

Is the European Union more National than Supranational? - An Economic and Political Perspective of EU

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Introduction

During its evolution, the European Union faced a series of challenges, both in terms of economic aspects as well as political and ideological aspects. During the last decades, a new challenge for the European construction has resided in the rise of nationalism. The elections for European Parliament revealed that new ideological approaches have become increasingly important in the European decisional architecture. Even though the autonomy of the member states is recognized as a fundamental value, there are some situations where giving up part of sovereignty become a real aspect that must be faced. In these circumstances, the relation between the national and over-national levels of governance becomes a real challenge to deal with by the European institutions and the member-states.

Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore and to identify the main challenges regarding the European governance, by considering the national and the transnational level. To accomplish this aim the objectives of the study are to: (i) create a conceptual framework regarding the European Union and its relationships with the member states; (ii) analyze the results of the European elections 2024, in comparison with the European elections in 2019; (iii) assess the national contexts and their possible influences in the future of the European Union; and (iv) highlight the main economic and political aspects determined by the current situation in the European Union.

Methodology

This study was based on a mixed research design, consisting of: a). literature review with the purpose of framing the conceptual aspects related to Europeanization, nationalism, interests in EU, European elections, European institutions; b). a desk analysis regarding the elective process in the European Union; c). a case study analysis with the aim of assessing the current situation and the future predictions regarding the member states' relationship with the European Union.

Results and Discussions

The European Union was established to promote integration among markets and states. Its intergovernmental institutions reflect three key interests: European interests (European Commission), citizens' interests (European Parliament), and member states' interests (Council of the EU).

The actual circumstances reveal some problems regarding the way that countries and citizens integrate fundamental European values, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, in accordance with their own. EU elections revealed 3 main categories of political approaches: the nationalist countries, the pro-European countries and the so-called "neutral" countries. These categories, however, represent only general tendencies, as many countries combine elements from more than one orientation. Thus, the so-called neutral countries or those with particular political situations often display complex internal dynamics. In some cases, the emergence of radical left-wing tendencies and their political agendas shape national debates as strongly as nationalist or pro-European positions. For instance, Viktor Orbán's long dominance in Hungary, based on a mix of nationalism and illiberal policies, or the rise of Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland until 2023 illustrate how right-wing populism has reshaped relations with the EU. Similarly, Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National in France and Giorgia Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia in Italy have pushed nationalist discourses into the political mainstream. At the same time, radical left movements like SYRIZA in Greece, or Mélenchon's La France Insoumise in France have influenced debates on austerity, redistribution, and social rights, challenging neoliberal and centrist models.

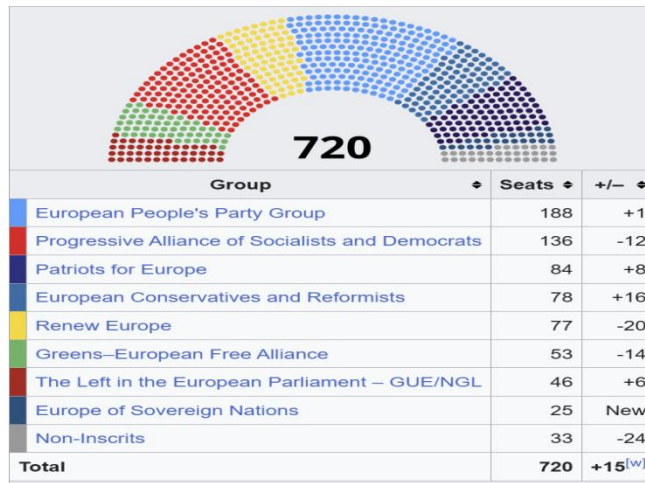


Fig 2 European elections 2024

The comparative analysis shows the following situation (see Fig 3):



Fig 3: Comparative analysis of European Parliament seats in the considered period (2019-2024, 2024-2029)

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The European Union, as a supranational structure, must balance three dimensions of interest: the European agenda, the national priorities of its member states, and the needs of its citizens. In the current political and economic context, this requires adaptive policies that both consolidate EU

influence internally and enhance its role globally. The European Parliament plays an increasingly central role in shaping these responses, as shifting economic and political priorities put pressure on EU institutions. Particular cases such as France, Italy, Poland, or Romania illustrate how the rise of nationalism challenges European governance and risks weakening consensus. To address this, EU institutions should develop policies that carefully integrate national interests while reinforcing the European dimension, with special attention to sensitive issues such as migration, environmental sustainability, and democratic governance. Strengthening dialogue with national governments and citizens will be essential to preserve unity and ensure legitimacy.

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