Economic Voting, Sociotropic vs. Checkbook: Cases from Greece and Germany

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Abstract

Economic voting, the theory that when the economy is good the party in control gains support and when the economy is bad the party in power suffers. This is a simplistic definition and economic voting is so much more. In this paper I seek to prove how economic voting can be broken down into two categories, sociotropic and checkbook. I do this by looking at two countries in very different situation. Greece is a country going through economic turmoil and is constantly changing which party is in control of the government. It has been suffering especially hard from a debt crisis that has crippled the country's economy. SYRIZA, the coalition of the radical left, has surpassed the PASOK, the moderate left wing party, in the most recent election. Germany on the other hand has been relatively stable throughout the European debt crisis. The economy has remained stable and Angela Merkel and the Christian Democrats will be in control of the government for third straight term. In Greece I seek to show how sociotropic economic voting is taking place and how radical parties are gaining support. In Germany I show how checkbook economic voting is taking place and why it is.

Introduction

Economic voting is the basic theory that when the economy is doing well, so is the party in power. When the economy is doing poorly, party in power is doing poorly. Essentially what economic voting boils down to is voters looking at the economy and deciding if the party in power should be punished because of it. But economic voting is not that simple. Economic voting can work in several different ways. The economy can work a lot of different ways. When economic voting takes place do voters look at macro-economic indicators first or do they look at personal finances first. This is the question I seek to engage. This paper breaks down two types of economic voting. These two types are sociotropic and checkbook. Sociotropic economic voting is the idea that voters use macro-economic indicators when economic voting takes place. In this theory the most important thing is what is happening to the country as a whole and not what is happening to them personally. Conversely, checkbook economic voting is the theory that voters look at their own economic standing and evaluate the government based on that. Macro-economic indicators and what is happening to the country as a whole are secondary to what is taking place personally.

I apply these two ways of viewing economic voting to Greece and Germany. Greece is a country that has suffered mightily through the European debt crisis. The country has changed the party in power during every election and painful austerity measures have been enacted to bring the debt of the country back into check. Germany, on the other hand, has remained stable throughout the debt crisis and is now in the position of having to bail out countries like Greece. Through the literature review and analysis I show that Greece has economic voting that is most like sociotropic economic voting, while Germany has economic voting that most closely resembles checkbook economic voting.

Literature Review

In 2009 the Prime Minister of Greece Karamanlis of the center right New Democracy Party called a snap election. This came about because of several scandals in the New Democracy party and the rising concern over the global economic meltdown. Because of the recent scandals and economic downturn PASOK the main center left party of Greece won the election with 44 percent of the vote and won 160 of the 300 seats in parliament (Nezi, 2012). Roula Nezi's research on Greek elections showed that economic voting is taking place in Greece regardless of who is in power. In 2004 the PASOK lost power to the New Democracy party. Then in 2009 the PASOK won back parliament in a sweeping victory. Nezi's research does not include the 2012 election, but after two elections, in 2012 the New Democracy party took back control of the government and PASOK faded into the background as a new radical left wing party came in 2nd in the voting. SYRIZA, which is known as the coalition of the Radical Left, it is made up of several Euro-communist groups and other left wing groups. SYRIZA only became an established party in 2004 (Moschonas, 2013). The party grew from a modest 4.6 percent in the 2009 election to an amazing 27 percent in 2012. This performance put SYRIZA ahead of PASOK and only a few percentage points behind New Democracy. This amazing victory in the polls can mostly be attributed to largely outperforming New Democracy and PASOK in lower income families. The two main parties combined were nine percent behind SYRIZA in this demographic (Moschonas, 2013). Economic voting has not only led to the party in power being punished in times of economic crisis but it has led to both main parties being punished and new radical parties gaining power. In the 2012 elections the Neo-Fascist party, Rising Dawn, won four percent of the vote.

