The Rise of Populism and Extremist Parties in Europe

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Table of contents

PART 1.
The irresistible attraction of populism in Europe

POINT OF VIEW
Isabelle DURANT, Daniel COHN-BENDIT, Martin HIRSCH 2

PART 2.
Is Europe powerless?

ANALYSIS
Michel HASTINGS 8
Nicolas LEVRAT 16
Gerassimos MOSCHONAS 20
Takis PAPPAS 28

Conclusions
The rise in Populism demands a more radical Europe

34

Biographies
42
Today the risk of widespread populism is a reality in Europe and could rapidly become a durable force. Today it is still probably manageable but could spiral out of control. It is the way Europe works that contributes to this rise in populism alongside the social and economic context and the specific agendas of each individual member state. But on the other hand, couldn’t Europe be the motor for fighting and defeating this trend? This is the key issue with difficulties ahead. We need a European vision which encourages member states to fight against whatever it is that feeds populism and these “arrangements” with democratic practices that influence private interests over the general interest. We need initiatives that give a solid meaning to the concept of what European citizenship is; a space that gives real weight to civil society; a strong capacity for decision-making with none of the inertia of compromise. We have to prove that a better organized Europe can improve the daily lives of European citizens. All this justifies a strong mobilization in the coming months.

So how do we respond to the rise of populism and to the success of extremist parties in Europe? Several findings and research factors have helped us to determine seven observations inspired by the European political context. These remarks have been subject to critical analysis from different scholars. Outside a purely strict study of the phenomenon of populism, contributors have outlined avenues of research for ways and means of addressing the risk that these populist tendencies are having on our continent.

1. FIRST OBSERVATION: THE GROWING ELECTORAL SUCCESS OF EXTREMIST PARTIES IN EUROPE

The latest polls reflect the tenacity of extremist populist parties and the popularized ideology on the political scene in Europe. Since the 1980s, Europe has witnessed the emergence of populist national forces; in 1984, the
National Front won 11% of the vote in the European elections in France; in 2010, Bossi’s Northern League in Italy strengthened its position in regional elections with 12.7% of votes; in Austria, the Freedom Party candidate Barbara Rosenkranz, came second in the presidential election of 24 April 2010; in the same year the Hungarian Jobbik party made a breakthrough and came third in the elections with 16.7% of the vote; in Greece, the neo-Nazi “Golden Dawn” party made its debut in the Greek Parliament after the parliamentary elections of May 2012.

How can we explain the rise of these parties which were marginalized before and which have now become part of the political scene?

2. SECOND OBSERVATION: THE MAJOR EUROPEAN HISTORICAL PARTIES ARE LOSING VOTES

Beyond the question of populism and the rise of extremism, the people are apparently no longer following the major European political families. The low turnout has become a real European disease. Since the fall of communism, the turnout in Romania for each election has weakened by 10%; the abstention rate in Hungary reached 45% in the second round of the parliamentary elections in 2010. Reflecting the current trend in Europe, participation is also declining in Germany: the 82.2% in the 1998 Bundestag elections fell to 70.78% in the last federal election of 2009, with an abstention rate increasing from 17.8% to 29.22%. It is the same trend in Austria, where voter turnout for the presidential election was 96.9% in 1951 against only 53% in 2010.

How can we explain the loss of public confidence in the political discourse of the major European political families? (Socialists, Social Democrats, Greens, Liberals, Christian Democrats ...)? Do the historical parties have room to manoeuvre in order to regain votes and counter extremist parties?

3. THIRD OBSERVATION: RIGHT-WING AND LEFT-WING POPULISM

The different populist movements all defend our living standards which they claim are threatened by globalization and the international financial system, playing the exacerbated opposition base against the elite. The economic and financial crisis reinforces the anti-European arguments by accusing the European elite of complicity with globalization, or by stigmatizing “technocrats” who, they claim, are under the command of international capitalism whose objective is to relay its ideological and political message and policy. This anti-globalization, anti-capitalist and anti-European rhetoric is widely present in the discourse of extremist parties, from the right-wing nationalist parties to the extreme left anti-capitalist parties. But is there a left-wing populism? What are the similarities with the right-wing populism? How does one respond to this rhetoric?

4. FOURTH OBSERVATION: THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CRISIS IN THE RISE OF POPULISM

The consequences of the economic crisis and the governance of the European Union are frequently criticized as unsustainable leading to the anxiety and disquiet felt by those citizens hardest hit. The current crisis, however, is not enough to explain the rise of the populist movement. Putting aside the economic factor, the rise in populism re-
reflects the profound rejection of our society model which due to the globalization process disrupts both our living environment, the configuration of European companies and world governance. The framework of the nation state no longer reflects the level of power and national public policies seem powerless against the global crisis. The national-populism movement claims that the EU is guilty of wanting to replace the nation state by imposing new rules of “austerity” in times of crisis. Is the crisis the sole cause of the rise of national populism? Would the return to growth bring about the disappearance of populist parties? Is the crisis indicative of pre-existing xenophobic nationalist reflexes which are the result of the current national-populist movement?

5. FIFTH OBSERVATION: NATIONAL IDENTITY, SENTIMENT OF BELONGING AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION

Populist movements waver between a demonized view of the European project and a discourse that resonates with the concerns of citizens on the crisis and on the changes in the nation-state within an integrated Europe. Since 1992, populism sees the European political project as an integrationist and perilous enterprise for the nation which will be crushed by a federal structure that has no soul.

When speaking of national space which is considered to be protective and nurturing, the populist discourse refuses to give credit to the European Union and thereby refuses to admit that it could be a reference to a space identity at the expense of ‘the nation’. So the European Union has a very low political identification power which hardly gives rise to a collective identity. The issue of the European Union’s external borders makes it an even more complicated debate as collective membership could not do without a specific territory. So how can the European Union win the support of citizens and recreate a European imagination which assumes a common identity without denying the local and cultural particularities of its citizens? How can we promote European identity and belonging against the excesses of the national-populist movement?

