ADV

A DIFFERENT VIEW

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Editorial

Welcome to Issue 30 of A Different View

Felipe Nunes
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With general elections in Germany coming up in September this year, voters ask whether the two main political parties, the SPD (Social Democrats) and CDU (Christian Democrats) have actually preserved any differences between them, or if they have become mainstreamed parties, without a profile of their own. Indeed, if one looks at the election manifestos of the four parties in Germany that are not under the surveillance of the "Verfassungsschutz" (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), one notices that the difference lies in the detail, not in the broad direction. All parties want to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency, reduce import dependency on Russia, strengthen the European Union, and make economic transactions more transparent and regulated. Especially the SPD has lost its unique features, having become a party that introduced lower welfare standards, agreed to the extension of powers of the Federal Police, and propagated their worthiness in dealing with climate change, something the Greens have already championed for decades. Hence the question what is left of right and left wing politics? Does such a distinction still make sense after New Labour in Britain and "Neue Mitte" in Germany?

In her opinion article Sayalee Karkare paints a picture of the right-left situation in India and what we can expect of Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Indian Prime Minister, whose party (The Congress Party) was re-elected with a comfortable majority in India's recent general elections. Furthermore, Verena Risse discusses the 'double standard' in the NATO mission in Afghanistan a topic which has provoked numerous discussions regardless of the left-right dichotomy.

In our academic article section Matthias Kranke provides us with a useful background about the left-right division. He argues that political parties and their left-right distinction will continue to be relevant; however, they need to be interpreted in the political context.

Nikoletta Sebestyén draws attention to the energy sector and the continuing interdependence between the EU and Russia, a highly topical issue, considering Russian claims that the next gas crisis looms on the horizon if Ukraine cannot pay to re-fill its gas storages. In our last academic article Ozgur Erkan analyses the Ideological Gap between Public Opinion and Party Orientation in Europe and claims that such a gap is also apparent in new issue dimensions such as European integration.

Opinion Articles

Indian Policies: Right leaning but Left acting?

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"....Nothing today is more greatly needed than clarity upon ancient notions. Sovereignty, Liberty, authority, personality - these are the words of which we want alike the history and the definition; or rather we want the history because its substance is in fact the definition."

Harold Laski

Harold Laski, Chairman of the Labour Party and Professor of Political Science at the LSE was right in his insistence to clarify ancient concepts, because with changing times, our understandings of these notions also change, as do the meanings that we assign to them. An important addition to ideas that need clarification would be the oft used notions of right or left wing politics.

In common parlance, to be right wing means to be conservative, support capitalism, free-trade and globalization and have nationalistic streaks, that are usually dormant but manifest themselves quite definitively when prodded enough. On the other hand, the left-wingers are usually classified as a group of discontented anarchists and communists, parading as socialists in their more socially acceptable version, who would overthrow the present world order at the slightest notice. This brigade is typically understood as being against globalization, the nation-state and capitalism, mainly for the vast inequalities that these bring about. Consequently, they are also often accused of having a very poor understanding of economics.

Although convention would have a policy or a person to be placed across the spectrum of either left and right wing politics, the truth is that such classification is actually extremely complicated because a typically left wing move, say such as the nationalization of banks, may in fact serve a predominantly right wing agenda, that of encouraging and stimulating the free market mechanism.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, the twice elected Prime Minister of India, is a fine example of such a conundrum. Although frequently touted as a liberal Prime Minister, he is firmly grounded in the Congress, a party with a strong commitment to the poorer, rural sections of India. It is known as the party that led India to independence and is also the only party to secure more than a 100 million votes in the last three general elections. Post independence, India has had One Party rule dominated by the Congress for almost three decades, which governed mostly on socialist lines, as was common for most former colonies. The reason was that the newly independent countries were suspicious of free trade and liberal reforms, given that their history of colonialism and imperialism had begun innocently enough, by trading with foreign companies. In fact, the Congress Party, at the peak of its powers under Mrs. Indira Gandhi had even declared an emergency between 1975-77, a period in which free speech was stifled, newspapers censored, banks nationalized and extraordinary laws passed giving Mrs. Gandhi unlimited powers. This period, one of the most controversial periods in the history of the Indian Republic, is important for the current discussion because it was during this period that the word "socialist" was introduced into the preamble of the Constitution of India by the Forty Second Amendment. The reason was to re-enforce the socialist agenda of the Congress. It remains unmodified till this day.

Another interesting side note in the history of Indian politics is that a considerable number of India's politicians have studied at the London School of Economics, an institution founded by the fabian-socialists. This includes the afore mentioned Harold Laski, a fabian-socialist himself who had tremendous influence on Indian politics, having taught a generation of future leaders at the LSE. The most prominent of them are Dr. Ambedkar, known as the Architect of India's Constitution and K.R. Narayanan, the 10th President of India.

Having thus established the fact that the Congress has had deep roots in socialism and a tendency towards "big government", it is Dr. Singh's penchant for reform and liberalism that contradict this trend. Dr. Singh had worked previously for the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, before being appointed Finance Minister of India. He is also responsible for the economic reforms of 1991 which brought India out of a long-term sluggish period during which growth had remained stagnant at around 3.5%, infamously known as the "Hindu rate of growth". It was during this period that there was a more systemic shift to an open economy, a larger role for the private sector and foreign investment and a re-structuring of the role of the government. More recently, at the G20 Summit in Washington, Dr. Singh re-affirmed India's commitment to free market principles, strengthening the IMF and deterring protectionism. It is also expected that in the near future there will be a signing of a free-trade agreement between India and the ten-country Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, the ruling coalition of the United Progressive Alliance does not consist any more of leftist allies and the decisive victory of the Congress by a wide margin gives Dr. Singh a strong mandate to implement reforms.

Yet bringing about liberal reforms is not so easy, for instance changing India's labour laws which make a small fraction of the workforce completely unsackable, would prove to be politically and administratively tricky. Another unfortunate victim of the dawdling of the bureaucratic machinery was the right to education bill which could not be passed because of the practicalities that would ensue. Additionally, despite his liberal bent, Dr. Singh is actually an advocate of the mixed economy model. This is because the government needs to play a strong role in agriculture and infrastructure for a developing country like India. It was during his tenure that the NREGS, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and the RTI, Right to Information Act were implemented. Analysts note it was such moves that targeted the poorer sections of society that ensured Congress a victory in the recent 2009 elections. The Congress campaigned on "inclusive growth" and it demonstrated this commitment in the previous term by forgiving small farmers their loans, raising the pay of public employees and providing infrastructure for the rural poor.

Only last week, a UNICEF report stated that India had not succeeded in protecting its people from poverty with over 230 million Indians suffering from chronic hunger. Despite his pledges to liberal reforms, Dr. Singh's commitments clearly begin at the home front. Even though Dr. Singh may prefer free-er trade, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the old matriarch of the Congress with firm roots in the countryside, will most probably succeed in reining him, as he gallops into more liberal territories.

Opinion Articles

Opinion article on the changes in the NATO strategy for Afeghanistan

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In mid-June, the ministers of defence of the NATO member states have agreed upon some changes in their Afghanistan strategy as a response to the growing number of attacks and thus a persisting insecurity at the Hindu Kush. It was reported that not only the number of attacks as such have increased but that their form has changed during the first five months of 2009, too. In fact, there was a 61 percent increase in direct-fire attacks, while the amount of attacks employing roadside bombs rose by 64 percent. The NATO plan, which aims to cope with this ongoing violence, involves sending both new troops as well as new military equipment. With regard to the troops, the United States have already increased their military presence in Afghanistan from about 32,000 in late 2008 to about 56,000 and plan to reach the number of 68,000 troops in the war zone by autumn. The new military equipment comes in form of AWACS surveillance planes which will be provided and mainly financed by the German government. The use of these AWACS planes, however, is not uncontroversial. This is first because they are costly but also because they can be used for both defensive and offensive operations. Yet, the hope is that they will add to the air security as civil air traffic in Afghanistan is about to augment.

