

Bundestag & Europeanisation

Europeanisation/German Politics

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Summary

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Bundestag and Europeanisation

- ▶ National parliaments widely seen as losers of europeanisation
- ▶ Bundestag acquired host of rights and prerogatives in European matters (European Affairs Committee)
- ▶ Integration of German MEPs in European Affairs Committee
- ▶ But European Affairs committee not extremely active ...
 - ▶ ... Few incentives (parliamentarism, national interest etc)
 - ▶ ... Informal channels of influence/information seeking
- ▶ Can/should Bundestag address democratic deficit?

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- ▶ But European Affairs committee not extremely active ...
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- ▶ Can/should Bundestag address democratic deficit?
- ▶ Most important collective actors within Bundestag: parliamentary parties/groups

Parliamentary groups/parties

- ▶ Parliament effectively run by parliamentary groups
 - ▶ Division of labour/specialisation
 - ▶ Powerful 'working groups' of experts within (larger) parliamentary groups
- ▶ 'European Affairs'
 - ▶ Rarely about integration as such
 - ▶ Rather nitty-gritty policy making
 - ▶ 'Normal' standing committees and parliamentary groups
- ▶ Behaviour of parliamentary groups more relevant than European Affairs Committee?

Europe & German MPs: Institutions and heuristics



- ▶ Theories of institutionalism provide general hypotheses on behavioural incentives for MPs
- ▶ Complemented by elite/expert interviews with MPs and their staff
 - ▶ Reality check; additional factors
 - ▶ Beware: respondents have their own interests to protect
 - ▶ Practitioners are **not** necessarily more competent, knowledgeable etc than scientists

Institutionalism: three points of departure

1. Path dependency

- ▶ Once a path for development is chosen, departure becomes costly
- ▶ (Very) incremental adaption to changing circumstances
- ▶ Existing solutions for new problems

2. Formal vs informal rules/procedures

- ▶ Formal EU institutions fragmented
- ▶ Management of europeanisation best left to informal channels (?); co-steering

3. Parliamentary roles

- ▶ Different types of MPs
- ▶ Some formal roles (positional)
- ▶ But also more fluent, self-styled roles

Hypotheses

1. Working groups (not parliament as a whole) will monitor/scrutinise government
2. MPs will rely chiefly on informal channels to influence EU policy making
3. Roles
 - ▶ Emerging role(s) of EU policy expert, relying on informal channels
 - ▶ Increase of parliamentary roles undermines cohesion of parliamentary groups

Belief systems and heuristics

- ▶ Cognitions (ideas, beliefs, heuristics) shape MPs interaction with Europe
 - ▶ Heuristics: hopefully efficient problem solving strategies (simple ↔ complex)
 - ▶ Belief systems: multi-tiered, complex systems of normative ideas & beliefs about political reality, e.g.
 - ▶ Deep core beliefs (central values)
 - ▶ Policy core beliefs (domain-specific core assumptions)
 - ▶ Secondary (beliefs re specific instruments etc.)

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- ▶ Example
 - ▶ MPs may have few incentives to scrutinise government over integration
 - ▶ May also *believe that integration should go ahead* (no matter what?)

Conflict & inconsistencies

- ▶ Normal people hold many incompatible beliefs about politics
- ▶ MPs' belief systems also often inconsistent (conflict between values and/or beliefs about reality)
- ▶ Heuristics to ignore/resolve conflict
- ▶ Potential conflict between
 - ▶ 'Deep core' support for integration
 - ▶ Incompatible 'policy core'
- ▶ Conflict 'solved' by relying on incomplete information? (hypothesis 4)
 - ▶ Another reason for inactivity?
 - ▶ Bundestag (or rather conflict about EU issues) a 'sleeping giant'



Improvement of formal procedures

- ▶ Bundestag established Brussels based clearing house in 2007 & new unit at home
- ▶ (Compete with existing federal structures controlled by government)
- ▶ Some MPs unaware of their existence, others reluctant, a small group of policy specialists rather happy
- ▶ Kropp: evidence for path-dependency (extension of existing structures)
- ▶ Either way, Bundestag tries to address europeanisation through institutional change