Where political turmoil has been the name of the game in Greece, Germany has been a model of consistency. In 2013 Angela Merkel has won her 3rd term as Germany's chancellor along with her party, the Christian Democrats a center right party. Despite Merkel's sweeping victory in the polls says, Alison Smale (2013) she will likely have to form a Grand Coalition with the Social Democrats, the center left party in Germany. This is coming about because Merkel's allies, the Free Democrats a pro-business minded party is likely to fall completely out of the German parliament. Merkel is going to need the Social Democrats if she wants to continue to support the fledgling nations of southern Europe with aid packages tied to painful reforms (Smale, 2013). Despite Merkel's Christian Democrats winning with 42 percent of the vote to the Social Democrats 25 percent she will likely have to make concessions she would not like to make to continue helping the PIGS countries. PIGS is an acronym for the countries of Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain. These countries have been struggled the most in the debt crisis.

Growing up in East Germany Merkel quickly rose to the top of the German Conservative party. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl selected Merkel to be part of his post-reunification cabinet. Merkel would become the leader of the Grand Coalition in 2004 and would take the reins of Germany during the European debt crisis. She is one of the main actors in the crisis and one of the only consistent heads of state throughout this crisis. Merkel has been called the Margaret Thatcher of Germany and is a major political player at this point in European and world history (Marr, 2013). Merkel does not see abandoning countries in the EU hit the hardest by the financial crisis an option. Merkel has been quoted saying “Euro is our common destiny, and Europe is our common future” (Young & Semmler, 2011). Merkel was instrumental in passing the Lisbon treaty and has so far been an ally to European Union future.

Merkel won a sweeping election in 2013; however, the 2009 election was much more closely contested. The economy was on the minds of German voters as they headed to the polls in 2009. Despite a Grand Coalition being in place the only party to be punished for economically downtrodden times was the center left Social Democrats. Merkel’s Christian Democrats lost 1.4 percent compared to 2005 and her preferred allies the Free Democrats won enough votes for her to form a governing coalition with them (Anderson & Hecht, 2010). Christopher Anderson and Jason Hecht researched into why the Christian Democrats were able to hold onto their power while the Social Democrats fell from grace with the voters. Anderson and Hecht point out that the real winners of the 2009 election were the small marginal parties of Germany. What was discovered through their research was that Germans did not blame the government for the economic downturn. They found that there was evidence that indicated the people who had personally been affected by the economic downturn were less likely to vote for the government in power (Anderson & Hecht, 2010). German voters who were personally suffering from the financial crisis in Europe leaned one of two ways. 1) German voters deserted the both governing parties (Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) and swung hard left or 2) they voted for possible coalition partners for the Christian Democrats, mostly the Free Democrats (Anderson & Hecht, 2010).

The idea behind economic voting is that when economic times are good the majority party or incumbent president’s party is rewarded in the next election and when the economy is bad the ruling party or incumbent president’s party is. Studying U.S. voters Bloom and Price

(1975) find this to be partially true. The party in power receives little or no added support when the economy is up but when the economy is down the party in power is severely punished. This is especially true for people who are suffer personally by the economic downturn. This concept also rings true for independents and weak party supporters. The only real support the party in power receives during economic downturns or crisis comes from long-time party supporters. This phenomenon known as "throwing the rascals out" holds true for both Liberal and Conservative parties (Bloom & Price, 1975).

Research into countries like Greece, who have faced a substantial financial and debt crisis, should expect that this trend hold true. The question raised by Marina Lobo and Michael Lewis-Beck is how does the European Union effect economic voting? They hypothesize that in an international economy where countries are interconnected in the European Union voters blame the European Union itself and let the controlling government slide for the economic downturn. Because of the introduction of the Euro in 2002 Lewis-Beck and Lobo believe that this international currency decreases the blame that the party in power often faces when the government is not in entirely in control of economic matters. They hypothesize that voters will likely hold their national government less responsible and place more blame on the EU (Lobo & Lewis-Beck, 2012). Their finding is that the national economic vote decreases depending on how much the EU is viewed as responsible for the economic climate in the particular country (Lobo & Lewis-Beck, 2012).

