youth group became a breeding ground for future far right leaders, including Golden Dawn leader Nikos Michaloliakos and the leader of the Hellenic Front (Elliniko Metopo), Makis Vorides (Ellinas, 2014:150). Apart from that, the 1984 elections marked the first attempts to form 'Green' parties, though no such candidacy ultimately stood for election (Lodge, 1984:38).[1]

The 1989 EP elections were once again held at the same time as first-order national elections (Schmitt, 1990:174). The year 1989 is another important milestone in Greek political history, as it has been marked by a bank/financial scandal, the so-called 'Koskotas scandal', with the (never judicially proven) participation of the then prime minister Andreas Papandreou (PASOK had in the meantime won the 1985 national elections as well), who was accused of moral turpitude and passive bribery (Dobratz and Whitfield, 1992). The allegations of possible bribery by Papandreou became known as the 'Pampers case', after they were based on rumors that Koskotas sent money to government officials and Papandreou himself in diaper boxes. This specific period is known ever since as 'the dirty '89'. Within this political context, it was anticipated that the campaign would be dominated by the scandals that had shaken the country for some time and the increasing

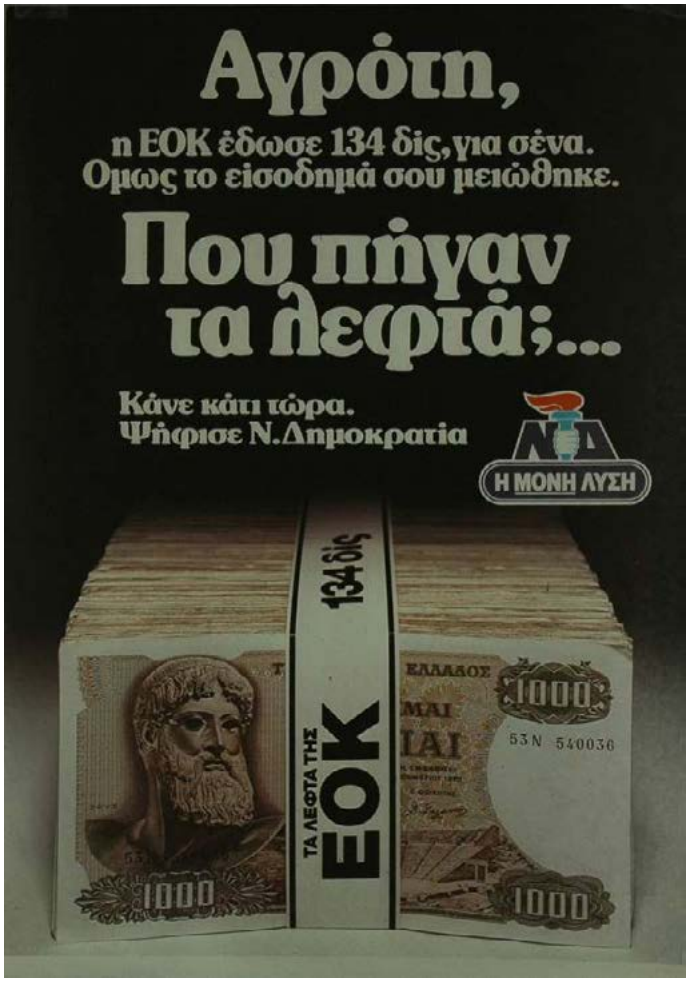

Image 5.01: New Democracy poster from the 1984 elections: 'Farmer, the EU has given 134 billion drachmas for you. Yet your income has been cut. Where did the money go?... Do something now. Vote for New Democracy'. 1984 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

1 All party names that have competed in the EP elections in Greece over the years, as well as all the information regarding the vote share, the voters' participation and the seats' dissemination, have been crosschecked with the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (https://ekloges.ypes.gr/).

Image 5.02: Poster of PASOK Youth (1989 elections) titled as: 'Young people ahead in Europe 1992'. 1989 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European elections Monitoring Center.

Image 5.03: Poster of the Alternative Ecologists (1989 elections) which depicts a leaf-shaped map of Europe, captioned as: Ecology: 'the alternative solution' 1989 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

indications that part of the government and the party elite of the ruling PASOK party, including prime minister Papandreou, were mixed up in these scandals (Niedermayer, 1991:7). This issue permeated the whole pre-electoral period, formulating an introverted and polarised political scene. The polarised context created due to the Koskotas scandal ended up with a record turn-out of 80% (Guyomarch, 1995). In addition, in terms of salience in the public sphere, there were two additional issues (the American bases and the Greek-Turkish differences)[2] that reached a moderate level of salience in media discourse during the pre-electoral period (Kuechler, 1991:90). Also, the ruling party of PASOK sought to disorientate the public dialogue by stressing out the then upcoming milestone of the Maastricht treaty in 1992 (Image 5.02). A last noteworthy parameter of the 1989 elections is the participation, for the first time in Greece, of ecological parties[3] (see for example Image 5.03). This dispersion proved to be their Achille's heel, since none of them made it to the European Parliament (Niedermayer, 1991).

All in all, the 1980s European political landscape was dominated by the socialist party of PASOK and its leader Andreas Papandreou. The EP elections took place within a divided political context marked by intense political debate, without actual reflection on issues related to the contemporaneous present and future of the EU.

Into the 1990s and Beyond: The Macedonian and other issues

The 1994 EP elections took place on June 12, 1994, approximately nine months after the general elections

2 One of the most well-known slogans of PASOK in the early 80's was "EEC and NATO- syndicate of war". In this rationale, PASOK initially rejected the presence of American military bases on Greek soil, and thus a debate in the Greek political scene was taking place on whether the Greek government should renew the agreement with the US on the bases or not (see for example, Danopoulos, 1988). Greece and Turkey have a rivalry with a history of events that have been used to justify/consolidate their nationalisms. The Greek-Turkish differences are related to diachronic disputes between Greece and Turkey over issues like whether the Greek islands are allowed an exclusive economic zone, the basis of claiming rights over the sea, whether Greece can expand its eastern sea borders to 12 miles according to the Law of the Sea convention, and various other diplomatic tensions (see for example Schmitt, 1996).

3 Namely Alternative Ecologists, Greek Democratic Ecological Movement, Ecological Movement- Political Renaissance.

Image 5:04 Poster of PASOK for the 1994 European Elections, reading: (middle text) 'Strong PASOK, Strong Greece in Europe'. (bottom text) 'For the people of Greece. For a people's Europe'. 1994 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 5.05: Poster of the Democratic Social Movement reading: [grey text] In 1990-1999, they took a lot away from us... [red text] 'That's enough, let's turn the page!' The red text against the yellow background translates to: 'Head up high'. 1999 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

of October 1993. In these elections, the turnout fell from 80% to 71.9% (Guyomarch, 1995:175). It seems probable that some of the turnout decline reflected a degree of 'voter fatigue' after the holding of national elections nine months beforehand (Guyomarch, 1995:177). Another possible cause contributing to this decline is the fact that the European Union had become somewhat less popular because of the 'Macedonian issue' (Irwin, 1995:187) -regarding the name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.[4] The role that the Macedonian issue had played in both national and EP elections of 1993-1994 (Irwin, 1995:194), underlines, once again, the central role of a national issue in the influencing of voting behaviour in the European elections. In addition, these elections marked the first implementation of the 3% threshold to enter the EU Parliament, due to a recent law enacted by the previous government of New Democracy. The election results showed a decline in the percentages of both major parties (PASOK and New Democracy), in favour of communists and their allies that enhanced their position on the left side of the ideological/political spectrum. At the same time, the Political Spring nationalists pulled towards the (far) right a significant number of votes at the expense of both PASOK and New Democracy conservatives (Smith, 1994; Guyomarch, 1995; Bardi, 1996). Still, the socialists and conservatives had by far the largest shares of the votes and the government did not feel any pressure to alter its orientation towards the Union (Pinder, 1994:507). Also notable is the fact that the 1994 EP elections mark the first electoral competition for the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn. To the extent that the public discussion in the pre-electoral period focused on European issues (Image 5.04), all parties stressed the importance of the financial assistance for infrastructure projects that would be received in the coming years (Irwin, 1995:187).

The 1999 EP elections served as a 'warm-up' for the forthcoming national elections that would be

4 Another nationalist issue concerning the name of the then newly established country of Macedonia, after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. The newly formed state named officially Republic of Macedonia at the northern border of Greece, abutting the Greek prefecture of Macedonia, caused massive protests instigated by conservative political parties and the Greek Orthodox church, whose argument is (up to nowadays) that there is only one Macedonia, and it is Greek. This issue was allegedly settled by the Prespes Treaty signed in 2018, but remains essentially unresolved, since many parameters of the treaty have not been ratified by the Greek parliament yet (see for example Bechev, 2023).

Image 5.06: Poster of the Communist Party of Greece depicting a broken chain with a weight ball affixed to it. The accompanying text reads: 'Without surrendering to the euro, better!'. 2004 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

held in 2000 (Guyomarch, 2000), and, once again, the national issues were at the forefront of the public debates. Of major importance was the 'Macedonian' issue and the involvement of Greece to the NATO bombings against former Yugoslavia, and especially Serbia, which mobilised both left- and right-wing citizens and organisations since leftists were demonstrating for peace and right-wing people would not approve the bombing of another Christian Orthodox country. These bidirectional pressures formed a negative context for the government of PASOK. The almost 'game-changer' news for the government would come from Brussels, since the allegedly successful course of the country towards entering the European Monetary Union managed to partially reverse the negative climate. Though hoping for a wide victory as a prelude for a win in the upcoming national elections in 2000, the major opposition at that time, New Democracy, won the elections with a short margin of 3%. More generally, the 1999 EP elections in Greece belonged to those which no party gained or lost more than two seats (Guyomarch, 2000:164), compared to the 1994 elections. Specifically, the new-left DKK (Democratic Social Movement-Image 5.05) gained two seats and the Communist KKE one. Conversely, the socialist PASOK shed one seat and the right-wing Political Spring party two seats (Teasdale, 1999:449).

The 2004 EP elections in Greece were a 'non-event', even though Greece had recently become member of the Eurozone. The recently elected conservative government of New Democracy wanted a 'reaffirmation' of the popular verdict, while the socialist opposition party (PASOK), knowing that three months is a very short time in which to change the political climate, wanted to hold onto their share of the vote at the national elections. The three small parties (Communist Party-KKE, Coalition of the Left, Movements and Ecology-SYN, and the far-right People's Orthodox Party-LAOS) tried to capitalise on the greater electoral volatility at EP elections. However, apart from the Greek Communist Party which campaigned against EU membership and the EU Constitution (Image 5.06), all the parties focused on domestic political issues (Kavakas, 2005).

The timing of the 2004 EP elections was also 'problematic', resulting in a (then) record-low turnout. This was not unique to Greece; only five of the 15 established EU member states (Belgium, Italy, Greece, Spain, and Luxembourg) managed to mobilise more than half of their electorate (Adshead and Hill, 2005: 538). This steep decline in voter participation can be attributed to at least three different factors. Firstly, national elections had taken place only three months earlier, in March, resulting in victory for the conservative New Democracy. The temporal

proximity of the conservative victory eliminated any doubt that New Democracy would be the leading party at these European elections (Adshead and Hill, 2005). In addition, the political parties had exhausted most of their budgets in the recent national elections and were unwilling to invest effort and funds in the EP elections (Kavakas, 2005: 131). Secondly, the public were unwilling to remain in the cities to vote during hot summertime weekends, particularly after people had already voted three months ago. Finally, on the Saturday evening before the Sunday elections, Greece's national football team won the opening Euro 2004 championship game against the host Portugal team. Saturday night and most of Sunday was given over to celebration. Even when the results were presented on Sunday evening on television, the reports from Portugal and the interviews with football players and commentators outnumbered the reports and interviews of politicians and election analysts. Politicians themselves were keener to discuss football than the results of the EP elections (Kavakas, 2005: 132).

The main issues that dominated the agenda in the 2004 EP election campaign were the performance of the new conservative government during the three months since its election; the new elements in the 'actual' economic situation in Greece revealed by the new government[5]; the referendum in Cyprus (PASOK and SYN appear to have lost votes due to their support of the Annan plan)[6]; and preparations for the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens. During the 2004 EP election campaign, New Democracy declared its full support for the EU Constitution and federal solutions to European integration; however, its message followed the domestic debate. In PASOK's campaign the European element was always there but in the background. It was something given, not disputed (Image 5.07). The Communist Party was perhaps the only party that focused exclusively on Europe. Its policies and priorities make it the most important anti-European political force. Perhaps this explains the doubling of its share of the vote compared to its share in the March national elections. With its main message focused on domestic issues, the Coalition of the Left (SYN) tried to persuade the public that 'There is another way, take it to the left!' Their only reference to Europe during the campaign had been the affirmation of its support for the constitution but with certain qualifications to prevent Europe becoming a fortress, and to ensure that the EU's so-called 'fight against terrorism' would not compromise or eliminate citizens' rights and liberties. Perhaps the biggest surprise of the elections was the success of a new far-right party, LAOS (People's Orthodox Rally). This populist party promoted religious orthodoxy and xenophobic rhetoric, following a campaign that was centred around its leader, George Karatzaferis, under the message 'Vote YES for him who knows how to say NO.' It won one seat (Adshead and Hill, 2005:540; Kavakas, 2005:135).

Compared to the 1999 elections, Greece showed a decrease in visibility of EU issues in the media (de Vreese et al., 2006:489) and a tendency towards rather negative news (de Vreese et al., 2006:493). Public TV and a few radio stations dedicated limited time to discussing the relevance of the European Parliament and its powers in EU decision-making. Despite several radio and television programmes sponsored by the European Parliament seeking to disseminate the message that Greek MEPs would participate in an institution that had increasing power and significance for making decisions that would impact on the daily lives of citizens in Europe, it seems that the message failed to get across. Such TV programmes did not manage to attract significant numbers of viewers and radio programmes failed to initiate a genuine European debate (Kavakas, 2005:134).

In 2009, turnout fell to 52.6% from 63.6% in 2004, the lowest turnout since the re-establishment of Metapolitefsi in 1974. For PASOK, the election offered a testing ground for its policies and strategy in anticipation of a snap parliamentary election (that eventually took place in early October 2009), whereas ND hoped to minimise its losses (Gemenis, 2010). As predicted by the opinion polls, the election was won by PASOK. New Democracy designed an electoral campaign based on the second-order national election model. For the first few weeks of the campaign, ND focused almost exclusively on national issues. The early television adverts for ND simply accused PASOK of overestimating the implications of the recession without making any reference whatsoever to Europe (Gemenis, 2010:356). This trend was to be partially reversed during the final weeks, however. Towards the end of the pre-electoral period, ND's campaign focused on a pro-EU political approach, again with strong national references (Image 5.08). The party related the country's entry to the EU to its past leadership pointing out

5 In 2004 the newly elected government of New Democracy accused the former PASOK administration of having presented intentionally "sugarcoated" evidence on the status of the Greek economy, especially in terms of public deficit.

6 Till now the Annan plan, designed under the auspices of the UN is the only plan that has been officially proposed for re-unification of Cyprus. The plan was proposed through a referendum to Turkish-Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots. The plan was supported by the Turkish Cypriots (65%), but not by the Greek Cypriots (24%). After this result the Annan plan was rejected and never put into practice (see for example Tannam, 2016).

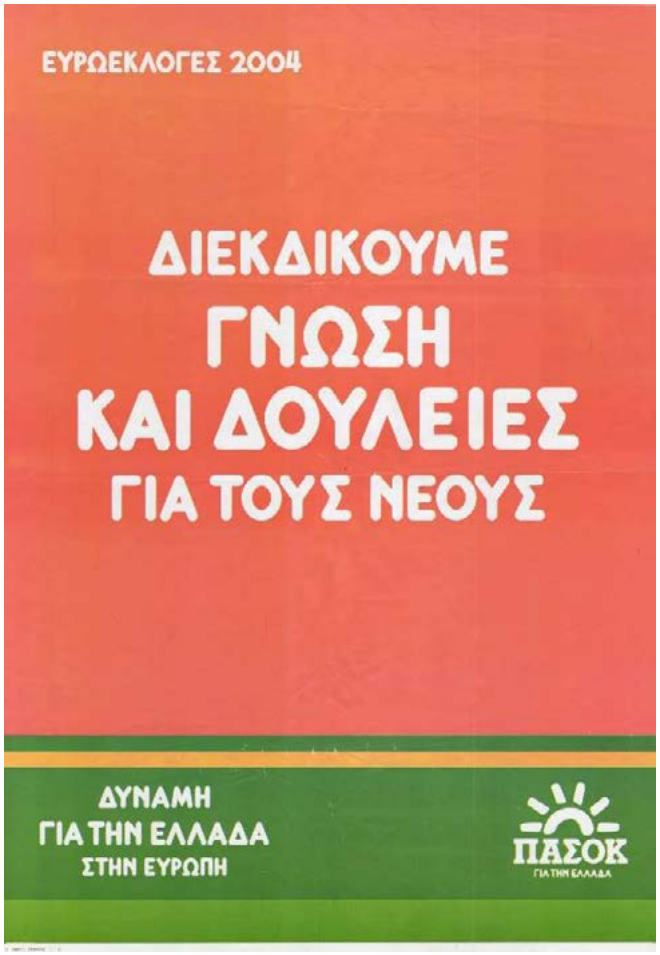

Image 5.07: Poster of PASOK. 'We claim knowledge and employment for young people'. The bottom left text translates to: 'Strength for Greece in Europe'. 2004 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 5.08: Poster of New Democracy, reading: 'New Democracy, the true European choice. The bottom text translates to: 'With you as an ally. New Democracy'. 2009 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

the pioneering decision to prepare the country for a schema of governance that has attained much political significance in Europe and the world. The ND's campaign was expressed in the slogan: 'we decide for MORE Europe'. Although the campaign had a European focus, this was mostly operationalised through its links to issues of national importance, such as the question of Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, economic growth, 'illegal' immigration, and structural funds (Sarikakis, 2010:139).

PASOK also presented a pro-European campaign blended with references to national issues, in particular those prioritised by the EP: unemployment, climate change, Europe's place in the world and international affairs, immigration, security, agriculture, and the Lisbon Treaty (Sarikakis, 2010:139). PASOK began its campaign by launching its 'Europeanisation' manifesto: for each policy area, the impact of European integration was explicitly acknowledged, emphasising, therefore, the importance of the election which was fought under the slogan 'We vote for Europe—We decide about Greece'. (Gemenis, 2010356). The tone of the campaign was subtly critical of the EU, which was characterised as a polity in crisis (economic, political), with an emphasis on a vision for a future EU characterised by social solidarity, social welfare, peace, employment, and cooperation (Sarikakis, 2010:139).

Of the remaining parties, SYRIZA (Coalition of Radical Left, the new form of SYN) (Gemenis, 2010), Ecologists Greens (OP), KKE and LAOS were all critical of Europe in various degrees and ways. SYRIZA spoke of ecumenical concerns of safety, employment and climate change as those uniting European peoples and the rest of the world: '(for a) social, ecological, and feminist Europe. Europe of solidarity, culture, Democracy and peace. Europe of Socialism'. The campaign dictated the need for social and economic change (e.g., demilitarisation of the EU, recognition of the state of Palestine, solidarity against undocumented immigrants and social unity across Europe) (Sarikakis, 2010). The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) followed its diachronic strategy of opposition to the EU, hoping that it could increase its vote share by attracting the protest vote of those who were most affected by the recession. KKE considers the EU as the bastion of a capitalist assault upon workers' rights. The far-right LAOS managed to increase its vote share by attracting Eurosceptic and more conservative voters of ND (Gemenis, 2010), promoting a highly polarised nationalist agenda, and presenting the EU as undermining national interests, with Greece depicted as a country under siege (Image 5.09). The OP's agenda was focused on the issue of climate change as one that concerns all Europeans, calling for a new European constitution (Sarikakis, 2010:140). One more notable parameter is the re-appearance of the neo-Nazi party of Golden Dawn (GD- Chrisi Avgi), although it didn't manage to gain any seats (Sarikakis, 2010:141).

The Crisis and Aftermath

The severe Greek crisis, starting from 2009, began as a financial crisis, which progressed to an economic, then a political, and, eventually, a social and cultural crisis. In late 2009, Greece's debt was labelled as 'unsustainable' and the Greek government resorted to a massive bailout from its Eurozone partners along with the IMF, in exchange for austerity policies and structural reforms (Poulakidakos, 2014; Poulakidakos and Frangonikolopoulos, 2019) that will continue to regulate Greece's financial and social life in the years to come. The economic crisis and its repercussions brought about a significant transformation in the Greek political sphere. Greek voters elected 21 new members, from seven Greek parties but not even one of the previous MEPs was re-elected (Fanourgiakis and Kanoupakis, 2016:650). The rise of the extreme right party of Golden Dawn (it elected three MEP's, with a vote share of almost 10%) was the most alarming sign of these elections (Fanourgiakis and Kanoupakis, 2016: 646), placing the neo-Nazi party, for first time, at the centre of Greek politics. Until the 2014 elections, GD stayed on the margins of parliamentary politics, never having managed to gain more than 1% of the vote (Ellinas, 2014:152). The two main political parties, New Democracy (conservative) and PASOK (social democratic) both suffered significant losses and new political powers emerged. In this new environment, SYRIZA dramatically increased its support: it won 4.6% in the 2009 general elections but gained 26.6% in the 2014 European elections (in January 2015, SYRIZA won the general elections as well).

The ongoing economic crisis profoundly influenced the 2014 campaign in Greece, since the vast majority of political messages concentrated on the crisis and related austerity measures, connecting the domestic situation in Greece mostly in a secondary level to its future in the EU. In both videos and posters, the narratives dealt with the crisis and the country's future, having a mainly domestic character (Novelli et al., 2017). Two dominant (and opposing) narratives were evident in the political advertisement strategies. First, New Democracy and PASOK (the latter represented through the 'Olive, Democratic Coalition') sought to emphasise positives for Greece's economy and society in the EU. This positivity was more than evident in the main slogan of ND- 'Steady steps ahead' (Image 5.10). The positive stance of these two parties was influenced by their pro-European political ideology, as well as the fact that

they were members of the incumbent governmental coalition at the time of the 2014 elections (Novelli et al., 2017).

The alternative approach employed predominantly negative representations of the EU. This approach was taken by parties such as SYRIZA (Coalition of Radical Left), KKE (Communist Party), ADARSYA (Anti-Capitalist Left Coalition for Overthrow), DIMAR (Democratic Left)—covering the centre-left/left political spectrum—and AN. ELL. (Independent Greeks) and Golden Dawn covering the far-right spectrum. The common denominator in the message of these parties was an emphasis on the problems that Greek society faced due to the implementation of severe austerity measures. It was either connected to an underlying pro-European stance (in the cases of SYRIZA, DIMAR, AN. ELL.) or an anti- European stance (KKE, ADARSYA-Image 5.11, GD) (Novelli et al., 2017). It is worth noting that the financial crisis and the subsequent austerity policies were the source of most of these negative attacks. An exception was 'To Potami' (The River), a newly established and self-proclaimed liberal party, which had a clear pro-EU attitude and a rather neutral stance towards its regional political adversaries.

Thus, the pre-electoral material/period of the 2014 EP elections reflects the intersecting divides that had already been formed (since mid-2010) in the Greek public sphere due to the financial crisis: pro-austerity vs. anti-austerity and pro-EU vs. anti-EU, signifying the existence of a rather intense domestic political 'battle'. Within this political communication environment, Greek voters preferred the anti-austerity, pro-European political discourse in the 2014 elections (and in the subsequent national elections in 2015), mainly represented by SYRIZA, followed by AN. ELL. (Fanourgiakis and Kanoupakis, 2016). Due to their associations with the already implemented austerity policies, ND and PASOK lost heavily (e.g. PASOK, having won the 2009 national elections with 44%, collapsed to 8% in the 2014 EP elections). The old bi-partisanism was replaced by a new one in the form of SYRIZA and New Democracy (Gerodimos, 2014).

The prevalent discourse of the 2019 EP elections has both similarities and differences to the 2014 elections. In 2014, the ongoing economic crisis had profoundly influenced the campaign in Greece. The vast majority of political messages focused on the crisis and the related austerity measures, heavily criticising the asphyxiation of the Greek economy and society. In the 2019 EP elections, though the starting point of the discourse remained the same—the Greek economy—the notion that conquered the public dialogue was 'development', instead of 'crisis' or 'austerity'. In this way, the major political parties (SYRIZA and New Democracy) that occupied the first and second place in the elections sought, in their own way, to underline the gradual distanciation of the Greek economy from the crisis period and its entrance in a new era of financial and social elevation, leaving behind the economic upheavals of the last decade (Poulakidakos, 2019:126). In addition, the 2019 elections, taking place just months before the general elections, were seen as a test for the political parties, in view of the national elections that—due to the result of the European elections—took place earlier than anticipated, on July 7, 2019 (Alvares et al., 2022). This domestication of the political discourse was also a result of the large period without elections in Greece. Given that the last elections (before the 2019 EP elections) took place back in September 2015, the Euro elections were really about demonstrating the popular sentiment prior to the national ones. To the extent that the EU was mentioned, the 2019 EP elections demonstrated a prevalent pro-EU rhetoric (with rather minor criticisms on behalf of the major parties), whereas the anti-EU voices were restricted to minor parties (the Greek Communist party being the most important among them) (Poulakidakos, 2019: 126).

Within this political context, it would not be an overstatement to claim that the large majority of the pre-electoral material published by the political parties (with the exception of the Greek Communist Party-KKE), could have been part of an electoral campaign for Greek general elections, as well. Under the rationale of domestication, most political advertisements focus on issues like unemployment, social justice, financial development, social welfare, and immigration, presented according to the ideological orientation of each party (Alvares et al., 2022). The then governing party of SYRIZA sought to promote its achievements by emphasising the policies implemented throughout its period in office. Domestication appears to be the prevalent context, within which SYRIZA builds its predominantly positive narrative on issues like civil rights, access to public health, enhancement of the welfare state, labour rights, education, upgrade of the capacities of the national health system. At the same time, SYRIZA was eager to project a prosperous future for all, through financial development accompanied by social justice, seeking to underline the distanciation of the party (and the country) from the unjust implementation of austerity policies, some of which applied by the SYRIZA government itself (Alvares et al., 2022).