These new attempts to somewhat definitely secure the country are supposed to cope with the rise in violence in Afghanistan which represents a continuous danger for civilians. Against this background, it seems reasonable to reduce at least the deaths of civilians caused by NATO operations themselves. This can indeed be achieved by mobilising more ground forces which render those air strikes unnecessary that used to have the problematic collateral effect of injuring civilians, too. Yet, it must be doubted that the AWACS planes will work without any combat operations at all and therefore will not hit any civilians. Still, the enforced US military presence can also be interpreted as a first step to pacifying and calming the situation in Afghanistan as quickly as possible, so that in larger perspective the exit strategy pursued in Iraq can be followed by a withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan.

All this, however, can only be one part of the argument. For not only civilians are threatened by the additional attacks in Afghanistan, but also NATO troops. And the number of deaths of the soldiers fighting in the name of the Alliance is already a political issue in the member states, as has shown the case of Canada. Indeed, it is hard to understand why brothers, husbands, neighbours return in body bags from a mission which was justified with the provision of security and stability in a far away country.

That brings me to the supposed 'double-standard' of the Afghanistan operation a point which has been brought up regularly and yet remains an issue. Truly, a military defence of the member states of the Alliance in Afghanistan and not at their national borders is one thing, bringing peace and democracy to an undemocratic region is another. In any case, the security justification cannot allow paralysing public life in Afghanistan in order to offer a maximal feeling of security from terrorism in Europe or Northern America, nor can it mean imposing a certain form of government designed in a Western sketchbook, neither. I had the opportunity to attend the NATO Youth Summit which took place in Strasbourg in April, and where the 'double standard' appeared to be the most serious issue for both participants from NATO member states and non-NATO countries. A remarkable comment was then made by an Afghan student who asked the panel speakers whether they were sure that the sort of democracy they have in mind is the sort Afghan people would aspire to. The answer given by the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy amounted to saying that NATO does not go to Afghanistan with a given democratic scheme, but that it hopes to create a context in which a democratic path can be taken. However, the question, as posed by the Afghan woman, suggests that there is the existing fear of a country to receive a form of government which is neither suitable nor compatible with its history and tradition. In this sense, it seems as if the charge of paternalism becomes an increasingly important issue with regard to military and humanitarian interventions which organisations such as NATO have to face and overcome with respect to the self-determination of nations a self-determination that may start well before the democratic process of voting and participating itself. It seems as if there is a lesson to be learned. While, with the necessary amount of funds and military equipment, it is relatively easy to intervene, pacify, maybe even secure a country, it is not possible to simply transform and shape it ideology-wise.

This eventually leads to the questions whether there is a future and what can be the future tasks of the Alliance. One thing at least seems to be uncontroversial: there will probably be no need for protection and military operations at the national borders of the member states in short term perspective. Instead, if there are any tasks for the NATO, these will be found in fragile and insecure parts of the world which only derivatively threaten the Alliance or its citizens. In this sense, the involvement of NATO forces in the combat against pirates at the Horn of Africa can be indicative for a possible prediction: once a certain country or a given group like terrorists or pirates become so dangerous that the security of the NATO member states is no longer sufficiently guaranteed (i.e. their citizens are threatened) or their interests are no longer assured (i.e. global trade or business is hindered), there are reasons for NATO forces to intervene. This intervention would be military first, but then followed by the supply of development aid, the provision of technical and other know-how, the building-up of an infrastructure as well as certain social institutions such as schools, hospitals etc and last but not least by assistance in the government creating process. These are all things that are per se not uninteresting and bad for a country which is poor, instable and corrupt. On the contrary, getting into the centre of attention of the Western states as some kind of security threat could potentially turn out to be extremely appealing for an underdeveloped country, since this seems to lead to the provision of far more international funds, attention and assistance than the country would normally receive from institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF or NGOs. Hence, it could happen that the need for security and the fear of insecurity felt by the members of the Alliance will once be intentionally abused by a state which lacks the necessary funds to help itself.

(Figures taken from http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4320757,00.html?maca=en-en_nr-1893-xml-atom)

Academic Article

Left, Right and a Bridge: On the Ongoing Relevance of Political Parties

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"Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river."
Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971)

Introduction

Khrushchev might have been right and wrong at the same time: right because promises are politicians' perhaps most valuable currency; wrong because voters seem to care at least a little about what kind of bridge, how and with what material it is to be built over the imaginary river. Political campaigns in the lead-up to elections are essentially built upon, and inspired by, competing promises that rivalling party camps give in an effort to win over key constituencies. Indeed, by aggregating a myriad of preferences, political parties embody a certain and certainly limited spectrum of choice to those who are entitled to vote. Once in power, a government from one camp should be expected to implement different policies than a government from another camp would.

Two such camps have traditionally been distinguished in a very rough manner into 'left' and 'right'. When the distinction entered the political arena to be applied to parties as early as during the French revolutionary era, no one could, of course, foresee the enormous importance it would acquire over time as convenient shorthand still central to today's media coverage of, as well as our everyday and conceptual thinking about, politics. It is important to note that this left-right dichotomy has survived repeated claims of an 'end of ideology' (Bell, 1967 [1960]; Lipset, 1963) and arguably remains one of the most widely used and sharpest analytical tools in the box of political scientists.

This article provides a brief overview of the salience of the left-right dichotomy in Political Science. It starts with a few comments on the evolution of these two bipolar terms before presenting as examples four policy areas in which this distinction has found widespread application and sometimes unearthed rather unexpected findings. Then, three caveats that limit the usefulness of its application are discussed. The article concludes by drawing two main lessons that can be learnt from the preceding considerations.

'Left' and 'Right': The Rise and Spread of a Forceful Dichotomy

The origins of the left-right political spectrum date from the time of the French Revolution. In 1789, the year the National Assembly convened, political affiliation came to be expressed by the seating arrangement of two competing blocks in legislative bodies. The occasion on which the two opposing terms were first used in a political sense[1] was nothing less than a deep division over the legitimacy of the 'old order' (the ancien régime) as epitomised by the French king as the head of state: while the anti-royalists sat on the left in St Louis church in Versailles, those who had opposed the new constitution or who had at least sought to give the king the right of legislative veto took the seats on the right. In other words, the terms were derived from the spatial separation of the representatives over one, albeit crucial, issue. At the same time as it transformed the political landscape, the establishment of the new spatial arrangement also marked the ultimate breakdown of the feudal order with its long-time segregation of French society into three Estates (clergy, nobility and commoners) (Laponce, 1981, pp. 478).

The creation of spatial groupings along ideological lines, however, never followed a grand plan. It was rather born out of practical considerations as effective interaction was hindered by almost unmanageable, disorderly debates in the newly created Assembly. With groupings established, political work was made both more transparent and less time-consuming:

In a large and noisy assembly, a solitary voice was unlikely to be effective, it needed the physical and the moral support of like-minded delegates. The fact that voting was not by roll-call but by standing or sitting contributed also to the spatial polarization along ideological and policy preferences (Laponce, 1981, p. 48).