The European debt crisis has been going on for several election cycles and countries like Greece have been forced to make deep cuts and implement austerity measures as well as raise taxes. All of these are unpopular for any party in power, let alone one that is in the middle of an economic crisis. Giger and Nelson (2010) address how these retrenchment and austerity measures have affected voting in Greek elections. They found that coalition governments that come into power are likely to gain seats because of retrenching and the coalition being seen as responsible action by this coalition. Their conclusion is that religious and liberal parties can significantly gain votes by retrenching the "welfare state" because they are appealing to a wider constituency. Religious and Left wing parties are able to retrench social benefits and take credit for doing so without receiving blame for cutting social benefits as their actions are seen being responsible. Barbara Vis (2009) continues this idea by asking when governments are likely to retrench the welfare state. Vis's main finding is that political parties only make unpopular social changes that will likely lead to punishment in the next election if there is a deteriorating socio-economic situation. This finding is only true when 1) the ruling party is already facing a political downturn or 2) the ruling party is on the "Right" side of the political spectrum. Parties from the right are more likely to do this as they see social programs as a hindrance to the economy and are often overturning or changing policies created by the party from the "Left" side of the political spectrum.

In German elections in 2009 and 2013 smaller more extreme parties from both the left and right gained seats. The same is also true in Greece in the 2009 and 2012. Orit Kedar (2005) explains this phenomenon in Parliamentary elections. According to his study voters are concerned with possible coalition outcomes and therefore factor this in when voting. Because of this moderate voters are willing to vote for parties that are often more extreme than their beliefs in order to pull policy of their favored party more in that direction. The hope of this way of thinking is that the voters favored party will have to form a coalition in order to govern or will trend the platform more this way in the future in the hopes of winning more votes. Voters will factor in post-election bargaining when forming a government when they vote (Kedar, 2005).

The main question that that I am posing in my research is the difference between stable economies, mainly northern Europe, and unstable economies, mainly southern Europe, voting trends during this economic crisis. Stable economies such as Germany and the Netherlands are being put in the situation where they are bailing out the countries that are unstable economically that are facing the most turmoil because of the crisis. These countries have been affectionately dubbed PIGS. PIGS is an acronym for the Southern European countries Portugal, Italy, Greece, and Spain. These four countries have been facing the worst of the debt crisis in Europe. Prior to Richard Nadeau's and Michael Lewis-Beck's research, there had been little research done on economic voting in some southern European countries (Portugal and Greece). What Nadeau and Lewis-Beck (2012) found was not only was there economic voting in the economically fragile and unstable nations of southern Europe but they also found that the PIGS countries have much stronger economic voting trends than in Non-PIGS stable northern European countries. The economic vote is 60 percent stronger in PIGS countries. Nadeau and Lewis-Beck attribute the strong effect that economic voting has to the fact that the governments of these unstable southern European countries often have less complex coalition governments that are dominated by one party. This made it easier for these countries voters to identify and blame the main party of the coalition for the problems in the slumping economy (Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2012). In stable economies the voters who are suffering personally would be less likely to support the government in power.

The main questions to be asked are why has Germany's government remained stable with the Christian Democrats while Greece has flip flopped between the New Democracy and the PASOK. Both countries suffered during the financial crisis but Greece was hit exponentially harder, but why have some parties risen while others have fallen. SYRIZA looks to be the new dominant left wing party in Greece while the Free Democrats have risen and fallen over the course of several elections. Are voters in both countries deciding to vote for more marginal parties in hopes of pulling the main parties towards that or are they completely committing to new radical ideas. The other main question is how and why is economic voting more substantial in PIGS countries than in Germany and why has the Christian Democrats maintained its strength through three elections around this debt crisis in Europe. European politics will continue to be an interesting development in the coming days months and years

Data & Methods

With this project I had to rely on two sources, one for Greece and one for Germany. I relied on two reputable sources for my datasets. The Greek data comes from the Eurobarometer. This survey covers all of the countries in the European Union and potential members as well. I separated the Greek respondents for my research. For the German data I used data collected by the Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences called the Gesis. This survey asked more pointed questions about politics specific to Germany and allowed for better understanding of the checkbook vs. sociotropic question I was asking.

Findings

The hypothesis behind the analysis is that Greek citizens will have a sociotropic view of the economy and government. That is to say that Greeks no matter their personal financial situation will view the government as failing them and will seek solutions from other places. This theory is corroborated by the rise of SYRIZA, the coalition of the radical left in Greece, and also the rise of Golden Dawn, an ultra-nationalist party in Greece. For Germany I am expecting the opposite. Germany has remained relatively stable fiscally and politically through the economic and debt crisis that has hounded other members of the European Union. The theory is that there is a checkbook view in more stable countries like Germany. People who are suffering financially will be less willing to support the party in power in Germany. This theory does not reflect on the supporters of the stronger parties just the idea of economics playing a role in the Germans who are choosing not to support these parties.

