Research on the Two-way Interaction Between Voters and Political Parties in Elections

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Abstract: In democratic politics in the Western world, the process of elections are full with direct interactions with voters. Hence, voters' choice affects whether a political party can become the ruling party. Voters prefer to choose parties that are in line with their own interests, and political parties need voters' support to win the election. This paper studies the two-way interaction between voters and political parties in elections. The needs of target voters will affect the political views and positions of political parties. Therefore, in order to gain support, the party will promise to carry out some policies that would benefit the target voters. While the voters affect political parties' positions, the parties also affect the voters' choices, and Brexit is an example worth studying. Through media and advertisements, parties promote their core values and achievements, shape the image of candidates, and belittle the opponents. In this way, the parties can affect the votes' preferable party and thus win the election.

Keywords: election, voter, political party

1. Introduction

With the development of globalization and informatization in the world, people have access to more information and pay more and more attention to political life. As an important part of political life, elections have generated many interactive relationships due to their direct contact with voters. In elections, the competition between political parties is always fierce, and obtaining the support of voters is their goal. Therefore, political parties will seek opportunities for interaction with voters, and voters' concern for their own interests also forces them to understand political parties and make choices, which results in a two-way interaction between voters and political parties.

From the perspective of voters and political parties, combined with recent examples, this paper discusses the impact on each other and analyzes the underlying logic of multi-level interaction between voters and political parties. The analysis of the interaction between them plays a positive role in understanding the political party election strategy and voter psychology.

2. The Influence of Voters on Political Parties in Elections: Case Study of Brexit

Due to the characteristics of direct elections, the influence of voters on political parties in elections is divided into two steps: First of all, from the voters' perspective, voters will choose parties to support according to their interests and needs. In every democratic election country, voters are entitled to choose a party that is more in line with their ideals or that better meets their interests based on their interests and ideological preferences, such as immigration, environmental, tax, and Brexit issues. Moreover, from the perspective of political parties, knowing that voters vote based on their interests, they will try to understand the needs of target voters and match the needs of voters to compete for votes. Therefore, in the election, the interest preferences of the target voters will affect the political views and positions of the political parties.

Next, the paper use the example of Brexit to further demonstrate voters' influence on political parties in elections. Although the people's Euroscepticism did not come into being only in this century, the European debt crisis dramatically intensified the British Euroscepticism. The widening gap between the rich and the poor, the European refugee problem, and the British economic recession have all hit the British people's confidence in European integration. Over the past few decades, economic inequality and regional differences in the UK have been quite pronounced. According to an inequality report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the wealthiest 10% of the population in the UK earn about ten times as much as the poorest 10% [1]. Globalization has made some of the UK's city dwellers well-paid, but other regions suffer a long-term economic decline due to deindustrialization and automation. The widening gap between rich and poor has become a regular feature of Britain's economic development. People in long-recession-hit areas tend to see immigrants as a threat because of economic insecurity [2].

Britain's national life is unhappy, and Euroscepticism is on the rise. It is believed that the European Community aggravates the domestic crisis in Britain and brings a series of disadvantages. People want to withdraw from the European Community in exchange for a more suitable and free development space. Popular Eurosceptic sentiment has pressured the ruling party to formulate its policy towards Europe.

In this situation, Cameron is forced to pressure the EU to change its policy towards Europe to push EU reform. Cameron proposed a Eurosceptic policy towards Europe with a referendum as one of its main contents. In December 2011, during the negotiation of the EU fiscal treaty, Cameron proposed that "the European powers should relax the strength of the UK's financial regulation in exchange for the UK's support for the treaty amendment". This condition, which was difficult for the EU to accept, "opened the conflict between the UK and the EU, which was regarded as an important turning point for the change of the UK's EU policy" [3]. Since then, Cameron has, on many occasions, strongly demanded the reform of the EU and warned that if the EU does not respond to the demands of the UK, the UK will not rule out a referendum to decide to leave the EU.

On 23 January 2013, then-British Prime Minister David Cameron promised to hold a referendum on Brexit between 2017 and 2018 if he won the 2015 general election to win conservatives' support. Cameron won the 2015 general election, and the referendum was held on 23 June 2016.

England and Wales voted strongly to leave the European Union in the referendum, and English voters played an important role. English voters make up nearly 85 percent of the UK population, and England is politically dominant among the national territories that make up the UK. Immigration has fuelled nationalist and Eurosceptic sentiment in England. England formed a nation-state earlier, and the island character and the glory of the former empire have made England maintain a strong national identity. This national identity leads to a lack of European identity. The combination of Euroscepticism and nationalism in England has led to a movement outside London to leave the EU.

The north and Midlands of England, dominated by traditional manufacturing, have long suffered from economic malaise. Support for Brexit in these areas was dominated by pensioners, skilled and professionally skilled workers in traditional manufacturing sectors, and those who felt marginalized by mainstream British politics and public opinion. After the 2008 financial crisis and the European debt crisis, the Cameron government implemented an economic austerity policy to reduce the fiscal deficit by cutting public spending. Cuts in government welfare spending have worsened the lives of low-income people who rely on government benefits.