6. SIXTH OBSERVATION: DEMOCRATIC SHORTCOMINGS OF THE UNION

The European institutions are widely castigated by populist parties which consider them to be distant, technocratic and undemocratic. This criticism comes from the current ambivalence between an integrated union which is of a federal character and an international organization where decisions are made in the secrecy of the chancelleries. EU citizens do not feel politically involved in the decision-making process of the European Union which explains the lack of interest that these institutions generate. The results of a Euro-barometer survey conducted a few months before the European elections in June 2009 proved this factor: 62% of respondents did not know the dates of the next European elections, and 53% declared they were not interested in them. In fact, Europeans know very little about the functioning of the institutions. Asked whether members of Parliament are directly elected by its citizens, only 53% of Europeans replied in the affirmative, 36% believe that MEPs sit by nationality and 20% believe that each member state has the same number of MEPs.
Must the European Union become a real parliamentary democracy integrating European political parties in order to win the support of its citizens and fight populism? How can the emergence of a transnational civil society become a reality in contrast to the nationalist reflexes? Is the European Union in a position to initiate a transnational democracy?

7. SEVENTH OBSERVATION: THE TRADITIONAL MODERATE PARTIES APPROPRIATE THE POPULIST DISCOURSE

Populist themes are spreading through many discourses and practices of traditional political currents by what we could call capillary action. Is it a way to climb on the bandwagon in order to marginalize the influence of populist parties or is it a sign of an alarming radicalization of public opinion to which the traditionally moderate parties are trying to respond?
Is Europe powerless?

How can we understand this upsurge in populism?
The Success of Extremist Parties in Europe

How can populism/national populism be defined in Europe today?

The term populism first of all poses more problems than it solves: it refers historically to diverse experiences and its use is now saturated with standard-setting judgments. It is considered to be a negative term in the media and in the political and academic arena. But the effects this has on the populist movement should not be underestimated and the increasing belief that there is a growing condescendence from the elite circles.

An understanding of populism cannot just be reduced to partisan terms and to political leaders, this is only the tip of the iceberg. Populism must also be studied as a set of values, arguments, opinions, not always expressed publicly, not always leading to an extremist vote, but which is seen as a reference to citizens’ immediate environment. Besides populism being an ‘institution’ which is widely studied, there is a populism seen as a real ‘conviction’, something that has ‘meaning’, albeit less obvious, and this must not obscure its current popularity.

Following the broad lines of the two previous points, populism today cannot only refer to the “shameful margins” of society, those that are usually built on the absence of clarity in indicators: lack of financial resources, lack of educational capital, lack of capacity to adapt to the demands of mobility, low socio-professional insertion, etc. Sociological surveys show that the middle and upper classes in European society are equally won over by populist ideas. Similarly, populism is a ‘style’ that more and more government party leaders adopt. Populism is not only ‘popular support’.

Analysis by Michel Hastings

Michel Hastings

After studying law and history, Michel Hastings received the aggregation of Political Science, he is currently University Professor at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Lille (France).
It is no longer possible to raise the issue of populism by confining it to the phenomena of local idiosyncrasies, to the old-fashioned ways which progress and Europeanization have swept away or to the extremist upsurges in times of crisis. Populism is not an anachronism or a sudden outbreak of opposition, but probably a manifestation of what is likely to continue in time, which is related to the current state of liberal democracy and to the changes in our contemporary societies (political practices, socio-cultural transformations, etc.).

The term ‘political extremism’ is not, after all, enough to define populism. Besides its vagueness and its underlying prejudice it may even be wrong for two main reasons: firstly, because individuals who have populist opinions do not rank themselves within the extreme left-right spectrum as shown in sociological surveys; secondly and especially because the organizations and leaders whom we tend to characterize as populist, in fact, adhere to strict democratic rules, without any justification for violence and furthermore, distance themselves from any form of extremism. In fact, it is via democratic procedures that populism derives much of its success.

Proposed definition: Populism is a political style which is a source for change based on the systematic use of rhetorical appeal to the people. In its discursive form, it is characterized by a programmatic minimalism but with a great symbolic plasticity which makes it a vector conducive to forge multiple and even heterogeneous indignations (ethno-cultural, anti-tax, anti-elitist, Eurosceptics, etc.). In its institutional form, populism includes partisan groups who intend to translate these empty statements into political regeneration projects by mobilizing the imagination of a virtuous people, who symbolizes the last repository of national values, ready to follow a strong leader who embodies the axioms of transparency, proximity, similarity and truthfulness.

How have these extremist parties which were previously marginalized become acceptable on the European political scene?

Acceptable populist parties that have emerged over the past twenty years and managed to strengthen their positions are those who have succeeded in two ways: through a process of de-marginalization (no longer part of the partisan system) and through an institutionalization process (firm anchorage in a partisan form).

This double movement is the result of several factors specific to the internal dynamics of these parties and to the change in their political and social environments:

- the dynamics of modernization that has transformed the former fascist extremist parties into politically acceptable entities: the change in leadership, the change in actions, the change in insinuating speech tactics and investment in communicative skills.
- an ideological and programmatic flexibility, behind some well identified invariants that function as stable reference points, and which allows them to embrace the evolution of ‘problems’, to adapt to new challenges and to respond to the situation. This is the general trend in European political parties towards the “grab-all” party type which has boosted populist formations.
- becoming “de-marginalized” is also the result of different media and political logic (exploitation, recuperation, ritual denunciation), and these effects, whether intended
or not, have led to a normalization of an acceptable populism.
- an increased feeling shared by European citizens that, over the past years, government parties have only proposed alternatives with no concrete changes and that the “real issues” have not been tackled. In other words, populist parties present themselves as the new political entrepreneurs
- avid to enter a political market they say is blocked
- seeking to politicize new issues they say are neglected,
- formulating simplistic and divisive proposals which they say are denied them,
- using a transgressive rhetoric which they say is unjustly despised.

