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EUROSCEPTICISM and
The *FUTURE OF EUROPE*

VIEWS FROM THE CAPITALS



Euroscepticism and the Future of Europe

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Editors

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FOREWORD

In May 2019, over 200 million Europeans elected 751 Members of European Parliament. With more than 50 percent, the turnout was the highest it has ever been in the past 25 years and represents an increase of 8.3 percentage points from the previous election in 2014. To illustrate, more citizens were entitled to vote at the European elections than the United States has inhabitants as a whole.

In contrast to certain predictions made by political commentators and spectators, the election result gives a clear pro-European mandate for more European engagement, more European solutions and more cooperation on a European level. Citizens voted because they want to see Europe taking action on a range of crucial issues from climate, jobs and the economy, to migration, security and defense.

Today, more citizens approve of the European Union than in previous decades. This is a direct result of multiple advantages, which have often become a matter of course on the one hand, such as the ability to easily work or study in another EU country. Political developments such as Brexit have tested and ultimately strengthened citizens commitment to the European Union. With the Brexit process slowly ending, the imperative lessons to be learned from this is that politics must be centered on compromise and cooperation instead of unconditional enforcement of political opinion or will. However, at the same time the Union also faces more challenges.

When looking beyond the borders, it becomes evident that peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity cannot be taken for granted. Even in Europe, war is still a daily occurrence when looking to Eastern Ukraine. In

some EU Member states, liberal, parliamentary democracy is questioned and fundamental rights such as the rule of law are trampled on. Thirty years after the end of the unjust regimes in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall, many citizens are concerned that the rule of law and liberal democracy are endangered.

There is one major lesson from the fall of communism. Regimes, which do not respect the rule of law, human and fundamental rights, can never ensure trust, freedom and fairness in a society. A country that does not have an independent judiciary that suppresses civil society and media freedom, and denies its citizens a fair living environment will fail to establish a relationship of trust.

A changing world also leads to rising pressures from inside and outside the Union. On the one hand, nationalists and populists seek to weaken or partially destroy the EU. On the other, world leaders such as President Trump challenge the global order by withdrawing from international treaties, expanding protectionism and questioning multilateralism. To withstand these developments, we need to make Europe stronger, more capable and more efficient.

We have to deal with populist and nationalist forces through substantial debates and practice oriented approaches in order to expose their dangerous ignorance.

They claim that taking back power from Brussels to the capitals through a Europe of Nations will subsequently solve all issues. Equally, they assert that Europe can be sustained with a halved or even abolished European Parliament. However, the terrifying reality behind these claims is a weakened Europe of uncoordinated small-scale states. More isolation, more nationalism, more demarcation and less cooperation and cohesion at European level. This would lead to economic decline and in particular the decline of the middle class, as well as the global insignificance of Europe. Europe is too valuable to be torn apart by populist and nationalist forces. On the contrary, we must work together to strengthen the Union and intensify cooperation. Together we must tackle issues like the fight against tax havens and money laundering, security policy, climate and environmental protection, investments, research and development as well as the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Thankfully, the tactics of populists, who play on feelings of insecurity, fear and blame, did not succeed at a European level during the 2019 elections. The majority of citizens throughout Europe realized that falling into populist traps would be contrary to the reality of what they were

really voting for. To fulfil the expectations and deliver on the promises made, we have to develop the democratic decision-making mechanisms further. Only then, we will be able to improve efficiency, build our capacity to find solutions and take action on the issues most important to citizens.

This means that we must abolish the practice of unanimous voting in the Council with regard to certain decisions taken by Member States. This practice leads to unnecessary blockades, blackmail and the total incapacity of the EU to act even when action is urgently needed. We fare much better wherever the co-decision procedure applies, and the European Parliament and the Council are on equal footing in terms of deciding on EU legislation. There is a stark difference between policy areas where co-decision applies and those where the EU is paralysed by unanimous decisions to be taken by all Member States.

This means that instead of the unanimity of Member States, there must be majority decisions in all policy areas. A simple majority in the European Parliament and a “double majority” of the Member States. Meaning a majority of Member States representing the majority of the European population. This would be more democratic, more transparent and more efficient.