Although immigration has brought cheap Labour and economic dynamism to Britain, ordinary people have not benefited from the so-called economic boom but have suffered when the country has cut public spending. Only the elites are concerned about sovereignty, and ordinary voters are more concerned about immigration, which is why the "People who want to remain in the EU" represented by Cameron are at a disadvantage in the debate on the relationship between Britain and Europe [4]. The government's neglect or inaction to address widening inequality has deepened the divide between middle - and lower-class voters and elites. The perception that mass immigration is coming, along with real security threats, all seemingly linked to EU membership, has led to a desire for radical change at the bottom [5].

In this context, the Independence Party, which advocates a hard Brexit and promotes a hardline immigration policy, has attracted many Eurosceptic voters [6]. Combining hot issues such as the National Health Service system and the refugee crisis with the Brexit issue, criticizing and reflecting on the policies of mainstream political parties towards Europe is the focus of the propaganda of the Independence Party. The Independence Party successfully brought together the public opinion of the middle and lower classes. It became Britain's third-largest political party after the Conservative Party and the Labor Party.

3. The Influence of Political Parties on Voters in Elections

The influence of political parties on voters is a highly complex and multidimensional subject in the electoral process. In particular, the policy stance is a crucial aspect. The policy platforms of political parties represent their positions and commitments on various topics. These policies are designed to meet the needs and values of voters, and as a result, voters typically measure the compatibility of party policies with their ideals [6]. Voters are more likely to support a party if its policy platform is aligned with their policy priorities. In the United States, for example, the policy platforms of political parties have a profound impact on voters' positions and voting behavior. For example, the issue of climate change emerged as a prominent issue in the 2020 elections, with the Democratic Party proposing an aggressive climate policy while the Republican Party emphasized economic development and energy self-sufficiency. These policy disagreements have led to significant changes in voter opinion and voting behavior regarding climate policy, with many voters choosing to support parties that align with their policy views. This coherence can cover various areas, including but not limited to economic policy (e.g., tax policy, social welfare), social policy (e.g., same-sex marriage, abortion rights), and environmental policy. Voters compare these policy issues before deciding whether to support a party [7].

However, policy is not the only factor, and political parties use media and advertising to influence voter attitudes and perceptions. Parties' advertising strategies can influence voters' political decisions in a number of ways. This may include highlighting policy achievements, bashing rivals, or communicating the party's core values [8]. The ads are often hotly debated during election season because they seek to shape voters' impressions of parties and candidates. On the other hand, the role of media in the transmission of political information should not be underestimated. The way the media reports, the topics they choose to cover, and the political stance of media organizations can all have a profound impact on voters. Social media became an essential platform for political parties to

disseminate election information. Political parties and candidates use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media to interact with voters, publish political advertisements, and disseminate policy messages. Mr. Trump, for example, is active on social media, interacting directly with voters and using Twitter to post policy views and attack rivals [9]. Voters can be influenced by media coverage, which may lead them to be more inclined to support or oppose a particular party or candidate, depending on the content and inclination of the range.

Finally, candidates' image and characteristics are also critical factors that influence political parties on voters. Voters don't just value parties; they also carefully study and evaluate individual candidates [10]. Candidates' character traits, political experience, background, and leadership abilities can all shape how voters perceive them. In American history, the character traits and leadership styles of candidates have had a profound impact on the voting decisions of voters. For example, in the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections, voters generally perceived Democratic candidate Barack Obama as having strong leadership and charisma, which in part shaped voter support for him. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom and Canada, candidate personality traits have also emerged as critical factors in voters' choices, influencing their perceptions of political parties and voting decisions. Voters are more likely to support those they think are honest, capable, trustworthy, and consistent with their values and expectations of the candidate. Such individual factors often play a crucial role when voters make their final choice because the character and leadership of a candidate matter as much as the policy platform.

All in all, the influence of political parties on voters is a multi-level, interactive process that is influenced by a variety of complex factors. The voters' final decision is usually in the policy, the media, advertising, and the candidate image formed under the condition that multiple factors are intertwined. These factors also include voters' personal political background and the influence of factors such as religion and political identity. Therefore, the relationship between political parties and voters is dynamic and complex, requiring a comprehensive consideration of various factors to understand its influence mechanism deeply.

4. Conclusion

The core reason for the development of interaction between voters and political parties is that voters choose parties to support according to their own needs, and political parties need to compete for voters' votes. Therefore, the interests and preferences of the target voters can influence the political views and stands of the parties. For example, the British feel that the European Union has brought disadvantages to their lives, so the Conservative Party has promised to hold a referendum on Brexit to win the people's support. Regarding political stands, voters are more likely to support a party if its policy platform aligns with voters' policy priorities. For example, in the 2020 US election, the differences between Democrats and Republicans on climate issues primarily affected votes' choice. Not only do the voters influence political parties, but political parties also influence voters' choices through media, advertising, and candidate images. Advertisements often promote a party's achievements and core values but may include attacks on rivals. Besides traditional media, social media is vital in promoting candidates and parties and influencing voters' choices. A deeper understanding of this two-way interaction will have a positive effect on promoting democratic politics. However, most of the examples in this study are elections in Western countries, and there is a lack of research on other countries. Further studies could compare the two-way interactions between voters and political parties in multiple countries.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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