How have these parties managed to seduce the electorate while traditional parties have lost momentum?
The answer is in the question! It is because the traditional parties no longer, or hardly, fulfil their triple historical function: programmatically through a meaningful programme for specific social groups; socially by implementing social policies which will contribute to the social and political integration of vulnerable social groups; and mobilizing the electorate which entails driving citizens to militant actions. It is the profound change that has occurred within the traditional parties over the past thirty years that has left the door open to populist groups. Today the ‘historical’ parties count more on the elected few rather than on the activists, on the financial state subsidies rather than on membership fees, and on the conventional practices of government rather than on the culture of opposition and critical proposals. The role of traditional political parties is restricted to selecting national and local ruling elites.

Populism thrives on this feeling that partisan politics have gone, in other words, on the impression that politicians are more concerned with reducing the sources of conflict (ideological and / or social) rather than encouraging differences and adversities which nevertheless, reflect democratic pluralism. This is the void left by the ‘bankruptcy’ of political parties in their historical function of carrying social cleavages, be it cultural and ideological, and which has propelled populism to the forefront.

So Populism, which can be considered sometimes to be inept or excessive, is the call to order of partisan democracy: the democracy that embodies the tension of opposites, the difference in ideas and clear alternatives. The success of populism is the call to real politics, politics where governments are no longer just administrations. Populism in this sense is a symptom of the change in the political engagement where there is less room for dissent and ideological struggle which is constituent of collective identities.

THE MAJOR HISTORICAL EUROPEAN PARTIES ARE LOSING MOMENTUM

Is the electoral rise of the populist parties a real success or are they thriving on the increase of abstention?
Abstention is another symptom of the current disappointment in representative democracy. It is another way of saying that the game is not worth it and that the electoral act is not the solution to change because political change does not bring about different policies. There are two ways to express these frustrations:
- either by an “exit” from the political game, renouncing a system in which we no longer
believe (abstention)
- or with a critical “voice” and the commitment to oust from politics those who are accused of being responsible for its shortcomings.

It is true that where the electoral geography records a high abstention rate, it is also tempting ground for populist formations. But the correlation is not perfect. The presence of compulsory voting in a country is not a guarantee against the rise in populism.

**How can citizens’ loss of confidence be explained with regard to the major European parties?**

We can assume that the origin and the embedding of populism in our European societies are at the heart of the changes in the “way of doing politics” which seemingly characterizes the exercise of power in contemporary democracies. Under the auspices of the dominant liberal conceptions, two constitutive principles of the democratic ideal have gradually disappeared and even lost all value: the reference to popular sovereignty and the resolutely combative nature of politics.

At national and European level, taking decisions on issues that makes life common to all seems to increasingly escape people’s actual understanding of “citizen participation”. This is the case for referendums; one no longer expects the sovereign word from the people but rather the ratification of policies already decided; the same goes for a global rhetoric system which deals with political problems through language and categories that leave no room for alternatives and are decided on in the absence of any expression of popular sovereignty. To govern today is to refuse conflict which is part of politics; it is a way to delegitimize confrontation and consider consensus as democratic progress.

Whereas it seems to me that the current rise of populism thrives on this double sense of dispossession; not to be listened to as a sovereign people, not to be listened to if in opposition to the elite who imposes their own consensus, increasingly interpreted as the effects of censorship. “Good governance” is the magic formula for this liberal consensus. It predicts the “end of politics” which today characterizes the discourse and practices of national and European policies: ideological and decision–making consensus, rallying the major government parties to “politics without adversary” and to “non-partisan democracy”, to depoliticize the way to resolve conflicts in favour of law and expertise, fetishism of impartial solutions, etc. These seem to me to be the main neoliberal elements which now affect the political career and which predict an emerging political field completely devitalized, where antagonisms must be eradicated. But it is exactly the inherent conflictual aspect of politics which allows for the creation of distinctive identities and for the opening out to other possibilities.

Populism can therefore be regarded as a demand for politicization on the part of the people. They feel a growing sense of being excluded from the effective exercise of democratic citizenship by remote elites who do not advance any alternative, who govern by diktat giving the impression that the voice of the ordinary people is not worth hearing. Populism can also be understood as an ever-growing accumulation of frustration and resentment towards a new way of governance of liberal democracies which seem to promote a new era for the dismantling of the right/left, them/
us opposition and yet source of a pluralistic ideal in favour of a moralistic conception of politics. The populist discourse subverts the existing form of politics by forging enemies (foreigners, the Muslims, the rich, the elite) rather than adversaries, and they stand for the active and virtuous people, denouncing the ‘lies’ of the politico-media class. We must therefore understand populism as an effort to reclaim politics from the transgression of an order that seems frozen and powerless. Where the public sphere of politics (and the media) produces and appears to impose legitimate discourse on immigration, on the economic and social crisis, on social issues, etc., by denying any form of discussion, the populist language embodies a kind of alienation, a form of pleasurable release that hears the opposite by showing that there is a contradiction, while formally activating the original ideals of democracy. Populists want to re-engage with discussion, exactly where a certain political neo-liberal moralism forbids it!

The emergence of populist groups in Europe comes from the contraction of the political space. It correlates with the rise of consensual culture which defines public interest as an objective alliance between political oligarchies, economic oligarchies, official experts and Parisian editors. Populism, in its own way, reflects the rejection of the confiscation of politics. The populist distrust relates to the feeling (and many indicators correlate this point) of some kind of collusion between various elites who are determined to confiscate political truth, to justify decisions as inevitable and without choice, and to denigrate any contradictory expression. So populism expresses a reaction against the despised sacred union which is apparently the administration of social affairs. Populism is therefore in the wake of demands for recognition which have proliferated in recent years in modern democracies, and feeds on the resentment generated by the effects of censorship and moral attitudes.

What flexibility do the historical parties have to regain voters and counter extremist parties?

In our opinion, it is clear that the response to populism is not a stigmatizing morality. This only reinforces the feeling of conspiracy against the people on which the populist sentiment feeds. With the overwhelming influence of economic and moralist approaches which hinder the recognition of antagonism, therefore pluralisms, it is preferable that the professional politicians re-define and re-specify politics. The virtues of politics lie within a reasonable ‘conflictuality’ which reminds us that the horizons of the meaning of public action are never universally shared, and there is no final truth in politics.