Greece

Table 1.1

		SITUATION: JOB PERSONAL				
		Very good	Rather good	Rather bad	Very bad	Total
CRISIS PERFORMANCE: NAT GOVERNMENT	Yes, very effectively	0	5	2	1	8
		0.0%	2.1%	0.8%	0.5%	1.1%
	Yes, fairly effectively	1	28	16	8	53
		4.8%	11.5%	6.2%	3.7%	7.2%
	No, not very effectively	7	92	85	61	245
		33.3%	37.9%	33.1%	27.9%	33.1%
	No, not at all effectively	13	118	154	149	434
		61.9%	48.6%	59.9%	68.0%	58.6%
Total		21	243	257	219	740
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Somers'd Value= .143[a]

a. Chi-Squared $p<.05$

For the Table 1.1 I compared job situation: personal against the crisis performance of the national government. Since both variables are ordinal level I used Somers'd measure of association. This showed that there was statistical significance. The Somers'd test also had a value of .143. This is a moderate correlation that shows that most people were in the bottom two categories that the national government was not effective in the crisis management. Across the board, no matter their personal job situation, people thought the government had not handled the debt crisis effectively. Over 90% of all people, no matter their personal job situation believed that the national government did not deal with the financial crisis effectively. A total of only eight respondents viewed the national government's crisis performance was very effective and only 53 viewed the nation government as fairly effective in crisis performance. There were 679 Greeks who thought that the national government had not been very effective or at all effective in crisis performance. Table 1.1 also shows the financial standing of Greece. Four hundred six Greeks placed themselves in the rather bad or very bad categories of the personal job situation variable. This largely outweighs the 264 Greeks who placed themselves in the very good or rather good categories with only 21 of the respondents saying their job situation was very good.

Table 1.2

		SITUATION: FINANCIAL HOUSEHOLD				Total
		Very good	Rather good	Rather bad	Very bad	
Direction of Country	Right Direction	4	46	28	6	84
		26.7%	13.8%	6.7%	2.8%	8.6%
	Neither, Nor	2	39	37	6	84
		13.3%	11.7%	8.9%	2.8%	8.6%
	Wrong Direction	9	248	353	200	810
		60.0%	74.5%	84.4%	94.3%	82.8%
Total		15	333	418	212	978
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Somers'd Value= .179[a]

a. Chi-Squared $p<.05$

Table 1.2 compares financial situation of the household against what people think the direction of the country is. Since both are ordinal I once again used somers'd measures of association. This shows that there is statistical significance. Somers'd had a value of .179 which is moderate correlation. This correlation shows that Greeks from across all categories view the country as heading in the wrong direction. No matter the household financial situation people believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. People had a very good financial household situation were the lowest to view the country as going in the wrong direction at 60% but the other 3 groups were all at or above 75%. Of the respondents only 84 viewed the country as heading in the right direction. Over 80% of all respondents viewed the country as heading in the wrong direction. Also shown in Table 1.2, 630 respondents placed themselves in the rather bad or very bad household financial situation categories compared to the 348 who placed themselves in the very good or rather good categories with only 15 in the very good category. Also worth noting is how few people felt the country was headed in the right direction. With 978 respondents only 84 viewed the country as headed in the right direction.

Table 1.3

		SITUATION: JOB PERSONAL				Total
		Very good	Rather good	Rather bad	Very bad	
SITUATION: EMPLOYMENT COUNTRY	Very good	1	0	0	1	2
		4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.3%
	Rather good	2	5	0	1	8
		9.1%	2.1%	0.0%	0.5%	1.1%
	Rather bad	7	91	85	13	196
		31.8%	37.4%	32.9%	5.9%	26.3%
	Very bad	12	147	173	206	538
		54.5%	60.5%	67.1%	93.2%	72.3%
Total		22	243	258	221	744
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Somers'd Value= .266[a]