The original meaning of 'left' and 'right' soon gave way to a less neutral understanding, as is so often the case with terminology. Though initially of mostly practical character, the spatial distinction acquired more coherent ideological that is, factional connotations, which then spread from France to other parts of continental Europe. Laponce (1981, pp. 526) attributes the geographical diffusion of the new terminology to two main channels of language: parliamentary democracy and socialism.

First, after spreading to other countries, the left-right dichotomy served as a political 'compass' of parliamentary democracy, especially in countries with relatively unstable multiparty systems. The ensuing changes in the national party systems at that time are a good indication of this influence; many new parties were given spatial names. For example, between 1870[2] and 1910, Denmark, Norway and Sweden all experienced the 'birth' of parties expressing their respective political position on the left-right scale in their names. In a similar vein, the German Centre Party (Deutsche Zentrumspartei) depicted itself as a (Catholic) balance between the extremes of left and right, and, consequently, sat in the centre of the Prussian parliament after its foundation in 1870. England and the United States with their stable and well-established two-party systems, in contrast, proved immune to absorbing the new terminology to any great degree.

Second, the left-right dichotomy again gained in importance with the advent of socialist/communist parties as serious rivals of the 'bourgeois' political establishment. The sustained influence of left-wing alternatives in several countries rendered the terminological divide almost all-encompassing to describe in simple terms quite nuanced political differences. Inside national states, their influence was particularly pronounced before World War I; their voices were often brutally silenced by nationalistic right-wing movements in the interwar period; in the post-World War II era, when strong ideological tensions between the two blocs each under the umbrella of one of the two global superpowers sparked the Cold War, communist parties seized power in the Eastern Bloc.

Parties on the (far) left have remained a political force up to the present day. Even though they seem to dispose of much lesser influence than until the historic events in 198990, the end of the Cold War has by no means spelled 'the end of history' (Francis Fukuyama) for the left-right distinction. Socialism has reappeared in recent years, most notably in Latin American countries such as Venezuela[3] or Bolivia. Also, left-wing parties in advanced democracies promote themselves as protectors against the many actual or perceived socio-economic malaises of 'globalisation' and/or European integration, seeking to occupy policy stances that moderate parties on the left have jettisoned. The recently founded German party The Left (DIE LINKE) is a case in point.

The illustrations above suffice to emphasise both the historical and contemporary relevance of party conflict along a left-right axis. It almost goes without saying that the left-right dichotomy is merely a device to classify, group and compare parties' policies, and thus parties themselves. 'Left' and 'right' form the conceived poles of a continuum representing a wide political spectrum of a great many shades that cannot be adequately captured by such crude terms. In the words of Thérien (2002, pp. 45960), "… to refer to a right- or left-wing world view is to appeal to an ideal type that does not exist in reality". Moreover, most party systems have diversified over time so that the traditional labels tend to be dubbed 'social democratic' or 'socialist', 'conservative' or 'Christian democratic' and so forth to better differentiate between parties located on the same 'half' of the spectrum. Despite its obvious limitations, the duality of 'left' and 'right' has proven a helpful concept for understanding and analysing politics: "Left/right is visual and spatial, hence it is immediately understandable and easily translatable across cultures" (Laponce, 1981, p. 27). Its benefits have encouraged innumerable political scientists to apply the concept to a number of policy areas. As the next section demonstrates, this can lead to surprising results contrasting with common sense assumptions about the left and the right.

Four Pertinent Policy Areas

The application of the venerated left-right dichotomy to various policy areas has a comparatively long history in the many disciplines of Political Science. What all such studies share is the conviction that parties matter in terms of policy outcomes, although the explanatory focus differs from discipline to discipline. In short: same explanans (political parties), different explananda. Students of International Relations (IR), for example, would insist upon 'opening the black box' of nation states and domestic societies to explain foreign policy behaviour with the relative strength of parties and the societal groups they represent[4]. Scholars of Comparative Politics adhere to the same second-image perspective of IR, yet without explicit mention thereof since looking into states is a daily routine, rather than a deliberate choice, for them to understand and be able to compare the characteristics of political systems.

Most studies on the salience of the left-right divide indirectly draw on the concept of cleavage, which was advanced in a seminal work by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). Its underlying idea is that voting patterns are structured along critical lines of historical cleavage such as centre/periphery, nation-state/church (both of which are products of the National Revolution), rural/urban areas and work/capital (both of which are products of the Industrial Revolution). This list could be extended to include further, as well as new, dimensions, but Lipset and Rokkan's central message remains valid: societal cleavages translate into politics of support and rejection, and this is where parties come into play as platforms for positions on certain contested issues.

The subsequent paragraphs present four areas in which the left-right distinction has been pertinent to research on how partisan differences impact on government policies. This is done without intending to provide an exhaustive list of all policy areas where differences in ideological provenance have been shown to play out. Nor is a comprehensive survey of the state-of-the-art literature on these four areas within the scope of the article. Rather, the select areas are to highlight both the ongoing relevance of the distinction and the varied results obtained from its application. For ease of exposition, the fourfold list begins with policy areas of rather domestic scale before proceeding with those more international or even supranational in character[5].

1) Macroeconomic policy[6]: The area of macroeconomic policy represents the classic realm to test the validity of the left-right distinction. Here, economists in particular have made headway in assessing the role of ideologically different parties. The conceptualisation of a 'partisan theory' of macroeconomic policies is closely associated with the name of Douglas A. Hibbs, Jr. (1977, 1987, 1992), whose analysis rests on the logic of the so-called Phillips-curve: the trade-off (or inverse relation) between a low rate of inflation, on the one hand, and a low rate of unemployment, on the other. By testing a sample of governments in twelve West European and North American states, Hibbs (1977) finds considerable evidence for the commonly held expectation that left-leaning governments tend to opt for a low unemployment-high inflation pattern while right-leaning governments favour the opposite configuration[7]. Through the use of large(r)- as well as small(er)-N studies[8], many scholars after Hibbs have again and again confirmed, albeit to varying degrees, the validity of partisan effects on macroeconomic policies for most OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development) countries across time (see, for example, Blais, Blake & Dion, 1993, 1996; Boix, 1997, 2000; Erlandsson, 2004).

Besides the bulk of studies on partisan preferences regarding fiscal and monetary policies, there is a sizeable body of literature on how parties affect overall regulatory policies. Expansionary macroeconomic policies, which aim less at controlling inflation than at ensuring high rates of employment, usually go hand in hand with a high level of state intervention into economic affairs. Thus, leftist governments may be more prone than their rightist counterparts to embrace interventionist instruments for the purpose of economic regulation. As far as the maintenance of welfare benefits and poverty reduction strategies are concerned, this picture seems to be confirmed (see Brady, 2003). It then stands to reason that parties from the left remain “the foremost defenders of the Nordic Welfare Model” (Nygård, 2006, p. 357). Zohlnhöfer, Obinger and Wolf (2008) make a related claim, stating that left parties in general are more likely to oppose privatisation of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), though they only have enough leeway to resist these pressures in the absence of severe fiscal restraints. Ross (2000), however, observes that while parties shape welfare policies, their impact can turn out to be counterintuitive when leftist parties advance unpopular welfare state retrenchment and restructuring more vigorously than their opponents from the right (see also Klitgaard, 2007). Yet another surprising finding is that centre-left parties have frequently championed corporate governance reforms that were more to the liking of 'finance capital' interests than of their traditional work-class and low-income constituencies (Cioffi & Höpner, 2006).

