

of democracy in the European Union. Interestingly enough, in her contribution which examines the supranational and intergovernmental channels of electoral democracy in the EU, de Vries' found that such channels work better. The second part of the volume is also given considerable context in Andreas Follesdal's chapter. He reviews the usual arguments about the democratic deficit of the union and recommends new democratic standards. According to Follesdal, this asymmetric polity relies heavily on federalist theory.

There are several strengths found within *Democratic Politics in a European Union under Stress*. The euro crisis 'has challenged many existing preconceptions and long-held-assumptions within the EU' (p. 5). The legitimacy problems of the EU is a consequence of the crisis. This point has been effectively conveyed by the authors in this volume. Meanwhile, another strength is the volume's thematic comprehensiveness in uniting contributions that both produce the standard concepts of European integration studies and political theory, while addressing more general, fundamental questions about the EU's political sustainability. These questions are then examined, with case studies thoroughly exploring the questions of legitimacy and democracy in the EU from the perspective of specific actors.

There are some criticisms. Due to the plurality of approaches and topics, it is difficult for the reader to follow all the arguments put forth in the book. The lack of integration of the chapters may be taken by fellow academics as a major shortcoming as might the novice reader. Finally, a concluding chapter that both recounts and integrates the numerous avenues of thought presented in the volume would have been beneficial, especially if this volume is intended as a textbook.

However, because the volume is diverse in methodology, encompassing counter-factual

reasoning, empirical data, such as public-opinion polls, party positions, newspaper articles, economic indicators, and EU law, the volume adds up to both an encompassing and profound account of the present state and prospects of democratic politics in the union. To their credit, Cramme and Hobolt have produced a fine work in which scholars have spent considerable time looking at some deeper questions with a critical eye. The volume is a valuable contribution to the field because it offers fresh perspectives on democratic politics in the constantly changing European Union.

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**LeDuc, Lawrence and Niemi,
Richard G. and Norris, Pippa, eds:**

**COMPARING DEMOCRACIES 4:
ELECTIONS AND VOTING
IN A CHANGING WORLD.**

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The book *Comparing Democracies 4* with the subtitle *Elections and Voting in a Changing World* published in 2014 under the editorial supervision of Lawrence LeDuc, Richard G. Niemi and Pippa Norris is the fourth volume of successful series of collectively created publications which brings together prominent scholars and summarizes the current state of the art in the field of electoral research and the overlap into the theory of democratic functioning. All of

the four editions are, much like Joseph A. Schumpeter (1976), placing elections and their particular characteristics at the centre of their attention in the faith that these are the processes necessary for understanding and explaining the dynamics of political system development (this is especially true for the fourth edition).

The book starts with the introduction in which the threesome of editors places elections into the centre of the institutional functioning of democratic systems and justifies the relevance of research in this field, because this determines the quality of other processes within a political system. The biggest question they raise is linked with beheld bidirectional development of political system that does not necessarily lead to the improvement of democratic standards, but can also fall back and, to a lesser or greater extent, implement some sort of authoritarian features. At the same time, they see that the most crucial thing fueling these processes both ways lays in the ability of democratic institutions and governing practices to satisfy the needs and demands of citizens (p. 8).

One has to agree that elections are a crucial point in the life cycle of political system. The question is whether they can solely provide the researchers with meaningful information for an explanation of the approached development stage of political system. Firstly, the position of elections as an independent or dependent variable can be responsibly set merely for the analysis of particular political processes, for which the level of the whole system seems to be far too high. We can never be completely sure whether the failure of elections to meet democratic standards is caused by the improperly established mechanical arrangements of the electoral system or are the result of politics executed by people who intentionally tend to concentrate the power in their hands. Alternatively, the cause can be a

combination of both factors. Secondly, since we cannot speak about election on the system-wide level exclusively as of either independent nor dependent variable, monitoring the characteristics of elections can only serve as an exploratory mechanism (one will only see whether everything is or is not according to democratic standards); its explanatory potential could be exploited only after stepping down into the particular processes within the political system, where not only the election, but also the connected causal mechanisms need to be taken into account. Therefore, the quality of the election itself could be seen as a mere indicator which only gains explanatory power after inserting into causal linkages.