New Democracy's (ND) pre-electoral spots focused on the need for 'political change'. Looking towards the future and with the main moto, 'we deserve better', ND presents its vision for the future of the country, simultaneously criticising the aus-

Image 5.09: Poster of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LA.O.S.) a male cartoon figure dressed in the traditional Greek Evzone (Tsolias) uniform. The text featured reads: 'My patriot friend, some people humiliated you in Europe. Learn the truth, forget the fairy tales!' The bottom text translates to: 'LA.O.S. The strong voice in Europe'. 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 5.10: Poster of New Democracy titled as: 'Surplus or babbling of benefits? We move forward'. 2014 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center

Image 5:11: Poster of the Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left reading: Bring down the government. Exit the euro and the EU. Wealth and power to working people. 2014 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

terity policies implemented by the SYRIZA administration. Apart from its criticism of SYRIZA, ND, on a rather optimistic basis, lays out the main axes of the proposed policies, which—according to the right-wing ideological orientation of the party—are focused on financial growth and security from both internal and external 'enemies' (there is reference to the need for better border control and the necessity to 'bring back a feeling of security'). Again, domestication prevails, although not in such an intense way as in SYRIZA's campaign, since ND underlines the 'European' past of the party (Greece entered the EU as a full member back in 1981 with ND in office) (Alvares et al., 2022).

Domestication, along with an optimistic rationale on the development perspectives of Greece, is evident in electoral campaign of the social democratic Movement for Change (KIN.AL.), an (unsuccessful) attempt to re-brand PASOK. This focus on the future perspectives of Greece is salient through the intense presence of young people in KIN. AL.'s political material since the party's messages aimed to reach the youngsters of Greece in order to motivate them to vote in the election (Alvares et al., 2022). The Greek Communist Party (KKE) stands as the exception to the prevalence of domestication since it focuses its messages on the European Union in a critical way. Asking for 'a Europe of the people', KKE's anti-EU stance is expressed through the participation of young people from various European countries, including Greece. Once again, similarly to KIN.AL.'s strategy, young people are placed at the forefront of the campaign (Alvares et al., 2022).

The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn and the far-right Greek Solution both used extreme discourse against the 'enemies' of the country. These included, among others, immigrants/refugees characterised as 'illegal intruders', the politicians that 'gave away' (the name of) Macedonia through the Prespa agreement, and the people advocating for the opening of a Mosque in Athens and for a cohabitation agreement for homosexuals in Greece. In a similar vein, using nationalistic discourse and symbols (Greek flags, ancient monuments), Golden Dawn promoted its rationale, opting for 'a Europe of the nations, a Europe of the homelands' and, of course, seeking 'revenge' for the Prespa agreement. The party's motto was 'we vote for Golden Dawn to keep Greece Greek' (Alvares et al., 2022). As foreseen by opinion polls, New Democracy achieved a landslide victory against SYRIZA by almost 10%. Far right parties managed—once again—to gain 9% of the popular vote. Another notable fact is that the 2019 Euro-elections were the first elections in which 17-year-olds were able to vote (the previous age limit was 18 years of age) (Poulakidakos, 2019).

Conclusion

The current text does not constitute a detailed analysis of the EP elections conducted in Greece, but rather a brief overview of important instances of these elections. From what we have so far discussed, the EP elections in Greece have not motivated substantial discussion about the EU and its various aspects (Poulakidakos, 2019). Quite the opposite, any discussion that might include the EU as a whole and its relation to Greece, has been superficial and conducted in a fragmented way.

More than 40 years have passed since the first EP election in Greece (1981) and domestication remains the prevalent theme behind almost any discussion in the public sphere concerning the EU and its relation to Greece. That is why the EU-Greece relationship is a complex, 'fragile' and contradictory one, directly related to domestic political developments, party competition and nation-centric understanding of the international environment. Therefore, one could vaguely discriminate at least four different periods regarding the 'image' of the EU in the Greek public sphere.

The acceptance of the full membership of Greece in the (then) EEC by the socialist government of PASOK and the influx of European funds during the 80's contributed to the formulation of a positive initial image of the EEC. The first serious 'crisis' in the relationship between Greece and the EEC/EU comes in the early nineties, due to the 'Macedonian issue'—a major issue in the pre-electoral public debates of the EP elections of 1994 and 1999.

The admission of Greece in the Eurozone, accompanied by flattering comments on the potential of the Greek economy, enhanced the positive opinions towards the EU until 2010. Since mid-2010 we encounter—justifiable—increasing criticism (especially on behalf of opposition parties) against the EU, due to the severe austerity measures implemented as an 'answer' to the financial issues of the Greek economy. These austerity measures, along with the pre-existing problems of the Greek economy, have caused extreme poverty and unemployment. An alarming effect of the impoverishment of the Greek society, in combination with the diachronic ideological prevalence of nationalism in the (Greek) public sphere, is the rise of far right and neo-Nazi parties (e.g., LAOS, Golden Dawn, Independent Greeks). From mid-2018 onwards, with the proclamation on behalf of Alexis Tsipras of the 'end of the Memoranda' and the consequent re-orientation of the political discourse towards a rationale of economic growth, the image of the EU appears to improve. The upcoming elections in early June 2024 will show whether this improvement is here to stay, and thus establish a new period in terms of the image of the EU in the Greek public sphere.

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Chapter 6: Spain

Sergio Pérez Castaños, José Manuel Trujillo, and Jonatan García-Rabadán

Introduction

Spain joined the European project in the mid-1980s with the signing of the accession agreement (1986) by the European Parliament (EP) in June 1987. Since then, Spain's institutional and political realities have been so closely linked to the EU project, that Spain's two sole constitutional reforms (i.e. to include the right to stand at European elections in 1992, and to incorporate a budget deficit limit in 2011) have been related to European community decisions. In electoral matters, that first call drew Spain into a new—and distinct —competitive arena for the first time.

In the following paragraphs, we address several points regarding Spain's European electoral competition over the last 32 years (Trujillo, 2019; García-Rabadán and Trujillo, 2020). To this end, we first approach the rules of the game—the regulatory framework—to understand the differentiated dynamics of political parties (that is, the electoral offer), as well as their results (i.e., citizen behaviour). The whole process is not without setbacks or complexities. Indeed, the elections of Members of the EP (hereinafter MEPs) have their very own dynamics, as they have been characterised as 'second-order elections' (Reif and Schmitt, 1997), which means that the citizen vote is not strictly circumscribed to a classical utilitarian logic.

To understand the European electoral contest, it is necessary to first address a basic issue, in line with the applicable regulations. A distinctive feature of the EP elections is the institutional framework. Indeed, the countries that have the competence of regulating them present substantial heterogeneity and it has proved impossible to establish a single electoral system for all Member States in the four decades of the EP's history of direct elections.

In the case of Spain, European election legislation is inspired by the system designed for the national Parliament (the 'Congreso de los Diputados'), in force since 1977 (Montero and Fernández-Esquer 2018; Montabes, 1998, 2018; Montero, Llera and Torcal, 1992). However, the elective systems of the Spanish Parliament and the EP are not entirely the same, owing to the 'differential' characteristics of the community call. The main differences between the two elections lie in two specific points: the constituency and the electoral barrier.

In the case of the constituency, Spanish legislation establishes a single electoral district, which implies overlooking any territorial distinction, as in the case of the Spanish Parliament. The second difference is the minimum threshold of votes required to be included in the distribution of representation. In the Spanish legislature, 3% of valid votes must be exceeded per province, yet no such requirement applies to the EP elections, facilitating the access of a greater number of political parties. This electoral barrier and the single district established for the EP elections reflect the legislator's interest in achieving greater proportionality in the distribution of representation. The downside is that the process undermines political alternatives, limiting their geographical implementation, and favours national parties and even new political actors created expressly for that purpose.

Ultimately, the establishment of one rule or another has a direct impact on the behaviour of both the political parties and the electorate: the 'mechanical and psychological' effects referred to by Duverger (2012). Their importance is such that any rule alteration generates major institutional debates. Nevertheless, this has had little influence on electoral turnout, which, in general terms, has remained between the range of 45% to 55%. There are a few exceptions, such as when the dates of European elections coincide with that of regional and municipal elections (every 20 years since 1999). Figure 6.01 shows Spanish participation rates compared to the EU-average.

As can be observed, the evolution of Spanish voter turnout is similar to the EU average for EP elections. The only exception was in 1999 (14% points higher in Spain) and 2019 (10% points higher). In both cases, Spaniards had to vote in municipal elections and for MEPs simultaneously and, in at least 10 regions, also regional elections were held.

In this way, it has been stated that the main political force in these elections is, precisely, abstention (Barreiro, 2004), with a 45% average abstention rate—placing them last in Spanish electoral processes. The result, however, is still far from other European countries where abstention soars above 70%, as in the cases of Portugal (69.25%), Croatia (70.2%) or Czechia (71.3%) in 2019; or in the extreme case of Slovakia with an 80.4% abstention rate in 2009 and 87% in 2014. A more detailed discussion of electoral turnout issues can be found in Pérez-Castaños (2020).

Spain's clear recovery in 2019 may owe to the call having covered multiple polls (municipal, regional, and European) within a cycle of electoral excitement: indeed, two general elections were trig-

gered by the country's first effective censure motion. Nevertheless, the historical sequence shows that the number of people who stop exercising their right to vote in the EP is constantly on the rise. And this trend was especially intense at the turn of the twenty-first century due to strong growth.

The 2004, 2009, and 2014 EP renewals mark a turning point compared to the twentieth century, as participation rates fell below the symbolic figure of 50%. Some territorial differences can be detected, although they are hardly significant since the trend always follows the same downward participatory trend—until the arrival of the eighth European election in Spain.

Spanish pluralism to be tested

Spanish politics, whatever its level of competition, has been characterised by two major cleavages of rupture (Linz and Montero, 1986): the ideological axis (left/right) and the identitarian or territorial axis (centre/periphery). This confrontation has generated a wide range of political proposals from both, statewide parties and non-statewide parties (Pallarés et al., 1997), giving voice to all realities. Consequently, the Spanish party system has been called 'moderate pluralism' (Oñate and Ortega, 2019), where two statewide parties, the 'Partido Socialista Obrero Español' —literally translated into the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party— (PSOE hereinafter) and the 'Partido Popular' —the Popular Party — (PP hereinafter), have traditionally led the electoral competition. Moderate pluralism is also characterised by a variable number of non-statewide parties, such as the Basque and Catalan nationalist parties, that have supported the former due to their strong presence in their respective regional autonomous communities. The recent irruption of other statewide parties, such as Podemos/Sumar, VOX, or the quasi-disappeared Ciudadanos – literally—Citizens (Cs hereinafter)— has somewhat altered the previous pattern, although it is too early to draw certain conclusions.[1]

For their part, EU citizens generally attach limited importance to the EP elections compared to other elections, precisely because EU parliamentary work is still largely unrecognised. According to the latest Eurobarometer Parlameter (2023), 34% of Spanish citizens have a positive image of the EP, just two points below the EU average (36%) and below the assessment of national legislative chambers. This is one of the reasons why the European elections have been described as 'second order' (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). Since the political significance of the EP lacks recognition, the population allows itself to opt for alternative or non-conventional formations,

1 We say Cs almost disappeared because this party obtained around 13% of the votes in the different elections that took place in Spain between 2016 and the first half of 2019 and has become an extra-parliamentary force since November 2019 and, above all, since 2022. So much so, in fact, that in the July 2023 general elections they decided not to run, contemplating the possibility of doing so in the 2024 European elections.

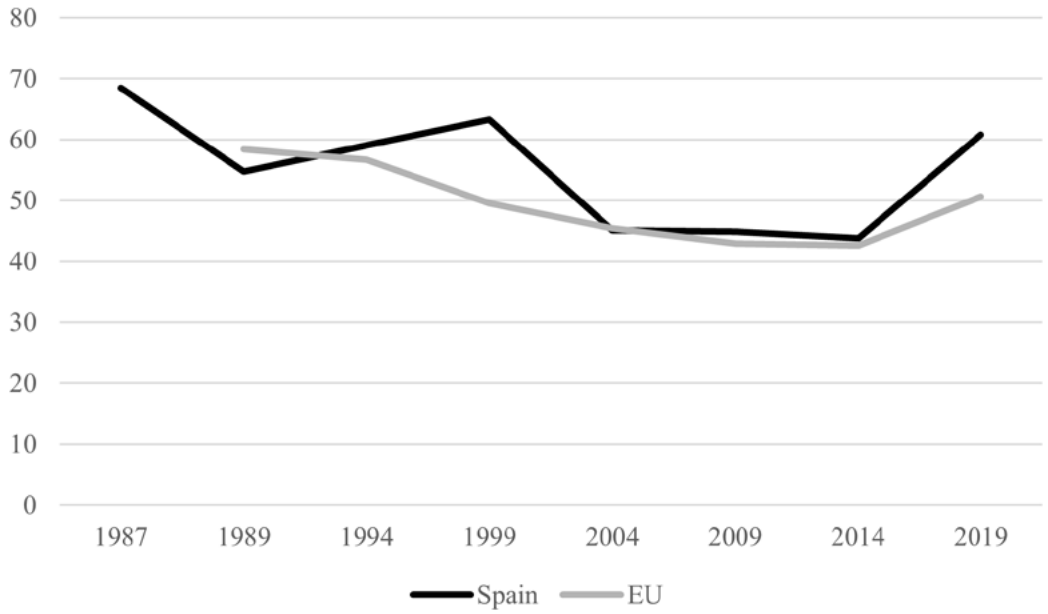

Figure 6.01: Electoral turnout in Spain and the EU (1987-2019). Source: Author's calculation with data from the Ministry of Interior.

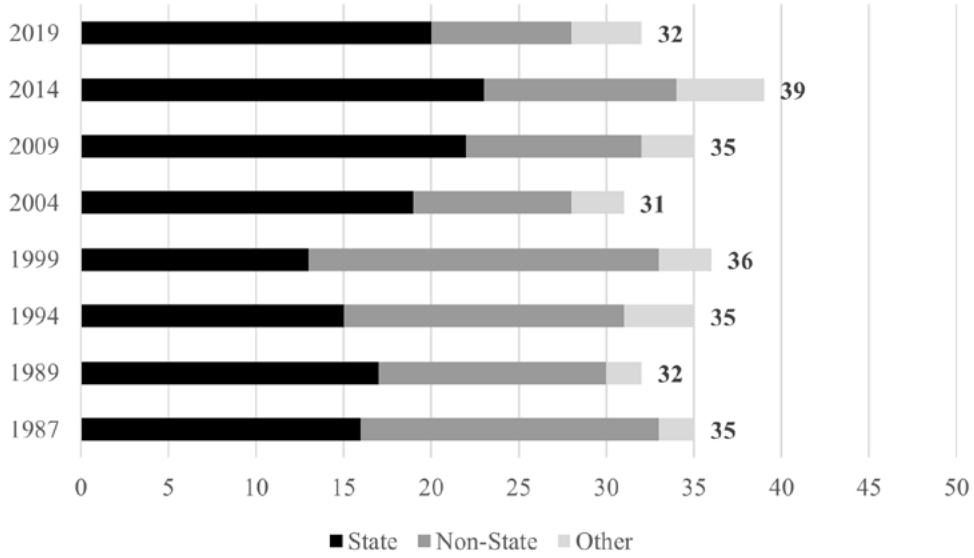

Figure 6.02: Number of parties competing in the elections. Source: Author's calculation.

even non-participation, based on the rationale of expressing protest or boredom (Cazorla et al., 2017; Pérez-Castaños and García-Rabadán, 2022).

It is precisely the exceptional structure of the Spanish electoral system in the EP elections that leads us to pause for a moment before moving on to analyse the evolution of elections over time. In general terms, the history of the EP in Spain includes a long list of solitary candidates, of which a dozen have sometimes obtained representation. A significant number of alliances between different political parties should be added to this exploration. Each call, on the other hand, has had an average of thirty candidacies of different signs, reflecting the particularity of the competition. A quantitative analysis of the partisan market shows that candidacy concentration reached a peak in 2004 with 39, compared to the minimum of 32 in 1989 and 2019.

Upon closer examination, the candidacies' categories fall into statewide parties, non-statewide parties, as well as other, highly diverse, party alternatives. The political literature has proposed different terms to identify these types of political actors which are so far removed from the more traditional ones. The most widespread labels include 'Single-Issue Parties' (Mudde, 1999) or 'Niche Parties' (Megid, 2005; Meyer and Miller; 2015; Wagner, 2011), beyond the traditional placement in the 'others' group or protest vote. According to the most basic definition of the first two parties, their main domain of competition revolves around a few non-economic issues that have not received sufficient attention from mainstream parties (Meyer and Miller, 2015; Wagner, 2011). The minimal theoretical characteristics given include their position outside the traditional class cleavage, the limited realms of action they address, and the fact that the latter are so transversal, they overcome classic partisan divisions. The literature has thus chosen to place the European green parties or some far-right formations, among others, under this denomination. As we shall see later, most niche parties present in European elections are national in nature and scope of action.[2]

As illustrated in Figure 6.02, in the European partisan 'market' in Spain, statewide parties have predominated quantitatively most of the time, apart from in 1987, 1994 and, especially, in 1999. In these three elections, two of which (1987 and 1999) were held in conjunction with municipal and regional elections, the offer of nationalist or regionalist parties exceeded that of national parties. If we add the 'other' candidacies, however, the latter will only apply to 1999. At the time, political excitement was high: owing to the PSOE and PP power transfer in the central government in 1996, the statutory renewals during those same years (Pérez Castaños and García Rabadán, 2018), as well as the multiple election call. And this effervescence was reflected in both the participation rate—the highest in European elections, surpassed only by that of 1987— as well as the number of non-statewide parties (20).

The formation of coalitions or alliances has precisely been a common dynamic from the very beginning among the non-statewide parties in the

2 At the European level, agrarian parties have also been characterised in this way, despite being unknown in Spain's political reality. Regarding extreme right-wing formations, the explanation lies in the major importance they give to the migration issue and their proposals regarding the migrant or refugee population.

EP elections. The mechanism is aimed at tackling the competition of a single district and without electoral barriers (Montero and Cordero, 2009; Roig, 2005). As a result, non-statewide parties, especially from sparsely populated territories, clearly perceived the risk that their electoral support would not be sufficient to obtain representation. This is one way—though not the only way—in which regional and nationalist parties with concentrated territorial strength have strived to ensure representation in the Strasbourg Chamber: they integrate their acronyms, which reflect different geographical origins and ideological positions, under the same electoral 'umbrella'. Their formations are predominantly left/right in nature—not forgetting the members' historical dimensions. Illustrations include coalitions such as 'Los Pueblos Deciden' —literally, The People Decide—or 'Ahora Repúblicas' —Now Republics—on the left of the spectrum, or, on the right, 'Coalición por una Europa Solidaria' – Coalition for a Europe of Solidarity.

A clear example of these coalitions of nationalist parties can be seen in Image 6.02, where a party from the Basque Country, another from Catalonia and a third from Galicia present their different bets in a joint electoral list. It is worth noting that the representative of the Basque party had just left his post as head of the regional government.

Image 1. PSOE poster, 'With strength in Europe'. 1989 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 2. 1989 non-statewide party coalition poster, 'To the Europe of the Nations' .1989 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Entering the Union and weighting in (1987-2009)

Since joining the European Economic Community (EEC), the weight of political parties has varied in Spain. Some tendencies, however, remain undaunted, such as the prominence of the two large PSOE and PP statewide parties. In this sense, the aim to strengthen Europe or to strongly represent an idea or party in Europe is a common trend. This can be observed in the PSOE election poster for 1989, as shown in Image 6.01, or in the PP poster for 2004, as shown in Image 6.06. These two parties have always maintained a pro-European stance. It should be noted that, to maximise the technical provisions of the European electoral process in Spain, the non-statewide parties have always tended to form coalitions to optimise their electoral performance. This formula was consolidated, as seen in Figure 6.02, at the turn of the millennium. The shift took place in 2004, when Spain's main peripheral nationalist political parties rethought their strategies, joining forces to form a left and right grouping, for whom the key factor was differentiation, that is, peripheral nationalism. Consequently, the cycle in which only the main non-statewide parties were present thus came to an end. This was so successful that, in 2009, the largest ideological concentration took place through two coalitions only: one on the left, and one on the right.

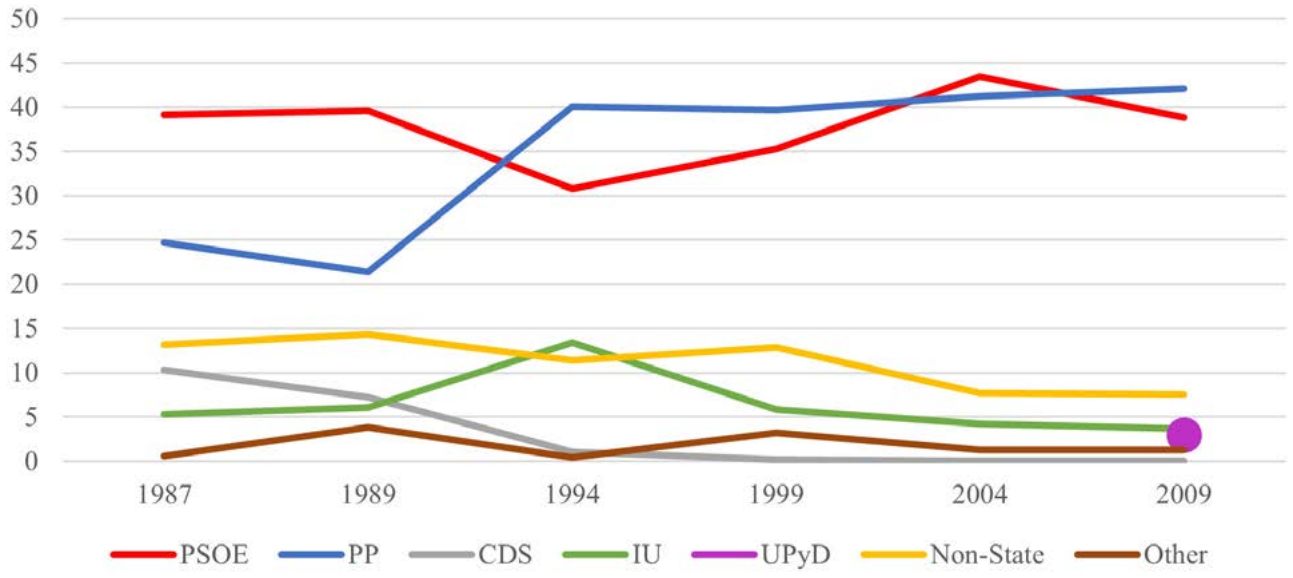

Figure 6.03: Spanish vote share for the European Parliamentary elections 1987-2009. Source: Author's calculation with data from the Ministry of Interior.

In this scenario, however, instead of using coalitions, the statewide parties chose to blur their electoral brands. Yet other actors were integrated in their lists without having their acronyms altered. In the Socialists' case, only a few specific agreements were formed with small parties, so the acronym has never received any additions. The second of Spain's major parties, the PP, follows a tradition of agreeing with certain non-statewide parties on list formations. The greatest exponent of this practice is the Union of the People of Navarre (UPN). Despite its weight in regional politics, this latter conservative regionalist party in Navarre has not presented a list alone in any of the European calls. In addition to these two major statewide political formations, the third in question is the 'Izquierda Unida' coalition—literally, the United Left (IU hereinafter). The latter, unlike the previous two, have opted to form agreements for the European elections, prioritising nevertheless the non-statewide party brands that are references for the left-wing coalition across different Autonomous Communities. A special case that deserves to be detailed is that of the party founded in 1989 by the businessman Ruiz Mateos (hereafter RM, see Image 6.03), which received representation in the same year, and which would fall into the category of a single-issue party, with the aim of obtaining immunity for the businessman from the legal proceedings he was facing.

Having described the party system that characterises this first European electoral period, we must now focus on the electoral results themselves. As described, the party system changes a little: formations appear and disappear while others do so to sustain themselves between both periods. We shall come back to this later. Beyond the PSOE and PP alternating leadership, with three victories each, the Socialists came out on top in the 1980s as well as in 2004, which were periods of Socialist governments in Spain. Meanwhile, the PP obtained the highest number of votes and representation in the 1990s, in addition to 2009. As was the case with the Socialists, the Conservatives' victories coincided with their own government cycles or, as in 1994—a victory that prophesised the 1996 electoral results— a scenario of socialist weakness that would end with the latter out of government for the first time in 14 years. On the other hand, these two formations' victories have converged since the eighties: the major differences between the two have dropped by 3-5% points, and they have become somewhat equal. In addition, the PP and PSOE clearly dominate in these elections given the high concentration of parliamentary acts, above 70%, reaching an all-time high in 2004 with 91% of MEPs. The 1999 PSOE poster (Image 6.04) demonstrates their electoral strength by featuring only the candidate's name and the words 'Contigo'. Rosa Díez, who became an MEP for the PSOE in 1999 and held the position until 2007, is the candidate depicted in the poster. Image 6.08 shows her later as the leader of a different political party.

In the cases of greatest two-party system weakness, they coincide with consolidated third statewide parties. This position has also been influ-

enced by the country's own social and political reality. Initially, the CDS — 'Centro Democrático y Social', literally, the Democratic and Social Centre—held that position and achieved the second-best result of the third formations with 10% of the votes. Figure 6.05 shows that CDS included former ministers of Spain's pro-democratic governments on its lists, as well as some individuals who played a significant role in the newly adopted democracy, such as Eduardo Punset, whose daughter would later join the ranks of the new centrist party Ciudadanos. In its early days, the CDS supported Spain's integration into the EU and the common market due to its liberal character. Prior to its merger with the PP in 2005, it opposed the European Constitution.

The next actor to reach the podium was IU. The left-wing coalition was able to hold the position from 1994 to 1999. It wasn't until 2009 that other statewide parties other than IU came on the scene. The only party that entered in this period, straddling the two, is UPyD — 'Unión Progreso y Democracia', literally Union, Progress and Democracy—who won an MEP with 3% of the votes.

During the 2004-2009 cycle, specifically, the third position went to coalitions of non-statewide parties. At both points in time, these coalitions were led by right-wing nationalist parties. In the case of 2004, it was the majority nationalist party in Catalonia at the time (CiU) that led the candidacy and that would obtain 5.2% of the votes. In 2009, the party leading the coalition was the majority nationalist party in the Basque Country (PNV), the coalition obtaining very similar results to that of the previous five-year period (5.1% of the valid vote). This was a singular result since regionalist and nationalist alternatives have rarely exceeded 15% of the votes.

In addition to these non-statewide political parties, other nationalist and even pro-independence forces competed first alone, and then forming coalitions in different European elections. The Basque separatists of the radical left ran alone in 1987, 1989, and 1999. For their part, the Andalusian regionalists did so in 1989, and the Galician nationalists in 1999. The rest of the representation has rested on different coalitions, but the results achieved have varied widely. Despite the broad range of regional elections, they have won no seats, not even under coalitions. As Image 6.07 shows, coalitions of different nationalist formations, with a pro-European tendency to unite nationals, have been a constant since 1989. In this case, they do not seek to leave the EU, but to reject outright the failed attempt at a European constitution, which for them sought to eliminate these identity markers.