The idea of Europe will only have a bright future if the EU-citizens are part of it. Today, hundreds of millions of citizens feel at home across national borders. We live in the largest shared economic area in the world driven by the freedom of movement, the free movement of goods, services and capital. Let us allow our citizens to be a stronger part of the political process on the European level.

The European Parliament is a reflection of European society. Trust, fairness, freedom, prosperity and cooperation mutually exclude populism and nationalism and can therefore not coexist within the same train of political thought an argumentation. That is why we need a Conference on the future of Europe. We need a strong partnership with the EU citizen’s apart from party politics. Let us put the future of Europe and the role of the European Union in the world above party lines. The future needs dialogue, European awareness and joint action.

European Parliament, Brussels, Belgium

Othmar Karas

WHY THIS BOOK?

Europeans no longer tacitly approve of European integration because of its positive effects on welfare and peace in a habitual manner. From the beginning political elites, citizens, media as well as civil society have criticised the European Union (EU), albeit to a different extent. Notably, political parties that are sceptical of the European integration process have become increasingly important over the past years across Europe—at a national and European level.

Europe has seen the rise, but also fall of Eurosceptic parties with nationalistic tendencies gaining further ground, fraying party systems with new parties and movements emerging and disappearing. On the one hand several Eurosceptic parties have taken up national executive responsibilities, have influenced the thinking of mainstream parties, swayed the public discourse with nationalistic, xenophobic, and anti-European rhetoric, and have further increased their number of parliamentarians in national and European parliamentary elections. Across Europe Eurosceptic parties are in government, support governments and successfully compete in parliamentary elections. On the other hand, some Eurosceptic parties never got into government, split up, left governments before the end of the legislative term or lost elections.

This book is an attempt to map and analyse the nature and impact of Euroscepticism in the different European party systems and take note of new nationalistic tendencies. The reason for this particular focus is that political parties are key gatekeepers in the process of political representation. They play a pivotal role in mobilizing societies and in setting the political agenda. In the end, they not only shape politics at a national level,

but determine the way Europe plays out as a political issue and thus, define the very future of European integration.

We have asked authors from the 27 EU Member States as well as from the United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine to assess in short, concise op-eds the following questions: What influence do Eurosceptic parties have and how has it developed over the past years? Did the success of Eurosceptic parties in your country change the government's EU policy stance? If yes, in which areas? The authors take the reader on a journey through various political landscapes and sketch out recommendations on how each country should deal with Euroscepticism in light of the future of European integration. The contributors look at Europe through a decisively national lens precisely because Europe has more national capitals than it has in Brussels these days. Understanding what is happening in the European countries is a precondition to understand the dynamics of European integration.

THE 40 SHADES OF EUROSCEPTICISM ACROSS EUROPE

The manifold contributions reflect the diversity of Europe. Most of the countries display some form of Euroscepticism, notably the following aspects are apparent:

1. Euroscepticism is a longstanding phenomenon. In some countries, such as Austria, Belgium and Sweden Euroscepticism dates back to the early 1980s. While French Euroscepticism goes back to the 1992 referendum on the Maastricht Treaty, the entire political spectrum in Czechia has shifted towards a generalized Euroscepticism over the first 15 years of EU-membership.
2. Euroscepticism is still a recent phenomenon in newer EU member states. Today, Euroscepticism in Czechia is nigh omnipresent— in political debates, in the media and in the broader public sphere. Paradoxically, there are not many Czech parties that would call themselves Eurosceptic and those who would call for a Czexit are even fewer. Yet those who once simply preferred intergovernmental cooperation over federalization are now more or less openly nationalistic. In Croatia, the government's current political volatility is closely linked to a number of emerging new Eurosceptic parties and directly related to the financial and sovereign debt crisis

(mid-2000s) and the migration challenge (mid-2010s). Lately, many Estonians have become tired of being the EU's "poster child". They are afraid of imminent socio-economic changes, most prominently of immigration and migration. Consequently, a previously marginal anti-European populist party, the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), started gaining popularity. EKRE has provided a forum to express this frustration in recent national and European elections.