But let's get back to the book's structure. The introductory chapter is followed by Michael Gallagher's contribution, called *Electoral Institutions and Representation*, in which the reader is presented with a categorization of electoral systems according to their mechanical arrangements and their theoretically expected consequences. The third, well-written chapter by Herbert Kitschelt, *Parties and Party Systems*, explains the necessity of parties' presence in democratic systems because they solve the collective action and choice problems. The author approaches the topic of political parties extensively; he explains the party life cycle and the influences stemming from the societal and economical contexts, as well as the nepotistic tendencies surrounding the parties. Moreover, he briefly includes the stage of development of party systems in various parts of the world. The fourth contribution, by Marc Hooghe, deals with *Citizenship and Participation*, including its electoral and non-electoral alternatives as well, and even if he does not develop any conceptual framework, he still brings up most of the recent empirical evidence that is summarized into the current state of the art. Christopher

Weizen is the author of the fifth chapter titled *Election Campaigns*. This is the only chapter that has been carried forward, with only minor changes, from the third volume of *Comparing Democracies*. The chapter presents the genesis of electoral campaigns which strongly correlate with the development of information and communication technologies and brings up the major problems of campaign effect inquiry. The problem is that any impact of a campaign on voter is basically drowned among the abundance of other variables and relationships within the social reality that are impossible to control for. Therefore, any result or conclusion is very uncertain. The sixth chapter, Mona Lena Krook's *The Political Representation of Women and Minorities*, discusses the theoretical arguments for affirmative action towards the above mentioned groups, the possible means for achieving their memberships in legislative bodies, and also potential positive as well as negative consequences (e.g. mandate effect, label effect etc.). The seventh chapter, *The Elusive Economic Vote* by Marc A. Kayser, presents the theoretical expectations of rationality in voters' behaviour. Approached from the perspective of economic voting and based on an empirical analysis, his rather disturbing concluding remarks are that rationality (in the sense of this theory) is probably not the dominant force shaping the preferences of electorate. The eighth chapter, *Voting Behavior: Choice and Context*, written by the two of the three editors – Lawrence LeDuc and Richard G. Niemi – places voting among the contextual factors which determine various stages of voter behaviour. This topic is newly included in the *Comparing Democracies* series and it should be strongly appreciated, because the research of contextual determinants is a quickly growing field among the electoral inquiries. The ninth contribution, *Electoral Integrity and Political Legitimacy*, belongs to the substantial research portfolio of

Pippa Norris. She develops the conceptual framework that allows us to normatively evaluate the quality of elections in any kind of system worldwide. It still lacks a lot of practical aspects and proper definitions, but it is a great accomplishment in trying to link the political theory with empirical reality. The penultimate chapter, *Authoritarian Elections and Regime Change*, is written by Jennifer Gandhi. In this chapter the author theoretically analyses why elections are held in authoritarian systems, and she outlines the particular situations in which an election itself could be an incentive which results in a change towards democracy. And finally, in *Conclusion: Why Elections Matter*, G. Bingham Powell, Jr. again raises the argument that elections are central to the evaluation of democratic system functioning and that poor quality elections can provide a meaningful explanation for the lack of system's legitimacy. The greatest added value of this chapter lies in bringing together all layers that should be taken into account when considering the performance of political systems implicitly presented in the whole book – (1) politics, (2) all sorts of institutional arrangements, and (3) individual preferences of voters – that only in mutual cooperation could become a meaningful explanatory framework for understanding the dynamics of political system bidirectional development.

If *Comparing Democracies 4* is compared to its third volume, there is only one chapter more or less the same, five topics are similar but fully revised, and the rest of the book represents brand new chapters written for this purpose. That means that the fourth volume brings almost completely new content, highly relevant in the field.

Even if none of the chapters develops an entirely new theoretical framework, nor does it try to falsify any established concept with not-yet-published empirical analysis, its added value consists in the summarization and sys-

tematization of the current state of the art in the discussed fields of electoral research. Additionally, the argumentation is very precise, without any blank or unexplained space left; none of the questions raised go unanswered. Moreover, the reasoning developed from scratch is what makes the content very understandable, even for those people unfamiliar with the common terminology and concepts applied in the discourse.

The *Comparing Democracies 4* brings together eleven prominent scholars who cover a wide range of highly relevant topics in the

field of electoral research and provides a great resource for young scholars and students to build a theoretical and comparative understanding in the wide range agenda of political science.

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