Responding to populism is not automatically blurring the boundaries between right and left, it is not systematically denying identity distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’, it is not hypocritically stigmatizing uncomfortable words. On the contrary, it is recognizing that the divisions, far from tearing apart the social fabric, in fact feed it and help build around it, in a given society, the distribution of material and symbolic goods. Making politics is no longer hide and divide. And we must add that in those countries in question, efforts for the moralization of public life must be made (prohibition of overlapping of mandates, transparency of salaries, etc.).
RIGHT-WING POPULISM OR LEFT-WING POPULISM?

Is there a left-wing populism? Its analogies with the right? How to counter this rhetoric?

From the historical and geopolitical stand, South American populism adopts “leftist” connotations, borrowing a national-revolutionary and separatist rhetoric, focusing on the virtues of indigenousness, etc. Look at Morales or Chavez. In Europe, the populist discourse also exists in training sessions or with political leaders who are usually considered to be on the left of the political spectrum. In August 2010, Thilo Sarrazin, member of the SPD, published a sensational paper, “Deutschland schafft sich ab” (‘Germany is doomed’); it was the British Labour Party who proposed the slogan ‘British Jobs for British Workers’ in 2007; Pim Fortuyn and Oriana Fallaci were originally on the left. In France, Mélenchon takes full responsibility for his populism and draws greater legitimacy from this stand. His book ‘Let them all go’, adopts a classic populist slogan ‘Out with the outgoing’.

This blurring of the left-right axis shows that populism is primarily a style rather than solid content. There is a lot of rhetoric, a strong Manicheism approach and the same attention to pinpoint the guilty. However, there is a key difference in that left-wing populism tends to make enemies within the class struggle (big against little, rich against poor), while right-wing populism often combines an ethno-cultural or even a racial divide.

THE ROLE OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CRISIS IN THE RISE OF POPULISM

Is the crisis the sole cause of the rise in national-populism? Would the return to growth mean the end of populist parties?

The economic and social crisis cannot be held solely responsible for the rise of populism. Nevertheless, it is the ideal ground for concerns and frustrations and therefore an accelerator for populist particles! Furthermore it is a formidable testing ground for the practices of consensus politics. Indeed, decisions taken in the name of fighting the crisis illustrate the democratic deficit which the populists complain about: solutions presented as inevitable and painful, lack of choice, rejection of any alternative, lack of necessary consultation or guidance for citizens, the impression of control from the top and a denial of popular sovereignty, etc. Political crises are indicative rather than sources of populism.

The question of the origins of the rise of populism is to be found in a combination of factors related primarily to major changes going on throughout Western societies: the crisis of the historical model of representative democracy, the crisis of the historical model of the nation-state, the crisis of integrating socio-cultural diversity, changes in the media and in journalism, etc. So it is likely that populism is the expression of movements affecting the historic structures of our modern Western societies, bringing about a transition to new socio-political configurations.
NATIONAL IDENTITY, BELONGING AND IDENTIFICATION WITH EUROPEAN POLITICS

How can the EU recreate a European imagination without refuting local and cultural characteristics?
I am not convinced that the European response to populism is in promoting a European collective imagination. This will not happen by decree but probably by a very long socialization process. It would also be better that national politicians and national media ‘denationalize’ their behaviour and speech. The information we receive, even when talking of European affairs, is translated and reinterpreted into national languages through patriotic analyses. Much more than a European imagination, it is a real Europeanization of public power that will provide a shield against populism, especially a strong integration of social and educational policies.

Which European identity should be promoted?
The European Union, as a global area of peace, freedom and human rights, is now completely taken for granted and therefore, it no longer inspires the younger generations. The European identity must now open up to new projects and write a new story, inventing a new exciting mythology for the European frontier. It is, of course, the new social Europe that we need, which is disappearing behind the financial Europe. We need a new Europe which will repatriate key issues of long-standing concern and which will be at the heart of the debate. This is the ‘us’ of the social question seen through the prism of the current crisis that must become the new European identity mutually supportive of one and all. In the absence of such an objective, populism, especially right-wing, will succeed in imposing its culturalist definition of ‘us’ and therefore its exclusive conception of ‘identity’.

DEMOCRATIC DEFICIENCIES IN THE EU

Must the EU become a truly parliamentary democracy?
To become a real parliamentary democracy, the EU must first simplify its ‘mapping policy’, in other words, it must get rid of the confusion in having different places for decision making and policy responsibility. European populism feeds on the illegibility of the EU political system. The EU must then give to Parliament and its representatives an institutional role consistent with democratic requirements (more debates, strengthened political control, better publicity and media coverage of parliamentary proceedings, etc.). It is regrettable that national candidates to the European Parliament are too often professionals who are not well known on the national or European level. European populism feeds on invisibility and inaudibility in the European Parliament, especially in times of crisis when decisions are seemingly appropriated by executive and administrative bodies.
Finally and most importantly, the European institutions must come back to practising real politics, so essential for democracy. The impression is that the European Parliament decides on public policies without real policy-making which results in laborious compromises and thus gives an impression of stagnation. As we have already said, European populism feeds on a desire to turn policy decision-making into conflict and to categorize it via majority logic.
How can a transnational civil society emerge?
Firstly by actively proving that it exists! And thereafter, by multiplying every opportunity to ask questions via referendum or participatory methods. Finally, we must give more visibility and power to the institutions and spokespersons (unions, interest groups, European parties).

The role and responsibility of the media
The internal changes in the media and the populist affirmations should be more systematically related. Today, journalism and the production and circulation of information is changing dramatically which also corresponds to the generalisation of neoliberalism’s demands: urgent dictatorship, distorting and exaggerating information, moralizing and criticizing in the name of individual judgment, using devious means to create controversy, rhetoric overreaction, etc. So there is a link or even complicity, between populism and the media world.

On the one hand, populism is regularly denounced as political perversion and yet, on the other hand, the spectacular performance of its tribunes is accepted as being a way to present information “close to the people.” Furthermore, both populism and media work on mobilizing collective emotions.