a. Chi-Squared p<.05

In Table 1.3 the comparison is made between personal job situations against the employment situation of the country. Most respondents found themselves in the very bad category for the country's employment situation. Sommers'd had a fairly strong correlation but it is not indicative of what the numbers show. The correlation is distinguishing between worse and worst. No matter the personal job situation of Greeks they view the country's employment situation as very bad at over 54%. Of all respondents 98% of respondents viewed the employment situation as bad or very bad. Ninety nine percent of Greeks who felt that their personal job situation was very bad or rather bad viewed employment situation of Greece as rather bad or very bad. The numbers are smaller for the respondents who viewed their job situation as very good but they still viewed the employment situation of the country as bad or very bad at 86%. The same is true who viewed their job situation as rather good. They viewed the employment situation of the country as rather bad or very bad at over 97%. Furthermore only 22 of 744 respondents from Greece viewed their personal job situation as very good. Only 10 Greeks total viewed the employment situation of the country as very good or rather good.

Germany

Table 2.1

		Own Economic Situation-Current					
		very good	good	some good, some bad	poorly	very poorly	Total
Party ID	CDU/CSU	26	162	80	13	1	282
		36.6%	36.5%	22.2%	12.5%	3.8%	28.1%
	SPD	17	105	92	20	8	242
		23.9%	23.6%	25.6%	19.2%	30.8%	24.1%
	FDP	2	10	4	1	0	17
		2.8%	2.3%	1.1%	1.0%	0.0%	1.7%
	Greens/ The Left	12	58	55	24	5	154
		16.9%	13.1%	15.3%	23.1%	19.2%	15.3%
	Other Parties	14	109	129	46	12	310
		19.7%	24.5%	35.8%	44.2%	46.2%	30.8%
Total		71	444	360	104	26	1005
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Crammer's V= .124[a]

a. Approx. Significance p< .05

For Table 2.1 I compared own economic situation (independent) against party identification. I had to condense down the Party id section into five major groups. I kept the main parties and combined the leftist parties into one group and all other parties into one group. Since the Party id is a nominal statistic I had to use lambda and crammer's V for my measures of association. According to these tests it is statistically significant. The Cammer's V test had a value of .124, this means that there is some correlation but not very strong. Germans that are in poor or very poor economic situations are more likely to support other parties than the main parties (CDU/CSU &SPD). The boxes in the lower right hand corner of table 2.1 that I highlighted are the most interesting. People who view their own economic situation as poor or very poor support other parties at over 40%. Over 65% of German respondents who felt their financial situation were poor or very poor identified themse4lves as either in the other party group or the leftist party group. Also important to point out is that Germans who placed themselves in the very poor category identified themselves as members of the CDU/CSU at only 3.8%.

Table 2.2

		Own financial situation last 2 years					
		become much better	improved somewhat	remainded the same	become somewhat worse	become much worse	Total
Government Responsibility for own finacial sit. last 2 years	very strong	3	2	19	18	24	66
		6.8%	0.8%	4.6%	7.3%	35.3%	6.6%
	strong	9	40	103	97	21	270
		20.5%	16.7%	25.2%	39.4%	30.9%	26.8%
	average	7	66	144	80	14	311
		15.9%	27.6%	35.2%	32.5%	20.6%	30.9%
	less	4	65	78	32	5	184
		9.1%	27.2%	19.1%	13.0%	7.4%	18.3%
	not at all	21	66	65	19	4	175
		47.7%	27.6%	15.9%	7.7%	5.9%	17.4%
Total		44	239	409	246	68	1006
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Somers'd Value= .293[b]

b. Chi- Squared Sign. $p < .05$

Table 2.2 compares financial situation over the last two years against government responsibility for financial situation over the last two years. Both variables are at the ordinal level so I could use Kendall and Somers'd measures of association. This was also statistically significant. Somers'd had a strong correlation of .293. People who felt their financial situation became worse or much worse were more likely to feel as though the government was responsible for this. Over 65% of Germans who felt there financial situation had become much worse had a strong or very strong belief that the government was responsible for this. The opposite was true for people who felt their financial situation had become much better. Germans who felt their financial situation had become much better did not believe the government had any responsibility for this at over 47%. Respondents who felt there financial situation had become somewhat worse or much worse view the government as having average of high responsibility at over 70%. Also worth noting is that only 68 out of 1,006 respondents viewed their financial situation as becoming much worse. This is less than half of what Greeks were indicating in a similar category with fewer respondents than the German survey.