For their part, the results of non-conventional formations have fluctuated more than that of the

Image 6.03: 1994 RM party poster, showing himself and all the companies that he owned, 'Spain for Spaniards. Work for everyone. Vote for me, dammit!'. 1994 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

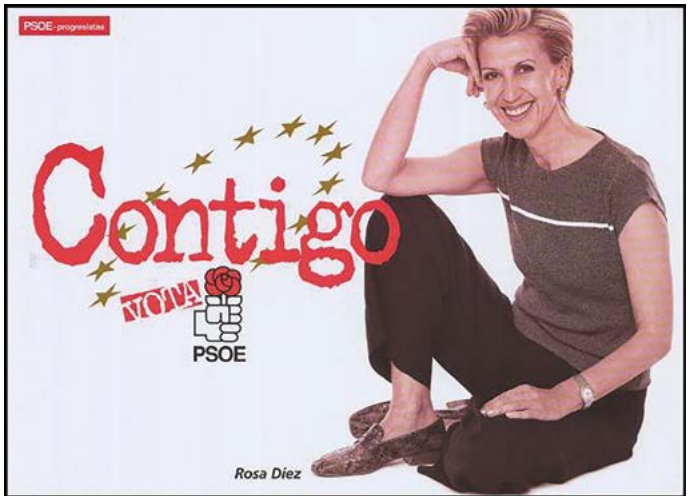

Image 6.04: PSOE party poster showing leader Rosa Díez, 'With you'. 1999 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

main political formations. The discrete numbers of this conglomerate of actors stood out in 1989. In all other cases, the sum of the different forces did not exceed 5% of the valid votes.

If we now focus on representation, based on the legal system established for the transfer of votes to seats, we find that, in electoral terms, the two strongest parties dominate entirely. Thus, the PSOE and PP accounted together for between 42 and 51 MEPs of those distributed throughout Spain in this period. This figure is meaningless on its own but in terms of percentages, these two parties won the fewest MEPs—1989—accounting for 70% of the total number of elected representatives. This figure has been gradually increasing ever since, reaching 90% of MEPs elected by Spain in 2004.

It should also be noted that the total number of seats has varied because of the European Chamber's various enlargements and legislative reforms. In 1987 and 1989, Spain had 60 MEPS. This quota increased by an extra 4 MEPs in the 1994 and 1999 elections. Subsequently, from 2004 onwards, the number of Spanish MEPs fell to 54, a figure that remained the same until 2019. It is worth mentioning that the number of Spanish MEPs increased by five when Brexit became effective and that in the 2024 elections, the number of MEPs to be elected by Spain is 61.

As one can see in Figure 6.04, the other statewide parties are consolidating themselves in the European electoral panorama, creating a stable environment where around 50 MEPs are controlled by the country's two major formations. The remaining 10 or 14 are distributed across the third statewide party in contention—between 2 and 9 MEPs—and the nationalist and regionalist formations—between 2 and 4 MEPs. This relative electoral stability underwent a change with the entry of the centrist UPyD party in 2009, wanting to be the heirs of the now defunct CDS. The party draws on centrist militants from other long-established parties such as the PSOE (their leader, Rosa Díez, as previously depicted in Image 6.04) and the PP, as well as writers and members of Spain's intellectual elite. This latter party would achieve two MEPs in what would be the precedent of the party system change in Spain owing to the Great Recession.

Changing the party system: here come the radicals (2014-2019)

As mentioned earlier, the Spanish party system has undergone a stable and lasting change since the 2014 European elections. The emergence of UPyD in 2009 (see Image 6.08)—which would also obtain representation in the national parliament—was followed by that of Podemos—meaning 'We can'—a radical left-wing party (see Image 6.09), which emerged because of the 'Indignados' movement that occupied squares throughout Spain in 2011. This movement was a series of protests, demonstrations, and occupations against austerity policies in Spain that began around the local and regional elections of 2011 and 2012. Beginning on 15 May 2011, many of the subsequent

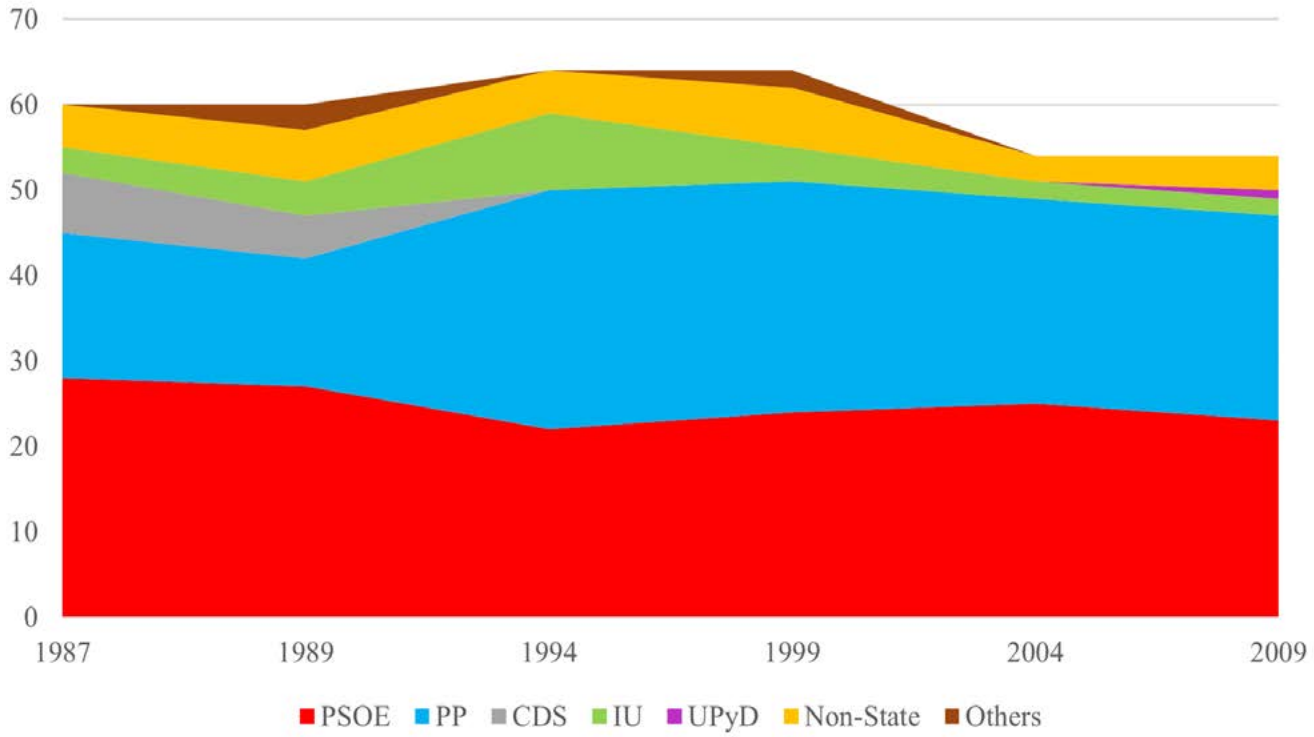

Figure 6.04: Number of elected members per party or group of parties in European Parliamentary Elections 1987-2009. Source: Author's calculation with data from the Ministry of Interior.

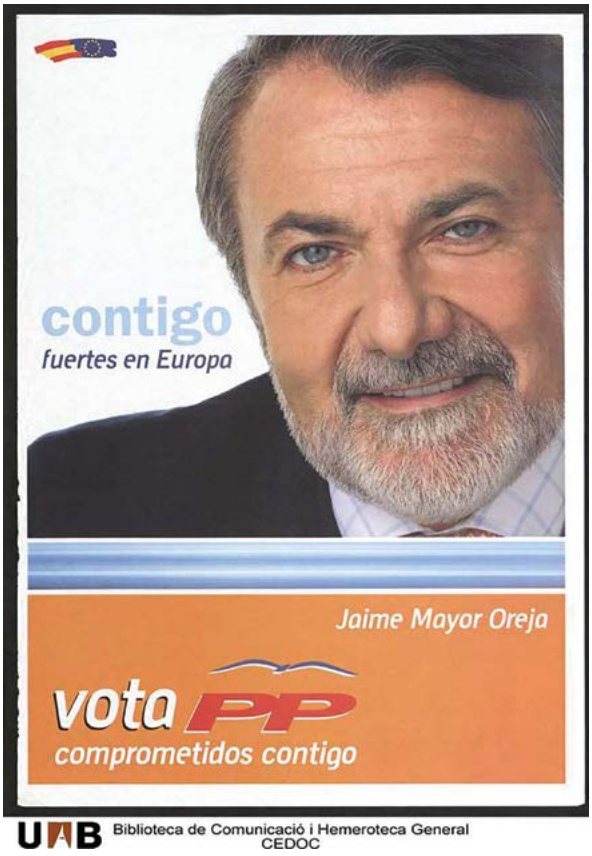

Image 6.06: PP poster showing number 1 in their MEP list, 'With you, strong in Europe'. 2004 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 6.05: CDS Poster asking for the vote and saying, 'The Center moves forward'. 1987 European Parliament Election in Spain. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 6.07: Non-statewide parties' coalition poster, 'The independentist left to Europe. No to the European Constitution'. 2004 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

demonstrations spread through various social networks. According to the Spanish public broadcasting company, between 6.5 and 8 million Spaniards participated in these events (Rodríguez-Teruel and Barrio, 2016). Recognising that they competed for the same electorate and in the same space as IU, both brands converged in a coalition in the 2019 elections.

Along with Podemos, the second statewide party with a new constitution is Cs (see Image 6.10). The party presents itself as centrist, upholding Spanish values in a Catalonia that is increasingly leaning towards pro-independence. It maintains a steadfastly pro-European stance, despite its rightward shift over time. This party originated as a regional party in Catalonia and leapt into the national arena in 2011. It ran in the 2014 European elections where it obtained its first national representatives on the political scene. This party has chosen a different path as it has always presented a solo candidacy since its formation in 2006. The exception was in 2009, when, despite being a Catalan party, it formed a coalition with the pan-European party Libertas, obtaining poor results (0.14% of the valid votes and no representatives).

The last statewide party to have entered with some force in the European Parliament is VOX. Much has been written in recent years about this party and its classification as a far-right, populist radical right or national-populist formation. The reason is its spectacular electoral advance and its ability to attain power in regional institutions throughout Spain from 2019 onwards (Antón-Merino, Pérez-Castaños and Méndez-Juez, 2023). In five years, this far-right party has gone from discrete results, although it was the first extra-parliamentary actor in 2014, to the fifth force, increasing its votes fivefold, as can be seen in Figure 6.05.

Extreme right-wing or radical right-wing formations (Norris, 2009) are worth a brief comment. At different historical and geographical moments, EP elections have represented a privileged platform for this type of political party, France being the clearest illustration of this. In Spain, however, over the last 32 years, and excluding the emergence of VOX (see Image 6.11), 14 different candidates have opted for representation, unsuccessfully. VOX maintains a Eurosceptic stance towards the European Union, arguing that Spain should not make any concessions to the EU regarding sovereignty. This is because, according to the Spanish Constitution, national sovereignty is vested in the Spanish people, from whom the powers of the State emanate. The party's leadership opposes the EU becoming a federal superstate and instead argues for a Europe of strong and sovereign states that defend their borders and Christian roots and oppose multiculturalism and mass immigration (Rama et al, 2021).

The data in Figure 6.05 now shows a greater number of forces generally fighting for representation. The fact that there were at least six statewide formations in the 2014 elections (to which regionalist, nationalist, and other different formations can be added) means that the vote percentage distribution dif-

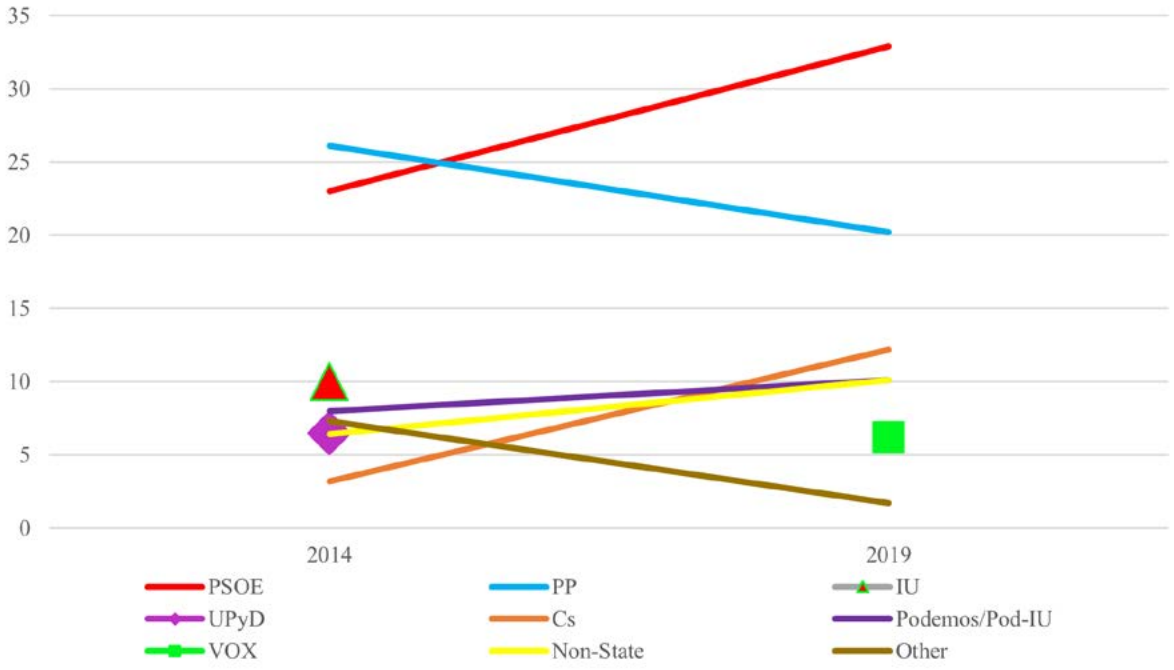

Figure 6.05. Spanish vote share in the European Parliamentary elections 2014-2019. Source: Author's calculation with data from the Ministry of the Interior.

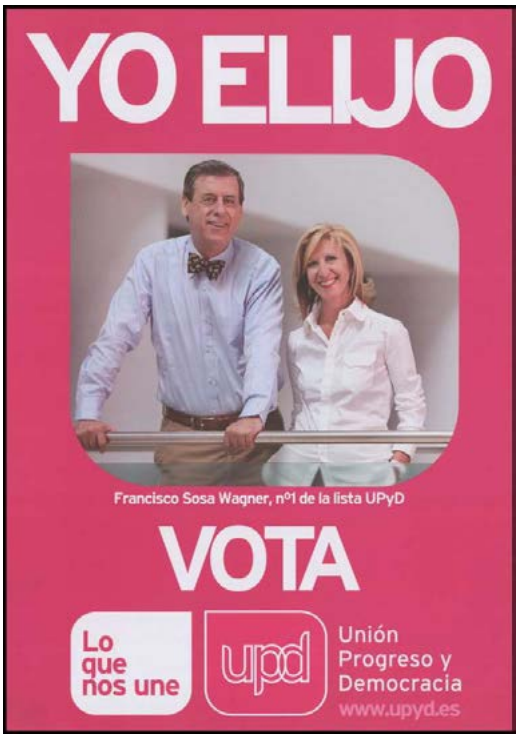

Image 6.08: UPyD poster showing number 1 in their MEP list and, also, leader of the party and former socialist candidate, Rosa Díez, 'I choose'. 2009 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

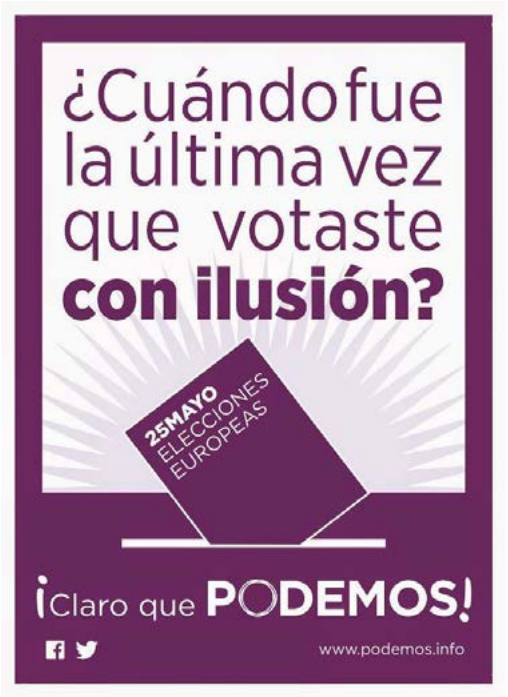

Image 6.09: Podemos poster 'When was the last time you look forward to voting?', and then stating, 'Of course we can!'. 2014 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 6.10: Cs poster 'The strength of the Union'. Note that one of the candidates is the daughter of the former CDS candidate seen in Image 6.06. 2014 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 6.11: VOX poster, 'Vote VOX for Spain'. 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

fered considerably from that experienced until then.

In this sense, the two major statewide parties continue to amass the highest vote percentage. However, these percentages tend to fall as more parties enter the electoral contest and have more chances of obtaining representation. What have not been reduced are the differences between these formations and the rest, since in 2014, the distances increased again, reaching the levels of the first calls (+10 points). Their weight in terms of votes, in those same two elections, is just below 50% (49% and 53%, respectively), when the previous lowest figure was in 1989 with 61%.

The third statewide party, IU, returned in 2014 to regain its traditional third vote percentage place, adding 10% of the votes. It maintained its position in 2019, although on this occasion it ran with Podemos, the new force created in 2014 and with which a coalition was formed for practically all of Spain's 2019 elections. In the European elections, they obtained 10% of the valid vote. Thanks to this coalition, Podemos went from 8% of the vote to 10%. However, the coalition with IU failed to sustain the electoral strength held by both parties in 2014, as they lost more than eight points by the wayside. It is worth noting that in both 2014 and 2019, left-wing parties maintained the active presence of the word Europe in their campaign materials (see Images 6.12 and 6.13). This element is even more important given that in 2019 the European elections in Spain coincided with local and regional elections, which may have diluted the role of Europe. However, the PSOE (Image 6.12) and Podemos (Image 6.13) differ in what they want for Europe, with the former being the guarantors of the Europe they want, while the latter are openly committed to changing what exists.

The fifth statewide party in terms of strength in the 2014 elections was Cs, although it was behind nationalist and regionalist parties. This party won its first representatives at the statewide level in the 2014 elections, with 3.2% of the vote. In 2019, the party was well-established and could even foresee becoming the second political force in the country at the national level. They achieved an astonishing 12.2% of the vote, the second-best electoral figure for a statewide party other than the PSOE or the PP in Spain's entire history of European elections. In fact, Cs has been known for its pro-European stance, which has been a significant aspect of the party's identity -as portrayed in Image 6.14-. Its representatives have played a crucial role in the European Parliament within the Liberals' political group. However, at the national level, Cs' positions have been aligned with those of the traditional right.

The shortest-running statewide party is VOX. Its 2019 election results were lower than expected in the European elections, as it achieved barely more than 10% support in the national April elections that same year and lost around four points within a month (6.2% of the vote). Despite it all, VOX obtained greater electoral support than the various non-statewide parties, becoming the fifth political force in the 2019 elections. However, the sum of the five statewide forces barely accounted for more than 80% of the votes, far from the 89% of votes reached in 2004 or 88% in 2009. Based on the above, the reason is the lesser weight of the PSOE and PP rather than the rise of nationalist and regionalist formations.

To draw conclusions upon the electoral weight percentage illustrated in Figure 6.05, we must now examine the weight of non-statewide parties. The latter were presented in 2014 in different coalitions that did not exceed 10% of the valid vote. The coalition trend described at the beginning of this chapter took a different turn in 2019, with the pro-Catalan pro-independence party JUNTS—meaning Together in Catalan—running alone (Image 6.15). This list obtained 4.5% of the vote at the national level and was led by former regional president Carles Puigdemont, a Spanish justice fugitive after having declared Catalonia's independence unilaterally in 2017. Together, non-statewide parties accounted for almost 12% of the valid vote in 2019.

As can be observed in Figure 6.06, if there is one feature that characterises Spain's representation at the EP over this period it is fragmentation. The emergence of new formations led to up to 10 candidacies represented in the hemicycle in 2014, which would fall to 8 in 2019 owing to the different electoral coalitions between both statewide parties (IU and Podemos) and non-statewide parties (from four candidacies to three). In addition, UPyD—which obtained 4 MEPs in 2014 but did not compete in 2019—disappeared, while VOX emerged, entering Parliament with 3 MEPs. The latter were distributed into five different EP parliamentary groups in 2014. An extra payroll was added in 2019, as well as four non-attached ones (García-Rabadán and Trujillo, 2020).

Thus, the PP was the first force in 2014, with 16 of the 54 MEPs to be distributed, followed by the PSOE which obtained 14. The IU was left with six, and Podemos, running for its first elections, would obtain a resounding success, achieving 5 MEPs. These figures changed in 2019, as the two main traditional parties won more votes. The PSOE thus obtained 20 European representatives, the PP coming second with 12. Cs, which had already obtained 2 MEPs in 2014, reached 7, its success in the EU election mirroring its national and regional Spanish electoral success. We can observe how over this period, with the appearance of new statewide parties, the PSOE and PP saw their representative weight

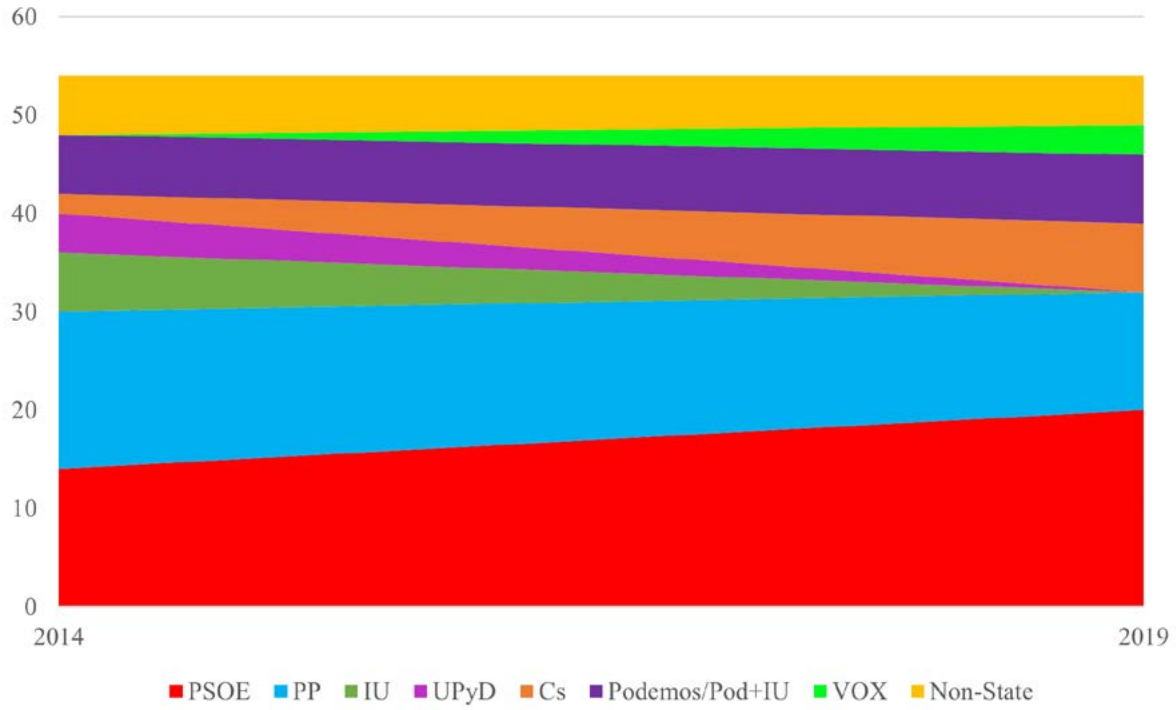

Figure 6.06: Number of members elected in European Parliamentary Elections per party or group of parties 2014-2019. Source: Author's elaboration with data from the Ministry of the Interior.

fall below 60% (56% in 2014 and 59% in 2019), with Spanish MEPs distributed across a greater number of formations. This loss of voters, in the case of the PP, is due to the strength of Cs in the centre of the political space and the emergence of VOX to its right, which is taking away part of its electorate. This is why, as Image 6.16 shows, it is appealing to the centre in its slogan for the 2019 European elections. For their part, the non-statewide parties maintained the same aggregate stability that characterises Spain's entire European electoral period.

Conclusion

Three decades of EP elections is a long enough period to be able to draw some conclusions regarding Spain's European Union journey. The changes that have unfolded over eight elections are as numerous as those experienced across all spheres of Spanish society. The initial enthusiasm of adhering to the Community project seems to have given way to a certain indifference, as in the rest of the Member States. The European elections have reflected this shift.

One pattern identifiable is the distinct nature of the EP elections. European elections are different from the rest, whether due to the interest they arouse in the media, citizens, or political parties, or because of the regulations applied. Nevertheless, Spanish national results and Europeans ones are highly interdependent, and several periods can be distinguished. First, there is a general historical trend of concentration in a few forces, in line with the supply and increase of coalitions. From 1989 to 2009, the number of actors with seats almost halved, from 11 to 6. This dynamic was broken in 2014 with the emergence of Spain's new political parties, which led to a shift in the statewide parties' scenario. The 3 traditional actors (the PSOE, PP, and IU) increased to 6 in 2014 (PSOE, PP, IU, UPyD, Podemos and Cs) and 5 in 2019 (UPyD, IU and Podemos formed a coalition, and VOX managed to gain a seat). The representative concentration of statewide parties thus failed to succeed at recovering the position they enjoyed at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Despite this, none of the traditional political actors, whether statewide or non-state parties, have stopped competing to obtain the best possible result. None of the numerous alternatives created with the aim of replicating RM's -portrayed in Image 6.04- great success have managed to do so. Spanish political parties are aware that the European Parliament constitutes an arena in which they can disseminate and defend their national interests. And as in the case of Spanish society, they consider that it weighs considerably in citizens' daily decisions.