2) Immigration policy: Another major strand of the literature is concerned with the partisan effects on immigration policy. From experience and common

sense reasoning, one might suspect that parties on the left are generally more favourable to open borders and hence advocate 'friendly', as opposed to restrictive, immigration policies. In turn, their counterparts on the right would appear more liable to restraining immigration for nationalistic considerations (Breunig & Luedtke, 2008, pp. 1289). That partisan hypotheses do not hold water in all areas forms a key insight from a recent macro-level study conducted by Breunig and Luedtke (2008), who evince a negligible influence of party ideology on immigration policies. For them, the comprehensiveness of institutional constraints checks and veto points within a political system is the determining factor for how restrictive immigration is handled. That is, there seems to be no such thing as an inherently pro-immigrant left or an inherently anti-immigrant right. A number of recent single-case and two-country comparative studies support this claim (see Geddes, 2008; Smith, 2008[9]). In many cases, centre-right governments are not so illiberal as one might have expected at first glance. An older survey based on self-placement, however, points to the persistence of a left-right divide among Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in attitudes towards immigration (Lahav, 1997). These contradictory findings suggest that, given their own strategic goals, parties act in different ways depending on circumstances, one of which is the nature of interparty competition within a political system (Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Green-Pedersen & Odmalm, 2008). This tentative answer needs further scrutiny; it seems plausible to focus on the differences in immigration policies between centre-left and centre-right parties (Schain, 2008, p. 469).

3) Foreign aid policy: At this point, things ought to get a little less complicated, for foreign aid (or official development assistance, ODA) is disbursed on an entirely voluntary basis and can thus be understood as a form of 'gift' giving (Hattori, 2001, 2003). Now consider the left's particular heritage to comprehend why parties on the left are typically credited with more egalitarian ambitions than those on the right. By extension, it is often argued, dominant convictions of distributive justice that are followed in the domestic realm transcend (rather arbitrary) national borders and make lifting nonnationals out of poverty a foreign policy priority. It follows from this that states with more generous welfare policies, on average, should give more ODA as well. Of all scholars interested in the logic of aid-giving, Noël and Thérien have possibly left the longest-lasting mark. They have not only empirically tested and validated the positive influence of welfare state traditions (Noël & Thérien, 1995), but also taken their previous argument a step further to have it pivot around partisan influence. Throughout their studies on the subject, which employ slightly modified 'micro-arguments', they maintain that governments from the political left in general provide more aid (Thérien & Noël, 2000; Thérien, 2001, 2002[10]; Noël & Thérien, 2002; Noël, 2006). The majority of analyses concur with these findings (for example, Breuning & Ishiyama, 2003). However, this consensus starts to unravel when ODA is measured beyond its 'default' category of volume relative to gross domestic product (GDP). Such a broader approach to assessing the influence that parties exert on ODA yields much more mixed results, at least for a small number of countries and a limited of period of time (see Kranke, 2008).

4) European integration policy[11]: The question of how parties at the national level view the European Union (EU) has attracted increasing academic attention ever since the very process of European integration first met with more and more resistance in the 1990s. The general pattern of party positions on the EU has been aptly summarised as an inverted U-shaped curve. The dividing line is between 'extreme' and 'moderate' instead of 'left' and 'right': peripheral parties exhibit strong anti-integration positions; centrist parties from centre-left to -right support European integration (Hooghe, Marks & Wilson, 2002, pp. 96870), a few notable exceptions such as the British Conservatives notwithstanding. A multitude of such analyses builds upon, and extends, the prominent work by Taggart and Szczerbiak on party-based Euroscepticism (among others, Taggart, 1998; Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2003). One of their main contributions has been to draw the crucial distinction between 'soft' (contingent) and 'hard' (principled) Euroscepticism (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2002, p. 7) and somewhat revise it later owing to criticism from within the academic community (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2003, pp. 612). Furthermore, they have observed similar patterns of party-based opposition to European integration exist in EU member and candidate states. Yet according to their research, Euroscepticism in the former candidate states was predominantly found in right-wing parties while there was no such clear bias in the old member states (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2002, p. 17). One newer analysis provides a particularly valuable supplement to previous accounts because of its focus on explaining the nature of extremist parties' opposition towards the EU. De Vries and Edwards (2009) propose that right-wing extremist parties refer to the perceived and feared loss of 'national sovereignty' to appeal to their constituencies; left-wing extremist parties, in contrast, rally behind the idea of a 'social Europe' and reject the EU on socio-economic grounds as being an inherently and as they see it dangerously 'neoliberal' project.

Three Critical Caveats

Contrasting 'left' and 'right' parties ranks among political scientists' most favourite exercises. Examples abound, as the preceding overview of four policy area has shown despite its relative brevity. But what are the limitations and shortcomings of the left-right dichotomy for political science research? To touch upon some of these aspects, three caveats are in order covering conceptual, methodical and bias problems.

First, 'left' and 'right' represent increasingly blurred concepts, as they have arguably always been to some extent. Like with any label, self-images and reputations coalesce in intricate ways that are anything but easy to disentangle. Bipolar labels also do not neatly fit for parties outside the traditional lines of cleavage. Single-issue parties such as the Swedish Pirate Party (Piratpartiet), which has so far experienced fast and sweet success culminating in the last EP elections in June 2009, elude categorisations along a spatial axis. Change is an additional worry for the left-right distinction. One key dynamic has been the advent of a new 'Third Way', as proclaimed by the British Labour Party ('New Labour') under then-Prime Minister Tony Blair upon coming to power. During the last one and a half decades or so, not only the Labour Party has sought to move well 'beyond left and right' (Giddens, 1994); others such as the German Social Democrats have followed suit, often leaving a glaring whole on the left that more extreme parties have filled gladly[12]. Yet another source of dynamic stems from the transforming effect of government responsibility, which cannot be achieved without the approval of the 'median' voter. Governing parties thus move towards the political centre and often have to accept certain compromises not always in line with their previously held 'pure' positions. Just as 'hard' Euroscepticism, which is characteristic of opposition parties, can be softened through government involvement (Hooghe, Marks & Wilson, 2002, p. 970), a governing party may be forced to relax or even sacrifice other core ideological stances, especially when relying on a coalition to achieve a stable majority in parliamentary voting. This argument can also be reversed for all those cases in which a formerly governing party has been forced into opposition and then exploits the potential of confrontation. In this sense, compromises literally compromise convictions.

Second, from these conceptual inaccuracies derive methodical problems. If the concepts used lack specificity, their operationalisation becomes difficult indeed. Testable definitions of the characteristics of different parties along the left-right divide are conducive to cross-temporal and -national comparisons. Attempts to enhance measurements might make some methodical headway but will very likely remain imperfect in one way or another, considering that any such endeavour involves handling 'slippery' and malleable notions. Still, the design of reliable models for measurements continues to be an important task, not least with a view to capturing the dynamics of change in party positions (see, for example, McDonald, Mendes & Kim, 2007). The situation is further aggravated by the specific problem of controlling for intervening and/or conditioning variables (see also Imbeau, 1994, p. 688). There are no simple causations to be inferred from party ideologies, for one has to account for the 'contingency factor': operating, like any other entity, in a particular social environment, a party is influenced by its environment (including, above all, competing parties), and vice versa. This constitutes the very nature of a game of strategic positioning in which all parties interested in winning elections necessarily engage. Scholars, therefore, have to keep an eye on the potential gap between rhetoric and action. As the brief discussion about the impact of the party system on immigration policies above has indicated, parties are strategic and intentional actors in many policy areas (Klitgaard, 2007; Huo, 2006), and their openly displayed ideology may merely form an outer layer of their 'identity'.