Europeanisation and parliamentary groups

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Europeanisation and parliamentary groups

- ▶ Parliamentary groups are complex institutions, well-suited to deal with europeanisation
- ▶ Or maybe not
 - ▶ Many EU matters highly technical
 - ▶ MEPs rarely attend
 - ▶ Meetings (oft the governing parties) often dominated by (Junior) ministers
 - ▶ A handful of policy experts work with government/bureaucrats
- ▶ Specialists within working groups have become somewhat more assertive
- ▶ Potential to affect EU policy making not yet fully realised

Informal channels

- ▶ Many MPs shy away from EU issues (complexity, time constraints)
- ▶ Those who see themselves as EU policy experts rely mostly on informal channels to
 - ▶ Commission officials
 - ▶ MEPs
 - ▶ Länder structures in Brussels
- ▶ Attempts to systematically connect MPs with EU officials via party leadership
- ▶ Informal contacts between government bureaucrats (involved in EU draft legislation) and (majority) MPs
- ▶ Informal channels very relevant; emerging normative conflicts (hypothesis 2)

EU policy experts

- ▶ (Domain specific) policy expert roles now extended to include EU
- ▶ Experts
 - ▶ attempt to influence EU policy making, not to monitor it ex post
 - ▶ rely on informal channels
- ▶ Plurality of practices and procedures
- ▶ So far, not seen as a problem by party managers (hypothesis 3b)

The role of beliefs and heuristics

- ▶ EU integration universally (!) cherished
- ▶ But: potential for future conflict,
 - ▶ E.g. anti-discrimination directive
 - ▶ Public becoming more eurosceptic
- ▶ Five 'heuristics' to deal with cognitive contradictions:
 1. Importance of core value 'Europe' trumps policy concerns
 2. MPs accept leadership, hierarchy, and trade-offs/bargains
 3. MPs assume that the supremacy of Europe is (quasi-)rational
 4. MPs accept authority of the government in EU matters (contra recent Constitutional Court rulings)
 5. EU policy experts highlight new opportunities for policy making brought about by europeanisation
- ▶ Supports hypothesis 4, but growing potential for conflict
 - ▶ FDP 'Euro-Rebellion'
 - ▶ Government-Opposition conflict over 'euro bonds'/'austerity'

Conclusions

- ▶ Bundestags' alleged passivity has an institutional *and* a cognitive base
- ▶ Heuristics/beliefs allow (many) MPs to stay inactive
- ▶ But there is evidence for change
 - ▶ New roles (EU policy experts)
 - ▶ Formal procedures and informal information channels
 - ▶ Growing awareness of potential for conflicts over 'Europe' (more relevant today than in 2010)
- ▶ How will this play out over the next 5-10 years?

Summary

- ▶ Bundestag has become more active since Auel (2006)
- ▶ Informal channels matter
- ▶ Bundestag massively affected by europeanisation, but not a passive victim
- ▶ Reaction still dominated by tradition, consensus, parochialism (?)
- ▶ But: diverging responses to europeanisation
 - ▶ Different types of MPs
 - ▶ Diverging political points of view
- ▶ Correlate: Germany speaks with many, many voices

Your turn

- ▶ In pairs of two, discuss if and how the European Sovereign Debt CrisisTM has transformed the traditional pro-European mind-set of German MPs
- ▶ Mock parliamentary debate in the face of a new Greek crisis, three groups:
 1. Nationalists (CSU), argue for leaving the Euro, re-introducing the Deutschmark (and blowing up the coalition in the process)
 2. Government (CDU, SPD, rump-CSU), argue for sticking to government policy
 3. Opposition (Greens, Left), argue for ending austerity and some deficit spending, backed by euro bonds
- ▶ Additional twist: You must keep up the appearance of being pro-European in principle