THE MODERATE PARTIES APPROPRIATE THE POPULIST LANGUAGE

A few years ago in France, we talked of the “lepenization of minds” to describe the spread of the National Front’s ideas beyond its own electorate. Today, it has become clear that the populist rhetoric and its strategies for politicizing issues that divide and the way it plays the card of transgression in the public debate, has been appropriated by the moderate parties, especially those whose voters are likely to be seduced by the populist arguments. One example among many is when politicians declare that they are talking “with no taboos,” and who claim they have no problems with the issues they raise. This rhetoric convinces the public that the politicians are being honest with the people. It is, we believe, one of the central elements of the populist discourse which does violence to politics and, at the same time, confuses the freedom to say anything with the ability to do anything. The appeal of populism to citizens and to leaders of moderate parties is this feeling of rupture and an anti-establishment capacity to protest against the current political system in the very name of what the latter should be representing, that is, the people. The ambiguity of populist rhetoric is in its way of re-using a number of the founding ideals of democratic legitimacy: restoring the magic of the sovereignty of the people and the misuse of the ethical values of the Resistance, of Human Rights or of secularism (in France). All become conquest tools for the populists.

Populism gives itself the means and resources to remain within the democratic framework, even if many of its imaginary elements project it to authoritarian horizons.
Analysis by Nicolas Levrat

In response to the document “the rise of populism and of extremist parties in Europe” prepared for the Berlin meeting of December 1-2 2012, I intend to deal comprehensively and concisely with the two issues set out in the Foreword: to identify the vulnerabilities of the European model and to present recommendations (actually, one single flaw and one recommendation in this brief contribution). In my opinion, a major flaw of the “European model” explains the current rise of national populism (please note, there is no European populism ....). Consequently, let me suggest a path, which, in my opinion, deserves exploration.

1. STATEMENT

European integration, ensuring peace between European countries, as it has recently and rightly been recognised by the Nobel Committee, threatens civil peace that has prevailed in each (national) community of the EU Member States. Indeed, the State, as an independent political community, was the place where conflicts of interest were mediated; conflicts between social (left / right) groups or between membership groups, language (Belgium) or “national” (Spain and UK). The state framework, around which the traditional political parties are structured, is no longer a credible space for political action: it is difficult for traditional political parties to gather support for their discourse because it can no longer be acted upon, as the decisions in many areas are no longer taken at state level. In these circumstances, the discourse of populist parties, left or right, separatist or autonomist becomes credible and even more reassuring with their solutions recalling a time when the state (whether the Historical State or a new more “homogeneous” state - Catalonia, Scotland, Flanders) was able to bring its own solutions. This is why the populist discourse, which uses
the people’s legitimate concern about the weakening of the political capacity of European states, is effective against the national government parties’ words which are losing credibility.

How is Europe to be blamed for this change? The Monnet method allowed for a “de facto solidarity” for the economic interests located in different State parties adhering to the integration project, and thus weakening the bond of nationality in order to avoid the resurgence of extreme nationalism. This has made member states powerless with regard to redistribution policies. Without going into detail, the economic integration of Europe allows private economic interests (and thus indirectly, the resources they generate for the community such as jobs and tax contributions), to be located anywhere on European territory. The emancipation of the national economy (in order to avoid the congruence of political and economic interests which thereafter led to the wars of the first half of the twentieth century) no longer allows for states to arbitrate between different social demands within their territory. Therefore, the foundations of the national social equilibrium (method of taxation allowing for public policies, particularly redistribution) are seriously shaken. As shown by the “financial markets”, the EU (or more exactly in this case the Euro zone) has created a free trade economic zone, but not an area of economic governance, which should above all include the capacity to maintain social and territorial balance through redistribution! In an article published in the magazine Esprit in October 2002, Pierre Rosanvallon linked the “European democratic deficit” to the weak capacity of redistribution of the EU. He compares national solidarity (between 30% and 60% of GDP in public contributions) to the redistributive capacity of the EU (1% of GDP). This, he approximated to a minimum humanity solidarity (the 0.7% development aid claimed for decades in the framework of the UN) and not to a national type of solidarity.

In conclusion, the flaw of the European model that allows for a new populist force is this discrepancy between the European Economic Area, and social and political spaces which remain national, but with devalued substance. Consequently, national policies, and those who embody them, namely governmental political parties, are left powerless. At the same time, the European institutions have not been granted the political capacity to address the legitimate concerns of citizens. So there is a general weakening of politics in the European model, with collateral damage in the form of the governmental political parties. Populism is thus rising by default.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Given this situation, two options seem possible. I personally recommend the second one.

The first obvious option is to increase the material capacities and abilities of redistribution at European level and to develop the intra-European solidarity to a level similar to that which was known at national level (to establish a European social state). This implies a major increase in the EU budget (I do not mean to double the EU budget, but multiply it by 10 or 15 times at least), no longer based on contributions from member states, but on a fiscal power exercised and politically assumed by the European institutions (firstly, the EP). This would resuscitate the
“no taxation without representation” more than two centuries after the Boston revolt. It would then be a matter of recreating the national model at the continental level, and of transferring the place of political balance (and therefore politics) to the European level (where the European populism, as I have already said, is not very present). This would definitely weaken the European states, and by extension those who already thrive on their downfall (national-populists). This is a possible solution, but I think this idea is currently inappropriate for two reasons. Firstly, (and the debates in Germany about Greece, or in Catalonia in relation to Spain demonstrate this) EU citizens are not ready for more solidarity. To engage in this political struggle in the current circumstances seems too risky, and the populists and nationalists could well emerge victorious, with consequences that I dare not think about. Secondly, because of the globalization process, presumably irreversible for technological reasons, does not seem sustainable. Globalisation exerts pressure on the ability of the EU to maintain balance among its members in the same way that European integration does on national balance.