Third, a fundamental bias informs most analyses on the left-right dichotomy, and this article is not an exception. This final note of caution concerns the 'Western' imprint of the distinction. Not only did it emerge on the European continent, but contributions in the leading journals of our disciplines have also predominantly tested it across the industrialised world of OECD countries. Questions arise: do different socio-economic circumstances in the developing world cause different cleavages between 'left' and 'right'? Is the ideal-type axis longer, shorter or somehow bent? How to allow for meaningful comparisons across different economic, political and social systems? Would our associations of the terms be different if we considered the bigger picture? The very success of applying the distinction hinges on answers to these and other questions.

Conclusion: Two Lessons Learnt

Generalisations are at best elusive and at worst counterproductive. This article has sought to contribute to fostering a better understanding of the history and usefulness, but also the limitations of the left-right dichotomy. Two main lessons have materialised from the preceding illustrations and the vast literature on the subject.

Lesson 1: parties matter! Even though they hardly ever conform fully with their labels, there is a kernel of truth in the idea of expressing political contest in opposing terms. Obviously, parties themselves use these as well as other 'sub'-labels to remain distinctive in the political contest for voters' approval. This terminological distinction has, if not always provided satisfying answers, at the very least guided scholars through an otherwise barely lit labyrinth of parties' politics and policies. Results from policy areas other than the ones covered herein, but in which similar left-right patterns have been tested, suggest that the jury is still out to find more convincing answers[13].

Lesson 2: context matters! The context comprises both the external (other parties, voters, international developments) and internal (factions within a given party) environment. Parties are thus neither externally independent nor internally homogenous but ever-evolving actors. Understanding their environment is key to understanding parties themselves be they allegedly 'left' or 'right'. Their collective positions as a party interact with both facets of their environment on a constant basis.

Chances are that the labels 'left' and 'right' will continue to dominate our thinking about politics in fundamental ways. The results of the 2009 EP elections attest to this outlook (see the next issue of A Different View: Issue 30, July 2009). Given that politics would otherwise be overly complex, this is not too surprising if only Khrushchev knew.

Notes

1. See Laponce (1981: ch. 2) on the prepolitical symbolism of the terms in various cultural settings.
2. Many Scandinavian parties have retained spatial names to date. Yet it is striking that while left and centre parties in all three countries have stuck to the old notion, parties on the right have substituted 'conservative' or 'Christian democratic' for the ill-famed label 'right'. To cite but one example for this general difference, the Swedish *Farmers' League* (*Bondeförbundet*), founded in 1913, was even renamed *Centre Party* (*Centerpartiet*) as late as 1957.
3. Seeing himself as the leader of the so-called Bolivarian Revolution (named after Simón Bolívar), Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez has coined the term '21st century socialism'.
4. One, if not *the*, standard text for this approach to studying foreign policy behaviour of states is Moravcsik's 1997 article in *International Organization*, in which he seeks to reformulate domestic liberal theory as an IR theory of equal rank besides the predominant realist and institutionalist theories (Moravcsik, 1997, p. 5136). While resting on societal groups rather than political parties, his general argument can easily be transferred to the role of the latter. Other scholars have also based their analyses on the insight that domestic institutions matter greatly, sometimes by giving particular attention to how parties affect a state's foreign policy (see, for example, Thérien & Noël, 2000).
5. This is only meant to facilitate better orientation for the reader, not serve as a hard-and-fast rule of ordering policy areas according to their degree of 'internationality'. In an era of advancing global integration, any such distinction would be difficult to draw and sustain, if it has ever been reasonably accurate.
6. Somewhat simplistically and indiscriminately, this category lumps together fiscal and monetary as well as regulatory policies.
7. Hibbs's original theory has undergone several modifications, among others by Alt (1985) and Alesina (1987).
8. Comparative country studies with an 'ideal' sample of N = 100 are virtually nonexistent, which is why 'larger' and 'smaller' seem more appropriate terms.
9. These are only two of the articles in a recent special issue on centre-right parties' policy stances on immigration in *Journal of European Public Policy* 2008, 15 (3). This issue also contains the articles by Green-Pedersen and Odmalm (2008) as well as Schain (2008), both of which are cited below.
10. The only major difference to his 2001 article, written in French, is the additional section on "The definition of foreign aid" (pp. 4502).
11. Thanks are due to Thomas Oberkirch and Joachim Schild (University of Trier, Germany), whose comprehensive, yet unpublished, literature survey on Euroscepticism has clarified the salience of the left-right distinction with respect to European integration, not least by identifying the most relevant literature on the matter.
12. Hellwig (2008), however, argues that deindustralisation and globalisation have jointly decreased the salience of the left-right distinction for political contestation from a voter's perspective anyway.
13. See Milner and Judkins (2004) on trade policy and Narizny (2003) on rearmament policy.

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Academic Article

Determinants of the European Union - Russia Energy Relations

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Introduction: the scope of the analysis

Analyzing European Union-Russian relations, one of the key issues in contemporary research and foreign policy agenda, is the cooperation and dialogue in the field of energy policy. In the following article, major economic determinants and characteristics of European Union-Russia energy interdependency will be assessed on the basis of macroeconomic data. The main goal of the following analysis is to provide a comparative assessment on mutual dependence between the actors in question, which can serve as a solid background for the comprehensive analysis on contemporary European Union-Russia relations and domestic energy policies. Yet this essay is not aimed to describe the general framework of European Union-Russian energy dialogue and domestic or European-level policy making, the scope of the following analysis will focus on the general characteristics of European Union-Russia energy relations and the economic factors especially the role of gas sector influencing the European Union-Russia energy dialogue.

Energy security: an evolving issue on soft security agenda

The so-called new security agenda having evolved after the collapse of bipolar world system got into the centre of political and academic discussions at the end of the 1990's, whereas new security threats including soft security issues became crucial in the formulation of security strategies and in foreign policy debates. In the same time, economic stability earned key importance in defining security in broad sense and energy security became part of the so-called new security agenda. In the scope of European energy security, European Union-Russian relations got into the forefront of political discussions, as mutual interdependence in the mentioned sector and the insurance of continuous energy supply play a privotal role in the economic development of the European Union and Russia likewise.

In the political and strategic debates about energy security, there are some general approaches and main aspects to consider, which define nowadays' economic and political environment in this aspect. Energy security, being a strategic interest for every state since it is a sine qua non for economic growth, consists of two elements: system security and quantity security. System security covers the proper operation of the energy infrastructure needed for energy supply, whereas quantity supply means the appropriate amount of energy resources, e.g. quantity of gas transmitted through the pipeline system (Spanjer 2006: 2890).

The notion of energy crisis should be also defined, as it is an ever returning point in the last years of European Union-Russia energy relations. There are two existing approaches to energy crisis, which have been defined in different periods: the term 'energy crisis' was used in the context of 'peak oil', the continuous growth of oil prices in the United States in the seventies; however, from the end of the nineties, it is applied in situations, when energy supply is not secured or shortfalls cannot be avoided.

In terms of European Union-Russian relations and the character of energy dialogue, the matter of choice between energy dependency and economic interdependency, symmetric and asymmetric nature are generally returning in academic debates. These dichotomies get imminent especially on the occasions of gas debates between Russia and Ukraine or Belorussia, when Russian actions tend to be regarded as not only deeds of economic rationale but also measures for the promotion of political interests. Therefore, the use of 'energy weapon' against the European Union is regarded one of the security risks of Russian foreign policy, while the economic interdependence is an often ignored factor in the assessments of EU-Russian energy relations. Economic interdependence which is to be discussed below also has policy implications on Russian energy policy, since there are well-known intentions to get involved in pipeline construction projects in the direction of Asia-Pacific region on the Russian side. Reduction of economic dependency on the deals with the European Union and the diversification of energy export markets are in the forefront of Russia's strategic document Energy Strategy 2020 likewise (Spanjer 2007; Ivanov 2003).

