Conference Agenda

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Session Overview

Session

RN32_07a: Radical Right-wing Populist Parties in Comparative Perspective II

Time: Thursday, 51/Aug/2017: 4:00pm - 5:30pm
Session Chair: Carlo Ruza, University of Trento
Location: PD.2.33
PANTEION University of Social & Political Sciences 136 Sygrou Avenue 17671 Athens, Greece Building D, Level 2.

Presentations

Populist Constitutionalism in Europe: Anti-Constitutional or Popular-Constitutional?

Paul Blokker

Charles University, Czech Republic

Populist parties are increasingly part of European governments and wielding governing power. One particularly significant dimension of this is populists reforming domestic constitutions or even adopting a new one (Hungary). Populists ordinarily claim to represent the ordinary people and to promote their interests. It is not surprising therefore that in populist constitutionalism the “people” is a central dimension. Populist constitutionalism is increasingly upfront in the constitutional developments in countries such as Hungary and Poland, causing significant tensions in a European Union that endorses its fundamental values democracy and the rule of law. The populist-constitutional phenomenon spare no debates on both democratic backsliding and illiberal democracy in Europe and on the supranational monitoring of democracy. At the same time, there are good indications that one can also find important manifestations of populist constitutionalism elsewhere, including in so-called established democracies, but in a more implicit and less upfront manner than in a case such as Hungary. The paper will attempt to start conceptualizing populist constitutionalism in a more systematic way than has been done so far. While there is some literature emerging on the phenomenon (Matte 2013; Tis 2012; Mueller 2016), a more robust and theoretical treatment of populist constitutionalism still seems absent. The paper will provide a first step towards such an attempt by “deconstructing” the phenomenon in a number of dimensions - the will of the people, majoritarianism, legal resentment, and constitutional instrumentalism - while relating the theoretical discussion to empirical case-studies.

The Appeal of the Islamic Conservatism of the AKP

Hayriye Özcan

Atilim University, Turkey

Most of the existing studies on populism deal with a certain type of right-wing populism, particularly the nationalist and anti-immigration populism. This study focuses on a different type of right-wing populism, the Islamic conservative populism of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in the rule in Turkey since 2002. Specifically, it tries to understand how the Islamic conservative populism of the AKP appeals to diverse groups, including those who do not have religious demands. In examining this distinct form of right-wing populism, the study draws on the persuasive appeal developed by Ernesto Laclau and the Essex School which conceptualizes populism not as contents of politics but as a particular logic of articulation which symbolically divides the social field into two antagonistic camps by interpreting “the people” against the “power” or “enemy”. It is demonstrated that the appeal to the Islamic populism as a discourse of the people against the power is not the only one w/ religious demands, but all those who feel excluded from the enjoyment of political rights and socio-economic benefits by the elites in power. Although relatively inclusionary populism gradually turned into an exclusionary and authoritarian one, it still appealed to many social groups, particularly to those who win the new rights and acquired new socio-economic benefits during the rule of the AKP, by constructing the category of the power as well as the antagonistic relation between the people and the power in different ways. This study implies that populist parties may reproduce their appeal by constructing the people and the power categories in different ways.

The European Commission against the rising right-wing populism: Are EU values and principles put into action?

Milica Pejovic

University of Trento, Italy

The refugee crisis, together w/ the Eurozone crisis, has been often framed in the public discourse as existential for the future of the European Union as it has brought into question the viability of the Schengen system, one of the core EU achievements. It has also challenged the concept of solidarity between member states as a few of them refused the proposal of the Commission to redistribute refugees. In order to ensure a more equitable and fair solution for the massive influx of people from southern and eastern Europe, the Commission did not act only on the refugee crisis but also the anti-immigration discourse of national populist politicians. However, the anti-immigration discourse of national populist politicians has been in a stark contrast to the discourse of the Commission, which has been more focused on the issue of refugees and stressed the importance of solidarity, tolerance and a common approach to the crisis. Against this background, the aim of the proposed paper is to examine how the Commission has reacted to the rise of right-wing populism and hate speech in the context of unprecedented migratory pressures. Using interviews with civil servants working for the Commission, the proposed paper seeks to find out what practical measures have been undertaken in order to tackle the issue of populist hate speech at the national level and w/ the Commission involvement and the EU level. The paper provides an overview of the Commission’s efforts to fight against discrimination.

How to explain the rise and fall of ethnocentrism in Belgium between 1981 and 2009? Tracing the structural and cultural embeddedness of ethnocentrism

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Objectives

The 1991 parliamentary elections in Belgium not only brought a majority victory for the extreme right but also that ethnocentrism became a central issue in Belgian politics. In this paper we trace (1) the evolution of ethnocentrism and (2) its structural and cultural embeddedness in Belgium.

Methods
For this purpose we make use of four consecutive waves of the European Values Survey (1991, 1999, 1999 & 2009). Confirmatory factor analysis, analysis of variance and regression tree analysis are used to analyze the data.

Results

We observe that ethnocentrism reached a peak during the 1990s and declined in the early 21st century, and that overall it is more prevalent in Flanders than in Brussels or Wallonia. Although the results regarding the structural embeddedness of ethnocentrism are consistent with the literature, the effects of structural variables, of which educational level and age are the most important, are too weak to really provide an explanation for the evolution in ethnocentrism. The association with cultural attitudes is weak as well and ethnocentrism shifts over time from being linked to a conservative socioeconomic attitude to being associated with institutional distrust and ethnic conservatism.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest that traditional structural and cultural models are insufficient to explain ethnocentrism in Belgium, and that for an explanation one may have to look at micro-sociological and social-psychological mechanisms.