3. Euroscepticism represents a self-standing cleavage cutting through the left-right divide. For the first time in France, for example, the 2017 Presidential elections were dominated by the European cleavage, dramatically framed by Macron as the confrontation between progressives and nationalists, open and closed society and liberal vs. illiberal democracy.
4. Euroscepticism is running out of steam in other countries. Polling suggests that it is losing ground in Denmark, for example, as the consequences of the UK's vote for Brexit becomes clearer. Pro-European politics have clearly taken the centre stage in the Netherlands and in Cyprus where Euroscepticism is decreasing too.
5. Euroscepticism is often playing with public sentiments and perceptions. As Eurosceptic parties quickly adapt to changes in public opinion a few remarkable exceptions, however, are worth mentioning: the pro-European positions taken by the vast majority of Greek parliamentary parties may misrepresent public opinion, which rather displays pessimism and diminished confidence in the EU. Eurobarometer surveys show that satisfaction with the EU is lowest in Greece. Greeks registered the 4th lowest score on the question of whether their country has overall benefited from being an EU member, the 2nd lowest on the question "my voice counts in the EU", and the 2nd highest percentage of wishing to express disagreement over national politics as the main reason for voting in the recent European Parliament elections. Poland is another example where a right-wing Eurosceptic coalition in power led by Law and Justice (PiS) coexists with one of the most pro-European societies in the European Union. According to recent opinion polls (COBOS 2019), 91 percent of Polish society declares to be positive about EU membership and only 5 percent think that Poland shouldn't be part of the EU.

6. Euroscepticism is (still) not prevalent in all European countries. In fact, four countries hardly display any form of Euroscepticism. Next to Ireland and Lithuania, Latvia has no Eurosceptic political party represented in the national parliament or municipalities. In the May 2019 European Parliament elections, none of the 13 political parties supported leaving the EU. At the same time, recent years have seen the emergence of EU intergovernmentalist positions in opposition to Latvia's traditional EU-federalist position. In addition, the Maltese party system is overwhelmingly Euro-enthusiastic showing some of the highest approval ratings for the EU. While Euroscepticism has been side-lined, nationalistic themes, however, have been gaining ground with the 2019 European elections in Malta, experiencing one of the most negative campaigns in Europe and that focused primarily on patriotism.
7. Euroscepticism occurs on the left and the right side of the political spectrum. With the exception of Austria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, most European countries have experienced right and left-wing Euroscepticism in parallel, while the left focuses their discourse largely on a rejection of the so-called "ultraliberal" Europe. In the 2019 European elections in France, for example, Eurosceptic parties scored up to 36 percent of the vote. Jean-Luc Mélenchon's France Unbowed (LFI) on the far left and Marine Le Pen's National Rally (RN, formerly National Front) on the far right, accounted together for 83 percent of these votes. In Croatia, compared with the results of 2016 national elections the Eurosceptic candidates increased their support during the 2019 European elections by a staggering 18 percent, scoring together more than 35 percent of the combined votes obtained by the Eurosceptic far-right (21.9 percent) and far-left (13.4 percent).
8. The number of Eurosceptic parties in national parliaments varies considerably. In the Netherlands, for example, five out of 13 parties in the Tweede Kamer share a (different) Eurosceptic agenda: the Forum for Democracy' (FvD) and the 'Freedom Party' (PVV), take the staunchest Eurosceptic positions, with the PVV advocating a 'Nexit' and the FvD calling for a membership referendum. The PvdD, SGP and SP propose less ambitious forms of EU cooperation, with the SP arguing to leave the eurozone, the PvdD arguing for a common currency among the Northern-European

- countries and the SGP demanding a judicial mechanism making it possible to leave the eurozone and stay part of the EU.
9. Euroscepticism takes many forms. While some EU-countries (Lithuania and Czechia) have seen the most critical positions on the EU being expressed not by political parties but by political movements, Euroscepticism ranges from a few xenophobic parties, such as for example the Polish KONFEDERACJA or the Spanish VOX, to those demanding an exit strategy, such as the Slovak L'SNS or the Dutch PVV, to other hard and soft forms of Euroscepticism proclaiming more and more to “change Europe from within”.
 10. Euroscepticism in non-EU countries varies significantly too. Talking about Eurosceptic parties in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, for example, requires a serious recalibration of the concept. In comparison with EU Member States, all Swiss and Liechtenstein parties adhere to a hard version of Euroscepticism with no party currently advocating fast and full EU membership. Consequently, all political parties in Liechtenstein and Switzerland are Eurosceptic—some, however, more than others. The Swiss People’s Party SVP and the Liechtenstein DpL are prototypes of the right-wing, nationalist and populist party that have thrived in many of the EU countries. In addition, the vast majority of Icelandic citizens support Iceland’s membership in the European Economic Area (EEA) and Schengen, and there is a cross party consensus on membership in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). However, the political party system is increasingly polarized around European integration. New Eurosceptic and pro-European parties have emerged, which campaign to limit Iceland’s participation in the EEA and Schengen or join the EU. In the countries of the Western Balkans EU integration is considered a process to benefit the whole society, representing freedom and equality for all, and a chance to belong to a large family sharing progressive values. The European perspective has been a powerful engine for change in all six countries over the last two decades. It has become a key motivating factor behind the country’s economic and political reforms. In other countries, populism is intertwined with anti-EU sentiments, but for the Western Balkan, the EU has been for a long time the popular choice. Although at this moment