Image 6.12: PSOE's poster, 'The Europe that you want'. 2019 European Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 6.13: UP coalition integrating Podemos and IU, 'United we can change Europe'. 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 6.14: Cs poster, portraying most of their leaders and candidates, 'Let's go! Europe'. 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 6.15: JUNTS poster, 'Free around Europe'. 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 6.16: PP Poster portraying is number 1 candidate Dolors Montserrat, 'Focused on your future'. 2019 European Parliamentary Elections. This makes a word connection, as the word meaning 'focused' and the centre in the ideological spectrum are the same in Spanish. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

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Chapter 7: Sweden

Bengt Johansson

Introduction

The first Swedish European parliamentary (EP) election was held in 1995, one year after the tight referendum where 52.3% of Swedes had voted in favour of European Union membership. The Swedish entry was a part of the fourth enlargement, where Finland and Austria also became EU members. These countries were prior members of the European Free Trade Area, with a limited interest in joining the EU, and Swedish membership used to be a 'non-issue' in the domestic political context, mainly because it was considered impossible to combine with maintaining neutrality in foreign and security policy. Two important factors —the fall of the iron curtain and a more globalised economy — led to political parties who traditionally opposed a membership starting to re-evaluate their positions. In particular, the Social Democratic Party (SAP) changed from being against membership to becoming open to joining the EU during the beginning of the 1990s, even if the internationalisation of the economy was seen as a threat to national politics ability to control the economy and employment policy. This change of position was not without problems as most political parties were internally divided in their view of the EU. This divergence could be found both among voters and representatives at different political levels. However, EU-membership was not possible without the SAP supporting the idea. The party has traditionally dominated Swedish politics, both in terms of voter share and being in government (Gilljam and Holmberg, 1998; Tallberg and Von Sydow, 2018).

In the aftermath of the referendum

The first Swedish EP election (1995) was overshadowed by the 1994 referendum in which only two parties unanimously favoured the membership (The Moderate party and the Liberal party) while two were strongly opposed to joining (The Left Party and the Green Party). The election outcome verified this as both the Left Party and especially the Green Party received stronger support compared with the national election held the previous year. In this respect, Sweden stood out compared with other EU countries in having the strongest opinions against the EU from parties leaning ideologically to the left (Gilljam and Holmberg, 1998).

Compared with other countries, where domestic issues often overshadow the EU perspective, the 1995 campaign focused on the EU and the future development of the union (foreign policy and an EU defence, European Monetary Union, EU federalism etc.). In other ways, the first Swedish European election shared experiences from other countries, with limited media interest, low intensity campaigns, and low voter turnout – 42% percent compared with 86% in the 1994 national election. In terms of election results, traits from EU elections in other countries were also apparent: larger established parties lost support and smaller parties gained voters. Thus, even if EU issues dominated the first Swedish European election it was nevertheless a second-order election (Gilljam and Holmberg, 1998).

The second EP election in 1999 became a rematch of the first, where voter turnout was even lower (39%). What changed was public opinion, where the strong stance against the EU was declining, even if most voters were still opposed to membership (Holmberg et al, 2001). This trend continued over time and Swedish opinion has changed from being one of the most sceptical towards the EU, to one of the most EU positive. Today, around 60% of the Swedes have a positive view of the EU (Berg et al., 2019).

In the shadow of the Euro

An important question of previous campaigns had been the European Monetary Union (EMU). It was an obligation due to the Amsterdam treaty, but Swedish politicians first chose to stay outside the EMU system (1999) and then submitted the decision over whether to join the single Euro currency to a citizen vote (Tallberg and Von Sydow, 2018). In 2003, Sweden held the EMU referendum and where the 1994 membership referendum was a close race, the EMU referendum turned out to be a landslide in favour of keeping the Swedish Krona with 56% voted against joining the Euro (Oscarsson et al., 2006). Consequently, the 2004 EU election was held in the aftermath of a referendum but, contrary to the outcome of the 1994 vote on membership, the debate over the Euro did not cast a shadow over the 2004 election campaign. Instead, it had rather the opposite effect. Voters lost interest in the EMU and EU and the turnout reached an all-time low with 38%. This was interpreted as a 'low signal' consequence of parties spending less resources on the campaign and there being relatively little media attention (Oscarsson et al., 2006). Looking at the campaign posters

from 2004, a significant trait of the Swedish campaigns was the universality of campaign messages criticising the EU, even from traditionally pro-EU parties. Even if the Swedes have become more positive towards the EU, there is still a somewhat sceptical view of it, which these campaign messages reflect (Blomgren, 2019).

What goes up must come down

A notable feature of the 2004 EU election was the success of a new political party. The June List Party was formed by two previously well-known economists and received a lot of media attention. The party favoured Swedish EU membership but promoted a critical stance towards the country's further integration into the EU. When the votes were counted Junilistan emerged as the big winner with 14.5% of the vote with three of the 20 Swedish seats in parliament (Oscarsson et al., 2006). This would be the first of several EU elections in which new parties would successfully campaign and win representation in the European parliament. Although Junilistan lost their three seats in 2009, one of these was taken by yet another new electoral force, the Pirate Party, that received 7.1% of the vote.

The Pirate Party had originally started as a protest movement against declining standards of integrity in public life and the threats posed by increasing control and surveillance from states and private companies' use of new information technology (Demker, 2010). The success story of the Pirates was, like Junilistan's, short lived and the party lost their seat in the 2014 election. There was, however, another successful newcomer in this campaign in the guise of feminist party Feminist Initiative (Fi). Again, a successful campaign (5.5%) of the votes was followed by one term in parliament as they lost their seats in the 2019 election (Berg, 2014). There is one exception from this logic—the Sweden Democrats—which we will come back to later. The Sweden Democrats was founded in the right-wing extremist movement with Nazi roots, and as nationalists from the beginning strongly opposing membership in the EU and received their first seats in Swedish parliament in 2010 and in the EP parliament in 2014.

A new campaign channel and a changing political landscape

Like other EU members, issues that are salient in other countries do not necessarily impact on Swedish politics. A prime example of this came with the 2009 campaign when the economic crisis dominated many election campaigns throughout Europe. The issue was almost non-existent in the Swedish campaign, mostly due to the limited effect of the crisis on the national economy. In several ways the 2009

Image 7.01: The Green Party poster during the 1999 EU election shows an illustration of Sweden as a dog on the EU's leash. 'Now it is enough! Away with corruption, bureaucracy, and destruction of nature. YOU choose'. 1999 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 7.02: Liberal Party Poster of Marit Paulsen, a well-known pro EU Swedish politician. She became very popular with her persona as a 'grumpy old woman'. The text on the t-shirts says, 'The right old woman for the job'. 2014 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

campaign differed from previously held campaigns. For the first time since Sweden joined the EU, voter turnout increased (46%) and the Swedes view on EU had developed to be strongly pro-EU. Secondly, EU policy issues seemed to be less important to voters when they cast their votes. Instead, domestic issue positions became more important. Thirdly, a significant change in the political landscape took place as the Green Party abandoned their goal of Sweden leaving the EU. The new position was in line with similar European parties where the EU was increasingly seen as an opportunity for progress rather than a threat, especially as an arena where the environmental cause could be advanced (Oscarsson and Holmberg, 2010).

Another important new aspect of the 2009 campaign was the introduction of political advertising on television. Traditionally, Swedish politicians have had limited access to the medium as a campaign channel on their own terms. Previously, journalists would control interviews, debates, and other kinds of visibility on television. Even though the internet started influencing campaign strategy, Swedish parties mainly relied on a traditional combination of channels like newspaper ads, election posters, public speeches, leaflets, and interpersonal communication to gain attention. Sweden had, until 2009, a history of prohibiting electoral TV spots but, due to changing regulation, political ads could now be aired on the private channel TV4. This facility was mainly used by the centre and centre-right parties. The left leaning parties, however, maintained a negative view of television advertising and were disinclined to use it, fearing it would decrease the quality of public debate and increase campaign costs. Instead, they produced films published on their websites (Johansson, 2017).

The Super election year of 2014

The consequences of the economic crisis were still prevalent as the 2014 EU election took place and cast a shadow over the campaign in many member countries, where Eurosceptic parties gained support. Even if the economic downfall was less visible in Sweden, Euroscepticism was on the rise elsewhere. As mentioned earlier, Sweden Democrats got seats in parliament after the 2014 election (9.7% of the votes) (Berg, 2014). This right-wing populist party had been increasing its support among the Swedish public for a long time before it entered the national parliament in 2010. Sweden Democrats adopted a clear anti-EU position from the start, with the party leader Jimmy Åkesson even claiming this issue was the main reason why he originally joined the party in the 1990s (Åkesson, 2013).

The 2014 election took place just a couple of months before the national, regional, and local elections in Sweden. Consequently, campaigning resources were limited, and it was anticipated the EU elections were a rehearsal for the upcoming general elections. Even if there were signs that some posters used slogans that would be recycled for the later campaigns, the European election mainly focused on EU perspectives. The pro-EU parties promoted collaboration, with the Social Democrats and Greens both prioritizing environmental and social rights. Nevertheless, some parties generally positive towards the EU still qualified their support for membership. For example, the Centre party produced a TV spot where EU bureaucrats were depicted walking around a Swedish landscape counting and measuring accompanied by a voice over from the party leader Annie Lööf claiming that EU regulations were too detailed, and that the energy and resources involved in implementing them should instead be allocated to help resolve environmental problems.

No longer a second order election?

The 2019 European election was a game changer in the history of Sweden election campaigns. The support for the EU was higher than ever before, with around 60% of the population endorsing membership and only around 15% opposing it (Berg et al., 2019). A so-called 'Swexit' was no longer even being proposed by the most critical parties given both the Sweden Democrats and the Left party having abandoned their previous goal of campaigning for the country to leave the EU. Interestingly Swedish voters seemed to have by now rejected the old wisdom of the EP elections being less important. Voter turnout reached a new record with 55% casting their vote. Still, slogans with themes about limiting or expanding the EU dominated the election campaign as many times before (Blomgren, 2019).

Several themes were visible, where some parties promoted stronger environmental measures (such as a carbon tax), which other parties criticised for its potential to hand over too much power to the EU. A similar divide was found upon migration issues, where some parties argued that the EU should be able to make binding decisions while others argued this should be a member state decision. National sovereignty was also debated in relation to the social pillar. Even if all parties defended the social welfare system, there were disagreements whether the national system would be threatened if the EU became more involved in this area. Crime was also a prominent issue during the campaign related to stronger border controls, but cooperation between police authorities and discussions of a future European FBI was also debated (Berg, 2019; Blomgren, 2019).

The two key themes that have dominated the

Image 7.03: Moderate Party poster. The party has traditionally been one of the most EU-friendly Swedish parties, but in this poster and others from the same election (2004) the party promoted the limitations of European power. The text on the posters says 'The forest and the agriculture are in Sweden, not in Brussels' where the EP candidate Peter Wachtmeister stands on a tractor (in suit and tie). 2004 European Parliamentary elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 7.05: Green Party poster. The Green party has often used contrasting slogans with a humorous twist in their political communication. One of the posters in the 2009 campaign featured the appeal 'Raise the emission demand levels in Brussels, lower the sea level in the oceans' illustrated by a picture of the well-known Brussels statue Maneken pils. 2009 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 7.04: The Pirate Party poster posed the question 'Which big brother will be removed?' illustrated by a picture of a serious agent/security person next to a teen boy carrying a younger boy on his shoulders. 2014 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 7.06: Sweden Democrats Poster. During European elections the Sweden Democrats' main theme has been about leaving the EU or, at least, minimising the influence of Brussels. Critiques of increased federation, bureaucracy and forced regulation have been a recurrent feature of the party's campaign appeals. In 2014 the message was condensed into one slogan 'Brussels out of Sweden – Vote for Sweden in the EU election on May 25th'. 2014 European Parliamentary election. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 7.07: Christian Democrats posters. The well-known public service television journalist Lars Adaktusson left journalism to become a politician for the Christian Democratic party. His journalistic background was acknowledged during the campaign with the message 'Send an investigative journalist to Brussels'. The implicit message of the poster was that even if the party supported membership, the EU needed to be controlled. 2014 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 7.08: Christian Democrats poster. The party used a Trump inspired slogan 'Make the EU lagom again' in the 2019 campaign. The word 'Lagom' (moderate) is often said to be unique to the Swedish language, but it has equivalents in other languages, meaning something that is 'not too much and not too little'. 2019 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 7.09: Left Party poster. Top candidate Malin Björk and party leader Jonas Sjöström stand together with voters. The campaign slogans were comprised of contrasting concepts that the party supported and opposed. On this one 'Oil lobbyists' is crossed over while 'Climate activist' is not. The general slogan on all posters was 'A united Europe for everyone, not the rich only. Vote for the Left Party on May 26th'. 2019 European Parliamentary Elections. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Swedish EU debate are firstly different policy positions along a left-right ideological scale, secondly the power of the EU where the debate is about if the EU should be delegated legislative power in specific issues. However, the latter also includes the broader question of EU integration and where the EU is heading. This tension between policy position and the delegation of power caused the biggest political scandal in the history of Swedish EU election campaigns. The Christian Democrats had cast their vote in the EP on what could be seen as being against women's rights to abortion. The party—and the MEP Lars Adaktusson—had a hard time trying to explain that the vote was opposing the issue being dealt on at the EU level, not on the party's position on women's rights. This scandal was revealed by a journalist on the broadsheet newspaper Dagens Nyheter and later used by other parties to question the party's position on abortion. The scandal became a dominant story; the image of the Christian Democrats became very unflattering both on social media campaigns and the media (Johansson, 2020).

The 'lagom' way

When looking back at the six EU elections held in Sweden, they can be at once characterised by stability and change From a country where the membership was contested and the Euro was rejected, the Swedish view of the EU has become more positive and after a declining trend, the voter turnout changed to rise to levels above the EU average (even if voting is voluntary in Sweden). The 2019 election campaign was also more engaged among voters, parties, and news media (Johansson, 2020). Thus, maybe the labelling of EP elections in Sweden as second order elections no longer true. However, even if the EU membership has been normalised in the Swedish political context, one question that has been stable from the beginning and is still there is: more or less EU? The Swedish position toward the EU is sometimes described as pragmatic and policy oriented (Tallberg and Von Sydow, 2017). When it comes to the future institutional issues of the EU, Sweden seems to be quite defensive, holding a sceptical view which is often visible in the campaign. Even pro EU parties express a somewhat defensive position to the EU and from a Swedish perspective, the EU should be 'lagom'.

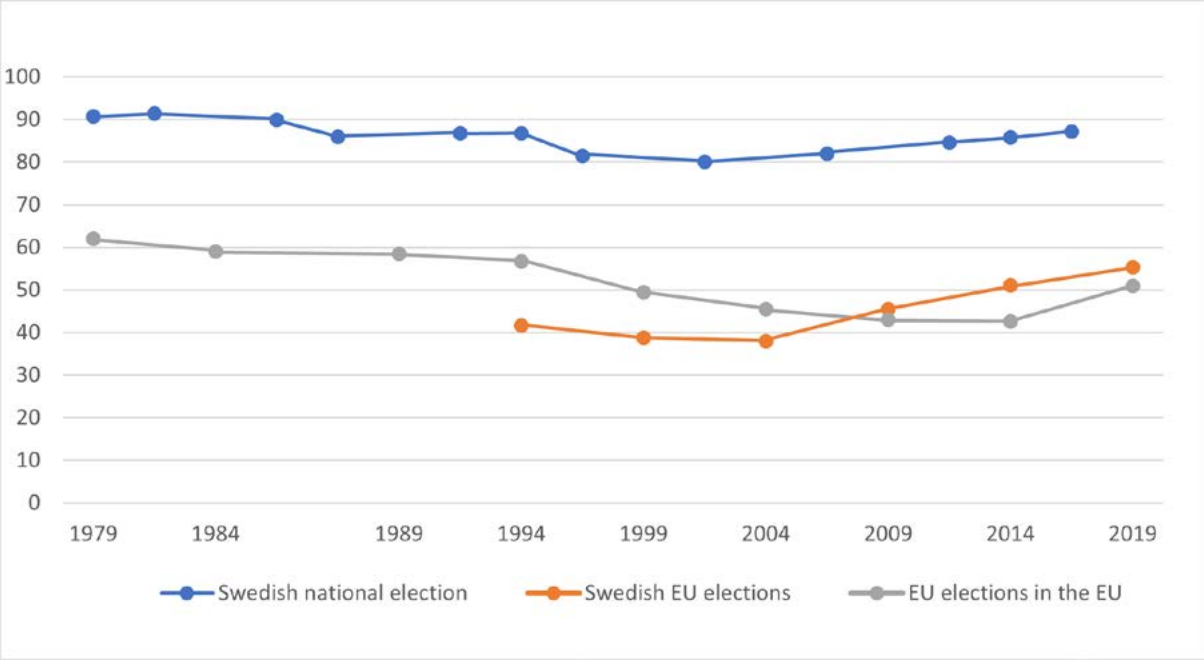

Figure 7.01: Voter turnout in the Swedish EU elections, Swedish national elections and EU elections in the EU (percent). Source: Author's own calculations based on data from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/sv/valdeltagande/

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Chapter 8: Czech Republic

Marcela Konrádová and Anna Shavit

Introduction: 20 Years in the Union

The Czech Republic has been a member of the EU for twenty years. It is a continuing story of a complicated relationship that undoubtedly benefits the Czechs. On the contrary, the Czech Republic can sometimes be an incomprehensible partner for the European Union (EU). The Czech Republic has long presented itself as a Eurosceptic country, yet EU membership is seen by its citizens as conventional, necessary, and economically beneficial. Criticism or Euroscepticism has its roots in the rhetoric of the first MEPs (sentiments such as 'Brussels dictates, Brussels says,' were common, and they are often used by politicians as a figure of speech and even by media). It may also be an accidental legacy of many years of membership in various international organisations of which communist Czechoslovakia was a member (such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and others).

The decision to join the EU was taken in a national referendum in May 2003. For the public, entering the EU was not just seen as becoming a member of an international organisation but as an explicit 'return' of the Czech Republic to Europe. It corresponded to the feeling that the Czech Republic was forced to adopt a pro-Russian or pro-Soviet orientation after the Second World War. Joining the EU confirmed the Czech pro-Western value stance and a clear distinction against Russia, signalling that Czechia is part of 'Western Europe'.

Back to Europe

The Czechoslovak political representation expressed interest in membership in the European Community (EC) in 1990, just one year after the Velvet Revolution (that became a label for a peaceful transition from the communist regime to a democratic one). After the fall of the communist regime in the country, the 'Return to Europe' was part of one of the central conflict lines—communism vs. anti-communism. The carrier of the democratic transition and the dominant force on the political scene, the Civic Forum headed by Václav Havel, even chose the slogan 'Back to Europe' for the first democratic elections. Havel claimed that Czech Republic (Slovakia) has historically been an integral part of Europe; however, its connection was severed by the communist regime. He aspired to reclaim that historic alliance within Europe.

Although an association agreement was concluded in 1991 (then together with Hungary and Poland), the split of the Czechoslovak Federation at the end of 1992 meant that the ratification process was suspended (Konrádová and Konrád, 2019: 1). However, returning to Europe was a priority for all Czech governments, and there was unprecedented political consensus on joining the EU. Of the parliamentary parties at the time, only the Communist Party (KSČM) had a long-standing ambiguous position on the issue of accession. However, it eventually launched a campaign against EU accession.

The application to join the EU was submitted by the right-wing government of Václav Klaus in 1996, and accession negotiations began two years later (under the leadership of then Deputy Foreign Minister Pavel Telička). Pre-accession negotiations were concluded at the end of 2002, and the European Council decided to admit the Czech Republic and nine other European states on 1 May 2004 (Euroskop, 2019). The Czechs approved the accession in a national referendum held in June 2003, with a turnout of 55.21% of eligible voters and 77.33% in favour of accession. The entry of the Czech Republic into the EU was essentially a continuation of the smooth development of the interwar political situation, which was only temporarily halted by the communist regime (Dyba, 2004: 80). This was also evident in the government's 'Welcome to the Community' campaign (see Images 8.01), which was not merely informative—the 'Objectives of the Communication Strategy' document referred to the government's programme statement, which identified EU accession as a programme priority. The campaign aimed to convince citizens of the benefits of joining the EU (Vilímek, 2005: 163). The government allocated roughly €8.3 million for the campaign, and it was handled by advertising agencies Leo Burnett, MARK/BBDO, and McCann Erickson Prague at cost only, without any fee, because they considered it too prestigious and essential for the entire country.

The government had been working on a comprehensive communication strategy since 1997 because the complex subject of accession could not be condensed into a 'small' conversation but would instead require long-term and multi-stage communication. The primary effect of the media campaign was to arouse citizens' interest in the issue of the Czech Republic's accession to the EU. Individual parliamentary parties organised various promotional campaigns, which were difficult to distinguish from those organised by the government. Economic

entities also joined the campaign; for example, the then semi-state-owned Czech telecommunication company Telecom (O2 today) undertook to provide a free information line. The EU itself also played a role. The Delegation of the European Commission has been in Prague since 1992 and has published many information leaflets and brochures about the EU and the consequences of accession for Czech citizens. The last actor can be identified as the mainstream media itself, which promoted the accession to the EU, provided varying degrees of space for supporters and opponents of the accession process, and engaged itself to varying degrees (Vilímek, 2005: 160-161).

The campaign was divided into three phases (Adamcová, 2003). The first wave included billboards, TV spots, and prints. The aim was to bring the EU brand closer to the ordinary Czech citizen. The government relied on the messages of model citizens of current member states (e.g., an Irish computer specialist, a Finnish manager, a Greek café owner, a Portuguese fisherman, an Austrian pensioner, and a Spanish bus driver). The visuals were accompanied by the logo - a yellow YES with stars in a circle instead of the letter O on a blue background. The logo's meaning was supposed to be 'everyone says YES to decide on this fundamental issue, YES to ask questions, and YES to come to vote in the referendum'. The second wave took place before the vote on accession to attract as many voters as possible to participate in the referendum, and its symbol was the knot on the European flag. The campaign was extended to radio and the internet. In the event of success, a third phase was planned after the referendum, with a billboard campaign with a simple 'Thank you'.

It must be said that the political consensus has disappeared with the accession to the Union. The EU has become another electoral playground in which the parties compete. Indeed, this election level is lucrative for the parties for several reasons. Firstly, entities that win at least 1.5% of the total valid votes in the European Parliamentary (EP) elections are automatically entitled to a 'contribution to the election costs' (the so-called 'vote allowance') from the state budget. This amounts to CZK 100 for each vote for that entity. The first elections to the EP were held in June 2004, just a month and a half after the Czech Republic's official accession. The harmonisation of Czech and European legislation that preceded the accession directly affected the election campaign. Candidates are legally guaranteed space within the airtime of Czech Television and Czech Radio. A total of 14 hours is reserved for both media. The official start of the campaign is sixteen days before the elections. Political promotion 48 hours before the elections is not allowed. The law also clearly stipulates

Image 8.01: European Union welcome and community campaign logos. Source: Adamcová (2003).

that polls and forecasts cannot be published three days before and during the voting (Law 62/2003, Article 59).

Thirty-one parties and movements stood for election to the EP in 2004. The interest of many entities is also due to the small electoral deposit. Some recessionary or folkloric groups used the candidacy to raise their profile. For example, the daily Mladá Fronta Dnes published profiles of individual candidates on its front page. In commercial advertising, small groups would not have paid for similar advertising. A maximum of 32 candidates could appear on the candidate list. However, many parties did not use the maximum number (Šaradín et al., 2004: 188). Domestic political issues dominated the election campaign. They had little to do with what was going on within the EU itself and with the position of a member state within it (Šaradín et al., 2004: 178).

By law, the election campaign started on Thursday, May 26. For example, the media reported, 'Politicians promise: the campaign will be different. Funny. Original' (Holecová, 2004a: 3). However, the campaign was a big disappointment. To some extent, the form, themes, and voter interest of the first Czech EP elections foreshadowed the subsequent movements. What was common for all political parties was that they resigned themselves to significant events, and their people addressed the voters face-to-face on the streets rather inconspicuously. Most political parties thus concentrated on meetings with citizens. Candidates did not 'pull' on Euro-politics or Euro-themed issues (Holecová, 2004b: 2). Despite the campaign leading up to the accession referendum a year ago, Czech citizens were not sufficiently informed about what Members of European Parliament (MEPs) do and considered Brussels a distant, disconnected place with no natural powers (Kašpar, 2010: 43).

Regarding the campaigns themselves, the Social Democrats (ČSSD) had bet on highlighting its political achievements in its campaign. However, this was not an appropriate step, as the EP elections were essentially a referendum on voters' satisfaction with the current government. The campaign lacked an original idea, a lack of a quality and attractive candidate list, and the expected low turnout also played a role, which certainly did not play into the party's ambitions. The party communicated mainly through public meetings. The Eurosceptic Civic Democrats (ODS) also chose traditional tools for campaigning. However, there was a noticeable effort to introduce new elements in this party. Compared to its competitors, the party relied more on the internet. However, as with other parties, the main emphasis was on election meetings. The party did not use European issues but mainly attacked the ruling parties and declared its defence of national interests. The Christian Democratic Party (KDU-ČSL) surprised many with its campaign. The traditionally conservative party also tried to attract young voters by launching a competition on its website for the most beautiful girl in its movement. The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia ran a modest election campaign, but it bet on a good theme and used its strong leader Miroslav Grebeníček. The Communist Party emphasised national issues and national interests. It also warned of a possible revision of the Benes Decrees, a traditionally sensitive case for the Czech public.1 The party also spread fears of potential domination by large European states (Kašpar, 2010, ch. 4.1).

The disappointment of the first Euro Campaigns was considerable. The vice-president of the Advertising Council, Jiří Mikeš, said bluntly: 'It was a great pity. The head of the Public Opinion Research Agency STEM, Jan Hartl, stated that 'the campaign for the European Parliament elections was generally deplorable and neglected by the political parties, despite their verbal proclamations about how much they cared about our representation in the EU, demonstrated the opposite' (Kramer, 2004: 1). Nevertheless, one can see the first glimpses of the professionalisation of election campaigning in the campaigns, which in general in the Czech Republic dates back to the national elections in 2006 (Matušková, 2010). In this context, it is also important to mention that the parties for the European elections released only one-tenth of the money they gave to campaigns before the national elections. It is not clear how much the parties spent. Still, the following information appeared in the media: the ČSSD had a total of 30 million, as did the ODS, the KDU-ČSL wanted to spend 10 million, while the KSČM wanted to spend 5 million, and the ruling Union of Freedom 6 million crowns (Kopecký and Dolejší, 2004: 2).

From a different perspective, the first elections to the EP represented an imaginary re-entry into the European Western family. The strongly right-wing ODS party won the election, which will continue to present itself as a Eurosceptic party. One of the narratives that is likely to persist in future campaign is that decisions are being implemented by Brussels with little opportunity for Czechs to inform EU policy.

Euroscepticism or Eurorealism?

European integration has long been regarded as an elite project in which citizens could be ignored. This

1 The Benes Decrees, or Decrees of the President of the Republic, were legal documents issued by President Benes during World War II in exile and later in 1945. The ones mentioned here are those that formulated the post-war removal of Czechoslovak Germans. These specific regulations remain highly controversial.

top-down perspective has resulted in describing the European Union (EU) as a compromise-seeking machine that produces 'policy without politics' (Schmidt, 2006: 5). This also applies to the Czech case, where the enthusiasm for joining the Union stemmed from the post-communist cleavage of the old vs. new regime. At the beginning of the Czech-EU relationship, it was challenging to find a political party or movement that would seriously consider alternatives to joining the EU in its then-current form; the mass public was overwhelmingly positive, too (Kopecký and Mudde, 2002: 298). At the same time, the Czechs' relationship with the EU is most often described as sceptical. The result of the referendum to join was positive, but was only 55 percent, the third lowest amongst the new Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) member states.