There is a significant difference between national approaches on energy market regulations and on the limitations of state involvement in energy sector in the European Union and in Russia, which can influence their long-term relationship in this aspect: 'on the one hand, competition rules in the EU are becoming a more determining factor, as traditionally vertically integrated energy markets are changing to become more liberalized and opened, while on the other, centralization and concentration of control are gaining more and more influence on the supply side in Russia (Milov 2006:4)'. As Milov stresses, EU-Russian energy relations are characterized by mutual distrust on both sides: the European Union tends to diversify its energy imports by infrastructure development, on the other hand, Russians insist on keeping energy sector in the property of national stakeholders and central control of external investments. In the same time, the limited involvement of investments lacks transparency: 'Bilateral ties have thus developed very much as cartel-like relations, which tend not to be very transparent, and very protective of the market position of European importers of Russian energy resources' (Milov 2006: 5).

Russian external relations with European states are primarily driven by the principle of bilateralism, which is manifested in the practice that Russia negotiates on country-by-country basis instead of European Union level, as it provides better possibility for pursuing its national interests and positions.

Economic significance of energy sector in Russia

As already mentioned, the importance of energy sector for Russian economy is not to underestimate, since 'Exports correspond to about a third of Russian GDP and roughly half of these export revenues come from energy. The federal budget is heavily dependent on both output developments and energy prices. Several sources assert that revenues from the energy sector account for 30 to 40% of central government total revenues, e.g. OECD (2002a)' (Rautava 2004: 316). Moreover, growth of energy prices infers visible increase in gross domestic product (GDP), therefore, stimulating growth of energy prices is an obvious economic interest for Russia.

Analyzing the composition of the main consumers of Russian gas industry (BP Statistical Review), it can be observed that Russian gas production covers domestic demands in a great extent (63%), whereas 27% of the production is exported to the European Union. However, domestic production and supplies to CIS represents 73% of Russian gas production, exports to the European Union are crucial for the Russian economy, as different pricing is applied for the mentioned three different regions, of which the gas prices paid by the European Union is the highest, notably European prices were six times of domestic prices. Therefore, economic interest in gas exports underlines the importance of securing European gas supply, as 'Exports to Europe provide Gazprom with cash money (which was not very often the case with domestic sales…)' (Spanjer 2007: 2891). In contrast, domestic prices are strongly subsidized by Russian state but still much lower than the level of European prices and payment details can be disadvantageous: 'Both non-payment and the fact that the bartered goods and money surrogates were generally of lesser value than the gas they substituted for, resulted in losses for Gazprom on the domestic market' (Spanjer 2007: 2891). Raising domestic market prices got on the agenda of WTO accession negotiations, as well as there were some references thereupon in the Energy Strategy 2020, in addition, world economic crisis had striven Russia's economy as well, what urges such steps.

In energy diverse forecasts concerning the Russian energy sector, there is a gap between real extraction capacities and the foreseeable demand, which could be reduced through investment and infrastructural development in this sector. Still, there have already been problems with domestic deliveries in Russia since 2006: 'Yet deliveries have also been disrupted involuntarily, when the extreme winter temperatures of January and February 2006 saw peak seasonal demand for gas in Russia, transit countries, and Europe as a whole translate into gas shortages for many consumers in all these areas' (Milov 2006: 7), as a consequence of which, Russian power stations had to change to alternative fuel so as to maintain power generation (Milov 2006).

Therefore, investment in Russian energy sector is inevitable for the development of the infrastructural background for the fulfilment of demands and for the promotion of the aforementioned strategic aim of diversification of Russia's imports and establishing energy relationships with other areas, e.g. with the Asia-Pacific region. Infrastructural developments aimed to increase extraction and transmission capacity will require investment in Russian energy sector. The Russian Energy Strategy 2020 estimates the need of investments in the energy sector for $735 thousand million, 59% of which should cover developments of oil (33%) and natural gas (26%) industry. Yet investment in security sector in Russia is hindered by business environment and restrictive regulations on foreign investments, as Monaghan and Jankovski outline, 'there have also been political problems, such as government interference and the legislative uncertainty facing Russian companies themselves. The YUKOS case is the most well-known example of this, but it has affected all investment and transport' (Monaghan Montanaro-Jankovski 2003:21).

As far as Russian oil and gas industry is concerned, interconnectedness of politics and economic sector is one of the features determining Russian energy policy, as energy companies are mainly controlled or influenced by the Russian government, business decisions deterring from the governmental directions can invoke actions of state authorities and legal procedures e.g. in the cases of Yukos and Russneft. Secondly, Gasprom plays dominant role in Russian energy sector, as it produces the majority of Russian gas supply, in the same time, it tends to extend its influence and gain monopoly in the oil production with governmental support.

Economic significance of Russian energy import for the European Union

In the scope of European Union-Russian energy relations, energy dependence on Russian energy is one of the determining challenges for Europe, since energy crisis situations justified the assumptions that political factors - e.g. Russian-Ukrainian relations can result in shortfalls and cuts of gas imports and the possibility of the usage of 'energy weapon' as an instrument for Russia to promote her economic and political interest. According to European Commission data, 30% of the oil import and 50% of the gas supply comes from Russia to the European Union (Figure 6, Monaghan Montanaro-Jankovski 2003:9). As a general policy response for this problem, the European Union promotes diversification of energy sources and suppliers through the Nabucco project and developing foreign policy tools for 'energy crisis management'.

On the other hand, European energy contracts are bound on national level, since energy policy is a national competence in the European Union. Therefore, European Union Member States have diverse energy relations with Russia depending on their reliance on Russian energy and level of development of the energy infrastructure, e.g. strategic storage capacities, however, some general trends can be observed on regional level (Figure 1). Depending on the proportion of Russian gas in national supply and the amount of the energy consumed, European countries possess different bargaining positions. In case of Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic States and Finland, there is a very high reliance on Russian gas imports, as gas supply coming from Russia covers the whole domestic consumption in the Baltic States, Finland, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania and Russian gas still represents a great proportion of domestic consumption in Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland. In contrast, some of the Western and Southern European countries, such as Great Britain, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the Benelux States do not import gas from Russia at all, which result in a great divergence between level of engagement and interest in cooperation with Russia. There is a significant difference in the bargaining potential of the different countries, likewise. France and Germany have stronger bargaining potential than Central and Eastern European states, since they are significant consumers and less dependent on Russian energy: for example, Germany imports the highest amount of Russian gas (i.e. 1339 billion cubic feet/year), which covers only 37-40% of Germany's gas consumption. Being Russia's biggest gas trade partner, Germany has much stronger bargaining potential, than Central and Eastern European states, which consumes less gas but dependent on Russian energy in significant extent. In spite of the fact that Central and Eastern European states have weaker bargaining potential compared to Germany or Italy, a possible future coalition and cooperation between these countries could lever their relevance in European Union-Russian energy relations, since they are altogether major consumers and transit countries, which gives them practically the possibility to block gas shipments to Western Europe.

Geostrategic situation of pipelines is a major determinant of European Union-Russia relations, since transit countries can also block energy supply to the European Union (transit dependence). In this respect, Ukraine plays a crucial role, since 'Russian gas supplies to Europe transit at least one country with Ukraine being by far the most important with around 80% of Russian gas supply to Europe transiting Ukraine in 2004 (Stern, 2005)'(Spanjer 2007:2890).

