

LUISS “Guido Carli”
Academic year 2012/2013
Department of Political Science – Political Science course

Supervisor
Professor Sergio Fabbrini

Candidate
Michele Casadei
n. 066142

Undergraduate thesis on
Europeanization of national politics in general elections of EU Member States

ABSTRACT IN ENGLISH

The aim of this undergraduate thesis is to provide a concise, yet clear theoretical framework of the changes to which general elections at the national level have progressively been subject as European integration has deepened. This focus has a strong empirical basis, as evidences of these mutations can be found in some of the most recent national elections in EU Member States. In the French 2012 presidential elections for the first time a German Chancellor publicly supported one of the candidates, Nicolas Sarkozy in this case. Similarly, in the Italian 2013 general elections, Angela Merkel was strongly attacked by EPP member Silvio Berlusconi, PM candidate for the People of Freedom party. These two cases have constituted a starting point to further analyse how the deepening of European integration has influenced the domestic political systems, the interactions among actors both at the European and at the national level and the perspectives of EU project. The main focus of the work is on whether European citizens deal with the EU construction within the national ballots, and on how this relationship changes their behaviour at the domestic level.

In this perspective, three main paths are followed, eventually merging in a more general and systematic framework. In Chapter 1, the Europeanization theory is examined in order to understand what kind of stimulus the European policy-making exercises on the national political systems, how the domestic structures receive and mediate it and what their reaction entails. In Chapter 2, attention is paid to the theories of political conflict that can explain how European polities deal with the integration process, i.e. for which reasons and in which forms the so-called Euroscepticism has developed. In Chapter 3, the changes triggered by European integration are contextualized by using the main notions of electoral studies, namely looking at how political parties, electorates and electoral campaigns have changed as EU integration has strengthened. Throughout the whole work, on open eye is kept on the empirical level by referring to the Italian 2013 general elections.

By examining these theoretical contributions, it is hence possible to illustrate how the expansion of EU policy-making applies a strong pressure on the domestic structures of the EU member States. In addition, the indirect form this stimulus takes in influencing national politics is assumed to make this area a privileged research field for a further development of the Europeanization theory. It is in this area, indeed, that European integration has triggered some less visible, yet deeper and crucial mutations in the legitimacy fundamentals which are at the basis of the political representation of polities, in both European and national arenas. Briefly, the creation of a new European cleavage is assessed by demonstrating how the opposition to the EU project often triggers a decrease of citizens' trust in their national political systems, within a general tendency to depoliticization, as shown by Peter Mair. Finally, a contextualization of these theories within the electoral dimension shows that a European public space is emerging, in which the circulation of political discourses, ideas and cultures enables both the representatives of the supranational institutions and the domestic actors to interact with each other within the national boundaries. In other words, Europe constitutes a salient electoral issue and an increasingly-politicized dimension in which new domestic actors can find their way to capitalize the Eurosceptic feelings into electoral consensus, as the unexpected result of the Italian Five Stars Movement shows. In conclusion, the risks of depoliticization and delegitimation of both European and national political systems are assessed, showing how a strong reaction is needed at both levels.