There is an expression in the Polish language translated as 'Czech movie'. It literally means chaotic, difficult to understand, and very complicated, with absurd and awkward moments. This can be used to illustrate the first years of the Czech Republic in the Union. There was a clear will to join the EU. It was soon followed by the feeling that we had just escaped a totalitarian regime. Now, we are members of the new entity and are once again told how to behave and what to do. On top of that, the media and politicians used expressions such as 'Brussels tells us' and 'The Brussel dictatorship'; a podcast produced by Hospodářské noviny, one of the most read media in the country, was even created under this title (Podcasty et al., 2024).

Another source of Czech Euroscepticism may be the feeling that we are a tiny country within the EU. Though Greece, Sweden, Hungary, and Belgium have the same number of MEPs (21) and Austria, Denmark, Slovakia, and many other countries have fewer, it is still deeply ingrained in Czech society that

Party	Euroscepticism
ANO	HARD
ČSSD	SOFT
ODS	HARD
Piráti	SOFT
TOP + STAN	SOFT
SPD	HARD
KDU-ČSL	SOFT
KSČM	SOFT-HARD

Figure 8.01: Czech Party-political positions in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: Shavit et al. (2022: 338).

we are a small and insignificant country within the EU. It is indeed necessary to recognise this starting point for forming national attitudes. The Czech Republic often presents itself as an illegible partner. This attitude has changed significantly recently, primarily due to foreign policy positions (see Figure 8.01 below).

It is necessary to avoid simplified conclusions and get a clear picture of what the Czechs are sceptical about because it is not so much about whether being in the European Union has been good or bad. Instead, it works as an institution. There is a significant disparity between the positive evaluation of membership and the institution's negative assessment (Czech Radio, 2019). Traditionally, Euro-optimism demonstrates trust in the EU and confidence about its economic and social future; Euroscepticism reflects a negative attitude toward the effectiveness of the EU integration and enlargement. Without relying on any specific ideology, Eurosceptics fear the dilution of national sovereignty, heavy administrative bureaucracy, unequal approach to the different member states, refugee problems, etc. (Shavit et al., 2022: 321-22). Within these two basic categories, we can further distinguish. In our case, the subdivision of Euroscepticism is important: hard Euroscepticism implies the outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to their country joining or remaining members of the EU; soft Euroscepticism is defined as involving 'contingent or qualified opposition to European integration; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001: 5-6). It is interesting how Czech political parties move in these categories. Among many political elites in the Czech Republic, Euroscepticism is widely understood as a 'healthy criticism'. None of the parties openly advocate exiting the EU (Shavit et al., 2022, p 337). Simplification is problematic in the Czech case, as the attitude of one particular party towards the EU differs ideologically during the campaign and on individual issues. The terms 'hard' and 'soft' focus on further European integration, membership, eurozone, etc. The development of these terms and approaches has to be further analysed, and we know this is just an introduction to a much bigger topic. When we say 'complex', we are referring to the rejection of the EU project in terms of administration, the dictates of Brussels, and critical issues (such as adopting the euro). Soft means criticism of ad hoc topics, often somewhat inflated by the media, but also (and above all) marketing attitudes during election campaigns.

Due to previous research and especially data from the Election Monitoring Center, it is possible to divide Czech political parties into the whole group of Euroscepticism (soft and hard; Shavit et al., 2022: 334-339).

It is important to investigate political marketing and campaign techniques to understand Euroscepticism with all its angles and shades. In some ways, the issues are used pragmatically during the campaign, basically to promote the candidates and keep the ideological integrity of the party (Shavit et al., 2022: 334-339). The second EP election campaign (in 2009) in the Czech Republic occurred under specific political conditions. First, it coincided with the Czech presidency of the EU (January–June 2009), which ensured that the European agenda was much more at the centre of the media and public discourse than ever before. Another effect of the presidency was that the leader of the governing coalition, the Civic Democratic Party (ODS), had to hold back its traditionally critical stances towards the EU and, in the campaign, tried to profit from the fact that the party leader, then Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek, was the President of the European Council at the time of the elections. However, even more important was the unexpected vote of no confidence in the ruling government on March 24, which the Social Democratic Party brought about as a result of long-lasting disputes over domestic policy issues. After the government's fall in March, a provisional government was installed, and the Parliament decided to hold early elections in September 2009 (later postponed until the regular term in 2010). In effect, what were initially expected to be standard second-order elections became quasi-first-order elections, at least from the perspective of the leading parties, which used the EP elections as a practice for the forthcoming national elections (Negrine et al., 2011: 79).

The fringe parties ensured the visibility of Europe, with the anti-European parties being more active in communicating their statements. This was apparent not only in the television spots, where the leaders of the three Eurosceptic parties targeted the EU or the Lisbon Treaty much more directly and dramatically, but also on election posters (Negrine et al., 2011: 85). The Social Democrats and the Civic Democratic Party approached the campaign merely as a practice for the upcoming national elections rather than a battle for EP seats.

The main highlights of the 2009 campaign were the ODS election team's placed emphasis on the internet, which was inspired by the Obama campaign, and tried to benefit from social networking tools. It set up a unique election website, created a website criticising its main competitor (ČSSD), and set up a special website offering solutions to the financial crisis. Another unique feature, following the example of Barack Obama, was the establishment of a team of volunteers, the so-called Blue Team. At the same time, the ODS clearly acknowledged its

Image 8.02: ČSSD 2009 election billboard: 'Prevent the return of the ODS. No more child benefit cuts.' Source: Lidovky (2009).

Eurosceptic position when it declared its intention to co-found a new, relatively sceptical faction in the EP together with the British Conservatives (Kašpar, 2010: 50). The KDU-ČSL also tried to modernise its campaign and made extensive use of the internet. They had two communication channels on the YouTube video server: 'one party' and 'one European'.

The left-wing parties, ČSSD and KSČM, relied on traditional election meetings and did not bring anything new regarding political marketing. However, the Green Party, which lost the 2009 Euro elections, took advantage of the growing trend of personalisation in the Czech environment and its campaign, compared to ODS or ČSSD, which also relied on their leaders, can be considered a successful example of a personalised campaign using the personal brand of its leader Ondřej Liška.

The 2004 and 2009 Czech EP elections were framed very expressly - the former took place just one month after EU accession, and the latter was held within the Czech EU Council Presidency. Thus, the 2014 EP elections were, from this perspective, the first 'normal' EP elections as they were not affected by any important EU-related event as in the previous cases (Kaniok, 2015: 7). The Czech party landscape had almost wholly transformed during the five years since the 2009 EP elections. Almost all relevant parties changed their leaders (some of them not only once), and the arrival of new parties and political movements introduced new strong figures. There were 39 lists registered for the EP election altogether; however, most did not have a real chance to reach the 5% threshold from the beginning of the campaign. The new political actors, especially the ANO movement—a strongly personalised party classified as a business firm—built their political success on political marketing in the primary elections.

The EP election in 2014 was the least visible and interesting campaign in modern nationwide elections held in the Czech Republic, with the lowest voter turnout (18.20 percent) in history. It does not mean that both the parties and media ignored the election, but the intensity of coverage through billboards, adverts, meetings, and TV debates was notably reduced. Only those engaged in politics and European integration and, of course, the politicians themselves demonstrated interest (Kaniok, 2015: 14). General valence statements and empty slogans prevailed within party manifestos (Havlík, 2014). Concerning governmental parties, it was sometimes challenging to distinguish amongst them, especially in the case of ANO 2011 and ČSSD. Relevant parties stressed the same topics (and policy agendas) that were important in the case of the 2013 parliamentary election. As Kaniok and Havlík (2014) identified, parties preferred the European level of governance as a governmental frame. The campaign preceding the election was hardly visible, lacking any contentious issues—the previous campaigns financially exhausted parties who could not pump much money to keep voters engaged. The ruling parties were consumed more with their intra-governmental agenda and dis-

Image 8.03: ANO election billboard. 2014. European Parliamentary elections. Source: Authors' archive.

Image 8.04: ČSSD election billboard. 'Strike to unfair wages. For a fair Europe'. 2014 European Parliamentary Elections Source: Chrudimské Noviny (2019).

Image 8.05. SPD 2019 billboard: 'Czech Republic first! Together against the Brussels dictate.' European Parliamentary elections. Source: SPD (2019).

Image 8.06: ANO election billboard: 'We will protect Czechia. Tough and uncompromising.' 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: Deník N (2019).

Image 8.07: Top 09 election billboard. 'Vote for allies, vote for EU, stronger together.' 2019 European Parliamentary elections. Source: TOP 09 (2019).

putes (Kaniok, 2015: 16).

The 2019 elections were a clear victory for the ANO movement. It also led to the election of the Pirate Party and the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) movement. Turnout was significantly higher, and the campaign was visible, sophisticated, and surprisingly dominated by European issues. At the same time, many parties began to present themselves as increasingly Euro-realist. This is an effort to distinguish themselves from parties that are critical of the EU in an unambiguous way and, on the contrary, to present themselves as a party that can effectively identify the problems of the Union and offer constructive solutions. Parties were divided into pro-EU candidates and those labelling them Euro-realist. The SPD here also used their international colleagues, Marine Le Pen and Matteo Salvini. Nationalism and 'protection' of the Czech values were the strongest motives of this campaign.

Second-order Elections in Practice

What can we say about the Czech elections to the European Parliament? It shows that there is a lack of voter interest, with turnout much lower than in the general elections (historically the lowest turnout in the European elections was 18.20 percent, while the highest turnout in the parliamentary elections was 65.43 percent). The campaign's topics often focus

on domestic issues rather than European agendas. Moreover, the ruling government parties are penalised electorally at the expense of opposition or non-parliamentary parties. This fully reflects the theory of ranked choice voting as defined by Reif and Schmitt in 1980. Although we have no ambition to prove the validity of the unidimensional criteria of the theory in the Czech Republic, the trend is clear. Nevertheless, what is the consequence?

The Czech Republic has been a member of the European Union for 20 years and faces its fifth European Parliament election. As a country, Czechs are perceived as Eurosceptics. This is proven not only by the voter turnout figures, which have not exceeded the 30% threshold since accession and the first elections in 2004 and even reached only 18.2% in 2014, the second lowest of all member states, but also, as we described above, by the attitude and mindset of the leading political heavyweights in the country. Political parties, or political representation in general, need to sufficiently communicate the benefits and importance of EU membership and use elections to the European Parliament and election campaigns as a tool of domestic political struggle. With few exceptions, Czech politicians have made the EU a scapegoat on which they blame their purely domestic failures. They have failed to understand, or more accurately admit in their hunt for votes in the next elections, that the interests of the Czech Republic can only be defended within the framework of a much stronger union (Šabata, 2019).

On an individual level, however, the reputation of the Czech MEPS in the Union is outstanding. They are perceived as hardworking, fast, reliable, and always strive to get results when possible (Euroskop, 2023). In 2020, the influential Politico server ranked two Czech women among the 20 most influential women in the European Union. Dita Charanzová, an MEP for ANO, is said to have a 'leading role in the European Parliament on technological issues'. This is at a time when support for digitalisation and new technologies is becoming one of the key issues in politics today (Houska, 2020). In 2023, she finished sixth in the ranking of the most active MEPs (EUmatrix, 2023). The second Czech on the list was EU Commissioner Věra Jourová. She even appeared among the 100 most influential people in the world in 2019 (Gavenda, 2019).

The current political representation of the Czech Republic also contributes to their good reputation. The Czech Presidency of the Council of the European Union was considered successful (Europeum, 2023), focusing, amongst other issues, on imposing additional sanctions against the Russian Federation. Prime Minister Petr Fiala was also one of the first European politicians to visit Ukraine in March 2022 (ČTK, 2022). The current government is powerful in its support for Ukraine and, currently, Israel and thus represents a strong voice in Europe. However, these attitudes significantly impact the local economic situation, and we can assume that the elections will be crucial for the opposing parties. The 2024 elections will undoubtedly be extremely important in European and local terms.

Conclusion

What can we conclude about the Czech EU membership? According to the Czech Centre for Public Opinion Research CVVM, more than two-fifths (41%) of Czech citizens are satisfied with the Czech Republic's membership in the European Union, more than one-fifth (21%) are neutral, and more than one-third (36%) are dissatisfied. Approximately two-thirds of the public think that European integration is beneficial in the areas of defence (65%) and culture (64%). In comparison, most respondents positively assess cooperation in ecology (55%) and the economy (53%). The least frequently assessed area of European integration by the Czech public is politics, which is perceived as beneficial by more than two-fifths (44%) of respondents. A comparable proportion (46%) believe it to be harmful. The most common view of the Czech public's attitudes towards strengthening or weakening integration is that the level of EU integration should remain about the same as in the future. Approximately two-thirds of Czech citizens (66%) believe the Czech Republic should be a member of the European Union. In contrast, the opposite opinion, i.e., that the Czech Republic should not be a member of the EU, was expressed by three-tenths of respondents (30%) (Čadová, 2023).

Another interesting fact is that Czechia is not a Eurozone member and is one of the few countries with its currency. Czech society still has a largely negative attitude towards adopting the Euro. Almost three-quarters (73%) of Czech citizens are not in favour of adopting the Euro as the currency of the Czech Republic, while less than a quarter (22%) of Czech citizens are in favour of adopting the Euro (Čadová, 2023). In his New Year's Speech, President Petr Pavel expressed that this should change soon (Novinky, 2024), surprising many.

The election campaign in 2024 will likely focus on pro-western values, expressing the need for additional support for Ukraine by some parties and strong protection of the Czechs by other parties with strong criticism of the governing parties. Another crucial issue will be migration and the sustainability of the life standards.

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Chapter 9: Hungary

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Introduction

Examining the outcomes of the four European Parliament (EP) elections in Hungary from a broader perspective is akin to observing a repetitive video, wherein the victor remains constant. Fidesz has achieved success in all four EP elections held so far, while the balance of power between their rival parties has changed in each instance. Despite these shifts, challengers have consistently struggled to make significant inroads against the prevailing dominance of Fidesz. In the years 2004 and 2009, Fidesz emerged victorious from opposition, whereas in 2014 and 2019, it was the incumbent governing party at the time of its triumphs. The communicative strategy of the winning party has also evolved. In the first two campaigns, it reflected upon EP elections through the lens of domestic political developments, whereas in subsequent campaigns, it mobilised voters by critiquing the European Union (EU), colloquially referred to as 'Brussels'. Conversely, other political entities in the EP campaigns predominantly conducted pro-EU campaigns. These endeavours were occasionally employed either to divert attention from domestic policy concerns (as witnessed in 2004 and 2009) or to present an alternative viewpoint countering Fidesz's EU criticism (as observed in 2014 and 2019). Nonetheless, all these campaign themes demonstrated limited efficacy in motivating voters to participate in the electoral process, prompting the need for an overarching theoretical framework to examine the EP campaigns in Hungary.

The most common theoretical framework employed in the analysis of EP elections is the second-order election model, as proposed by Reif and Schmitt in 1980. Since its conceptualisation, this model has undergone rigorous examination and scrutiny by the authors and other scholars with varying results (Hix and Marsh, 2011; Marsh, 1998; Reif et al., 1997). Nonetheless, its fundamental principles are still considered to be valid expectations for these elections. The foundational theory describes these elections as contests characterised by lower stakes compared to first-order elections, resulting in diminished voter turnout, weaker performance of incumbent parties, and heightened performance of smaller and new parties. Before undertaking a detailed examination of European election campaigns in Hungary, we will provide a comprehensive overview of the four previous elections. However, it is important to note that the evaluation of the second-order election model's validity is beyond the scope of this study.

Electoral system

As of 2023, Hungary is represented in the EP by 21 members. Initially, 24 representatives were elected in 2004 in accordance with the Treaty of Nice (2001). Subsequently, this number was reduced to 22 with the accession of new member states in 2007, and further decreased to 21 upon Croatia's integration into the community.

Hungarian representatives are elected through a proportional system, wherein the entire national territory comprises a single electoral district with a magnitude of 21. Seats are allocated using the D'Hondt method among closed party lists that secure at least 5% of the national vote.[1] Political parties are required to collect 20,000 signatures from Hungarian citizens with voting rights to register their lists. Since Hungary's accession, no major reform has been implemented to this system (Act CXIII of 2003 on the election of the Members of the European Parliament). An important alteration to the electoral rules occurred in 2018 when the National Assembly facilitated voting by mail for Hungarian citizens lacking permanent residence in the country. This modification explicitly extends voting rights to individuals residing outside the European Union territory. The legislative decision owes its significance to a specific event in Hungarian history. After the First World War, the country lost approximately two-thirds of its territory and half of its population in accordance with the Treaty of Trianon, resulting in a high number of ethnic Hungarians losing their citizenship and living in foreign countries (Hajdú, 2020). The majority of their descendants reside in the neighbouring countries. In 2012, individuals that could prove their Hungarian lineage were granted the opportunity to gain citizenship and voting rights for parliamentary election. This provision can be considered a continuation of the government's effort to enfranchise them and enables individuals

1 The D'Hondt method is used for allocating seats in a proportional manner. A series of quotients are generated for each party by dividing their votes with consecutive integers up to the total number of seats to be distributed. Seats are assigned for these quotients in a descending order.

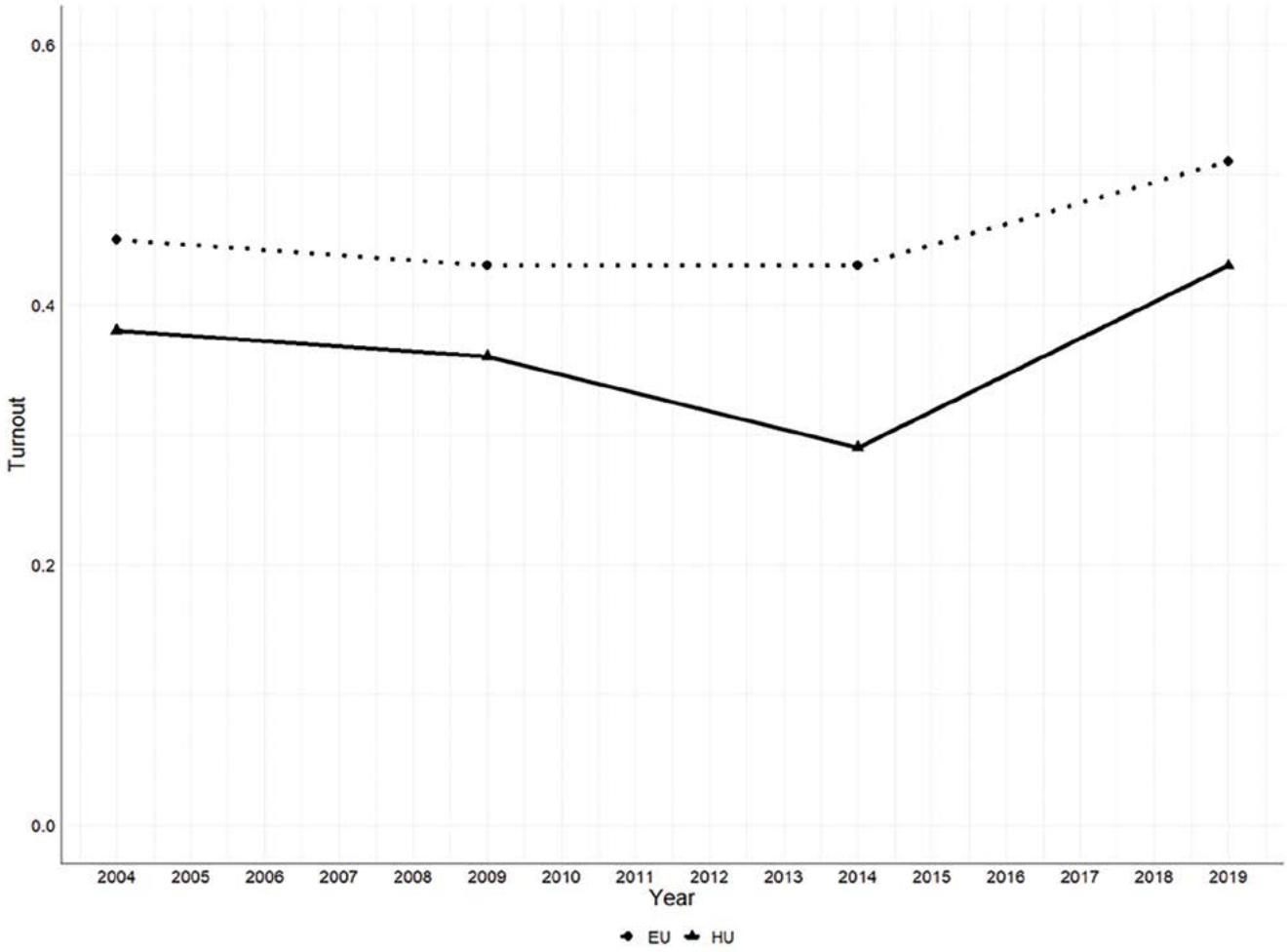

Figure 9.01: European and Hungarian election turnout on EP elections. Source: European Parliament.

who have never resided in the EU to participate in the elections. In 2019, 57,608 such citizens voted, constituting a modest 1.7% of valid votes, exerting minimal influence on the final results. Noteworthy, however, is the fact that 95.97% of these mailed-in ballots endorsed the governing Fidesz-KDNP alliance.

The system used for the election of Members of the European Parliament (MEP) diverges significantly from that employed in legislative elections in Hungary. In the National Assembly, 106 representatives are elected through a single-member plurality system, with an additional 93 securing seats from national party lists in accordance with proportional rules. This hybrid electoral system places substantial emphasis on majoritarian elements, posing challenges for smaller political entities in attaining representation. The inclusivity inherent in the proportional system of European elections, coupled with lower entry barriers—manifested in reduced signature requirements for list registration and more easily attainable seats owing to generally diminished turnout—should strengthen second-order characteristics, rendering it an attractive entry point for new political parties.

Within the context of the second-order election model, temporal alignment with parliamentary cycles emerges as a crucial factor. Elections held shortly after a national contest, during the so-called 'honeymoon period', tend to favour the incumbent governing parties, whereas mid-term elections typically tilt in favour of the opposition. Applying this framework to the Hungarian scenario, the elections of 2004 and 2019 can be characterised as mid-term contests, while 2009 occurred at the conclusion of the parliamentary cycle, preceding the subsequent national election by less than a year. Notably, 2014 squarely fell within the aforementioned honeymoon period, held in June less than two months after the general elections in April.

Turnout

Hungarian voter turnout in European elections is consistently lower compared to both national elections and other member states. In 2004, only

38.5% of eligible voters participated, marking the initiation of a gradual decline that reached its lowest at 28.97% in 2014. However, the most recent elections in 2019 witnessed a notable upswing, when a record-breaking 43.37% of eligible voters decided to cast their ballots. Over the four elections conducted thus far, turnout has consistently been higher in urban centres and lower in small towns and villages. Notably, settlements with more than 25,000 eligible voters consistently surpassed the national average in terms of turnout. The smallest rural villages, however, deviate from this pattern, with those having fewer than 500 eligible voters also recording an above-average turnout. Although Hungarian turnout remains below the European average, it intriguingly aligns with international trends, experiencing a decline in 2014 followed by a substantial increase in 2019.

Results

According to the second-order election model, governing parties are typically expected to underperform in European elections, particularly in later stages of the parliamentary cycle. In Hungary, however, the government-opposition dynamic appears to have less influence, revealing an alternate pattern. Fidesz, in alliance with a smaller right-wing party, has emerged victorious in all four European elections since Hungary's accession, even during their time in opposition. Except for 2004, where they secured 47.4%, Fidesz consistently received an absolute majority of valid votes: 56.36% in 2009; 51.48% in 2014; and 53.78% in 2019.

This sustained success can be attributed to multiple factors. In 2004, the governing coalition of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) faced a political crisis when it was revealed that the socialist Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy had previously worked for the secret service of the Hungarian People's Republic. This scandal contributed significantly to his eventual resignation after the elections. In 2009, domestic politics again favoured the right-wing opposition as a leaked speech by the socialist Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, in which he admitted to lying in the 2006 campaign about Hungary's economic performance, led to a loss of public support. Fidesz capitalised on this discontent, orchestrating a successful referendum in 2008 where the majority of voters rejected the socialist-liberal government's reform plans, leading to the dissolution of the coalition with the liberals. Subsequently, Gyurcsány resigned and the selection of his successor, in an unusually public process, further eroded confidence in left-wing parties by the 2009 European elections. The transformative shift continued into the 2014 elections, where the quasi-two-party system began to evolve into a dominant party structure (Enyedi, 2016), with Fidesz in a hegemonic position, securing an absolute majority in both 2014 and 2019. In further sections, we will elaborate on how Fidesz campaigns used these favourable situations to their advantage.

Small parties, new parties and mobilisation

According to the second-order model and due to the relative inclusivity of the electoral system, EP elections are expected to be an attractive avenue for new political entities. Despite the Hungarian party system experiencing several major shifts since the country's accession, only two extra-parliamentary parties managed to secure seats in the European Parliament: the radical right-wing Jobbik in 2009 and the centre-liberal Momentum in 2019. Notably, both parties had participated in the preceding general election but fell short of the 5 percent threshold, indicating that the European campaign did not initially serve as their entry point into national politics.

To evaluate the performance of small parties across the four European elections, examining their results in proportion of the votes they had received in earlier general elections provides valuable insights. While political preferences may evolve over time, this calculation offers a preliminary estimate of each party's efficacy in mobilising their prior voter base.[2] Results indicate a varied performance among small parties, with Fidesz outperforming most competitors in terms of mobilisation. Parties such as Jobbik in 2009, Momentum, and the Democratic Coalition (DK) in 2019 experienced exponential growth, reflected in their higher mobilisation index. Conversely, certain small parties, including Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) in 2009, LMP in 2014, and both Jobbik and LMP (Politics Can Be Different until 2020, LMP – Hungary's Green Party since then) in 2019, encountered challenges in mobilising their base for European elections. The data suggests that, generally, small parties do not hold a distinct advantage in these contests. Nonetheless, the European elections provide opportunity for voters to realign their political allegiance and reshape the distribution of support within the opposition, albeit without causing significant change in the dominant

2 To calculate this, we divided the number of votes received by each party list on the elections to the European Parliament with the number of votes they had received in the previous parliamentary contests. We used the 2002 results for 2004, the 2006 results for 2009, the 2014 results for 2014, and the 2018 results for 2019. The resulting index would take the value of 1 if a party could mobilise all their voters (or at least the same number of voters) from the previous elections.