EU-enlargement fatigue poses real risk of reversing some of the achievements of the accession process.

11. Euroscepticism is in constant flux. In Hungary, for example, there have been substantial shifts on the right wing of the political spectrum. JOBBIK, originally an anti-EU party has started to move towards the centre and has recognized the value added of EU membership, even if criticizing „Brussels interference into domestic issues” in specific policy areas. At the same time, the governing FIDESZ made a turn to the extreme right, mixing Euroscepticism with evident anti-EU attitude and open nationalistic rhetoric. Also, the German AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) has evolved from a Eurosceptic single-issue anti-Euro party in 2008, breaking with Germany’s long-standing permissive consensus on European integration, to a hard version of Euroscepticism and nowadays leading the opposition party in the German Bundestag. In Greece, a new ultra-right nationalist-populist party, Greek Solution, which owes its existence to the nationalist sentiment unleashed in Greek Macedonia against the recognition of the neighbouring Republic of North Macedonia, has succeeded the far-right Golden Dawn, which failed to enter Parliament, as well as the nationalist-populist Independent Greeks (ANEL), a former coalition partner of SYRIZA in government, which scored below the 3 percent threshold.

IMPACT OF EUROSCEPTIC PARTIES

From senior to junior coalition partner in national government to opposition leader and notorious backbenchers, the degrees of impact of Eurosceptic parties vary considerably. Debates across Europe continue whether to embrace or marginalize Eurosceptic parties. For example, in Sweden the political elite wonders whether to include the Sweden Democrats on specific issues without running the risk of being influenced by their lack of respect for certain values. The Left Party, the Social Democrats, the Green Party, the Centre Party and the Liberals are strongly against it, whereas the Christian Democrats and the Moderates seem increasingly positive on the issue of integrating them. So far, no cooperation has yet been initiated at the national level—in contrast to Norway and Finland. In Bulgaria, forms of cooperation have led to an increasing

number of Eurosceptic parties. Forming minority governments in 2009 and 2014, the Bulgarian GERB relied on the tacit support of Attack. This initiated the creeping legitimization of nationalism and Euroscepticism in mainstream politics, with increasing numbers of Eurosceptic parties such as the Patriotic Front—(NFSB and IMRO), entering the parliament in 2014 and a new populist party—WILL, in 2017.

In Austria, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), part of the political landscape for more than 60 years, has been a junior coalition partner three times since the year 2000 with varying impact. Nowadays, it is the only relevant political force pursuing an explicit Eurosceptic agenda but has massively lost support in the latest elections. As junior coalition partner the FPÖ refrained from radical anti-Euro and anti-EU rhetoric in public, in particular during Austria's EU Council Presidency. Yet, the party questioned the legal basis of the infringement procedures against Hungary and promoted the rejection of the UN global migration pact.

In the opposition, the impact of Eurosceptic positions can still be significant. The Danish DPP for instance may have lost votes in recent national and European elections, but it has heavily influenced both the Danish Liberals and Social Democrats, the two largest Danish governing parties, over the past two decades. The Liberals, thus, lost the general election after it was outfoxed by the Social Democrats on taking its immigration policy further to the right and toning down its pro-EU rhetoric. The 'taking in' of the positions of the far right has probably gone further in Denmark than anywhere else in Europe. In Denmark's public discourse it is considered almost absurd to even question the political legitimacy of the far right today.

