How do the populist and technocratic critiques of party government (as discussed by Caramani) relate to the transnational cleavage?

Introduction

In the following essay we will argue that, in the context of the transnational cleavage, the populist and technocratic critiques of party government can empower political actors to challenge the current mode of representation and establish themselves on opposite poles of the new cleavage. Technocratic responses of mainstream parties to transnational challenges can trigger populist reactions which solidify the new cleavage, while technocratic political parties can also emerge under certain conditions. We will organize our argumentation along the following lines. First, we will approach the concepts discussed by Caramani, Hooghe and Marks and outline their contributions in relation to the argument. Second, we will examine the relationship between the two, focusing on the contemporary political crises. Finally, it is important to underline that, in line with the literature, the discussion takes place primarily in the European context and we should tread carefully if we are to extract general conclusions.

Globalization and the translational cleavage.

Our analysis should begin from the "revolution" that led to the development of the transnational cleavage. As Hooghe and Marks (2017) point out, the point of departure for the institutional crystallization of the transnational cleavage in Europe can be seen in the watershed reforms of the Maastricht treaty as well as the collapse of the iron curtain and the rapid processes of European integration and enlargement in eastern Europe. In the European case, the general inclination for an increase in the free movement of goods, capital and people was already in development and the relevant institutions where more advanced in comparison to the rest of the world. It is quintessential to point out that support for European integration (and accordingly transnationalism) was almost uncontested by the mainstream center-left as well as center-right parties across the continent.

On a broader context, the gradual decrease of physical and technical barriers to trade brought about by the World Trade Organization as well as regional trade institutions

caused an overall increase in the importance of international trade and competition across the world. The aforementioned process created economic and political traction, which was consequently intensified in the context of the financial crisis and the immigration crisis respectively, giving birth to the "transnational cleavage". Such crises in the context of globalization undoubtedly produce not just winners and losers, but perhaps more importantly expectations about who is going to be a winner and who is going to be a loser in the not so distant future. Just like previous periods of cleavage development, the process of globalization is a transformational period which sets forth substantial questions about personal values and collective identities as well as distribution of material resources among different groups. With political elites struggling to provide concrete answers to their divided constituencies, new political actors have the opportunity to challenge the status quo.

The populist and technocratic critiques

Caramani's recent contribution (2017) fills an important gap in the theoretical discussion about the contemporary crisis of representation. The article is particularly useful in conceptualizing populism and technocracy as alternative forms of representation and demonstrating where the criticism towards party government is coming from as well as significant similarities and differences between the critiques. In short, he points out that representative democracy (in the form of party government) comes under twofold pressure. On the one hand, the populist critique can be summed up in the argument "parties became too busy governing". Therefore, populist actors aim at increasing responsiveness of political elites to "the people", bringing back popular sovereignty and mitigating everything that causes economic and cultural insecurity to their supporters. On the other hand, the "technocratic critique" can be summed up in the argument that "political parties became too busy winning elections". Thus, technocratic actors seek to restore responsibility in governance in order to maximize effectiveness. Consequently, political parties are stuck in the middle, as they are criticized for being both unresponsive and overly responsive simultaneously! Despite the fact that some conceptual similarities do exist between the critiques, they certainly reflect antagonistic agendas that originate

from conflicting perceptions of political organization as well as opposing interpretations of historical and political circumstances.

But why do the populist and technocratic critiques become salient in the context of globalization and the transnational cleavage? And more importantly, how can we claim they are able to stimulate reform of the existing party competition structure? After all, Caramani points out that similar critiques of representative democracy in the form of party government have existed almost as long as the idea itself and political parties have been generally successful in withstanding pressure from both sides.

Connecting the dots: Populism, technocracy and the transnational cleave

To answer these questions, we must direct our attention to the impact of transnational crises to established political actors and the reaction to their responses. The European context in light of contemporary crises provides an adequate case to work with. As we mentioned above, the European case is sui generis when it comes to processes of integration. As it is often said, the European Union is much more than an international organization. Indeed, if we were to compare it to any other world institution or regional organization, the latter would certainly seem far less legitimate, democratic and overall "political" compared to the EU. By the same token, however, it is much less than a national government and its functions can be seen as distant and technocratic to some, especially if we consider the absence of a single European demos. In times of crisis, this contradiction creates a fundamental dilemma for mainstream political actors, who have to simultaneously defend national and transnational interests. In line with Hooghe and Marks, we see the financial and immigration crises as critical points in the development of the transnational cleavage. In order to understand the connection between the populist and technocratic critiques and the transnational cleavage we must first understand how European governments proceeded to deal with these crises and what types of reaction they encountered. Throughout the following section, we will underline the political elites' struggle to maintain balance between national and transnational interests, withholding pressure by external circumstances and internal criticism.