The second option, to which I would give priority, is to revive European federalism. Federalism is primarily a political model in order to preserve the diversity and particularities of different groups within the Federation, through strong federate institutions (Länder, communities, regions, cantons,) within one single political community. So the capacity of action of both the European institutions and the European states must simultaneously be strengthened within the EU. Since the mid-sixties, the European federalists have allowed the propagation of a false equation: European federalism = strong centralized institutionalization of the EU! This is not the essence of federalism! The European Union must, following a well-understood subsidiarity, allow and favour state political areas (“national”) within a common European Federation, and not simply build more powerful European institutions at the expense of national institutions (the mechanism of the European semester is an eloquent example of this flaw). From this point of view, Switzerland, where I come from, or Germany that has successfully integrated the former GDR without major damage to its economic and political system seem interesting examples to analyse in their “balancing act”. To give back to member states their capacity for autonomous political action without dismantling European integration seems more feasible than the creation of the European state. Moreover, it would allow traditional political parties (national) to regain credibility and to push back the populist advance. These national political parties would form part of the European federations of political parties, as is the case for federal states. This is not about weakening the European institutions, but mainly about revising certain “dogmas” which were central in the development of integration, but that now prove counterproductive in an established EU; such as the absolute primacy of EU law over national laws, which made sense for a fair and effective liberalisation of economic trade, but does not make sense anymore for developing public policies based on public choice, as was shown by the German political scientist Fritz Scharpf in 2000. Furthermore, this option (better than the first) would allow for finding dynamic and progressive solutions to the current risk of collapse of the EU which the first option would unfortunately almost certainly produce.
Obviously, I do not pretend that this option for reviving European federalism will take an easy course; it just seems more realistic and sustainable. But it entails, I agree, a Copernican revolution of federalist thinking and discourse on European integration. I submit this to discussion, not forgetting that this brings the federalist address back to a classic notion of the Federation.
Analysis by Gerassimos Moschonas

The ‘broken equilibrium’ in European politics:

THE EUROPE FACTOR AND THE WEAKENING OF MAINSTREAM PARTIES
with an emphasis on centre-left and radical Left parties

“Politics in the end is the art of solving substantive problems”.

Europe is undergoing a major upheaval and, at the same time, a gentle, slow and silent institutional revolution. The European Union is one of the most imaginative creations of institutional and political engineering. And just as parties have historically developed in the wake of major institutional changes (e.g. the advent of universal suffrage or the parliamentarisation of former authoritarian states), so today the unprecedented character of the EU has a significant impact on the party phenomenon and party conflict.

In the framework of the classical nation-state the limited

1 In this document bibliographical references are “minimal”. The paper is part of the Research Programme ‘Designing & Operating an Infrastructure for the Empirical Inquiry of Political & Social Radicalism in Greece’ (co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and Greek national funds).
number of power centres and political actors, as well as the less constraining influence of ‘external’ factors, has made it easier to formulate and implement a national strategy. By contrast, the European ‘transnational’ terrain, while not chaotic, is structured very differently. The centres of authority and the (institutional and political) actors are very numerous; their ideological repertoires are heteroclite; and the logics of actions often diverge. The distribution of power centres is such that, between the Council, the Commission, the European Parliament, the European Central Bank, national governments and administrations, strengthened local instances and independent authorities, the cohesion of the system of power (conceived here as a single macro-institutional system, comprising both powers at EU level and national) is weak.

And the outcome of all this? The formulation and implementation of a strategy of ambitious reforms has become very difficult. The institutional reality of the EU is a sizeable obstacle in the path of all actors (national states, left-wing parties, populist right-wing parties, anti-globalization or alternative globalization movements, federalist and anti-federalist associations etc.) aspiring to achieve policy or regime change in the EU. All these actors find themselves facing a difficult problem of collective action and coordination. This problem is strategic in a twofold sense: in the European system there is no Winter Palace to occupy or surround (a political system factor); and there is no royal road for prompting and coordinating the mobilization of national actors with highly diverse sensibilities, cultures and interests (an agency factor). Europe has brought about a radical change in the environment and structure of political opportunities.

Following the great reforms of the 1985-99 period, the European Union became a heavy and imposing political machine. Analyses that only examine Europe’s ‘liberalism’ underestimate the fact that the Community’s model of political economy is fundamentally two-fold: produced both by liberalisation and by a certain (uneven, fragmented and minimal) kind of federalism. Europe is notable for a remarkable concentration of powers in certain sectors — monetary policy and structural policies are two examples of quasi-State policies. Thus, European integration is the still incomplete product of two almost simultaneous building processes that reinforce one another: the building of Europe through the market and the building of a political Europe. Paradoxically, despite social-democratic and euro-communist aspirations (political Europe as a counter-weight to the market), the politicisation of integration (through a dense, rigid institutional apparatus) consolidated and solidified the liberalisation of Europe. It was the building of a political Europe that gave liberal economic solutions a long-term advantage. Such was the major irony – and unanticipated ruse – of the politicisation of the process.

European integration calls into question three closely related aspects of party activity and influence: (a) the ability of political parties to harmonize the institutional system and hence their problem-solving capacity; (b) the programmatic freedom of political parties and the conventional left-right divide; and (c) the strategic flexibility of mainstream parties.

I. THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK: POLYCENTRIC REGIME AND THE WEAKENING OF THE MAINSTREAM PARTIES

The weakening of the problem-solving capacity of parties in government:
the institutional and political setting has dramatically changed. One aspect of this change is critical. Progressively, the dynamic of Europe has significantly reduced the space allotted to the forces of the nation and to national governments. Ironically, the great transfer of authority unleashed by the Community renaissance has generated a framework of weakened dual power: a simultaneous power deficit both at the national and European level. In a sense, as Cramme aptly notices, “half-way federalisation has brought the worst of both worlds to the fore”3. This double discrepancy differentiates the EU fundamentally from the United States, in that the structure of the European system does not embody a centralizing logic comparable to the dynamic of American federalism. If globalization has weakened overall the core component of what might be called “governance”, the dual deficit in question is specifically European. It is in a way the direct product of the renaissance of Europe and undoubtedly deprives all parties in government of some of their influence (this especially applies in the case of the social-democratic parties, which have traditionally pushed “national power” as the principal lever of their political action).