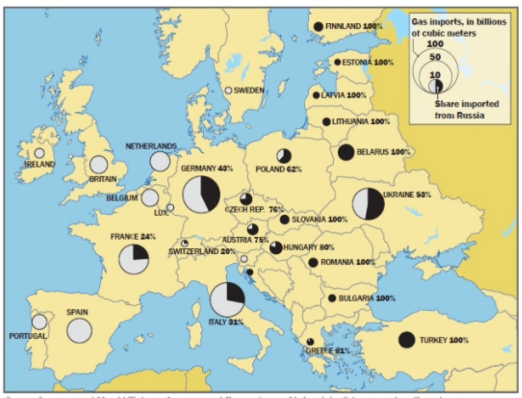
Conclusions

The possibility of using energy as a 'political weapon' infers increasing tensions between some of the European Union member states and raises the importance of the position of energy security on the European Union economic, political and security agenda. Energy crisis situations also contribute to the redefinition of relations with transit countries. On the other hand, energy crises situations force the European Union to search for policy options and solutions for the European Union's dependence on Russian energy and energy crisis management strategies. The main examples for this type of development are the construction of Nabucco pipeline and the development of strategic storage capabilities. There are also some positive signs of cooperation in the European Union in energy crisis management, for example the mutual solidarity and ad hoc cooperation between Member States during the gas debate of 2009 January, when Germany and Hungary provided natural gas for other Member States in need of energy. On the institutional level, the Lisbon Treaty would establish a common external energy policy, which would mean a decisive step towards the development of the European Union's external actorness.

As far as the Russian policy developments concern, significant investments in energy infrastructure should be carried out so as to fulfill the increasing domestic and external energy demand and diversify export markets for the reduction of dependence on European markets, which could be financed from international investment international cooperation in gas sector or the raising of gas prices in the domestic market and CIS countries, where prices are lower than the European level.

Appendix

Europe: Natural Gas Imports



Source: International Herald Tribune, International Energy Agency, Verband der Schweizerischen Gasindustrie

Figure 1. Natural gas imports from Russia in Europe, 2007

Source: Russia's Energy Policy, Russian Analytical Digest, No. 18, 17 April 2007, ETH Zürich.

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Academic Article

The Ideological Gap between Public Opinion and Party Orientation in Europe

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Since the extension of suffrage to a wider population and the emergence of mass parties, parties have been the key elements of political life that bridge the gap between citizens and the state. With the rise of Kirchheimer's "catch-all-parties", followed by Mair's "cartel parties", however, political scientists started to question, whether political parties are still fulfilling their function as a bridge between citizens' preferences and the state or whether the politicians of these parties have evolved into purely "office seeking bureaucrats", that ignore the preferences of citizens. The latter hypothesis gives rise to the argument that following this changing role of parties, an inevitable gap has emerged between public opinion and the party orientation, which stands at the core of this essay.

By using relevant arguments and empirical examples from Europe, this paper will posit that there is an evident gap between the public opinion and party orientation in European countries, which is also inherent in new issue dimensions, such as the European integration. This paper will analyse the gap between citizens and party orientations in three parts. In the first part, it will be examined whether the type of electoral system in European countries matters for the congruence between the citizens and parties, and it will be concluded that neither majoritarian nor proportional electoral systems in fact lead to greater congruence. In the second part, the paper will examine the congruence between citizens and parties in Europe, from 1970s till the end of the 1990s, on a left-right dimension and assert that although the citizen-party gap has diminished slightly in the 1980s, it grew again in the 90s. In the third part, the paper will show that there is a significant gap between voters and their parties in the EU dimension. In the conclusion, the paper will present the implications of this gap for political science. It should be noted that in this paper, the gap between parties and citizens will be examined, rather than the gap between party leaders and citizens, assuming that party leaders will be representing their party line, thus any emerging gap will be between citizens and parties.

Firstly, one should look at the citizen-party gap from a broader perspective and ask whether the hypothesis, that there is a growing gap between citizens and parties, is valid in majoritarian and/or in proportional electoral systems. In other words, does the electoral system matter for the citizen-party congruence? There is a significant amount of work published on that question, including Dalton (1985), Huber & Powell (1995), but the most detailed research on that question was conducted by Wessels (1999), who asserted that under proportional electoral systems the party voter is better off (in terms of policy distance between the party and party voter) whereas under majoritarian systems, the median voter of the whole electorate is better off (again in terms of distance of policy representation). One weakness with Wessel's work is that Wessel measures (opinion) congruence between parties and their voters solely based on party manifestos in the run up to elections. Parties, however, can deviate from what they argue on their manifestos, once they move into office. Therefore, a measurement of the gap between parties and voters based predominantly on the party manifesto is not sufficient to capture the citizen-party congruence. One should also examine whether the public policies implemented by the incumbent party in office match the ones which were promised during elections or at party manifestos.

In terms of public policies implemented by parties in office, Huber & Powell find that under proportional electoral systems, public policy outcome is close to the median voter of the entire electorate (Huber & Powell 1994). This is due to the fact that, under proportional electoral systems, all parties in coalition including the opposition party, get some weight in policy-making, therefore the final policy outcome is a product of bargaining and compromises, reflecting the preferences of the national median voter (Ibid 1994). Similarly, under majoritarian electoral systems, since the opposition party is excluded from decision-making, the winning party implements its partisan preferences (Schmidt 1996), which are away from the preferences of the national median voter.

In that case, if we compare the ex-ante (party manifesto and elections) and ex-post (in office) policy orientations of parties, we find that there is an evident public opinion-party gap in both electoral systems. In other words, there will be a gap between voters and party lines, regardless of the electoral system, which is also supported by Holmberg (Holmberg 1994 in Mattila & Raunio 2006). Under proportional electoral systems, while parties target their median “party” voter at elections, the policies they implement in office are away from the median “party voter” and close to the preferences of the national median voter. Accordingly, an ideological gap emerges between the median party voters (including other partisan voters of these parties) of incumbent parties in coalition and these coalition parties in office. Similarly, under majoritarian electoral systems, while the party policies seem close to national median voter at elections, the policies implemented by the winning party in office (under single party government) are away from the national median voter and they reflect the preferences of “natural constituencies” of this single-party government. Likewise a gap emerges between the national median voter and the party in office. Therefore, regardless of the electoral system there will be an ideological gap between voters and party orientations. Empirical evidence also supports this hypothesis. When the party-voter congruence (for domestic politics) was measured in EU-25 on a left-right dimension, Mattila & Raunio found that while in Austria, which has a proportional representation system in place, the voter-party line gap was 0.51 (on a 10-point scale), the same distance (0.51) between voter and party line was also found in the UK, which has a plurality system (Mattila & Raunio 2006, p.438).

After capturing a broader picture of the voter-party gap from the perspective of electoral systems, we should now consider the picture from a micro-level and examine how this gap looked like between 1970s and 1990s in European countries, measured on a traditional left-right dimension, which encompasses the congruence between public opinion and parties on various issues from economy to environment. Klingemann demonstrates in his analysis of Western European countries that while the gap between voters and their parties was wider in 1970s, this gap has slightly closed by 1980s, yet not completely disappeared (Klingemann & Fuchs 1995). For example, on a point scale of 0-10 on the traditional left-right dimension, where 0 is the extreme left pole and 10 the extreme right, Social Democrats in Europe stood at 3.68 points on this scale in 1970s, while their voters had a stance of 4.25. In 1980s, however, Social Democrats shifted to 4.26 points on this scale, while their voters moved to 4.13 (Ibid, p.188). Similarly, Christian Democrats had a stance of 5.47 in 1970s, with their voters standing at 6.63, but the Christian Democrats parties moved to 6.21 by 1980s, whereas their voters stood at 6.55 in the same period (Ibid, p.189).

