

Democratic Deficit and Deparliamentarisation?

Europeanisation/German Politics

Outline

Intro

Revision

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A democratic deficit?

Majone and Moravcsik: no democratic deficit

Follesdal & Hix: democratic deficit reloaded

Bundestag: europeanisation

Assessment: 'passive europeanisation'?

Possible explanations

Summary

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Class questions

What is public policy?

- ▶ Policy making: what political systems do
- ▶ Different types of policies:
 - ▶ Who wins, who loses?
 - ▶ How concentrated are the gains/losses?
- ▶ Circular process that is difficult to control in democracies
- ▶ EU policy making . . .
 - ▶ Focus on regulation (economy, labour market)
 - ▶ Spill-over
 - ▶ Complex, many players, many modes
- ▶ Important gateway for europeanisation of Germany

Today: German Bundestag & democratic deficit

- ▶ Is the EU a state? A confederation? A political system?
- ▶ It has state-like qualities
- ▶ Democratic structures?
- ▶ Implications for member states
 - ▶ Quality of democracy in member states reduced?
 - ▶ Can/do member state institutions provide democratic input?

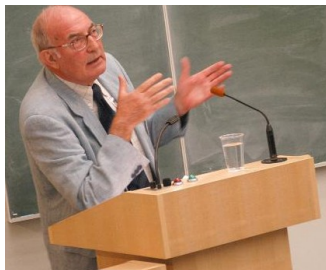
Democratic deficit: the standard version

1. Increase in executive power, loss of parliamentary control at national level
2. EP too weak to compensate
3. EP elections are 'second-order national contests', not European elections
4. EU too distant from citizens
 - ▶ Too different from national systems/politics
 - ▶ Institutionally insulated
5. Policy drift
 - ▶ National governments can implement policies w/o national majority support
 - ▶ 'Neoliberalism', de-regulation, austerity

Who?



A. Moravcsik



G. Majone

Majone: EU *should* not be democratic

- ▶ EU is all about regulation (of the market)
- ▶ Regulation is Pareto-efficient
 - ▶ No one is worse off
 - ▶ Some are better off
- ▶ So EU is about efficiency, not about (re)-distribution
- ▶ Limited number of solutions to problem, regulation identifies the correct one
- ▶ Like a court, EU institutions should be isolated from political pressure to fulfill their job

Moravcsik: Checks & balances limit policy-drift

(EU largely intergovernmental)

- ▶ National governments directly accountable *and* under national parliamentary/media scrutiny
- ▶ Strengthening of EP most significant development since early 1990s
- ▶ EU policy making process more transparent than domestic systems
- ▶ Commission promotes diffuse interests, thresholds imply the (centre-left) median voter is privileged

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- ▶ Commission promotes diffuse interests, thresholds imply the (centre-left) median voter is privileged
- ▶ EP elections need not be about Europe
 - ▶ *Voters care about tax & spending, less relevant at EP level, involvement too costly*
 - ▶ Political insulation protects minority interests
 - ▶ Isolated policy makers can correct bias

Who?



A. Follesdal



S. Hix

Contra Majone

- ▶ Even purely regulative policies generate winners and losers (process that brings about regulation targets is political)
- ▶ Not all EU are regulative; there is a continuum:
 - ▶ Court adjudication, merger control, technical standards ...
 - ▶ Monetary and competition policies
 - ▶ Market (de)regulation: globally efficient but generates losers
 - ▶ EU expenditure (agriculture, deprived areas ...)

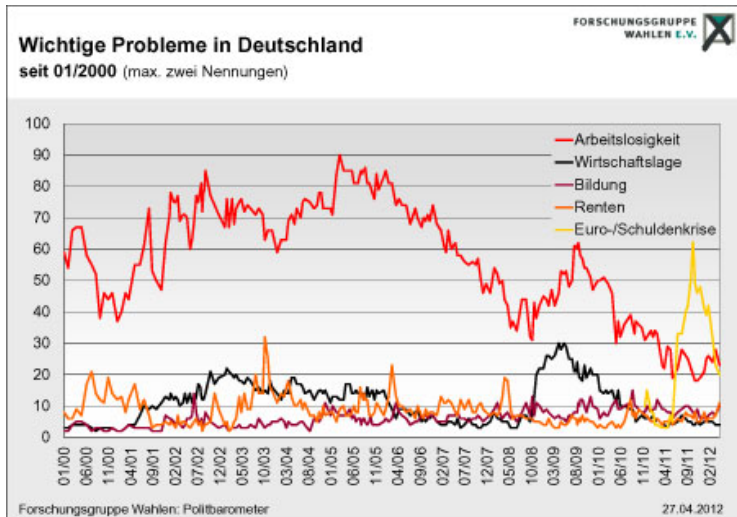
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- ▶ No good reason to isolate distributive & redistributive policies from majority rule