The double power deficit, the multiplicity of power centres and the superimposition of decision-making levels short-circuit the unity of the decision-making process and reduce government efficacy (problem-solving capacity) of the regime. Today’s European parties perform, much less than in the past and much less effectively, a central function and mission, which forms part of their profoundest political specificity: that is, the function of government, a function that contributed greatly to their historical influence and endurance. As a result of the fragmentation of the system of decision-making within the multi-level and multi-sites European system, the strong institutional presence of parties cannot be converted into genuine policy capacity. In fact, the problem of contemporary mainstream parties is not so much their transformation into professional power mechanisms cut off from society (theories of the state party or cartel-party), but rather the opposite: it is their failure to function as effective power mechanisms, and as mechanisms for solving problems that distances them from society. Contemporary parties matter less as problem-solving structures and because of this, they are not regarded as representative vehicles even though they are supposed to solve problems.

From confrontation to ideological convergence:
the EU, as argues Simon Hix, “is perhaps more consensus-oriented in its design than any other political system in the history of modern government” 4. For a policy to be adopted it requires (depending on the sector and institution) strong majorities or unanimity, which lead the member States or the national parties either to build grand coalitions or to abandon their policies. Moreover, the European circuit is by definition one of reform and indeed, a difficult, tortu-

3 Olaf Cramme, The power of European integration, Social democracy in search of a purpose, Policy network paper, September 2012, p.11.

ous reform. This “conservative” character of Europe’s way of working is not set up by liberal perversity nor will it easily change: it draws its raison d’être from the multi-state and multi-level nature of the regime, which requires barriers to avoid one group of countries or actors to dominate another. Negotiation, the endless processes of compromise and wheeling and dealing, and the increased weight of technocratic solutions largely neutralise ideological fractures and the left-right cleavage.

Europe reduces the political repertoire of party formations especially major parties with a governmental vocation. It tends to inhibit programmatic innovation whilst programmatic convergence and the weakening of cleavages find an extremely fertile terrain. Moreover, by a kind of “ideational spill-over”, Brussels pragmatism and gradualism spreads to all the national ‘systemic’ political forces. The “Europe” factor hinders genuine policy and governmental alternatives not only at the European level but also at national level. Consequently, the new European environment is conducive to the weakening of the ideological differences of contemporary moderate parties. And they are already weakened by other causes, such as the economic slow-down and the economic limits of Keynesianism, globalisation, the change in the model of economic production, immigration, catch-all politics etc. The EU has increased all this.

From strategic flexibility to “flexible rigidity”:
the great historical parties of the Right and Left have been characterized, especially after World War II, by a high level of strategic flexibility and a great capacity for adaptation and renewal. It was precisely this capacity in adapting that enabled them to survive and remain mass parties. The capacity for adaptation, especially in the case of the Social Democratic parties, was reinforced after the 1960s (by virtue of the strengthening of the leader’s personal power, the weakening of traditional bureaucracy and reducing ties with the trade unions). Nevertheless, this is not so much the case today as in the past. There are two reasons for this: on the one hand the economic constraints imposed on national governments by globalization; on the other hand, the political constraints associated with the unwieldy and sluggish European system of governance. Today’s main government parties are organizationally flexible but finally politically and ideologically “rigid” owing to external factors. Consequently, they find it very difficult to respond to the changing demands of the electorate, particularly if these demands deflect from the “corridor of possibilities” whose boundaries are those of globalization and European integration. The most distinctive feature of their present-day identity is in fact a kind of “flexible rigidity”: they are capable of proposing a host of new ideas of limited significance and many innovative policy proposals (and have systematically done so in recent years). What they are not in a position to produce is a grand vision, a new major narrative, an alternative perspective to the present and the future, even though such an alternative would probably be in their electoral interest. The widespread


idea that moderate parties are characterized by strategic flexibility has become a myth.

The new flexibility of extremes: by contrast and paradoxically, radical parties, Left or Right, have greater tactical flexibility today, and to some extent, greater strategic flexibility than the mainstream parties (this dimension is rarely taken into account by specialists). Admittedly, the flexibility in question is, in a sense, fictitious, precisely because it is inextricably linked to these parties' non-governing character. The parties are therefore frequently accused of being “populist” (the term “populism” referring here to lack of responsibility, demagogy, and facile denunciation of the opponent or of the system). Nevertheless, neither the radical Right (with some exceptions) afflicted by the past's rigid fascism, nor the radical Left (again, with some very important exceptions) display the extreme ideological and organizational rigidity of yesterday's Communism. The “anti-systemic” parties of the present are relatively responsive and supple players, or at least, more so than those of the past. They are well-versed in the manoeuvres of electoral politics, they are more open to ideological compromise and they have a greater capacity for renewal from above (owing to greater autonomy at the level of leadership). In reality, as opposition parties and precisely because they are in opposition, they can show greater flexibility than the big parties in government, whose hands are tied by virtue of their participation in complex and laborious power systems.

All this, to some extent, reverses the logic of 150 years of party history. For the first time the “peripheral” parties, while remaining more “ideological” than the centre-right and centre-left parties, are adapting their words and deeds more rapidly to changing circumstances than the moderate parties. This represents, at least to a certain extent, something new in the history of the party phenomenon. What we have learned from the history of parties applies less today than in the past.

The historical irony of this development (the change in the role of moderate parties is a major historical novelty and a rupture in European tradition) is that parties, which created the EU, at the same time created the conditions for undermining their own influence and role. From this point of view, national mainstream parties are the victims of Europe’s success. This naturally tends to reinforce every species of opposition and to reinforce them in a way that is by no means cyclical or ephemeral.

II. COMMENTS ON THE DYNAMIC OF POLITICAL CONFLICT

Is there really a far left populism?
There are many similarities between the populisms of the Left and of the Right. The harsh criticism of globalization and finance capitalism, of the EU, of the downgrading of national parliaments and democracy, are just some of them. Attribution of central significance to the cleavage establishment/people is another point of convergence between the Far Right and the Far Left. But the differences are just as great, if not greater. Today's Radical Left has for the most part embraced the theematics and mottos of the 1960s New Left (feminism, ecology, minorities’ rights, multiculturalism, immigration etc.), issues and preoccupations that share little common terrain with right-wing populism. In terms of economic policy its discourse bears increasing resemblance to that
of the old Keynesian Social Democracy. The Strategy for the EU adopted by the Party of The European Left is an amalgam of scathing criticism and reformist aspirations. On the one hand it criticizes the neoliberal policies adopted by the EU, on the other it puts forward proposals for a change of political course within the Union, in essence for “more Europe”.

