



European Integration and the Surge of the Populist Radical Right

Julia Schulte-Cloos

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Abstract

Does European integration contribute to the rise of the radical right? This dissertation offers three empirical contributions that aid understanding the interplay between political integration within the European Union (EU) and the surge of the populist radical right across Europe. The first account studies the impact that the European Parliament (EP) elections have for the national fortune of the populist right. The findings of a country fixed-effects model leveraging variation in the European electoral cycle demonstrate that EP elections foster the domestic prospects of the radical right when national and EP elections are close in time. The second study demonstrates that the populist radical right cannot use the EP elections as a platform to socialise the most impressionable voters. The results of a regression discontinuity analysis highlight that the EP contest does not instil partisan ties to the political antagonists of the European idea. The third study shows that anti-European integration sentiments that existed prior to accession to the EU cast a long shadow in the present by contributing to the success of contemporary populist right actors. Relying on an original dataset entailing data on all EU accession referenda on the level of municipalities and exploiting variation within regions, the study demonstrates that those localities that were most hostile to the European project before even becoming part of the Union, today, vote in the largest numbers for the radical right. In synthesis, the dissertation approaches the relationship between two major current transformations of social reality: European integration and the surge of the radical right. The results highlight that contention around the issue of European integration provides a fertile ground for the populist radical right, helping to activate nationalistic and EU-hostile sentiments among parts of the European public.



Jury: Liesbet Hooghe (Univ. NC, Chapel Hill), Hanspeter Kriesi (EUI) (Supervisor), Julia Schulte-Cloos (Ph.D. candidate), Elias Dinas (EUI), (Kai Arzheimer (Univ. Mainz) participated over skype)

Bio

Julia Schulte-Cloos holds a MSc in Politics Research from the University of Oxford and a BA in Political Science from the LMU Munich. Her main research interests are comparative politics, electoral behavior and European politics. Her research has been awarded the SAGE award for the best paper published in European Union Politics in 2018 and the Peter Mair Prize.