Party	European Party affiliation	2004	2009	2014	2019
Fidesz-KDNP	EPP	47.40%	56.36%	51.48%	53.78%
MDF	EPP (2004), ECR (2009)	5.33%	5.31%	-	-
MSZP	PSE (2004), S&D	34.30%	17.37%	10.90%	6.76%
SZDSZ	ALDE	7.74%	2.16%	-	-
Jobbik	NI	-	14.77%	14.67%	6.51%
DK	PES	-	-	9.75%	16.44%
Együtt-PM	Greens/EFA	-	-	7.25%	-
LMP	Greens/EFA	-	-	5.04%	-
Momentum	Renew Europe	-	-	-	10.05%

Figure 9.02: Results of the European Parliament elections in Hungary for parties that reached the legal threshold at least once. Source: European Parliament, 2019; Hungarian National Election Office, 2019.

position of the governing parties.

Fidesz in opposition, 2004 and 2009

As previously noted, Fidesz, along with its coalition partner, has consistently secured victory in all EP elections held in Hungary since 2004, irrespective of its position within the government-opposition dichotomy. A distinctive feature that sets apart the election campaigns of 2004 and 2009 from those in 2014 and 2019 lies in the characteristics of the party system: whereas in the former instances Fidesz contended with one relatively robust left-wing party, in the latter instances Fidesz confronted numerous smaller adversaries, having already established a hegemonic position.

The EP election campaigns brought success for every significant party except MSZP in 2004. The EP election provided an evaluative opportunity for the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition. However, economic challenges, uncertainties surrounding EU accession, and budgetary restrictions announced between 2003 and 2004 constrained the campaign's thematic scope for the government (Lakner, 2005). Despite pertinent issues such as imminent tax modifications, governmental reorganisation, healthcare reform, and proposed social legislation dominating the media agenda during the campaign period, the government sought to divert attention from these subjects. The MSZP attempted to incorporate favourable economic indicators into its communication, emphasising GDP growth, while the opposition highlighted the national budget deficit. Nevertheless, the government started the campaign from a disadvantaged position and struggled to dictate the narrative (Világgazdaság, 2004). Furthermore, the popularity of the governing parties substantially declined due to the incumbent Prime Minister's involvement with the secret services, coupled with internal conflicts within the party, leading to a considerable surge in support for Viktor Orbán's Fidesz. Major research institutes universally predicted a victory for Fidesz, with some anticipating a 10% advantage (Political Capital, 2004, June 8).

In the initial phase of the campaign, Fidesz introduced the so-called 'national petition', distinct from the more recent 'national consultations', positioning itself strategically within ongoing discussions. The document delineated five pivotal points for the national budget, with a notable focus on various social issues, encompassing housing, affordable food, gas, and medicine prices. Additionally, it articulated positions against hospital privatisation, advocated for job preservation, and expressed support for national farmers (Fábián et al., 2010). Fidesz successfully garnered over one million signatures in

support of the petition, although critics, including some competitors, contended that this could be construed more as a campaign tactic than a genuine political intention, given that amending the budget required a parliamentary decision (Political Capital, 2004, April 16).

As the campaign progressed, its tone took on an increasingly confrontational character, with Fidesz emphasising the theme of national debt and attributing responsibility to the governing parties. This narrative culminated with Fidesz disseminating pamphlets, designed to resemble actual postal cheques, to citizens, captioned 'Your debt', enumerating the per capita public debt amount. Furthermore, Fidesz flyers forecast impending price increases for various products (e.g., a 19% rise in gas prices, a 30% increase in the price of sugar, and a 42% increase in the price of potatoes), while attributing the situation to the 'banker government' (Fábián et al., 2010: 320).

In contrast, the MSZP predominantly relied on positive messaging aimed at highlighting past governmental achievements, such as a 50% wage increase in healthcare, education, and social sectors, tax-free minimum wage, and augmented family allowances. Their communication centred around the slogan 'Others only talk, MSZP works'.

The MSZP attempted to employ a previously efficient election rhetoric emphasising unity, with the Prime Minister proposing early in the campaign that parliamentary parties should contest the elections on a unified list (Enyedi, 2006). However, as the election date approached, MSZP's messaging took on a progressively negative tone. For instance, they published a booklet titled 'Best of [László] Kövér', featuring controversial statements by the Fidesz party's chairman (Bohus, 2004). Efforts aiming for European-level unity persisted until the conclusion of the campaign. At MSZP's concluding campaign event, party leader and Foreign Minister László Kovács articulated a commitment to sending representatives to the EP who were disinclined to engage in gratuitous quarrels (MTV, 2004).

Concurrently, the two smaller parties that secured mandates, SZDSZ and MDF, successfully pursued a process of emancipation from their coalition partners during the campaign. SZDSZ adhered to classic liberal themes, rejecting intolerance, domestic violence, nationalism, and high taxes. Notably, they introduced a distinctly EU-centred topic, advocating for cities to receive a larger share of EU funds (Enyedi, 2006). Conversely, the MDF sought to differentiate itself from Fidesz and foster autonomy, employing slogans such as 'normal Hungary' (Hegedűs, 2004).

As a result, despite a favourable political climate, the campaign proved to be triumphant for Fidesz, securing 47.4% of the votes and thus obtaining twelve seats (out of the 24 at the time) in the European Parliament. Their principal opponent, the MSZP, trailed them with 34.3%t of the votes, securing nine seats. While Fidesz utilised its mid-term victory to absolve itself of lingering political responsibility for the 2002 national election defeat, the aftermath for MSZP resulted in the resignation of incumbent Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy. He was succeeded by Ferenc Gyurcsány, whose political figure subsequently played a pivotal role in Fidesz campaigns.

Despite Fidesz's triumph in the 2004 EP elections, the party encountered a setback in the 2006 national parliamentary elections, consequently entering the 2009 European election campaign once again from opposition. However, the political landscape underwent a subsequent shift. A key development in the election was the abrupt ascent of Jobbik. The far-right party's success was primarily attributed to the sustained prominence of the topic of Roma murders on the national agenda. The Tiszalök murder, in particular, garnered such significance that major media outlets accorded more attention to this issue than to the EP elections themselves (Szabó, 2010).3 Ongoing investigations and court proceedings related to the case, coupled with the activities of the Hungarian Guard, consistently provided grounds for referencing Jobbik, although their politicians were seldom afforded opportunities to speak in news programs. During this period, the term 'Gypsy crime' permeated public consciousness, with the far-right party unequivocally dominating the narrative on this subject (Karácsony et al., 2010). Jobbik's campaign posters featured slogans such as 'Hungary belongs to the Hungarians!', adorned with the colours of the national flag, and frequently incorporated expressions like 'The New Force' or the promise of reconquering Europe (Nagy, 2009).

As previously mentioned, the leaked speech of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány significantly undermined support for the government, a development characterised by the opposition as a 'crisis of legitimacy'. Subsequently, the 2008 global financial crisis further eroded the government's standing, compelling the implementation of austerity measures that were met with widespread public disapproval. Moreover, in December 2008, the

3 For more information about neo-Nazi murders of Roma in 2008 and 2009 see: European Roma Rights Centre (2022, September 5): *Hungary: Neo-Nazi Murderer Finally Admits His Guilt 13 Years After the 'Roma Killings' and Confirms Two Members of the Death Squad Remain Free*. Errc.org. http://www.errc.org/news/hungary-neo-nazi-murderer-finally-admits-his-guilt-13-years-after-the-roma-killings-and-confirms-two-members-of-the-death-squad-remain-free.

Image 9.01: newspaper advertisement for the Hungarian Socialist Party 'Others only talk, MSZP works'. Source: Népszava (2004, June 4:1).

government's position in a national referendum (termed 'social referendum')[4] fell short of the opposition standpoint, indicative of a measurable shift in public opinion. The political climate grew pessimistic, prompting Ferenc Gyurcsány to announce in March 2009 that he was willing to resign if the governing parties identified a replacement in due time. In response to this tumultuous situation, Fidesz's campaign was formulated around the imperative for change, featuring key slogans such as 'New direction, Yes, Hungary can do better!', and 'A nation says ENOUGH'.

The primary antagonist of the Fidesz campaign was Ferenc Gyurcsány and his government, due to their perceived shortcomings in the management of the economic crisis. A noteworthy illustration of this facet of the campaign is the creation of a blog titled 'Gyurcsány is to blame'.[5] This blog aimed to capture and sustain the attention of voters, explaining how the errors in crisis management exacerbated Hungary's financial situation, leading to consequences such as factory closures, post office shutdowns, and school mergers. To amplify the dissemination of these messages, stickers with the same slogan were strategically placed throughout the country, appearing on public transport vehicles and in public squares. While the actual campaign itself was relatively brief, such tools contributed to the Fidesz campaign capturing the attention of voters beyond the campaign period as well (Mihályffy, 2010: 38–39).

Besides its primary emphasis on the need for change and dissatisfaction with the left-wing government, the 2009 Fidesz campaign incorporated a rather detailed policy program. In an article published in the daily Magyar Nemzet, Viktor Orbán expounded on how Hungary might have faced bankruptcy without EU membership, portraying a vision of a robust Europe with a strong Hungary within it. Simultaneously, he attributed Hungary's current weakened state to the governing parties (Orbán, 2009: p. 1; 6). The party's program outlined various policy agendas, encompassing demographic policy, healthcare, equal opportunities, education, employment policy, energy policy, research and development, environmental protection, and rural development, among other areas (Mihályffy, 2010: 40).

One of the major casualties of the election was the SZDSZ, failing to secure any mandates. Their campaign centred on messages of inclusivity, tolerance, and expertise. Utilising twenty-three individuals representing diverse minorities, they aimed to underscore the diversity of Hungarians within the framework of the 'One Hungary!' campaign (Ördögh, 2010). The MSZP's campaign also featured a rejection of the far-right, with posters conveying the message: 'I won't vote for the right because they collaborate with extremists'. Additional campaign messages focused on national political issues, emphasising the government's prior accomplishments. The visually distinctive concept on the posters highlighted female lead candidates, sympathisers, and group photos of lead candidates and supporters (Nagy, 2009).

In parallel with the 2004 EP elections, the 2009 Fidesz campaign proved highly successful, securing 56.37% of the votes that translated to fourteen seats out of twenty-two. This electoral triumph held particular significance for Fidesz as it foreshadowed the subsequent 2010 general elections, which culminated in a two-thirds majority for Fidesz in the Hungarian parliament. This marked the onset of a new era in Hungarian politics.

The 'illiberal' era of EP elections in Hungary, 2014 and 2019

The 2014 EP elections represent a crucial moment in Hungary's history of European Parliamentary elections. Not only was it the first election year

4 The 'social referendum' involved questions about the elimination of fees within the healthcare and education systems, which had been introduced during the tenure of the second Gyurcsány cabinet. Initiated by the opposition parties (Fidesz–KDNP), this referendum is deemed a distinctive success in Hungary's history of referendums. Notably, it met the stringent criteria for validity and achieved success, boasting an unusually high turnout of 50.51%.

5 The blog is still accessible to this day. See: https://gyurcsanyahibas.blog.hu/

Image 9.02: Jobbik poster 'Hungary belongs to the Hungarians!'
Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

when the roles shifted among the contestants, with Fidesz entering the race from the governing position, but it also marked the inaugural occasion in Hungarian history when the EP and national general elections coincided in the same year. However, this convergence led to diminished interest in the European elections, with a turnout of only 28.97% of eligible voters. Most participating parties had already exhausted their mobilisation potential in the preceding general elections in April 2014. An additional noteworthy consequence was the minimal discernible distinction between parties' European election campaigns and their campaigns for the parliamentary elections. With these factors, Fidesz achieved another triumph, securing twelve seats out of twenty-one.

The primary messages conveyed by Fidesz during the EP campaign were characterised by succinctness and directness, with a noticeable tone of hostility towards the EU, or as presented in the campaign, towards Brussels. Prominent among these messages were the demands for 'Respect for Hungarians!' and exclamations urging to 'Let's send a message to Brussels!'. Furthermore, exceedingly simple messages, such as the recurring slogan 'Only the Fidesz', were prominently featured throughout the campaign. An interesting observation is that some of these slogans were 'salvaged' from the preceding general elections; for instance, on certain billboards, the sentence 'Hungary's Prime Minister' was merely overlaid by the aforementioned messages, eliminating the need to take down the billboards after the general elections, as they were repurposed. Another crucial shift from the previously analysed elections is that in 2014, Fidesz did not face a single prominent challenger as it had in preceding elections. The opposition parties were dispersed and embroiled in internal conflicts, rendering the tactic of straightforward campaign communication ineffective.

The simplification of messages and the absence of substantive policy themes represent one of the most conspicuous changes compared to Fidesz's previous two EP campaigns. This shift can be attributed to various factors, including the growing influence of digitalisation in campaigns, particularly on social media platforms that favour concise and direct messages over comprehensive and informative articles. Another factor is the increasing preference of governing parties to utilise billboards as a primary platform for their campaign messages—not only during campaigns but also throughout the electoral cycle—thus constraining the scope and content of the materials used. Additionally, it is noteworthy that changes in the media landscape have significantly facilitated the acquisition of spaces for billboards by the governing parties, providing further incentive for the parties to lean in this direction.

The European focus of campaign communication was influenced by various events at the European level, including the implementation of the Spitzenkandidat system, the unfolding migrant crisis, and the Euro crisis. However, from Hungary's perspective, it was predominantly Fidesz that kept the country's relationship with the Union on the agenda. Therefore, to discern the main messages of the 2014 EP campaign, one must scrutinise the various interviews given by candidates and

representatives of Fidesz. This examination reveals that, in terms of the campaign themes, the discussion of the EU frequently arose in juxtaposition with 'national independence', characterised by sub-topics such as the early repayment of the IMF debt or the defence of the Hungarian standpoint in conflicts with EU institutions (Kapitány and Kapitány, 2014: 14).

MSZP focused its campaign on the opportunities provided by EU membership, emphasising messages such as EU-level job creation and the economic opportunities within the EU. In contrast to the negative portrayal of the EU by the ruling party, smaller parties like Együtt (Together), PM (Dialogue for Hungary), or LMP highlighted the positive aspects of integration, underscoring the importance of European cooperation (Koller, 2017). Együtt campaigned for the coexistence of national and European identities, rejecting the mutual exclusivity of Hungarian and European identities (Nyugat, 2014).

The DK (Democratic Coalition – formed as a split from MSZP in 2011 and led by former PM Ferenc Gyurcsány) structured its campaign around the theme of European cooperation, articulating its messages based on a vision for the future of the EU, aiming to attract votes with the concept of the United States of Europe. At the party's campaign opening event, the leader, Ferenc Gyurcsány, stated, 'Our world can be more successful if we are not afraid to say that in historical perspectives, we would like to have the United States of Europe' (ATV, 2014). Meanwhile, Jobbik's campaign strongly emphasised patriotism, national identity, and the preservation of national sovereignty against European political processes. The escalating migrant crisis was a central theme, they advocated for reinforced border protection and stricter security measures. Additionally, economic issues, particularly the defence of the national economy, played a significant role in Jobbik's campaign, as evident in the slogan 'Hungarian economy, European income!' (Nyugat, 2014). A representative of Jobbik stated during a press conference introducing the poster campaign that without the realisation of the concept of a Europe of nations, national self-determination and effective national representation, the Hungarian people will not be able to live prosperously in Europe (Hirado.hu, 2014).

The significance of the 2019 EP elections surpassed that of previous years, although it was still considered a second-order election by voters. The path to the election victory of Fidesz was marked by conflicts and confrontations, not only among national political actors but also between Fidesz and the EPP. The latter conflict arose just before the start of the EP campaign. As part of their ongoing tendency to portray the EU (or 'Brussels') as an external entity seeking to 'weaken member states' and dismantle

Image 9.03: Fidesz poster 'A nation says ENOUGH'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 9.04: Fidesz poster 'Let's send a message to Brussels: Respect for Hungarians!'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

national barriers, the government launched a poster campaign targeting Jean-Claude Juncker, the incumbent president of the European Commission. The campaign depicted Juncker alongside Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros, frequently framed within Fidesz narratives as the financier behind all opposition activities—both within the country and at the EU level. The accompanying text on these billboards stated, 'You have the right to know what Brussels is planning', implying that the two portrayed figures aimed to relocate migrants to Hungary. In response to the campaign, on March 20, 2019, the EPP voted to suspend Fidesz's membership. Their reasoning specifically cited the personal campaign against President Jean-Claude Juncker (EPP, 2019).

Throughout the actual campaign, the Fidesz campaign continued to emphasise anti-immigrant sentiments. Frequently recurring slogans included 'Immigration needs to be stopped now and All the immigration supporters will be there, we have to be there too [at the elections]'. The campaign also featured demands seemingly directed at Brussels, urging the EU to stop supporting 'George Soros's NGOs'. Another key aspect of this narrative was the protection of Hungarian identity, values, and families in particular, as well as the Christian cultural heritage in general, which was portrayed as being threatened by a pro-immigrant EU administration.

The tone of the opposition parties' campaign was influenced by the controversial amendment of the overtime employment law, commonly referred to as 'slave law', which sparked widespread protests. This controversial modification remained a prominent issue for months, leading left-liberal opposition parties to unite and collaborate, mobilising opposition voters. The unity observed during the protests even prompted discussions about forming a common EP list (László et al., 2019).

While the government party's campaign focused on immigration-related issues, a significant portion of the opposition sought to avoid this topic. The MSZP-PM coalition primarily addressed national political issues and critiqued Fidesz and Viktor Orbán's governance. The idea of forming a united front permeated their communication, positioning themselves as the sole common list against the government. Most parties relied heavily on traditional campaign tools and social media, utilising billboards. However, Jobbik faced challenges in accessing poster spaces due to fines previously imposed on them by the authorities (Merkovity et al., 2019). The two most successful opposition parties, DK and Momentum, centred their campaigns around EU-related topics. DK aimed to present itself as the 'most European' party, advocating for the United States of Europe and common European social security. Momentum linked itself to the EU through welfare, social dimensions, and also addressed environmental issues in their communication (Merkovity et al., 2019: 136).

The primary platform for the campaign was social media, with a significant focus on the official Facebook profiles of the parties, the Prime Minister, and leading candidates. Facebook emerged as the leading platform, serving as the primary arena for Hungarian public discourse. Opposition parties predominantly relied on this platform to convey their messages, partly due to the limited opportunities for text to appear in traditional media due to overregulation. In contrast to the offline dimension, Facebook saw the dominance of government-critical media and opposition political figures, surpassing the government party and its affiliated online media in terms of advertising spending (Bene et al., 2021). The confrontational nature of the campaign, coupled with victimisation narratives and other factors, led to an unprecedented and record-breaking turnout in the history of Hungarian European Parliamentary elections. However, Fidesz once again secured the absolute majority of votes, winning 13 out of 21 seats.

Conclusion

Fidesz has consistently won all four EP elections since Hungary's accession to the EU. However, the campaign and communication style of the party has evolved significantly since they came to power. In the first two elections, the campaign had elements of protest against the governing parties, incorporating alternative policy ideas and solutions. In later campaigns, Fidesz emphasised its strength and competence as the incumbent party, particularly in standing up to certain EU officials and institutions to protect Hungary's independence.

As observed, policy themes gradually faded from the campaign, and messages became more brief, straightforward, and confrontational, relying on expressive catchphrases to grab voters' attention. The success of this change in campaign style was facilitated by shifts in the party system, with Fidesz holding a hegemonic position against a highly fragmented opposition, reducing the need for meaningful dialogues and deeper policy disputes.

A new era could begin in 2024, as a notable, albeit indirect modification enacted in 2023 stipulates that Hungarian municipal and European elections must be scheduled simultaneously. While formally affecting the timing of local rather than European contests, this change is anticipated to impact voter turnout, with expectations of increased engagement due to the simultaneous scheduling of municipal elections, which traditionally garner more attention.

Image 9.05: MSZP commercial 'Security in Europe (We are also voting for the MSZP list!)'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 9.06: Together-PM poster 'I am both Hungarian and European. What about you?'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 9.07: Jobbik poster 'Hungarian economy, European income!'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 9.10: Momentum commercial 'Looking at the future! (Vote for the Momentum!)'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 9.08: Fidesz poster 'Support Viktor Orbán's programme, stop immigration!'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

Image 9.09: MSZP-PM poster 'The only joint list. We joined together! Homeland, Love, Europe!'. Source: European Elections Monitoring Center.

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Chapter 10: The Last Campaign: the UK's Final European Election

Nathan Ritchie, Dominic Wring and Cristian Vaccari

Introduction

From a British perspective, the European Election of 2019 was an extraordinary event. The campaign took place against a background of an ongoing Brexit related impasse within the House of Commons and resulting domestic political turmoil. That the election happened at all was another manifestation of what seemed an interminable crisis (Vasilopoulou, 2020). Aside from the continuing and often fierce debates between and within those aligned to the so-called 'Leave' and 'Remain' camps, the minority Conservative government led by Theresa May struggled to make any meaningful progress in its negotiations with the European Union over how and when UK membership would cease. Although the 2016 Referendum had endorsed Brexit, the relatively close margin of victory, together with the varied (and subsequent growth in) interpretations over what that result should mean in practice, had only served to intensify a debate that now engulfed British politics.

The background to the Referendum and indeed Brexit itself was linked to surge in support experienced by the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). One of UKIP's most notable achievements was to top the poll in the 2014 European Elections (see Chapter 4), and this success further enhanced the profile and influence of its increasingly visible leader Nigel Farage. UKIP secured an eighth of the popular vote in the following year's national election, but this did not prevent the Conservatives from securing a majority government. Fatefully, within a year, David Cameron felt obliged to call the 2016 Referendum in which he belatedly embraced and led the Remain campaign. Opposing him was an official Leave effort spearheaded by Conservative colleagues Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, both of whom subsequently attempted to replace Cameron following his resignation following the public endorsement of Brexit. Theresa May's subsequent installation in Downing Street failed to resolve the ensuing crisis over how and when the UK would leave the EU. Like Cameron in 2016, she made another sudden decision to go to the country in 2017 but this too ultimately began her eventual downfall when her party lost its parliamentary majority following that year's General Election. May's resignation came after two further years of parliamentary impasse with the catalyst being the outcome of the UK's 2019 European elections: that this vote happened at all further underlined the extent of her government's failure in negotiations with the EU to deliver Brexit.

The analysis in this chapter examines the British experience of the European elections, a campaign that foreshadowed the momentous and subsequently definitive outcome of the General Election held later in the year (Prosser, 2021). Because the country was still an EU member in May 2019 Britons were obliged to vote in the elections and while the broadcast media gave obligatory attention to the subsequent campaign, the most fiercely pro-Brexit newspapers failed to muster anything like the kind of enthusiasm they had displayed during the 2016 Referendum. The last-minute announcement that the UK would be participating in these elections also made for a highly unusual race and one where the only meaningful and detailed communications a party could issue were via social media platforms. This study is based on researching the most popular of these, Facebook, a site adjudged to be one of the most important on account of its widespread reach within the UK population. The parent company had also recently become embroiled in a controversy centring on the activities of the Cambridge Analytica consultancy and, more specifically, the firm's perceived efficacy in being able to influence voters including during the 2016 Referendum itself. Regardless of these allegations, there was a widespread belief shared by politicians that Facebook was potentially important as a relatively low-cost method for targeting parts of an electorate who otherwise might not have been reached via the news media or conventional campaign methods.

An Election Like No Other

Such was the uncertainty de facto Deputy Prime Minister David Lidington only confirmed the UK would be participating in the 2019 EU campaign less than three weeks before polling day on 23rd May. While every election is different, none had come about in quite the same circumstances. And if this was dramatic, then so were the dynamics of this short campaign, the immediate aftermath of which saw the resignation of Theresa May as Prime Minister. The

Party	Seats	Share of vote (%)	Popular vote
Brexit Party	29	30.5	5,248,533
Liberal Democrats	16	19.6	3,367,284
Labour Party	10	13.7	2,347,255
Green Party	7	11.8	1,881,306
Conservatives	4	8.8	1,512,809
Change UK	0	3.3	571,486
UKIP	0	3.2	554,463
Other	7	9.1	1,716,565
Total	73	100	17,199,701

Figure 10.01: Results of the 2019 EP election in the United Kingdom

EP elections saw her governing Conservatives slump to fifth place in the poll, having obtained less than a tenth of the available votes and secured only four parliamentary seats. Far from being the beneficiaries of this spectacular collapse, the principal Labour opposition failed to capitalise and performed only marginally better. By contrast it was the Leave supporting Brexit Party which, only a few months after it had been created by former UKIP leader Nigel Farage, claimed 'victory' by gaining the most seats having topped the poll. Farage's success was in part due to his forthright and repeated demand for the House of Commons to accept the result of the 2016 Referendum. Although deeply opposed to the Brexit Party over the European issue among other policies, the Liberal Democrats were similarly able to articulate the kind of case that helped them comfortably secure second place in an election that marked their best national result in nearly a decade. But for others, this election experience was far from beneficial. Significantly the rejuvenation of the LibDems signalled the beginning of the end for the then newly formed anti-Brexit party Change UK.

The very late notice that the UK would participate in the 2019 EU poll meant party strategists had little time to make their respective preparations. Given there had been relatively little journalistic interest in previous elections of this kind, together with the exponential growth in use of social media over the last decade, it was clear that the online campaign would be of some importance. And while Twitter and other platforms may be favoured by the cognoscenti, Facebook remains the platform of choice for most Britons (Ofcom, 2019). Particularly significant here is its dedicated following among older people, who are those more likely to participate in elections than their younger counterparts (Maier and Nai, 2020). Facebook would therefore be an essential tool for parties seeking to mobilise the widest possible number of prospective voters because of a reach and immediacy invaluable in a barely three-week race. Studying this platform also provides understanding of the strategic thinking and persuasive techniques of rival politicians at a moment where

the public at large also had a further opportunity to participate in a nationwide ballot. While the 2019 EU vote might not have been the most electorally significant given the symbolic nature of it, it was nonetheless another in a sequence of political events at the height of the domestic travails that followed both the Referendum and subsequent General Election. This analysis seeks to better understand and analysis this situation through empirical analysis of the election that was never supposed to have been. The project does so having contemporaneously collected material posted by rival parties in the period covering the most intensive weeks of campaigning across the entire EU. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis of this material provides unique insights into the themes, issues, tone, and personalities that defined the campaign in every country.

For this study Facebook postings from the respective party's official page were coded from May 1, during the build-up to the formal election announcement on May 7, to polling day on May 23 and for the 5 days after. All data was retrieved from the publicly available database of material collated by the EU Parliament sponsored European Election Monitoring Centre (EEMC) investigation which had used a crawler managed by a small AI component to undertake daily capture of content (Novelli and Johansson, 2019). In total, 721 posts were collected for the UK aspect of the project with material filtered according to its relevance to the EP elections. Most obviously this material concerned any direct mentions of elections, candidates, and exhortations to participate such as hashtags like #VoteUkip that accompanied postings. Through manual rather than automated coding procedures, care was taken to ensure other political content was filtered out, notably postings relating to the local government campaign which climaxed in early May. Ramley et al (2019) included all Facebook adverts from the political parties they analysed between 5 April and 23 May, and it is highly probable that some of this material was primarily about the Council rather than the EP elections. Even a declining electoral force such as UKIP retained an interest in local campaigning in 2019, defending the gains they made at this level when the respective seats were last contested in 2015.

