

Party Competition in Western Europe

Roundtable Session on Voters

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Event announcement

Today, there's the second session of our speaker series on *Understanding Democracies: Challenges and Solutions*.

- **Matthijs Rooduijn** who, among others, has worked extensively on populism will be our guest
- Presentation on “Arts-based interventions and prejudice reduction: do narratives of empathy and tolerance affect feelings towards outgroups?”
- you are all invited to join us directly after our seminar today, 12-13 in Room SCH 100.3

What we did last week...

- input on the relevance of globalization and other transformative social changes for political behavior
- discussion of how economic risk perceptions affects turn towards the far-right
- ...and how technological change both fosters political stability and anti-system vote

Plan for today

- In the first part of the session, we'll discuss your essays on voting behavior.
- Interim evaluation

Task

Many models in party research are based on the assumption of rational citizens voting for their self-interest. However, some scholars raise doubt that rationality determines political behavior (Achen and Bartels 2017). What do you think – do voters follow their own self-interests? If yes, how can we evaluate rational voting? If not, which other motivations appear important? What are the strengths and weaknesses of both approaches to voting?

Procedure

We split the class into two groups.

1. In each group, one person briefly summarizes their essay.
2. Then, the commenters jump in: do they agree with the argumentation? If yes, explain why it makes intuitive sense to you. If not, please explain why you share a different opinion.
3. Brief open discussion.
4. After each of the authors have presented and received comments, open discussions: is there still anything missing?

Decisions to consider

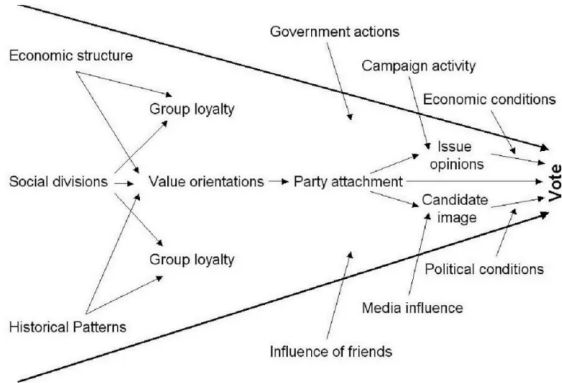


Figure: The funnel of causality and vote choice ([Source](#))

On bounded rationality...

“Does this mean that people (and therefore their politics) are irrational? Not at all. People making choices are intendedly rational. They want to make rational decisions, but they cannot always do so.” (Jones 1999, p. 298) → procedural rationality (Simon 1986)

How much may bounded rationality apply to vote choice?

On bounded rationality...

Take the example of **retrospective voting**

- basic idea: voters base their decision on experiences in prior terms
- if experience was good → reward the incumbent; if experience was bad → punish the incumbent

What are the challenges to accountability?

On bounded rationality...

Achen and Bartels (2017) outlines two main conditions:

- voters need to know what the government's role in their experiences is; which decisions lied in their competence, which were beyond?
- voters need to evaluate whether times were good or not

Is this the case?

The Sinkhole in Louisiana

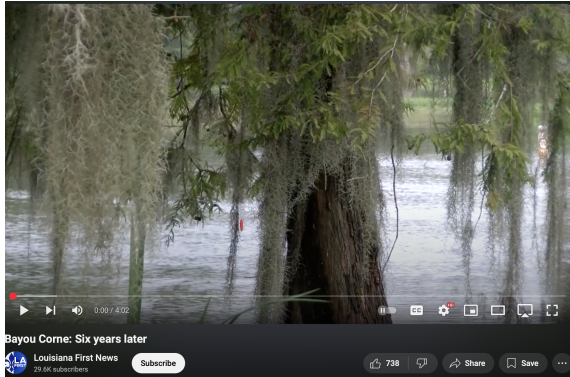


Figure: The [giant sinkhole](#) in Bayou Corne, Louisiana

The Sinkhole in Louisiana

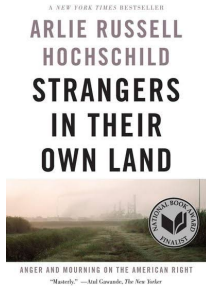


Figure: What's the **paradox**?