Also, the reluctance of the French Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls (2014–2017) to welcome refugees can be understood as a consequence of the continuous rise of Marine Le Pen and the radical RN.

Albeit strong tensions and fractions between the political parties in Spain, there has traditionally been a national consensus regarding the value of European integration and the benefits of EU membership. With some of the new parties performing rather well, consensus is becoming more and more fragile. Spain has ceased being a stronghold of pro-European political parties. It is not immune anymore against the rise of Euroscepticism with the very right-wing party Vox having gained close to 15 percent of the vote share in the latest national parliamentary elections making it the third biggest party in the Spanish parliament. The left-wing party Podemos is likely to enter a government coalition and the

proponents of independence in Catalonia will use their regional political weight to gain further autonomy.

The Luxembourgish Eurosceptic ADR's vocal claim that the Luxembourgish language should be reassessed at European level also left its footprint. In light of the recognition of other small European languages such as Irish and Maltese as official EU languages, the Luxembourgish government launched an action plan to promote Luxembourgish as a vehicle of communication (besides the country's two other official languages, French and German) and to make Luxembourgish one of the official languages of the European Union.

In Switzerland the SVP's impact on Switzerland's EU policy is disproportionate to its vote share. Not only has it taken the option of EU membership off the political agenda. The SVP's capacity to campaign successfully on Swiss values such as neutrality, sovereignty and direct democracy against the alleged democratic deficits, foreign judges and power grabs of the EU constrains the institutional deepening of bilateralism. Moreover, the SVP's regular launch of popular votes against the perceived costs of integration—such as immigration or financial contributions to the EU's cohesion policy—polarizes Swiss politics and keeps EU-Swiss relations in a stranglehold.

Clearly, party-based Euroscepticism is part of the political *Landschaft* of most Member States and beyond, and government responses to it throughout Europe is as diverse as civil societies. Eurosceptic parties are by no means in retreat, they are “here to stay” (Treib, 2019). This volume of argumentative, op-ed style short chapters covering 40 European countries highlights this diversity. Eurosceptic parties might not always be strong enough to enter governments or remain in government for a full period, but their views increasingly enter mainstream politics.

HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS PARTY POLITICAL EUROSCEPTICISM IN LIGHT OF THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION?

There is a clear need for focusing on the main social drivers of Euroscepticism: unemployment, socioeconomic vulnerability, climate change and widespread insecurities, morphing into not just anti-EU sentiment but anti-immigrant and xenophobic stances. Without a credible re-invention of Europe's priorities addressing those issues such negative stances will persist and represent an ever-bigger challenge for the European

integration project and its liberal values. Governments across the continent have the obligation to define objectives that reach beyond the electoral cycle. Europe has served them all incredibly well, what it needs now is a spelling out of a captivating vision of the future. It matters less if this vision is federalist or intergovernmentalist. What matters is that it recognises the value of cooperation, the advantage of many years of trust building amongst neighbours bound together by not only geography but also heritage and values. There is a need for a genuine public debate on the pros and cons of further European integration which has been less pronounced in the last decade. This would foster awareness of the degree of integration that has already reached and the benefits it harbours. There is a need to include the demands and visions of the younger generation to a much higher degree. For those ideas to be productive, they need to be built on a better understanding of Europe's past.

It is essential to continue strengthening bilateral relations with non-EU countries and to maintain a clear EU perspective. In the Western Balkans, in particular, the EU can extract further benefits from deepening this alliance by keeping the enlargement perspective open and by pushing through a reform agenda that makes the region more attractive for EU investors. Anything short of a strong EU-presence will jeopardise the reforms, the countries' democratic future, and create a vacuum that will be exploited by anti-reformist and anti-EU forces. In Turkey, despite the political situation, the EU should engage with those parts of Turkish civil society, which still strive for democratic governance.

After all this volume talks to an audience beyond the normal academic niche interested in European politics. It is a guidebook through a tremendously dynamic, interesting and challenging political landscape. And as a guidebook it favours the lexical purpose as much as the comprehensive comparative reading. Students and teachers may find a myriad of questions to explore deeper in seminar papers and theses. Practitioners will benefit from the overview it presents. And for all of us it shows the breath-taking diversity that unites this continent.

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Michael Kaeding
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