This project focused on posts from selected parties' official Facebook pages. Posts of this nature operate as the public face of the party opposed to paid for ads that tend to be targeted towards specific demographics. This study formulated a coding frame adopted from by the codebook devised for the EEMC project, with the key variables being: the presence of the party, and the individual political actors/campaigners; the major issues being addressed; whether content was directly linked to Brexit; if the material was negative and, if so, whom was it rebuking (see also Ritchie et al., 2022). Several variables in the EEMC framework were not adapted because they were irrelevant and these included codes relating to EU phenomena like the so-called 'Spitzenkandidaten'. The codebook was, however, carefully tailored to reflect the particularities of the British experience, most obviously by the insertion of Brexit-related themes to capture the subtlety of related messaging during the campaign.

Taking Sides: Leave, Remain, Other

This study focuses on Facebook content produced by rival parties and whose posts were collected by the EEMC during the campaign: for logistical reasons the project limited the number of parties to a maximum seven in each of the twenty-eight member states. This project therefore includes those that fielded the largest number of candidates throughout the UK which, in practical terms, means the parties that contested all of the seats in Great Britain and collectively won over 90% of the popular vote (see Figure 10.01). For this reason, Northern Irish parties were excluded as were the others that gained seats having only stood candidates in the other devolved nations of Scotland (i.e. Scottish National) and Wales (Plaid Cymru). The Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, Green, UK Independence, Brexit, and Change UK parties were therefore the seven chosen subjects featured in the EEMC database and in the focus of this analysis. The formation of the latter two were, of course, further evidence of the significant changes in the domestic party system since the previous EP elections of 2014.

Despite experiencing various setbacks approaching the 2019 elections, UKIP maintained a large social media following and its continuing influence was reflected in the relatively high number of shares, comments and likes from their Facebook posts during the EU campaign (Ramley et al., 2019). The once dominant pro-Leave party had lost considerable ground in the aftermath of its 2014 triumph following various internal rows over its ideological direction that culminated with several high-profile defections including 21 of its 24 MEPs, among them former leader Nigel Farage. Farage would leave and found his new organisation, the Brexit Party, in January 2019. This febrile environment also saw the launch of Change UK shortly after, a group established to promote the so-called 'People's Vote' in the form of another referendum on UK membership of the EU with Remain as an option. Like their Brexit Party rivals, Change UK chose not to formally contest local elections in spring 2019. There was some

Image 10.01: UKIP post advocating for the UK to adopt World Trade Organisation rules after the implementation of Brexit. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

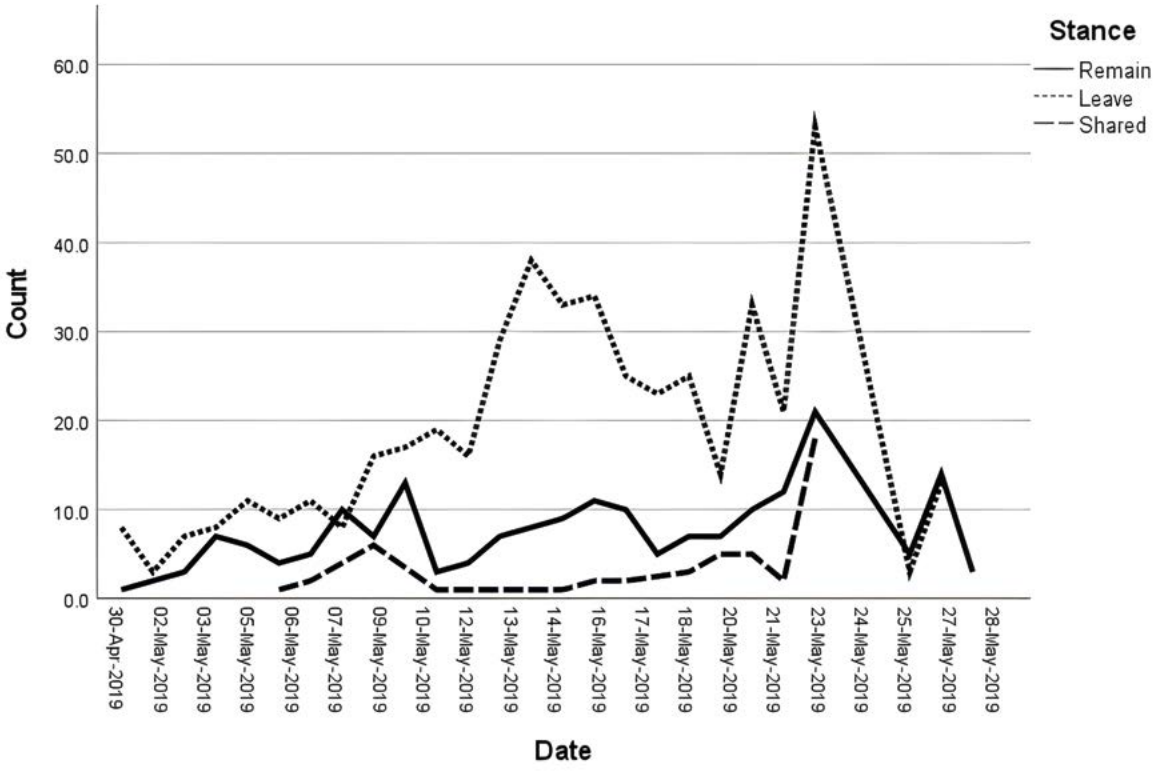

Figure 10.02: Facebook posts: daily variations according to stance on Brexit. Source: Authors own analysis.

speculation over what the presence of these two new, diametrically opposed parties might mean for the highly fractious state of contemporary British politics and beyond. The EP election would afford the opportunity to make their case to the public.

The study distinguishes between the featured parties according to their respective stances over Brexit. The two clear 'Leave' organisations, UKIP and the Brexit Party, defined themselves by their position on the EU issue; both also supported a 'no deal' or exit on 'WTO terms' (Image 10.01). The Liberal Democrats, Greens and Change UK would later participate in a so-called 'Remain Alliance' during December's General Election but were still rivals entering this campaign, in part a reflection of the proportional voting system that benefitted smaller groups. All three advocated for another referendum on EU membership during this campaign, although the LibDems later abandoned this position (in favour of the more controversial revoke policy) in December's General Election. In contrast, the formal positions of the two main parties were ambiguous. While Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn publicly countenanced that Brexit could take place under an incoming Labour government subject to protections of employment and environmental standards, Theresa May struggled to articulate the Conservatives' position given the parlous state of her government which, when the election was called, was reeling from its latest crisis over her sacking of Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson for a charge of misconduct he vigorously denied. So, although the two main leaders accepted the result of the Referendum, they appeared more reluctant to align themselves with the Remain and Leave sides. Their shared ambiguity positioned Labour and the Conservatives together as the 'other' side in the Brexit debate going in to the 2019 EP election.

Judging by the parties' combined Facebook posts, the campaign was somewhat uneven. Following the official announcement that the election was going to happen there was a flurry of material, but this content did not increase and develop uniformly during the ensuing campaign. Rather posts fell away during the initial part of the final running up to polling day after heightened activity from May 13-17 (Figure 10.02). More generally there appears to have been a relatively modest amount of posting in this campaign, particularly when UKIP material is discounted: this reflects how certain parties appeared unprepared or, in the case of Labour and the Conservatives, unsure over their messaging on Brexit. This scale of activity also reflected what was expected to be a low turnout of the kind normally associated

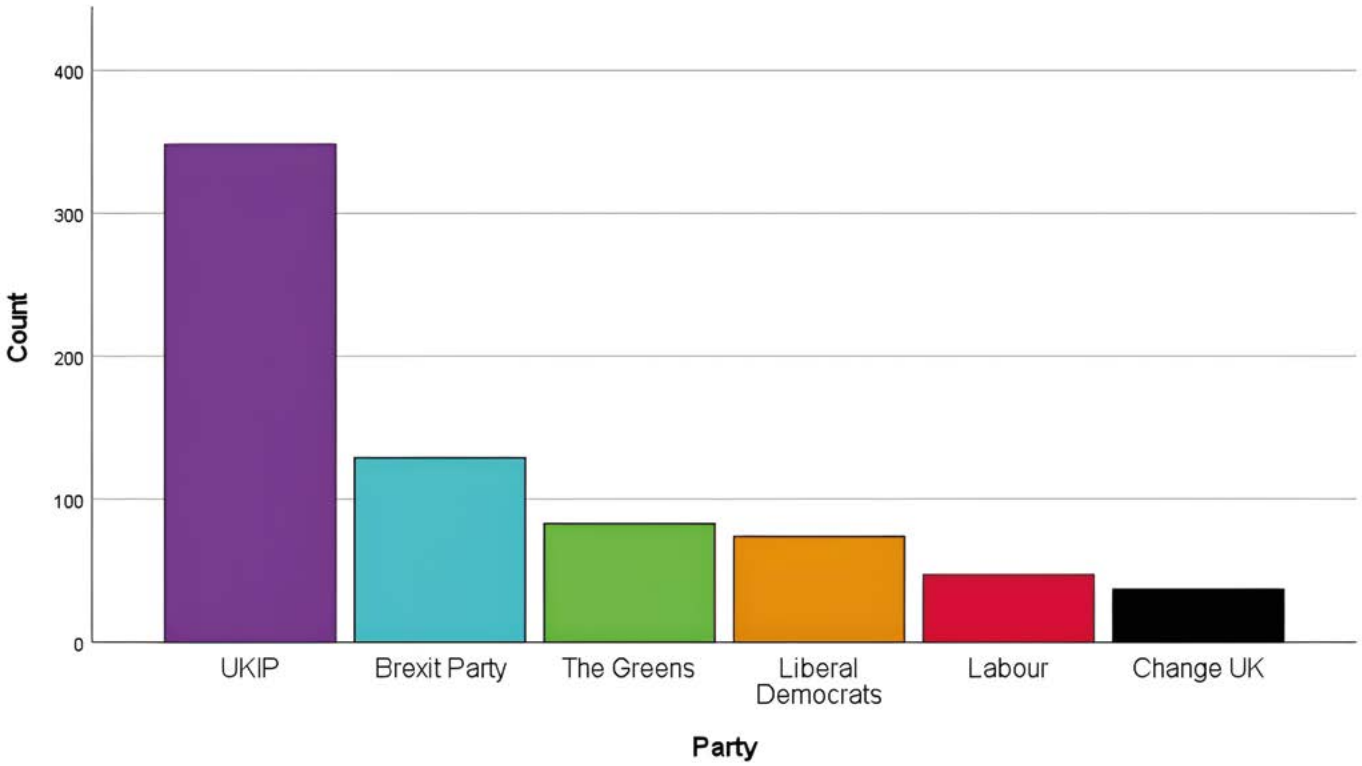

Figure 10.03: Facebook posts: total number by each party, May 1-28. Source: Authors own analysis.

with a second order election: at 37% of the registered electorate this was approximately half of those who voted in the General Election later in the year.

Figure 10.03: demonstrates the extent to which content from the two most avowedly pro-Leave parties exceeded that of their rivals. UKIP were by far and some way the most active party on Facebook with 348 postings, nearly half (48.3%) of the total sample, and typically these were about topical campaign issues, the government's alleged mishandling of EU negotiations, and material relating to their MEP candidates. A likely reason for this was that the party, devoid of funds, was not able to sustain the kind of paid advertising efforts that its opponents could. The Brexit Party, for instance, did spend on Facebook ads while simultaneously maintaining a notable presence with the second largest number of posts on the platform. Many of these 129 postings (17.9%) were predictably highly critical of the government, claiming they had ill served democracy in betraying the Referendum result.

On the Remain side, the Greens were the most active party with their relative lack of financial resources and full-time personnel no barrier to them being able to disseminate posts via social media platforms including Facebook. The Liberal Democrats posted almost as much but, as will be demonstrated, tended to focused this messaging on future UK-EU relations and the prospect for another referendum on British membership. The other pro-Remain grouping, Change UK, maintained a comparatively low profile on their official Facebook page as it did on other social media platforms. Despite having been launched to expressly campaign against Brexit, the party appeared wholly inadequately prepared to offer either coherent or consistent messaging regarding its position. The Labour and Conservative MPs who had defected to Change UK did not capitalise on the initial publicity they had generated over the months preceding the EP election. During this campaign they failed to make an electoral breakthrough having disseminated relatively little content. CUK's Facebook postings were less frequent than those of Labour, a party divided over whether to press for a second referendum. But if the official opposition was somewhat muted, this was nothing compared to the virtual anonymity of the Conservatives on Facebook throughout this campaign. The incumbent government's failure to articulate or even defend its policies in this way reflected the chaos engulfing Downing Street during a period that turned out to be the closing weeks of Theresa May's premiership.

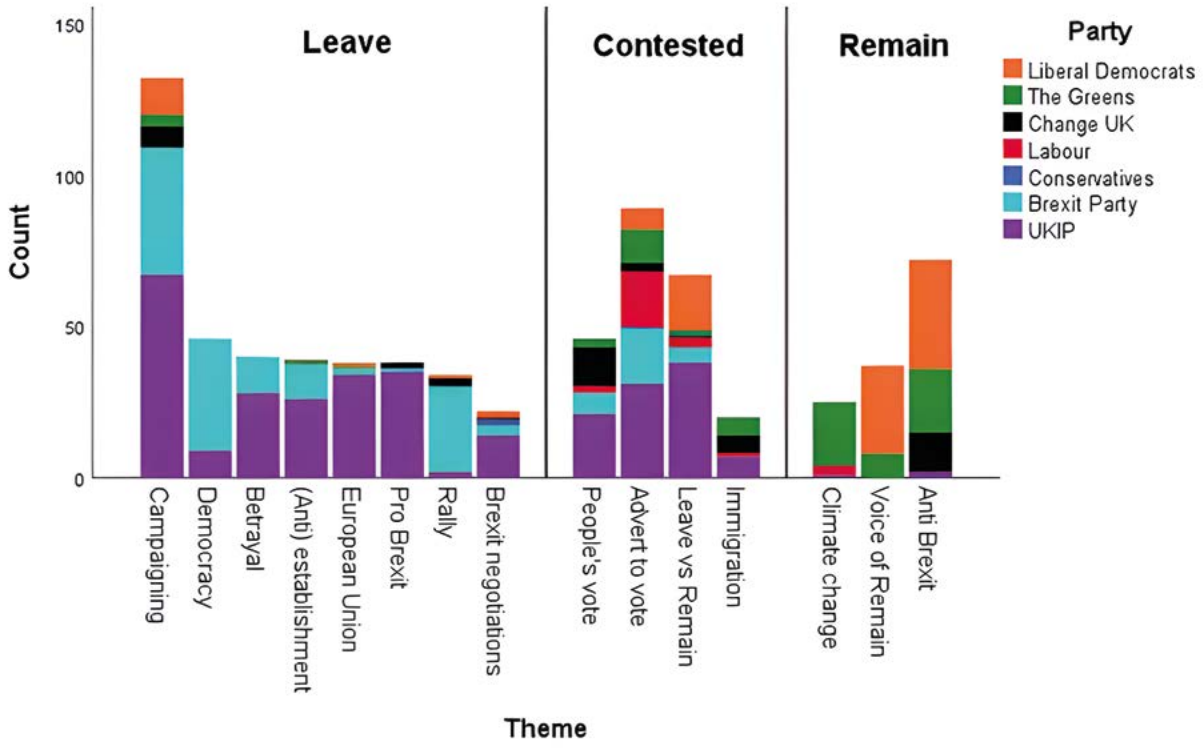

Figure 10.04: Key campaign themes: according to party and divided by whether dominated by supporters of Leave, Remain or both (i.e., Contested). Source: Authors own analysis.

Image 10.02: Brexit Party post advertising one of leader Nigel Farage's public campaign rallies. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.03: Brexit Party ad referencing the need to support it and ensure the 2016 Referendum outcome is honoured. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.04: Liberal Democrat ad reinforcing the party's continuing opposition to Brexit. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.05: Party messaging adopts Sex Pistols' iconography and slogan from the 1970s to make its point. European Election Monitoring Center.

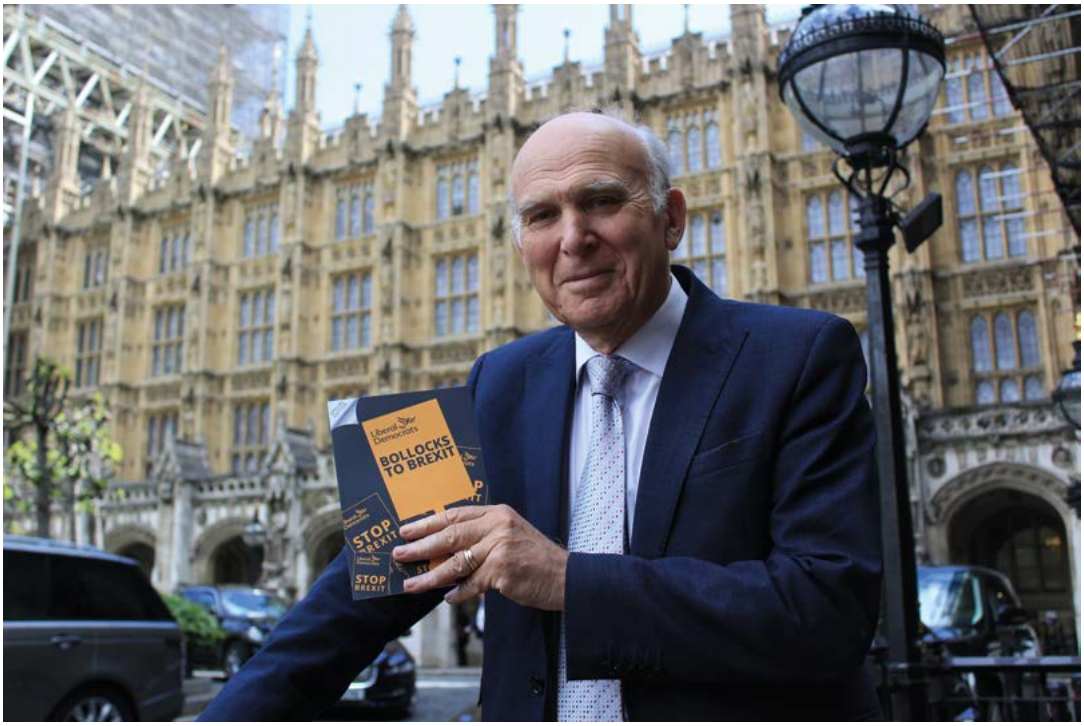

Image 10.06: Leader Vince Cable endorses his party's colourful 'Bollocks to Brexit' strapline. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

A Brexit Campaign? Themes and Issues

This was a campaign indelibly linked to the issue of Brexit but it was about more than the merits or otherwise of the alternative proposals that had been formulated and promoted since the Referendum. That said, where the parties' Facebook posts explicitly referenced the election, their support for Leave or Remain was a noticeable factor in shaping most of their posted content. Figure 10.04 reviews the major issues of the campaign and it is evident there was a degree of polarisation between the pro- and anti-EU sides. It is, however, noteworthy that the two camps intervened over some common concerns: where each was responsible for at least a quarter of the postings on any given subject these were categorised as Contested. Foremost here were so-called process items like 'People's Vote' although there was 'Immigration' related material. Non-policy messaging predominated throughout this campaign regardless of whether the posts originated from the Remain or Leave side. The latter camp, in particular, were responsible for the generic theme of 'Campaigning', the single largest topic. Typical content of this kind featured images and video of politicians and/or their supporters meeting voters, canvassing or on their campaign bus. The Brexit Party was characteristically strategic in its use of professionally made and edited film content, with footage of Nigel Farage in front of crowds, on board fishing boats, or visiting Brexit supporting communities in the once Labour Northeast heartlands of places like Sunderland and Hartlepool.

The Brexit Party leader addressing members of the public at campaign rallies became a recurrent image as highlights of these events were relayed via Twitter and YouTube as well as Facebook. The feed for what were supposedly live streams was often delayed by 5-10 minutes, a fact promoted by some highly self-conscious apologising for the inconvenience caused to waiting viewers. Brexit Party content providers explained the delays had been caused by the exceptional numbers of supporters seeking access to the venue in question. The subsequent reference to the size of attendance at events, and the resulting problems caused, became a marked feature of the campaign's presentational strategy. The related imagery helped amplify the core message that Farage and his colleagues had seemingly won the support of 'the people', a contention supported by continuous visual evidence of crowds, many of whom could be clearly seen embracing Brexit Party placards. Footage from gatherings like this was routinely edited into two- or three-minute vignettes before being posted. In one typical video of this kind, Farage finished his speech to a rally in Lancashire by declaring his intention to 'change politics for good' before the camera panned out behind him as he pointed to an audience giving their unanimous support by holding up the party's now ubiquitous light blue signs.

Repeated claims to be representative of 'the will of the people' was the Brexit Party's core message and explains why four-fifths of their posts could be categorised under the 'Democracy', the second most important theme for the party and one it also dominated (see Figure 10.04). Linked to this, party representatives referred to a 'Westminster elite' and a 'political class' deemed 'out of touch' and Nigel Farage was quoted as believing 'the establishment aren't scared of us… they are absolutely terrified' (Image 10.02). The national flag also featured prominently in party messaging (e.g., Image 10.03). In a series of talking head style videos, party candidates promoted accountability, rather than UK departure from the EU per se, as their primary motive for standing in the election. This contention was linked to the supposed crisis of accountability in British politics with one clip challenged viewers with the question: 'Ask yourself, do you really live in a democracy?'. On the eve of polling day, the party circulated an animation featuring an image of Westminster to further amplify this message. The accompanying slogan offered a stark warning: 'British Democracy is at 1 minute to midnight. Tomorrow is your chance to save it'. Several of the Brexit Party's less familiar representatives were prominent in this messaging with one, Robert Rowland, speaking in alarmist tones when contending: 'There may not be tanks on the streets but make no mistake this is a coup against democracy' (23 May). Similarly, fellow candidate Laura Kevehazi spoke of the election as 'our battle of Britain', invoking the memory of her parents who had been shot by the Nazis during the Second World War.

The Brexit Party formula was part of a successful campaign if judged by the election outcome as well as the success with which this still very new political force was able to quickly establish itself as the most credible voice for Leave. Inevitably it did share some of the concerns of its Eurosceptic rival UKIP, albeit promoting them with greater message discipline. One issue common to both was the so-called 'Betrayal', a theme articulated by ex-Conservative minister Ann Widdecombe who claimed her former party had failed the 17.4 million people who had supported Leave by wilfully refusing to carry out what she termed a 'proper Brexit'. This was complemented by a video compilation featuring Remain supporters describing the 2016 ballot as 'a once in a lifetime' vote. The film then showed the same politicians advocating a second referendum accompanied by the tagline 'They lied to you'. Although it made postings about this and other similar issues, UKIP did so more frequently and in characteristically more provocative ways. That said, it was also the only party

Image 10.07: Green Party ad material positioning itself against its principal rivals for left of centre voters' support. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.8. Green party ad material depicting a hot air balloon emblazoned with the Green Party emblem rising above two jagged rocks representing the colours of Lib Dems and Labour. Source: European Election Monitoring Center

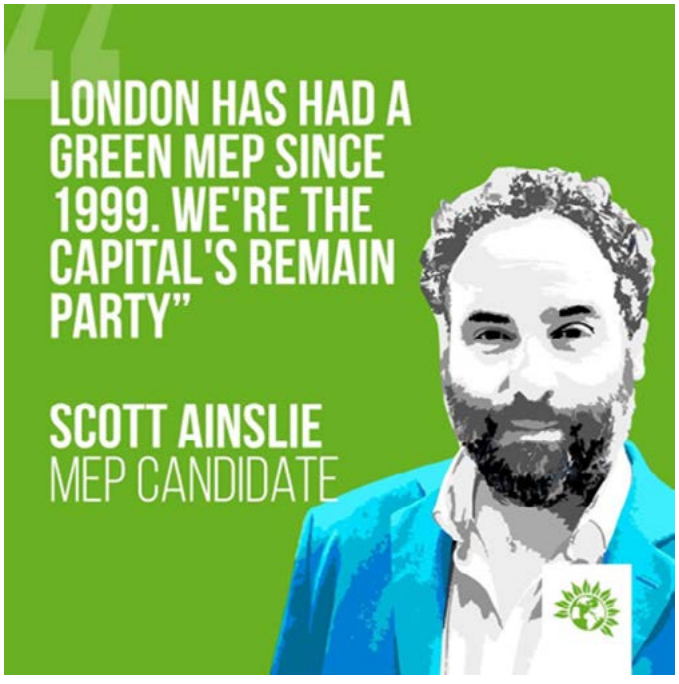

Image 10.09: Green Party material challenged the Liberal Democrats' claim to be the leading Remain party. Source: European Election Monitoring Center

that seriously engaged with the European Union as an entity, albeit through interventions that were predictably highly antagonistic towards the institution.

Perhaps realising their previous criticisms of the European Union had already convinced enough prospective supporters, the Leave parties did not excessively promote the supposed benefits of Brexit. The case for leaving the EU did not actually feature in the Brexit Party postings. The same was the case with both the Labour and Conservative campaign albeit for different reasons relating to the paucity of their Facebook postings: while the former exhorted supporters to vote and offered some comments on more generic policy concerns, the latter barely issued any election related material at all. By contrast the Remain camp, notably the Liberal Democrats, frequently posted content and in its case much of this was anti-Leave (Image 10.04). Energised by success in the recent local government elections, they were keen to promote themselves as 'Biggest Remain party'. The LibDems popularised the slogan 'Bollocks to Brexit' in homage to pop group The Sex Pistols' iconic 1970s album cover and in doing so caused further controversy (Image 10.05), particularly after BBC presenter Andrew Marr felt obliged to apologise to viewers when leader Vince Cable used the phrase in an interview with him (see also Image 10.06). The memorable phrase and related imagery helped position the party as a more maverick force seeking to challenge pro-Leave orthodoxy. Although the term proved popular among sympathisers and anti-Brexit campaigners, most of the LibDem's Facebook postings were stylistically less aggressive and did not make much use of it.