Is this an example of irrational voting behavior?

The Sinkhole in Louisiana



Figure: An attempt for an answer by [Arlie Hochschild](#)...

Challenges to Rationality

Misinformation

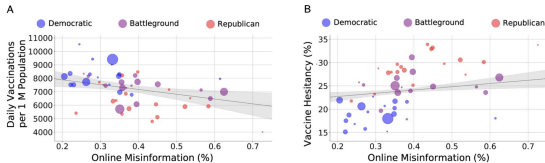


Figure: Relationship between misinformation and vaccine hesitancy (Pierri et al. 2022)

A crucial determinant of forming a rational opinion is information:

- individuals need to have sufficient resources to form a sound opinion
- they must be willing to update their opinion
- the information environment must offer high-quality, accurate information

Challenges to Rationality

Partisanship

A citizen votes for a party they also voted for in the past.
Is this an example of irrational behavior?

Challenges to Rationality

Partisanship

“If partisan loyalties reflected voters’ considered ideological judgments, then the powerful impact of partisanship in elections would reflect thoughtful democratic citizenship, and voters would be electing representatives who reliably shared their political commitments.” (Achen and Bartels 2017, p. 300)

- particularly in decision-making environments with time constraints, party cues can actually mitigate irrational behavior arising from limited information
- however, partisanship at times also takes the role of a group identity, coming with strong psychological attachment

Under which conditions does partisanship constitute a threat to rational behavior?

Challenges to Rationality

Partisanship

“citizens are prone to overly accommodate supportive evidence while dismissing out-of-hand evidence that challenges their prior attitudes.” (Taber and Lodge 2006)

Challenges to Rationality

Partisanship

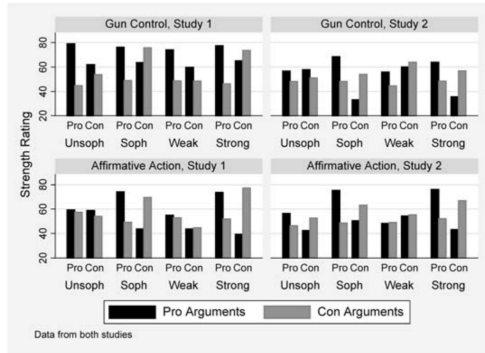


Figure: The effect of frames on supporters and opponents (Taber and Lodge 2006)

When rationality prevails...

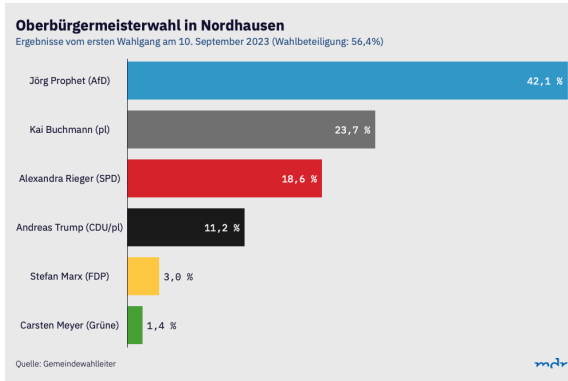


Figure: First round election results from Nordhausen, Thuringia ([Source](#))

When rationality prevails...

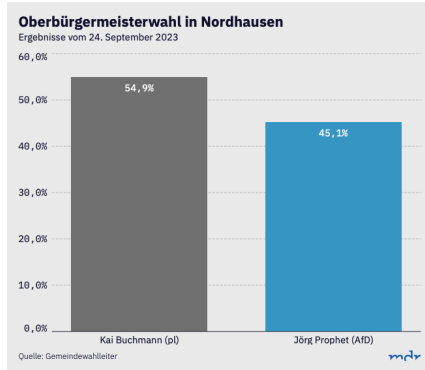


Figure: Second round election results from Nordhausen, Thuringia ([Source](#))

Does this qualify as rational-choice decision-making?