Although these figures above may reflect an 'illusionary' result that the gap between the voters and their parties is closing, the findings of Blyth and Katz point to the opposite direction. Based on empirical evidence from the two big parties in the UK, Blyth & Katz assert that in 1990s the gap between the parties and their constituents widened, as major political parties in this country have 'downsized their natural constituents' and evolved into Mair's 'cartel parties' by becoming agents of the state (Blyth & Katz 2005). In the UK, traditionally-left Labour Party claimed in 1997 under its “Third Way” frame that it no more enjoyed special ties with trade unions, but it solicited funds from business groups, and paved the way for 'tax cuts to raise their profitability' in exchange (Ibid, p.46). The Conservatives, on the other hand, 'suggested reversing their long-standing opposition' to state funding for party budgets (Ibid, p.47).

After presenting some empirical evidence on the gap between parties and their voters, we should also examine the reasons of this gap, which tended to diminish slightly between 1970s and 1980s, but which has grown again in 1990s.

The first reason for this gap is the emergence of Kirchheimer's catch-all-party in the post-World War II period, which was especially apparent in 1970s, when the electoral volatility reached its climax. Assuming that voters have become less ideological by 1970s, parties have adopted an 'office-seeking behaviour' and focused on winning elections, rather than developing public policies (Downs 1957). Therefore, they focused on maximising their votes, and in order to reach their targeted amount of votes, they had to shift towards the median voter, which however left the more partisan voters of these parties worse off. Accordingly, this shift has caused an ideological gap between parties and their voters. Klingemann supports this hypothesis, by asserting that it was the Christian Democrat parties in Europe, which had the biggest gap between their voters and the party line in both 1970s and 1980s, which can be explained through the fact that Christian Democrats have become catch-all-parties (Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995, p:190). This gap can still be traced in some European countries. For instance, at the last general elections in Germany, both SPD and CDU/CSU shifted to the national median voter (Williams 2006). As a result of this shift, a gap emerged between the party line and partisan voters of both parties, who punished both parties by switching to the closest extremist party (Williams 2006). Oskar Lafontaine also gives support to this finding, by stressing that the leftist voters, who were disappointed with SPD's lost identity and neoliberal policies, found the alternative answer in Die Linke party (Der Spiegel, Nr. 35 2008, p:30).

The second reason for this gap is that, political parties have started switching from catch-all parties into cartel parties, yet this effect became evident particularly in the UK by 1990s. Initially constructed by Katz & Mair, cartel party model in fact cuts across the Downsian model in its assumption that politicians are office seekers, who design policies to get elected (Downs 1957) or to remain in office, who in other words turn politics into a profession (Katz & Mair 1995) The cartel-party model leads to a gap in opinion congruence between voters and their parties, because in that model parties become agents of the state, which are also funded by state aids, (Ibid 1995) and they no more fulfil their function of representing the interests of their constituents. Accordingly, a gap emerges between what parties stand for and what their constituents demand.

So far I have analysed the voter-party gap generally in different electoral systems and under the traditional left-right policy dimension. It is also worth analysing the gap in the congruence between public opinion and party lines in a new dimension, which is of salience to nearly all European countries: EU dimension. It should be noted that, as previous studies have shown (Hix 1999, Hooghe & Marks 1999) the EU dimension is a question of integration vs. anti-integration and it is different than the traditional left-right dimension, thus it needs to be examined as a separate dimension.

As the 'European project' has transformed from a liberal single-market project into a quasi-redistributive 'political system' through deeper integration, it has become more salient for all European citizens. This continuing integration, however, does not necessarily mean that public opinion backs deeper integration. Empirical evidence from EU-25 has demonstrated that there is a gap between voters and their parties on the issue of European integration. The general trend in EU-25 is that political parties are more supportive of European integration than are their voters, particularly in the UK, Hungary, Luxembourg, Finland, Austria and Portugal (Mattila & Raunio 2006, p.438). On the contrary, in the Czech Republic and Poland voters are more integrationist than are their parties (Ibid, p.438). One specific example of this public opinion-party gap in EU dimension is the 1989 EP elections in Germany, where many German voters did not approve the EC project their leaders were involved in, therefore many Germans casted protest votes at this election (Franklin et al. 1996, p.155). A more recent example is the referendum on EU Constitutional Treaty in France in 2005. Contrary to the stance taken by their party leaders on the Treaty, many French voters were concerned that EU project was getting 'too liberal' and thus they voted 'no' (Taggart 2006, p.16). In other words, the gap between the major parties and their voters played a major role in the rejection of the Treaty. It should be also emphasized that, from the available data, it is hard to say whether there is a growing, diminishing or a stable gap between voters and parties on EU dimension, yet the empirical evidence presented above indicates that there is a clear gap between voters and their parties.

We can find three reasons for this voter-party gap on EU dimension. Firstly, this gap emerges partly due to the fact that governing parties are mainly pro-integrationist, whose position does not necessarily reveal the preferences of their voters and which becomes then a motive that estranges the voters from governing parties (Mattila & Raunio 2006, p.440). Secondly, because of intra-party fragmentation on EU issues, many European parties cannot explicitly announce their position on this dimension, thus they cannot distinguish themselves on EU issues from all other parties in the system (Ibid, p.441). Consequently, partisan voters observe that their ideological position on EU issues are not explicitly reflected by their parties, which creates again the ideological gap between the voters and their parties. This is why Mattila and Raunio argue that the average distance between parties on EU dimension is lower than the average distance between their voters (Ibid, p.441). Finally, parties that fail to mobilize their voters can indeed cause a gap between the party line and their voters. An obvious example is the French Socialist Party (PS). Although PS sided with the governing party (UMP) and endorsed the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005; as it failed to mobilize its voters to vote in favour of the Treaty, many Socialist voters did not follow the 'official' party line and they voted 'no' (Crum 2007, p.73).

To sum up, this paper has three major conclusions. Firstly, the electoral system does not have a real impact on the gap between citizens and parties, and regardless of the electoral system there is a gap evident between voters and their parties. Secondly, although the gap between voters and their parties seemed to decline in 1980s, when measured on a traditional left-right dimension, this gap has grown again in 1990s, with the clear influence of cartel parties. Finally, as shown above, there is a gap between voters and their parties on EU dimension, since the parties, especially the governing parties, are more integrationist than their voters are. Although we find a clear gap between voters and their parties, we cannot conclude whether it is growing or diminishing, except for the gap on the traditional left-right dimension analysed in the second part, which was on an increasing trend from 1980s to 1990s.

This issue of party-voter gap has some implications for political science. The first implication is that this gap points to a crisis in democracy, since elected representatives do not reflect the preferences of their constituents. This gap resembles an elected dictatorship, because in democracies “smallest common denominator in normative terms is that in a democracy there should be some match between the interests of the people and what representatives promote (Mattila & Raunio 2006, p.428).” The second implication is that the accuracy of Downsian model could be questioned, because as seen from the catch-all-parties in Germany a shift towards the median voter does not guarantee a victory in elections, because due to the emerging gap between the partisan voters and the party line, the catch-all-party could be punished by its extreme partisan voters, who usually switch to the closest extreme left or right party.

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