In the context of the euro crisis, European governments were obliged to protect their own financial institutions, while also making sure transnational financial structures did not

collapse. The European Stability Mechanism, an intergovernmental organization in charge of bailout programs for Eurozone member states, as well as the European Central Bank, a supranational technocratic institution, were instrumental in dealing with the financial crisis. In some cases, fully technocratic national governments were formed to manage the crisis; Typical examples include the Papademos cabinet in Greece and the Monti cabinet in Italy. In like manner, looking at the immigration crisis we observe a similar trade-off between national interests and transnational stability. Governments tried to limit redistribution of resources to deal with the crisis and at the same time, despite popular discontent, agreed to common measures in order to keep the situation from escalating. In both cases, as cleavage theory would suggest, mainstream right-wing and left-wing political actors across Europe were inflexible in dealing with exogenous shocks. As Hooghe and Marks successfully point out, the "bounded rationality" of political parties was a defining factor for their response to new challenges, thus allowing for challenger parties to develope.

Under those circumstances, it should come as no surprise that populist actors sized the opportunity to solidify their position and aimed at representing the "losers" created by the elite response to the financial and immigration crises. It should be noted that, as we mentioned earlier, one's perception about "winning" and "loosing" does not always have to be based on strict materialistic rationality. Personal values and feelings about the status quo also enter the equation. Left-wing or Right-wing, in Northern or Southern Europe, populist critique towards European governments can be seen as a reaction of those how perceived themselves as "losers" in the process of resolving contemporary crises. Therefore, depending on a number of contextual variables, populistic right-wing and left-wing critiques gained considerable ground in the political discourse of almost all European countries. In the national elections that followed, populist parties enjoyed successes across Europe, shifting media attention to their agendas. Some populist parties became leaders of opposition in their national parliaments, while others even managed to come into power.

Taking everything into consideration, the European populist critique was primarily directed against transnational institutions in general and the European Union in particular.

Transnational institutions and the national elites that supported them were depicted as undemocratic, illegitimate and non-transparent. In debtor countries like Greece and Spain, populist criticism was also directed towards technocratic transnational actors, with "troika" being the emblematic example. If, as Hooghe and Marks point out, change comes in the form of new challenger parties, then populist parties in Europe have undoubtedly managed to position their critique on one pole of the transnational cleavage.

Having described the populist reaction to the transnational crises and its consequences to party competition structures, we should turn to the technocratic critique. It would be accurate to claim that, up to the present time, we have not witnessed technocratic critics challenging the mode of representation to the extent that populist critics have. This can be explained, at least in part, due to the fact that elite responses to the transnational crises were heavily based on technocratic solutions, thus restricting opportunities for substantial criticism of party government from the technocratic side. However, we should not write off the possibility of such a development just yet.

As we acknowledged above, in many cases technocratic actors were targeted by populist critics trying to objectify their resentment for transnational elites. This is understandable if we consider that, as Caramani highlights, populism and technocracy are (and see themselves as) "opposite ideal forms of representation". But what happens if the populist critic is extremely successful, or even manages to take on governmental responsibilities? Looking at cases were populist actors have been able to position themselves successfully on one side of the transnational cleavage, we can see political parties, old and new, trying to respond to the populist rise by positioning themselves on the other side. Markedly, some new political parties have been created on the basis of restoring responsibility in government and supporting technocratic solutions to contemporary problems. The "Civic Choice" in Italy and "The River" in Greece can be seen as new political actors how attempted to represent technocratic critiques, occupying the transnational side of the new cleavage. Another possibility for the development of technocratic representation of the basis of the transnational cleavage is for old parties to "reinvent" themselves in order to deal with the populist "Zeitgeist". Corresponding to that prospect, mainstream actors in political systems where populist became dominant can position themselves as defenders

of transnational values and institutions from the irresponsible policies of populists. The mainstream conservative and socialist parties in Greece seem to have gone through such a process after the complete collapse and realignment of the party system in the context of the watershed elections of 2012.

Concluding remarks

To summarize, we have demonstrated how the development of the transnational cleavage in the context of contemporary crises can create opportunities for populist actors to establish themselves in the political arena. Looking at the European case, party government solutions to transnational challenges caused a series of reactions that in turn strengthened the divide between populist and technocratic actors, thus solidifying the new cleavage. Even though the technocratic actors in Europe have not yet created stable structures of representation to the extent the populists have, looking at the cases we mentioned this development does not seem unlikely for the future.

Literature

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