Campaigning for a second referendum the Greens also made it clear its preference for Remain being on a further ballot: to underline this position their 'No to Brexit' webcards were adorned with the image of the EU flag. The party devoted some Facebook postings to attacking its principal rivals for the anti-Brexit vote, calling out the Liberal Democrats for their role in the Coalition government between 2010-15 and particularly their support for austerity and tuition fee rises. The Greens cautioned voting for the party 'could be dangerous' (Image 10.07). In related imagery, a traffic light device was used to extol the merits of the party (and its colour) while warning voters against supporting the Liberal Democrats (amber) or Labour (red). Another illustration contained a similar message, this time with a Green hot air balloon charting a course between two jagged rocks representing each of the aforementioned rivals (image 10.08). Nevertheless, the party devoted considerable efforts and posts to substantive policy issues. Conscious of appealing to younger people, the Greens promoted their traditional raison d'être of the environment and, more specifically, the issue of climate change which made up over 25% of their Facebook content and an overwhelming majority of all posts on the topic. Significantly, as previously noted in reference their candidate Majid Majid, they party promoted immigration, an issue linked to the Brexit debate and more often associated with Eurosceptic politicians who were comparatively muted on the subject in this election. The issue was also one of the few to attract comment from Change UK in what was a notable intervention in an otherwise somewhat low-profile campaign of posts by them.

Although they managed to fund a reasonably well-resourced advertising campaign via Facebook, the lack of Change UK self-generated content on their official page was illustrative of the wider problems that had engulfed the party since its initial launch. The lack of content bore out media coverage about the organisation's lack of strategic direction that these reports linked to uncertainty over the party's leadership and the absence of a coherent vision. The *Mail* reported some influential figures in the group believed they should position themselves to challenge and even replace the Liberal Democrats (Ellicott, 2019). This plan, and its hostile intention, was distinct from the Social Democratic Party experiment in the early 1980s (see Chapter 4) although it was permissible that the EP elections' proportional voting system could have afforded the new party a potentially invaluable opportunity. But the subsequent campaign proved to be the beginning of the end for CUK after various public embarrassments, including their lead Scottish candidate endorsing the Liberal Democrats.

The pro- and anti-Brexit parties may have been diametrically opposed on the European issue, but they did share some common, albeit 'Contested' concerns in this campaign. UKIP and the Liberal Democrats, for instance, tended to frame the election as 'Leave versus Remain' as distinct from a traditional, purely party-political affair (see Figure 10.04). Similarly, the so-called 'People's Vote' label appeared in UKIP as well as Change UK material, although for entirely different reasons. CUK promoted the concept in just over a third of their posts and in so doing made it the core message of their meagre campaign. The proportion of posts making some reference to Brexit varied according to party. Just over half of this material mentioned the word itself, with this including items that used any of the interminable and growing range of related jargon that had become commonplace since the Referendum. This covered phrases like 'People's Vote', 'Remainer', 'Brexiteer' and more esoteric fare such as 'WTO Brexit'. Posts that did not explicitly use the word were nevertheless routinely framed in relation

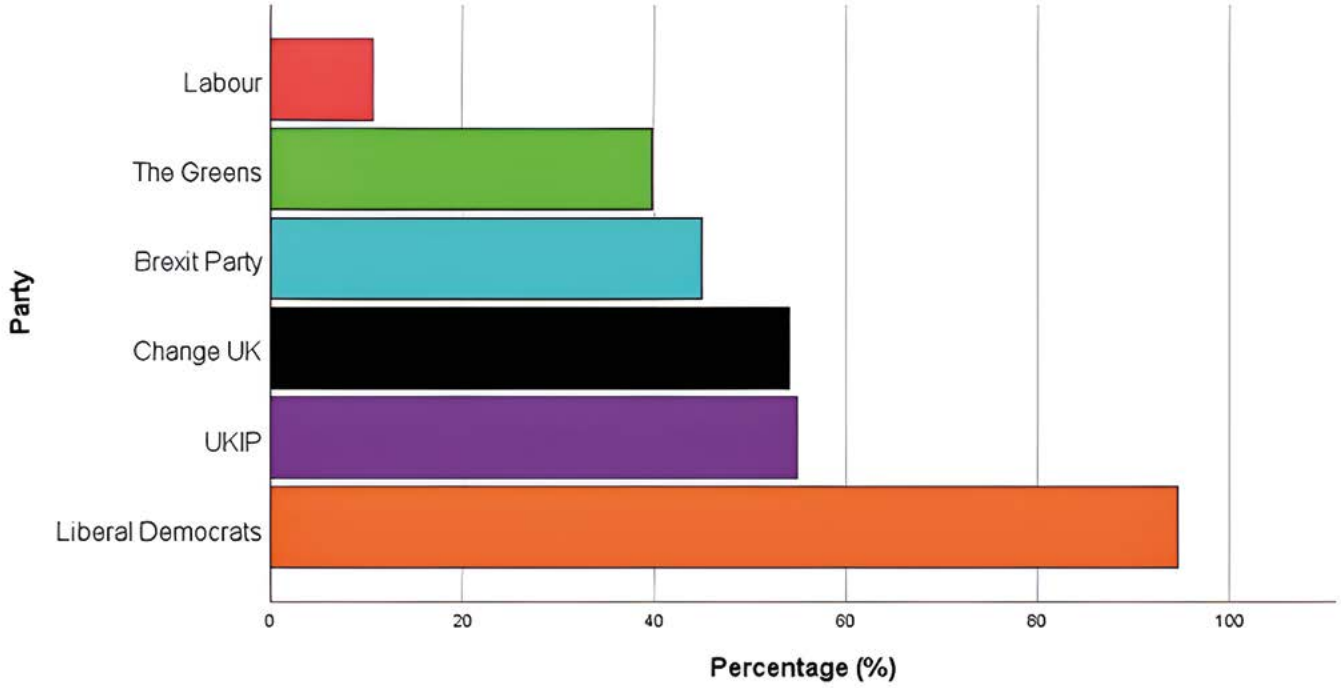

Figure 10.05: Facebook posts: percentage of each party's mentioning 'Brexit'. Source: Authors own analysis.

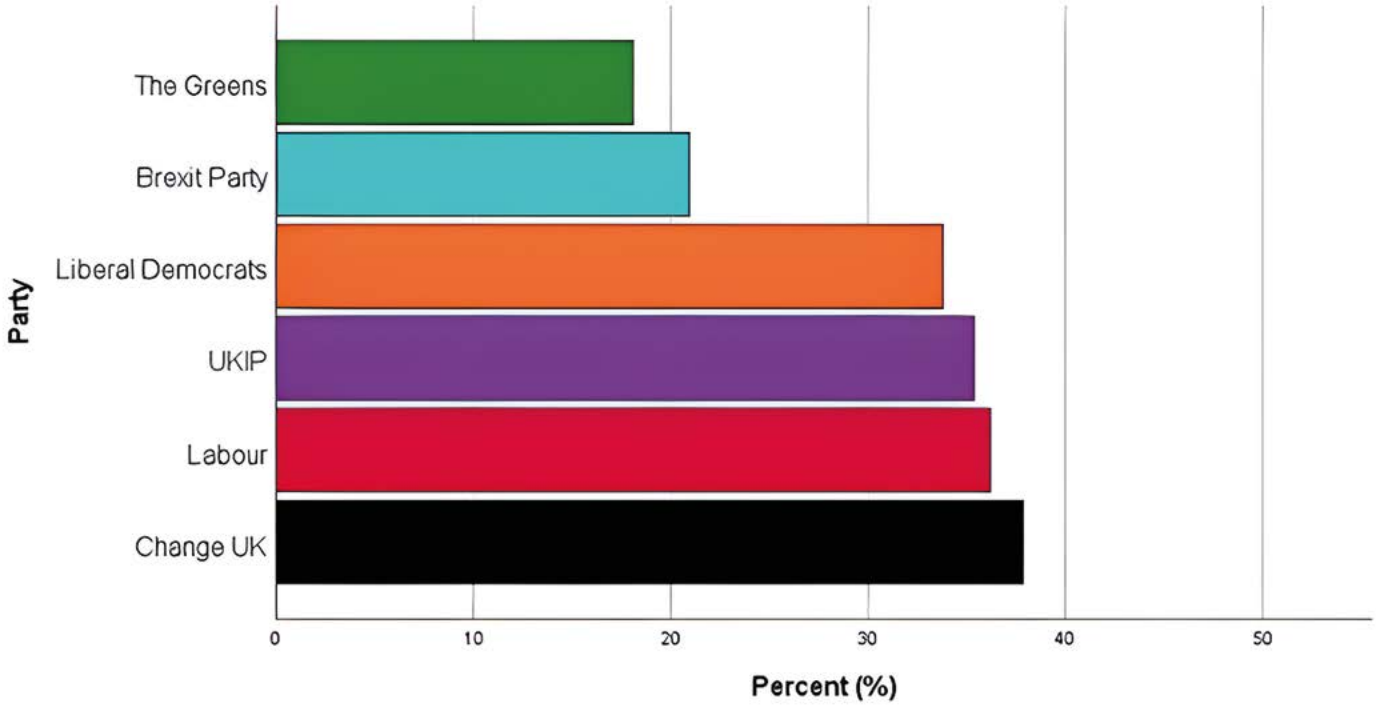

Figure 10.06: Facebook posts: percentage issued that were negative by party. Source: Authors own analysis.

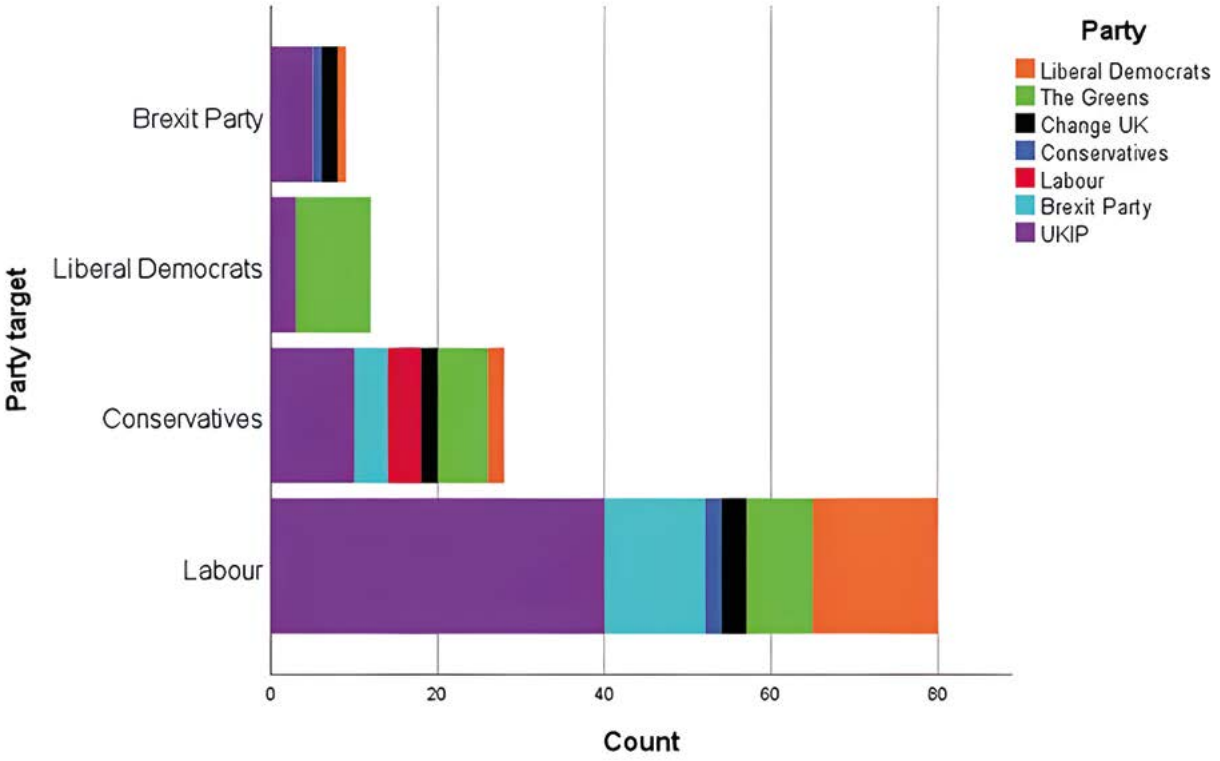

Figure 10.07: Facebook postings: numbers of posts by party, and their intended target. Source: Authors own analysis.

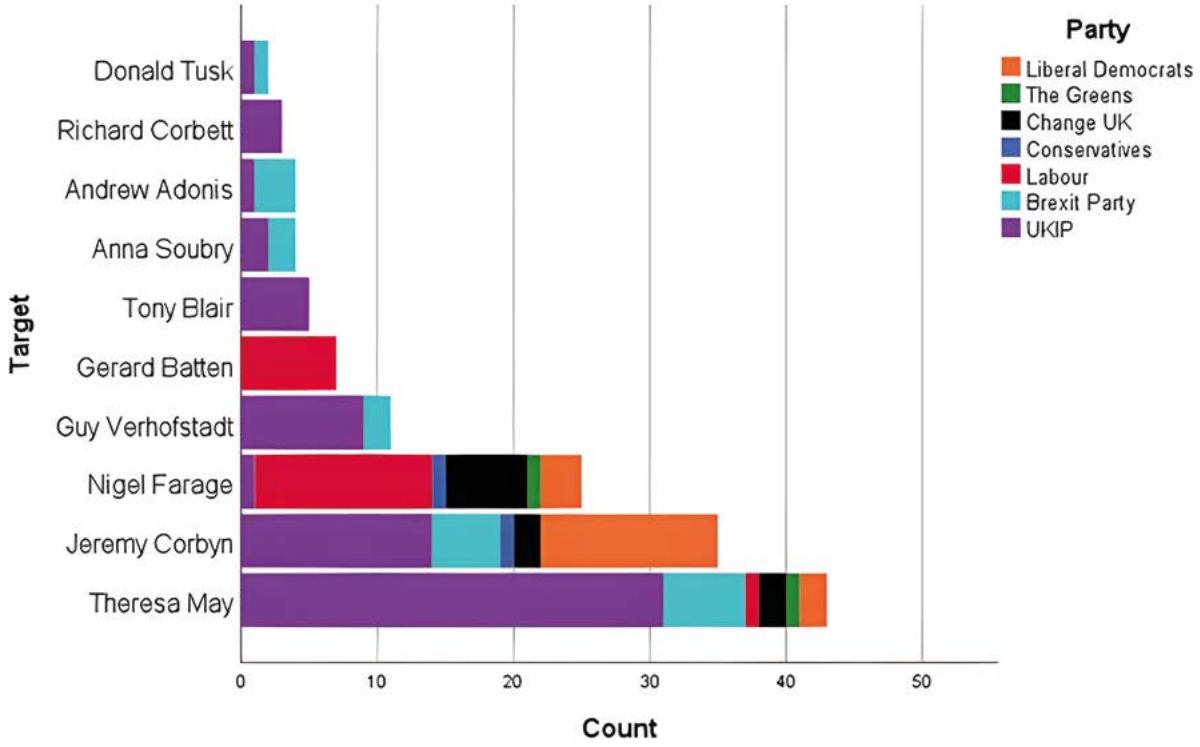

Figure 10.08: Facebook Targets: Most prominent politicians in rival parties' content. Source: Authors own analysis

to it, i.e., a desire to leave the common fisheries policy or, conversely, to continue working closely with the EU over action on climate change.

Figure 10.05 demonstrates that it was the Liberal Democrats, more than any rival, who were most likely to use 'Brexit', as the term appeared in virtually all their campaign content: only four of their posts did not. It has already been acknowledged how some of this material included the 'Bollocks' mantra'. But while this profanity attracted attention and even rebukes, the slogan was one more noticeable manifestation of the party's strategy of single-mindedly focusing on the general cause rather than the specific benefits of continued UK membership of the EU. Despite Nigel Farage's party bearing its name, the term Brexit was mentioned in just under a half of all its campaign postings. This was a similar level to the Greens, two-fifths of whose content also featured the word. As previously noted, the Greens favoured messaging on policy rather than process-related material. Furthermore, their volume of posts meant they outstripped Labour, their most obvious rivals for left leaning votes. Despite being the official Opposition, the party issued comparatively little content and 90% of what did appear was conspicuous for the absence of Brexit as an issue. Rather, Labour preferred to concentrate its content on highlighting issues such as the economy, environment, and workers' rights.

Going on the Offensive

Negative campaign content was a feature of this election, with the UK ranking highest on this score when measured against the other 27 member states (EEMC, 2019). While this may reflect British political culture in general, it was also linked to the highly fraught ongoing debate within the country that provided the backdrop to this campaign. Four criteria determined whether any messaging was negative in nature: (1) was content directly critical of identified opponents on either personal or policy-related grounds? (2) did the material call out a particular elite, e.g., 'the establishment', 'Westminster', the main two-parties/system, or similar? (3) was any post explicitly disputing the merits of a Leave or Remain perspective, e.g., mentioning 'Remaniacs', 'Remoaners', 'Brextremist' and other such epithets? (4) was ideological terminology deployed to denounce a rival politician/party, e.g. 'Marxist', 'far-right', etc? Here the limits of dichotomous coding should be acknowledged. The designating of content as not/negative did not necessarily capture its intensity nor reflect the tone of a particular individual message.

Just under a third (31%) of all campaign related content was negative according to the four identified criteria described above. UKIP was responsible for over half of all this material, but this was only because they generated more Facebook posts than any of its six rivals. Consequently, Table 5 examines the degree to which each party's content was negative (NB with only three campaign related posts, the Conservatives were excluded). By this measure Change UK devoted more of its content (14 or 38.9% of its total) to criticising opponents than its rivals, with Labour not far behind (17 or 36.2%). Overall, the Remain parties (CUK, LibDems and Greens) were slightly more likely to issue attacks (30.2%) than their Leave counterparts (28.5%), with the Brexit Party decidedly more positive in this respect when directly compared with UKIP.

The debate around the value of negative campaigning to gain votes is still very much ongoing (Goerres, 2007). Gerbaudo et al (2019) analysed the Labour and Conservative party Facebook campaigns during the 2017 General Election. They found that Corbyn and Labour's positive postings attracted far higher user engagement than the more negative posts by May and Conservatives. This suggests a more complex picture than previously thought about negative electioneering becoming more prominent in recent years and that the rise of social media has led to more negative campaigning.

If parties were prone to issuing negative content, it is also important to identify the principal targets of their ire (see Figure 10.07). Symbolically important was the way a notable proportion of this material criticised opponents by consciously adopting and using their rivals' own traditional colours. Labour was the recipient of far more adverse comments than any of its rivals, receiving 80 such posts or 62.1% of the total. The party's strategic ambiguity over its Brexit policy had left it open to attacks from both the Leave and Remain sides as various rival parties took the opportunity to call out the official Opposition from their respective vantage points. While UKIP denounced Labour for being 'Marxist' as well as denouncing the cross-party talks between them and the governing Conservatives, the Brexit Party took a more subtle approach through promoting content featuring clips of now deceased veteran anti-EU left-wing stalwarts Tony Benn and Peter Shore. Benn and Shore were Labour Cabinet ministers who had forcefully led the campaign against joining the then European Economic Community during the 1970s and would likely have been familiar to older people. If this kind of messaging targeted the party's Leave voters, the Liberal Democrats focused on appealing to the larger group of Labour supporters who were more inclined towards Remain and might be persuaded to use the election as a chance to send a message on Brexit. A fifth of all LibDem content (fifteen posts) were critical of Labour.

If the Conservatives were virtually anony-

Image 10.10: UKIP ad uses Disney imagery to mock the Prime Minister. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.11: Brexit Party ad adapts an (in)famous image of the Prime Minister dancing on stage prior to her keynote address to her party's 2018 annual conference. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.12: Brexit Party ad contrasting a statement by one of its leading candidate Claire Fox with comments from pro-EU Labour politician Lord Adonis. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

mous in terms of their own Facebook activity, others more than made up for their lack of self-promotional presence by calling out and thereby reminding voters about the party. Aside from UKIP, energetic on this as it was on other subjects, the other five parties devoted Facebook content to attacking the incumbent government. It is, however, noteworthy that Liberal Democrat and Brexit Party were less preoccupied with the Conservatives than they were with Labour. Despite their strong showing in the polls, the Brexit Party were not subjected to many Facebook attacks and most material of this kind came from its Leave rivals UKIP. The former also studiously ignored the latter, perhaps confident it had succeeded in replacing it as the leading anti-EU force and could now turn its attention to converting the voters of the larger parties (Cutts et al, 2019). For its part, UKIP looked like a fast-declining electoral force as tensions within were played out on their Facebook page during the campaign with leader Gerard Batten and his deputy Mike Hookem rarely pictured together on the way to defeat. As previously noted, and departing from its reputation for positive campaigning, the Greens criticised the Liberal Democrats in several postings having initially sought an alliance with their fellow Remainers for their role in the Coalition government.

Frustration at Theresa May for 'betraying the people' was prevalent in the Leave parties' campaign with a total of 88.1% of posts targeting May coming from UKIP and Brexit Party (Figure 10.08). UKIP repeatedly called on May to resign, echoing the calls of many in her own party. In one of these, for instance, Theresa May was portrayed as the Evil Queen from Disney's animated classic Snow White, holding out an apple representing her putative Brexit deal (Image 10.10). This was one of the more memorable postings from a campaign characterised by its rather scattergun, unfocused approach. The Brexit Party critiques of May were more humorous but no less cutting in their portrayal as a failed leader (Image 10.10). Aside from domestic targets, Leave parties also targeted key EU figures such as Donald Tusk and Guy Verhofstadt. UKIP were incensed by what it claimed was a provocative appearance by Verhofstadt in London where he declared support for the Lib Dems, a sister organisation of his own in the European Parliament (10th May). Labour Remainers were also targeted by the Leave parties. Comments made by the former Cabinet minister turned anti-Brexit peer Andrew Adonis in an interview with LBC stating that Leave voters should no longer support his party were recycled in a series of edited videos produced by Farage's now self-styled 'people's party' (7th May). Adonis was identified with a so-called 'political class' that had defied the democratic will (10th May) (Image 10.12).

After Theresa May, Jeremy Corbyn was the most targeted politician but unlike his rival he was attacked from both sides of the Brexit divide. Portrayed as a Brexiteer by the Liberal Democrats, they were responsible for 37.2% of all posts that called out the Labour leader. An archival clip of Corbyn from his time as a backbench MP denouncing the EU as undemocratic was edited into a video designed to highlight his previous hostility towards Brussels. UKIP labelled the Labour leader a 'Marxist' and associated him with the hammer and sickle flag (Image 10.13). The Brexit Party once again took a more subtle approach, calling out Corbyn over alleged inconsistencies in his party's position. One post contrasted a quote from Corbyn stating that Article 50 should be invoked without delay next to another in which he ostensibly supports a second referendum. Labour responded with a series attacking Farage for his devotion to Margaret Thatcher (Image 10.14) and past statements on topics such as Islam and sought to associate him with his former colleague and successor as UKIP leader Gerard Batten as well as Batten's ally Tommy Robinson, founder of the English Defence League and now an independent candidate in this election (Image 10.15).

Conclusion

Although his new venture went by the name of the Brexit Party, leader Nigel Farage ensured their campaign was not solely consumed by further debate over the specific terms of British withdrawal. For a party that had only existed for six months the results of this strategy were impressive. That the Brexit Party made such an impressive breakthrough in the EP Election, its first such test, reflected its unity of purpose and a focused message that appealed far beyond those who had previously supported Farage when he led UKIP. The campaign was co-ordinated, sleek, and combined a celebrity appeal with emotive messaging about accountability but without familiar topics such as immigration. The analysis presented here has detailed the various ways in which the Brexit Party promoted its self-styled defence of democracy against an allegedly elitist, out of touch establishment that was accused of wanting to thwart the 2016 Referendum and, thereby, the will of the public. The party's success, or more especially the failures of its much larger rivals, underscored the significance and importance of a 2019 EP Election that the UK had only been obliged to participate in because of the government's failure to deliver Brexit.

The UK's last EP Election was about more than machinations on the Leave side, and the Brexit Party far from the only one to make polit-

Image 10.13: UKIP post attacks Labour by focusing on party leader Jeremy Corbyn. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.14: Labour party post depicts Nigel Farage holding a mug adorned with an image of Margaret Thatcher. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

Image 10.15: Labour party post depicts Nigel Farage, Gerard Batten and Tommy Robinson alongside the statement 'Don't let fear win here'. Source: European Election Monitoring Center.

ical advances. Pro-EU forces were emboldened by an election that enabled them to restate their opposition to British withdrawal and this led to subsequent co-operation between the Liberal Democrats and Greens as part of the so-called 'Remain Alliance' during the General Election held later that year. Both also eclipsed Change UK, the new anti-Brexit group, which became a minor player in the cross-party campaign for a second or so-called 'peoples' vote'. The European election also proved difficult for Labour who appeared keen to promote its policies on a range of issues but said little about Brexit. The party was conspicuous by its absence from this debate, as were the governing Conservatives whose virtual disappearance during the campaign preceded their ignominious defeat.

Having led the Conservatives to defeat and an unprecedented fifth place in a national election, Theresa May bowed to the seemingly inevitable and resigned as Prime Minister. Boris Johnson succeeded May though faced similar problems, at least in the short-term. The new premier eventually manoeuvred his government into a place where the momentum for another public vote to try to resolve the crisis became eventually unstoppable. But the poll would be the December General Election and not another referendum. Guided by Dominic Cummings, the strategist behind the Leave's 2016 victory, Johnson recycled messaging that echoed that used by Farage and his colleagues during the EU campaign. The 'Get Brexit Done' mantra not only proved readily understandable and appreciated by a significant section of the electorate, this also enabled the Conservatives to (once again) reinvent themselves as the party offering the country meaningful change.

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Europe Votes provides a retrospective evaluation of how European election campaigns have evolved in nine member states over the forty years since the public first elected their Members of the Brussels/Strasbourg Parliament. The volume is sponsored by the European Election Monitoring Center whose archive comprises a unique collection of the promotional material disseminated during every election held between 1979 and 2019. This book explores the continuities and changes in European democracy over the last four decades. The era saw the European Economic Community embark on a major transformation involving the substantial broadening of its membership as well as a deepening of the relationship between those states involved. While this policy was intended to renew and strengthen what became known as the European Union, there was an adverse reaction to the change from increasingly vocal critics opposed to plans for greater EU integration.

Among those most hostile to further European integration have been the so-called 'populist' sceptics who have moved from the periphery to the centre of debate as reflected by their growing success in recent EU elections. The tumultuous period that has ensued has seen these critics accusing their more mainstream rivals of having failed to defend their respective countries' national sovereignty against the perceived encroachment from Brussels. While debate over the apparent threat posed by a supposedly omnipotent European Commission has become a marked feature of recent EU elections, other issues have attracted considerable interest. Prominent topics of this kind include the environment, economy, security, and migration. Each of these issues relates to a major area of domestic concern within the various individual member states themselves involved. They also touch on, to varying degrees, the controversy over where power ultimately lies (or should lie) within the contemporary reconfigured EU.