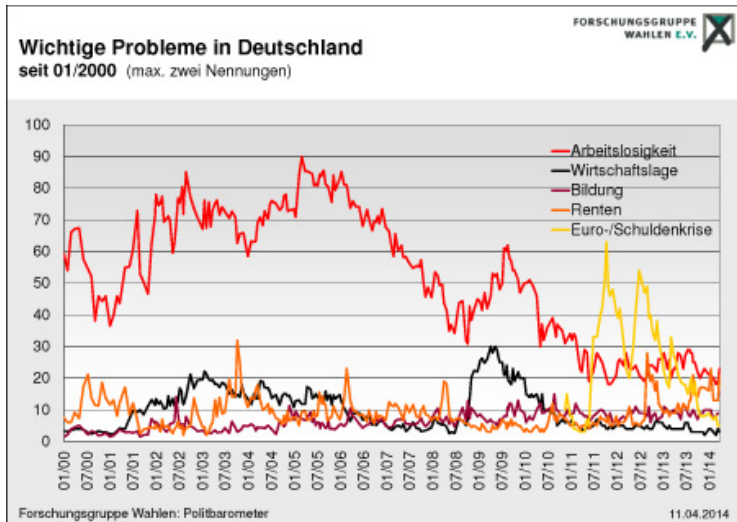
Contra Moravcsik

- ▶ Even if there is a fit between policies and voters' preferences, democrats want strong safeguards (accountability)
- ▶ Voters' preferences are not fixed; deliberation and party contestation are essential
- ▶ Lack of salience can be a *result* of a lack of mobilisation
- ▶ Regulators no necessarily less likely to be captured by specific interests
- ▶ Checks and balances privilege the status quo, which is not identical with preference of majority

Salience of European issues in Germany



Salience of European issues in Germany



Pro 'Constrained Democracy'

- ▶ All theories of democracy agree on competition, deliberation, accountability, meaningful elections
- ▶ Even if policies are ok, EU institutions are not democratic
 - ▶ No institutionalised opposition
 - ▶ No competitive elections
 - ▶ No EU-wide public debates, no opinion formation
- ▶ EP is becoming more coherent and europeanised . . .

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- ▶ Commission could be politicised (stripped of its regulative tasks)
- ▶ What happens at the national level?

Institutional changes

- ▶ At least $\frac{1}{3}$ of all German laws triggered by 'European impulse'
 - ▶ Huge variation across policy domains (agriculture, environment, economic policy)
 - ▶ Not included: European regulations, European rules implemented by executive decree, EU rules anticipated by legislators

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 - ▶ Huge variation across policy domains (agriculture, environment, economic policy)
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- ▶ Bundestag took rather long to institutionalise its prerogatives
 - ▶ 'Consultation' guaranteed by constitution
 - ▶ Oversized majority required for any further transfer of sovereignty
 - ▶ European Affairs Committee mandated by constitution

European Affairs Committee

Article 45 [Committee on the European Union]

The Bundestag shall appoint a Committee on the Affairs of the European Union. It may authorise the committee to exercise the rights of the Bundestag under Article 23 vis-a-vis the Federal Government. It may also empower it to exercise the rights granted to the Bundestag under the contractual foundations of the European Union.

Political passivity?

But ...

- ▶ Few recommendations, fewer debates in the Bundestag
- ▶ During height of Euro-crisis, committee has made only 13 recommendations
- ▶ While thousands of European documents hit the Bundestag each year
- ▶ Why are the Bundestag and its European Affairs Committee so passive?

Why so little activism?

- ▶ Europe is complex; government as gatekeeper
- ▶ Lack of Anti-European parties (but now: AfD)
- ▶ Overload
- ▶ Lack of co-ordination between committees and competition, lack of a ministry for Europe
- ▶ Lack of incentives for MPs (low salience)
- ▶ Activism dysfunctional for members of majority parties
- ▶ Government needs leeway in negotiations, opposition parties do not want to act against national interest

Is there no activity at all?

- ▶ Members of majority parties try to affect government policy informally
- ▶ Members of opposition parties try to do the same
- ▶ Member seek early and independent information
 - ▶ MEPs
 - ▶ Eurocrats
 - ▶ Colleagues (e.g. in Austria)
- ▶ Members of opposition parties will also work with Land governments
- ▶ The existence of veto rights has effects

Summary

- ▶ The EU has statelike qualities but lacks democratic mechanisms
- ▶ European integration undermines the role of national parliaments
- ▶ The Bundestag is a strong parliament, yet oddly passive
- ▶ That impression may or may not be deceptive

Your turn

1. Discuss the arguments for and against the existence of a democratic deficit with your neighbour. Can you think of any others?
2. Can the Bundestag reduce the democratic deficit, and if so, how?
 - ▶ Form groups of 5 students
 - ▶ Select one person to take notes/minutes
 - ▶ Discuss the problem, using arguments from the texts and your work with your neighbour
 - ▶ Report back to the plenary
3. Take home questions
 - ▶ How has europeanisation affected the work of MPs?
 - ▶ Should Germany have a ministry for European Affairs?