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The EU Through Multiple Crises. Representation and Cohesion Dilemmas for a “Sui Generis” Polity, Maurizio Cotta and Pierangelo Isernia (eds), London, Routledge, 2021, 286 pp., £96.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-367-35473-2

The volume edited by Maurizio Cotta and Pierangelo Isernia raises important questions for contemporary European democracies particularly after more than two decades of crises. The Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis, and the security crisis have shaken European citizens' confidence in the effectiveness of democracy or, at a minimum, in the capacity of the European multilevel system to deliver effective policy responses. Where do citizens place the blame for the crises and the strategies adopted to tackle them? Do citizens share the same views as their political leaders when it comes to expecting action from national or European authorities and apportioning praise and blame for crisis response? Do they (still) share the same assessment regarding the utility of staying in the European Union? Do EU member states differ widely on these types of assessment? Are citizens and leaders predisposed towards burden-sharing and solidarity at EU level? The editors frame these questions as pertaining to the broader theme of democratic representation, raising important questions about the meaning of 'representation' in a multilevel system like the EU. They provide a wealth of data to describe the views of both citizens and political leaders through a number of methods.

The data are mostly drawn from the EUENGAGE project covering ten member-states between 2016 and 2018. The data collected lend themselves to multiple kinds of quantitative and qualitative elaboration, from regressions to surveys, from textual analysis to deliberative experiments. The numbers reached through one or the other method are impressive, making the conclusions drawn all the more solid and noteworthy.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is dedicated to a discussion of the growing tensions that can be detected within the European Union (EU) and more specifically whether the left-right cleavage has been replaced by a GAL-TAN one hinging on whether it is the national or the European authorities that are considered legitimated to act in times of crisis and therefore which level should ultimately be blamed for the handling of the crisis. This shift is discussed by some of the authors that first proposed it – Marks and Hooghe together with Attewell and Rovny. Together with the authors of the second chapter – by Braun, Popa and Schmitt – they analyze the roots and consequences of this shift, the most evident being increased voter volatility and the emergence of challenger parties. We learn that not all Eurosceptic parties are equal and that some blame Europe for what it does not do or does not do well, while others blame Europe for the emasculation of national democracies thus generating divergent expectations as to the future evolution of the EU. These first two chapters rely on data generated by other research centers, such as the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) and the Euromanifesto Study, and show that mainstream parties are affected by competition from the challenger parties only on immigration and economic issues.

The second part tackles the main questions raised in this volume by drawing on the survey dataset generated by EUENGAGE: who is to blame for European crises; whether there is willingness among European citizens and leaders to share burdens and show solidarity; what level should be charged with dealing with which type of crisis. Conti and Marangoni tackle the first question through survey data that make it possible

to detect both different patterns of blame attribution across countries and the possible causes of such patterns. They discover that citizens increasingly blame the EU perhaps because its multilevel system and absence of a government-opposition dynamic prevents them from punishing the incumbent government as would happen in a conventional parliamentary democracy, but that the reasons for blaming the EU differ across countries. Basile, Borri and Verzichelli examine the willingness to share burdens among EU countries on the part of both citizens and leaders and whether such willingness is dictated more by the likelihood of being affected by one of the three crises analysed in this volume (economic, immigration, security) or by the development of a genuine sense of solidarity, with both factors most probably contributing to the outcome. In turn, these orientations are influenced by the diffusion of nationalist feelings and the desire to 'take back control' particularly strong among sovereigntist parties. Not surprisingly, the willingness to share the burdens created by the crises pit the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the UK, which were relatively unaffected by the Eurozone and immigration crises, against Italy, Portugal and Spain, which were affected by both, leaving France, Germany and, somewhat surprisingly, Greece occupying an intermediate position. Finally, the chapter by Cavatorto, Cotta and Russo analyzes citizens' and leaders' expectations of what level of government should act in case of a crisis, whether the member state or the EU. Here too, differences can be noted both across countries and between citizens and elites as well as across policy fields, with the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the UK consistently more negative about the EU being the preferred level of government; but a certain reluctance towards granting more powers to the EU can be observed everywhere. The chapter by Angelucci, Isernia and Smets discusses the changed nature of representation in light of the previous results, concluding that citizens and elites tend to be closer when representation measures broad ideological congruence and further apart when more specific policy positions are measured. The distance between political elites and the public is generally speaking still rather small, although a certain distance can be detected between national MPs and MEPs. They conclude that 'The robust congruence among voters and representatives ... augurs well for the future of democracy in European countries. ... Either we have overestimated the importance of congruence as key for democracy to work smoothly, or democracy is healthier than we think' (p.179).

The third part is probably the most innovative, in that it seeks to assess whether the use of deliberative forms of democracy could help bridge the (widening, but not dramatically large) gap between elites and masses. Olmastroni, Bianchi and Dugud wonder 'whether the alleged transformative power of deliberation ... can be used to reconcile citizens with politicians and reduce their estrangement with the European project' (p.187). Even under the best circumstances, the effect of deliberative experiments on the distance between masses and elites is not uniform, with some leading to greater divergence of positions than at the beginning. Faralla and Innocenti use a 'public goods game' experiment to establish that country members are more willing to cooperate in economic than in immigration crises and that being placed in a group generally increases the willingness to cooperate.

In sum, this is a remarkable collection of very accurate analyses of whether the European 'polycrisis' has driven a wedge between citizens and leaders, increased the distance between EU member states and further dented perceptions of the effectiveness and legitimacy of the EU among both groups. One question that could be raised, and which remains at the margins of the analysis, is to what extent 'public opinion' (a frequently used term) really captures the views of citizens, and when and why they may not be taken as synonymous.

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