Table 2.3

		General economic situation current					
		Very good	good	some good, some bad	bad	very bad	Total
Party ID	CDU/CSU	19	167	90	6	1	283
		41.3%	35.2%	22.1%	8.7%	10.0%	28.1%
	SPD	11	123	94	10	3	241
		23.9%	25.9%	23.1%	14.5%	30.0%	24.0%
	FDP	1	11	4	1	0	17
		2.2%	2.3%	1.0%	1.4%	0.0%	1.7%
	Greens/ The Left	6	72	65	11	0	154
		13.0%	15.2%	16.0%	15.9%	0.0%	15.3%
	Other Parties	9	101	154	41	6	311
		19.6%	21.3%	37.8%	59.4%	60.0%	30.9%
Total		46	474	407	69	10	1006
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Lambda= .105[a]

a. Approx Sig. p< .05

I used the general economic situation variable and compared it against party ID on Table 2.3. This also had statistical significance according to Lambda. People who felt the economic situation of the country in general was bad or very bad were more likely to identify themselves as supporters of opposition parties (other parties) while people who felt it was good or very good identified themselves with the Grand coalition parties (CDU/CSU &SPD). Lambda showed that this was a weak correlation at a value of only .105. Germans who view the economy as bad or very bad identified with other parties at about 60% while Germans who thought the general economic situation was good or very good identified with the parties of the Grand Coalition at over 65. Germans who viewed the general economic situation as bad identified with other parties or leftist parties at over 70%. Once again worth noting is how few respondents felt as though the general economic situation was very bad or bad. Only 79 of the 1,007 German respondents viewed the economic situation as very bad or bad. Most Germans felt as though the general economic situation was either some good some bad or good with over 80% of respondents indicating it.

Discussion

Greece

With the Greece output and the literature review the evidence points to sociotropic economic voting. In Table 1.1 across all categories of personal job situation Greeks believed the government was not dealing with the debt crisis effectively. The measure of association showed that there was some correlation but that is not the main point to be drawn from any of the Greek tables. The main point to draw from Table 1.1 is that over 85% of respondents from all personal job categories viewed the national government as not very effective. This indicative of sociotropic voting because Greeks are not factoring in their personal job situation into how they view the government is doing. Also interesting about table 1.1 is how few of the respondents viewed the national government as being very effective. Only eight out of 740 respondents viewed the national government as very effective. Similarly only 21 out of 740 respondents viewed their personal job situation as very good.

In Table 1.2 this indication of sociotropic economic voting continues. No matter what the household financial situation of the respondent the majority of Greeks viewed the country as heading in the wrong direction. There is statistical significance but it is not a very strong correlation. The significance can be misleading as well. Even though there is a difference based in the financial household situation it is a difference of 60% increasing to 94.3%. Even the majority of respondents who said their financial household situation was very good believed the country was headed in the wrong direction. That number only increases with deterioration of financial household situation. This still indicated a sociotropic view because the majority of Greeks view their country as heading in the wrong direction despite their household financial situation. Personal situation is not the biggest factor in deciding the view of the country as a whole. As Table 1.2 indicates well over the majority of every group believes the country is headed in the wrong direction.

For Table 1.3 I used the personal job situation again. When comparing it against the job situation of the country as a whole it was almost a non-factor. This shows the sociotropic view of the Greek population. Greeks who have very good personal job situation and Greeks who have very bad job situation both view the employment situation of the country as very bad or rather bad at over 85%. The main difference between these groups is that people who characterize their personal job situation as very bad view the job situation of the country as very bad at a high rate. The statistical significance of Table 1.3 comes from the fact that respondents who view their personal job situation as very good only view the employment situation of the country as bad or very bad at 85% compared to the over 97% of the respondents of all other categories. Also showing the sociotropic view of Greece is how few respondents view the employment situation of the country as good or very good. Ten total respondents viewed the employment situation favorably with only two saying that it was very good out of 744 total respondents.

