CoesioNet

EUROPEAN COHESION AND TERRITORIES RESEARCH NETWORK

Minutes of the "Crises and Territorial Cohesion" Workshop
16 May 2011

9h30 – 13h00 Regional Disparities and Political Extremisms

To what extent has the crisis changed citizen voting behavior? Can cohesion policies be a tool to limit the rise of extremisms in Europe?

I. The "Surge" of Far Right Parties in Europe: A Sign of the Geography of the Crises?
Pascal Perrineau – CEVIPOF

1. The Diversity of Situations

The rise of national-populism in Europe can be measured in terms of election results. In several countries in Europe – Austria in 2008, Finland in 2011 and Switzerland in 2007 – those results have been impressive. In other countries, national-populist parties have only had limited success (Germany, Spain, Great-Britain, etc.).

Yet the great diversity of national-populist movements must be underscored. The issues at the core of these movements vary considerably from one country to the next and can include the role of the state in the economy, the place given to the centre compared to the periphery, moral rigor vs. moral liberalism, etc. The national-populist movements of Europe therefore vary in terms of the contents of their program and change over time.

2. Common Features

Despite these differences, Europe's national-populist movements share some common features: they promote centralism, have difficulty organizing at the European level, accord a central role to the authority of charismatic leaders and often refer to populist demagogy. Some issues are also common to most national-populist parties – for example, a xenophobic attitude to immigration. If we consider the votes, the results of national-populist parties correlate with the presence of immigrant populations but not in direct proximity. Their discourse includes frequent appeals to law and order. Their economic program is influenced by neo-liberalism even if this is a point of much divergence. They also often employ "anti-system" discourse.

3. *What Are the Causes of the Phenomenon?*

- The decline of economic modernity – i.e., the transition to post-industrial society – has changed social groups. The once central working class is today suffering a crisis of identity due to its increasing heterogeneity. This has resulted at a political level in an increase in abstention, on the one hand, and the growth of national populism, on the other. This situation raises an important question for the parties of the left, which now must seek out and identify a new base.
- The opening of a political space for the winning formula, i.e., the alliance between blue-collars and shopkeepers. The vote for national populist parties represents a social protest tied to industrial de-structuring and economic crisis.
- The globalization process is challenging traditional value systems. The tension between libertarian and authoritarian values has changed the relationships between right and left wing parties in France, creating some new political spaces based on authority which have been colonized by the national-populist party.
- There is an increasing split between a population (the upper middle classes and upper classes) that is gaining from an open society and another population (the older, less well-educated members of society) that is losing from it and demanding national reorientation.
- Another social split is the cleavage between city centers and urban peripheries, which has resulted in the rupture of traditional solidarities.
- A crisis of political representation, like the above-mentioned economic and social factors, is also contributing to the rise of national-populist parties.

4. *General Discussions*

- Can the party of the Kaczynskis in Poland be considered part of the national-populist movement?
- Can territorial cohesion policies act as countervailing forces to national-populist politics?
- What is the distinction between national populism and regional populism?
- How to account for the fact that radicalization is not general (i.e., does not occur everywhere)?
- Is information available concerning the likely voting behavior of future generations?

II. Territories of Radical Nationalism in Bulgaria: A Challenge to Cohesion Policy?
Nadège Ragaru - CNRS-CERI/Sciences Po

The emergence of nationalisms required that interaction between two phenomena – i.e., the territorialization of ethnicity and spatially-based social inequalities – be examined in order to go beyond the traditional socio-economic explanation of political behavior.

The territorial presence of ATAKA in Bulgaria illustrates the correlation between population diversity in a territory and the territorialization of socio-economic inequality.

When talking about territories we can refer to the distinction between "border, boundary and frontier" discussed below.

1. *What is ATAKA?*

- ATAKA frequently uses symbols to represent political space.
- ATAKA was born in 2005. The conjunction of several factors characterized the particular context in which it emerged: There was a widespread feeling that most political change had taken place in the absence of real alternatives, which therefore opened a space for differentiation. Moreover, Bulgarians have grown tired of the European process being used as the ultimate source of legitimacy for all decisions.

- ATAKA can be considered "an ordinary party" responding to issues that are widely discussed by the population. The question thus becomes why such discussions are susceptible to politicization. Indeed, ATAKA's discourse is based on several commonplace observations:
  o The fact that the transition led to theft and the destruction of all previous achievements;
  o Bulgaria is a small country manipulated by larger countries;
  o The Roma population is poor and steal and don't want to be integrated;
  o ATAKA clearly targets the country's ethnic Turk population and opposest the integration of Turkey into the EU.

2. *What is the socio-demographic profile of ATAKA?*

A 2005 poll of ATAKA voters supplied the following information concerning the supporters of national populist parties:
- They tend to live in Sofia,
- They are relatively young and well-educated,
- They are particularly strong in Burgas in the Eastern part of the country, the city where ATAKA was created.

But they are not present in territories with settled minorities.

In 2009 the profile of these voters has changed: fewer were present in Sofia and its surroundings but the Party was gathering support in the Eastern part of the country and poorer areas. It was still largely absent in territories with minorities. The explanation for ATAKA's considerable support in Sofia in 2005 is explained by a specific situation linked to some unrest with the Roma population in certain parts of the town that received extensive media attention and allowed ATAKA to mobilize voters. In 2009 there was a generational shift among ATAKA voters, with the party base increasingly dominated by elderly voters.

3. *Border, Boundary, Frontier*

To understand what happened with ATAKA in Bulgaria we need to refer to the concepts of border, boundary and frontier.

First the frontier between one's self and others affects how relations with others are conceived, especially in what concerns Bulgaria's Roma and Turkish populations. The frontier between the Roma and the Bulgarians used to be very porous since Bulgarians used to work with Roma in agricultural cooperatives. Social promotion was possible. Today, Bulgaria is facing a process of social declassification known as "romization". This has led to a reinforcement of frontiers between Roma and non-Roma. Indeed, with the transition, Roma left their rural villages for urban ghettos. In the former communist tower blocks, the populations were rather mixed. This is no longer the case following the transition, with only poor people today occupying these tower blocks. Therefore, the Roma population is perceived as a threat to the Bulgarians.

Internal frontier dynamics in the case of the Turkish population are linked to significant changes in the definition of Bulgarian citizenship. Ethnic differences are exacerbated.

As far as the borders are concerned, the vote of the bi-national population is a key challenge in the discourse of ATAKA. Indeed, there is a territory of the vote and a territory of citizenship. How is what defines the outlines of "being a foreigner" to be conceived?

It is therefore important to have a social cohesion policy with a coherent territorial component that takes the fact of mobility into account. We need to think about the definition of legitimate social inequalities.

4. General Discussion

- When ATAKA was created, how did it interpret the construction of socio-economic disparities in public discussions?
- Does cohesion policy play a role or is it a matter for debate?
- Does the alliance between blue collar workers and shopkeepers constitute an explanatory factor in examining voting behavior in Bulgaria?
- What is the role of corruption?