When rationality prevails...

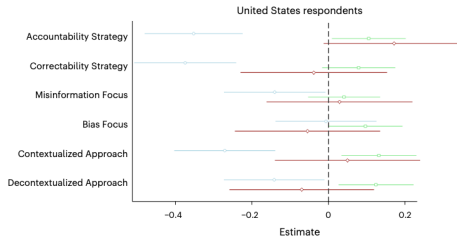


Figure: Effect of different strategies to counter misinformation on misperception (blue), skepticism (green) and trust (red) (Hoes et al. 2024, p. 1546)

And our readings?

What about the readings we've done – how do they speak to (ir)rational voting behavior?

Marks G et al. (2023) The Social Bases of Political Parties: A New Measure and Survey. *British Journal of Political Science* **53** (1), 249–260. ISSN: 0007-1234, 1469-2112. DOI: [10.1017/S0007123421000740](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123421000740)

- **Research Question:** How can we measure cleavage strength over time?
- **Main Argument:** Cleavage strength depends on composition of group in party and general population.
- **Data and Method:** Election data from surveys from 1973-2019; descriptive analysis of cleavage strength
- **Results:** Cleavages do not lose in significance but new ones gain prominence
- **Implications:** Re-alignment instead of de-alignment

And our readings?

Bischof D and Wagner M (2019) Do Voters Polarize When Radical Parties Enter Parliament? *American Journal of Political Science* **63** (4), 888–904.

ISSN: 0092-5853, 1540-5907. DOI: [10.1111/ajps.12449](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12449)

- **Research Question:** Does voter polarization increase when the far-right enters parliament?
- **Main Argument:** Far-right appearance bolsters polarization due to legitimization (in-group) and backlash (out-group)
- **Data and Method:** (1) In-depth panel study in the Netherlands, (2) cross-country studies with synthetic controls
- **Results:** The first-time entry of the far-right increases voter polarization
- **Implications:** Single, disruptive events can foster stark political reactions

And our readings?

Gallego A, Kurer T, and Schöll N (2022) Neither Left Behind nor Superstar: Ordinary Winners of Digitalization at the Ballot Box. *The Journal of Politics* 84 (1), 418–436. ISSN: 0022-3816, 1468-2508. DOI: [10.1086/714920](https://doi.org/10.1086/714920)

- **Research Question:** How does workplace technologization influence political outcomes?
- **Main Argument:** Technologization has education-specific effects on economic outlooks which translate into political behavior
- **Data and Method:** Combination of industry investment on ICT and panel data; multivariate regression + IV approach
- **Results:** Those with education win and stabilize the system; those lacking formal education lose and lead to systemic disruption
- **Implications:** Voters factor in their economic situation when participating in politics

And our readings?

Abou-Chadi T and Kurer T (2021) Economic Risk within the Household and Voting for the Radical Right. *World Politics* **73** (3), 482–511. ISSN: 0043-8871, 1086-3338. DOI: [10.1017/S0043887121000046](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887121000046)

- **Research Question:** Does economic risk bolster support for the far-right?
- **Main Argument:** Household's risk prospects not current individual economic hardship foster far-right voting
- **Data and Method:** Cross-sectional study with macro-level risk indicator + ESS data on political attitudes
- **Results:** Heightened economic risk in a household increases probability of far-right vote, with gendered patterns of status loss
- **Implications:** Individual voting behavior is influenced by reference network and voters do not simply vote for the far-right because of economic considerations

Reflection

Overall, how did you like the format?

- for the writers: what did you learn from the writing exercise and the comments you received?
- for the commenters: how was it to comment on the papers?

Should we follow a similar format next time or should we adjust?

Interim evaluation

We have already completed (almost) half of the seminar. What's your verdict?