Germany

The evidence that was accrued through the literature review and the output indicates that Germany has pocketbook economic voting. According the Hecht and Anderson those who were doing the worst financially would vote for parties of the left or other parties not in power to try and force a different coalition government. With Table 2.1 this is shown. When respondents were asked to identify with a party those who were doing the worst financially clearly trended towards the left and other parties. This shows the checkbook economic voting. People who are suffering personally are more willing to vote for a party that is not in power to create change. In Table 2.1 Germans who felt that their own financial situation was bad or very bad identified with parties of the left, either the Greens or the Left, or other parties at over 65%. Also of importance is how few of these respondents identified with the CDU/CSU. Only one respondent from the very poor personal economic situation category self-identified as part of the CDU/CSU. This indicates the checkbook economic voting because personal financial situation is clearly a factor when going to the polls. If Germany was more sociotropic, personal economic situation would not have as a big of an affect.

Table 2.2 shows a similar trend. When comparing the financial situation against the government's responsibility those who believe there situation has become much worse or somewhat worse believe the government has responsibility for it. This also indicates the checkbook view of economic voting. Eighty five percent of Germans that believe their own financial situation has become much worse view the government as being of average involvement in this or high. Likewise those who viewed their financial situation as becoming somewhat worse viewed the government as having average responsibility or high at over 75%. Respondents who felt their financial situation stayed the same or improved did not believe the government was as responsible. This shows the checkbook economic voting because those who feel they are doing the worst are saying the government is responsible for this at some level. The Germans who are suffering the most are finding it easiest to blame the government for their plight.

Table 2.3 had the weakest correlation of any of all the German tables. Germans, who viewed the economy as bad or very bad, did not support the party in power. They did so at nearly 60%. This is not directly related to checkbook economic voting but it is related to economic voting. Respondents who viewed the economy as bad were far less likely to support the party in power. Also worth noting about Table 2.3 is how few Germans viewed the economy as bad or very bad. Only 79 out of 1,006 respondents indicated that they felt the economic situation of Germany was very bad or bad; furthermore, only seven of those respondents supported the party in power.

The results from the data give a clear indicator of which way each country is looking. With the results in Greece, almost no one trusts the government and almost everyone believes the country is headed in the wrong direction. My data does not have any electoral data, but when you do compare this trend to the recent Greek election it shows that Greeks are losing faith in the main parties and are starting to turn to more radical parties for solutions and quick fixes. The accumulation points to a trend in a sociotropic view of the Greek citizenry. Greeks who feel financially stable as well as Greeks who are not, all have a skeptical view of the government that is leading them into the future. This is not definitive proof of sociotropic voting in Greece but it is a strong indicator.

Germany on the other hand shows strong indicators in the pocketbook economic voting theory. Germans who are suffering the most are identifying with other parties that are not in the mainstream at a statically significant level. The correlation with this theory is not as strong, but the economy of Germany was not hit as hard as many others in the European Union. This evidence is not conclusive either but it does show that Germans who are suffering tend not to side with the controlling parties. Instead these people find themselves in falling in with other parties that they believe will support what they believe in better. They are voting or at least thinking with their checkbook when they go to the polls.

Conclusion

Economic voting is something that is multi-faceted. Economic voting is not a monolithic idea. Economic voting is something that changes based on several things and depends on what is happening in a country at any given time. This has been shown throughout this paper. In Greece economic voting is more sociotropic because of the severity of the debt crisis that has taken place there. Because of this radical parties are starting to gain footing and are beginning to have an effect on elections. Because of this the politics of the country has been volatile and the party in power is constantly changing. Syriza received the second most votes in the last election surpassing the moderate left leaning PASOK. In Germany the economy has remained more stable and thus the political climate has been more stable. Economic voting in Germany has been most like checkbook economic voting. Only those who are suffering personally want to "throw the rascals out". Only those who are suffering personally are looking to leftist or other parties for solutions instead of large parts of the population like in Greece. In conclusion, economic voting is something that can change with the situation of the country and the economy, and when the economy is bad and people are desperate for solutions, radical parties from the left and right are able to gain support. Countries that are suffering from crisis seem more susceptible to sociotropic economic voting as the country is suffering as a whole. While checkbook economic voting takes where the economy is stable and only those suffering personally punish the government. Economic Voting also seems to reflect the idea when the economy is doing well the party in power only receives marginal support, but when the economy is doing poorly the government in power is much more likely to punish those in power.

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