- How do you find the content covered so far?
- Were you able to follow the class?
- How did you like the teaching activities?
- What should we continue, what should be adjusted?

Interim evaluation



To prepare for next week...

- Next week, we'll switch the sides – from the demand to the supply side
- Moreover: data input on the supply-side
- **Main reading:**
 - **Schwörer J (2024)** Mainstream Parties and Global Warming: What Determines Parties' Engagement in Climate Protection? *European Journal of Political Research* **63** (1), 303–325. ISSN: 1475-6765. DOI: [10.1111/1475-6765.12602](https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12602)
 - **Wappenhans T et al. (2024)** Extreme Weather Events Do Not Increase Political Parties' Environmental Attention. *Nature Climate Change* **14** (7), 696–699. ISSN: 1758-6798. DOI: [10.1038/s41558-024-02024-z](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-024-02024-z)

To prepare for next week...

- **Complementary readings**

- **Laver M** (2014) Measuring Policy Positions in Political Space. *Annual Review of Political Science* **17** (Volume 17, 2014), 207–223. ISSN: 1094-2939, 1545-1577. DOI: [10.1146/annurev-polisci-061413-041905](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-061413-041905)
- **De Sio L and Weber T** (2014) Issue Yield: A Model of Party Strategy in Multidimensional Space. *American Political Science Review* **108** (4), 870–885. ISSN: 0003-0554, 1537-5943. DOI: [10.1017/S0003055414000379](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000379)
- **Thomson R et al.** (2017) The Fulfillment of Parties' Election Pledges: A Comparative Study on the Impact of Power Sharing. *American Journal of Political Science* **61** (3), 527–542. ISSN: 1540-5907. DOI: [10.1111/ajps.12313](https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12313)

To prepare for next week...





- Please also sign-up and download the data from [Marpor](#) ([Main Dataset, csv](#)) or register for API usage

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

-  **Abou-Chadi T and Kurer T (2021)** Economic Risk within the Household and Voting for the Radical Right. *World Politics* **73** (3), 482–511.
-  **Achen CH and Bartels LM (2017)** *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. REV - Revised. Princeton University Press, 2017. JSTOR: [j.ctvc7770q](https://www.jstor.org/stable/47770704).
-  **Bischof D and Wagner M (2019)** Do Voters Polarize When Radical Parties Enter Parliament? *American Journal of Political Science* **63** (4), 888–904.
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-  **Hoes E et al. (2024)** Prominent Misinformation Interventions Reduce Misperceptions but Increase Scepticism. *Nature Human Behaviour* **8** (8), 1545–1553.
-  **Jones BD (1999)** Bounded Rationality. *Annual Review of Political Science* **2** (Volume 2, 1999), 297–321.
-  **Laver M (2014)** Measuring Policy Positions in Political Space. *Annual Review of Political Science* **17** (Volume 17, 2014), 207–223.

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-  **Marks G et al.** (2023) The Social Bases of Political Parties: A New Measure and Survey. *British Journal of Political Science* **53** (1), 249–260.
-  **Pierri F et al.** (2022) Online Misinformation Is Linked to Early COVID-19 Vaccination Hesitancy and Refusal. *Scientific Reports* **12** (1), 5966.
-  **Schwörer J** (2024) Mainstream Parties and Global Warming: What Determines Parties' Engagement in Climate Protection? *European Journal of Political Research* **63** (1), 303–325.
-  **Simon HA** (1986) Rationality in Psychology and Economics. *The Journal of Business* **59** (4), S209–S224. JSTOR: [2352757](#).

Literature



Taber CS and Lodge M (2006) Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science* **50** (3), 755–769.



Thomson R et al. (2017) The Fulfillment of Parties' Election Pledges: A Comparative Study on the Impact of Power Sharing. *American Journal of Political Science* **61** (3), 527–542.



Wappenhans T et al. (2024) Extreme Weather Events Do Not Increase Political Parties' Environmental Attention. *Nature Climate Change* **14** (7), 696–699.