The new radical Left undoubtedly has numerous populist or, to be more precise, demagogical, aspects to it. But its historical links to Marxism, its bad relations with nationalism, its identification (in most cases) with cultural liberalism, its strength of the organizational factor, do not favour its transformation into a populist force. Much less do they favour its transformation into a “national-populist” force. The new radical identity embraces substantial elements from the ideology and culture of the historical currents (Leninist, Trotskyist, anarcho-syndicalist, Action Directe, Maoist), as well as the New Left and elements originating in the social-democratic tradition, political ecology, populism and the anti-globalization movements. The radical Left is closer to the model of a “left social democracy” with a populist/libertarian and social movement-orientation than to the classical populist model.

The policy (including European policy) proposals of most of the parties that comprise the European Left Party incorporate strong elements of social-democratic reformism and are, irrespective of their frequently intransigent rhetoric, part of a strategy of reformism more than a strategy of rift or revolution. Nevertheless, the analyses that, more generally, attribute social democratic characteristics to the politics of the radical Left parties or tend to regard these parties as parties “like all the others”? underrate the internal divisions, the culture of protest (segments of the Radical Left are inclined to criticise everything that moves on the planet), the “anti-capitalist” rhetoric, the use of discursive schemes inspired by the insurrectional model, the arrogant sectarianism of some of its component part, indeed the very “soul” of sections of the radical Left. The logic of social democracy is an overall political logic, not just the Keynesian approach to the economy. It is no accident, moreover, that these parties live in fear of being transformed into social democracy, of coming to resemble their big brother and perennial opponent.

The hijacking of the populist rhetoric by the traditionally moderate political parties

Hijacking of populist rhetoric is something that has already been indulged in, to a certain moderate extent, by some national conservative parties (viz. Sarkozy in the 2007 elections). It improves electoral performance in the short term but in the medium term seems to undermine political credibility. Nevertheless, particularly for mainstream parties of the Right, it is a good electoral option which can net some modest political returns. In the absence of a change in the overall liberal orientation of the EU a variety of “moderate populism” could work for conservative parties, but not for the socialist family.

From a strategic standpoint, the current structure of social-democratic electorates renders the adoption of an advanced ne0-
liberal strategy too costly in electoral terms (because of the ever strong presence of social-democracy among popular strata and public sector wage-earners). The huge electoral defeat of PASOK (June 2012) dramatically underlines, the consequences of harsh austerity policies for social democracy, above and beyond any Greek idiosyncrasies. This same electoral structure also makes the adoption of “left-wing populism” by social-democratic leaderships equally too costly (because of the increasing electoral implantation among salaried middle strata, particularly educated strata, strongly “attached” to cultural liberalism).

What room for manoeuvre do the historic parties have to counter the extremist parties?

While Europe still has the characteristics as described above, and it has had them for a very long time, room for manoeuvre for the historical parties will remain very limited. Also, given the pressure from a reinforced popular Euroscepticism, the classic, and oh! so familiar, European policy of half-measures and “uncompleted agreements” (which will supposedly be perfected at some point in the future), along with the politics of austerity, is grist to the mill of populism, particularly in the present conditions of serious crises. Given that citizens are perfectly well aware that their political preferences are not sufficiently taken into account by the moderate parties, which are in any case on a trajectory of mutual convergence, they frequently choose to support more extreme parties, even though they know that the positions of these parties diverge from their own through being more radical. “Voters prefer parties whose positions differ from their own views insofar as these parties pull policy in a desired direction”, wrote Orit Kedar very aptly. Their vote for one of the extremes is not, for the great majority of voters, an identity vote. Nor is it really a protest vote. It is rather an “instrumental” vote, a vote aimed at turning the helm of policymaking in another, more desired, direction. This explains why the extreme parties are, in fact, growing stronger, but, at the same time, also remain electorally unstable and fragile. For as long as voters consider that Europe “is run by a vague, grey elite over which they have no influence”, the potential for the growth of extreme parties will remain great.

CONCLUSION

A reduction in the actual perimeter of party action constitutes the hard core of the influence exercised by Europe. The European Union, by its structure and its workings (and not by some kind of conspiracy of the elites or capital), raises an enormous problem of effectiveness and practical coherence for all parties, whether mainstream or radical. Thus, for the first time since the crystallization and consolidation of the model of ‘party government’, the exceptional role and exceptional influence of parties are now under challenge. All this boils down to a bleak outlook for all party families. Not from the viewpoint of electoral possibilities or electoral potential (the EU is a gift to oppositional politics from every point of the spectrum). The outlook is bleak from the viewpoint of the parties’ ability to promote their political objectives. The real, profound and, in all likelihood, non-ephemeral weakening of partisan institution represents a sizeable obstacle to the long-term stability

not only of the mainstream parties, but of all parties, including right-wing populist parties or radical left parties. The new European environment tends to stabilize the tendency to electoral instability. Instability might turn out to be an enduring characteristic not only bound to the choices of partisan leaderships (moderate or not), but also to the profound transformation of the concept of the political in Europe.
Analysis by
Takis Pappas

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In fact, we are confronted with several interrelated problems: (a) the decline of Europe’s old parties and party systems; (b) the rise of populism; (c) the rise of non-democratic political extremism; and (d) the unappealing image of the EU. There seems to be a direct line of causality that leads from (a) to (d) through (b) and (c).

WHAT HAS GONE WRONG WITH THE OLD PARTIES?

Any explanation should take into account that, for all intents and purposes, Europe’s major parties developed historically in close relation to their respective sovereign states and, more particularly, the state-controlled national cultural reproductive mechanisms (i.e. education, administration, social security systems, etc.) and state-regulated markets. More recently, however, as the sovereignty of Europe’s nation states has been undermined by the forces of Europeanization (which created supranational institutions) and globalization (which liberalized the markets), the traditional political parties have lost much of their political scope, let alone their ideological and political appeal. As a result, this has led large chunks of their previous electorates to abandon them, thus creating an enormous pool of available voters who are currently up for grabs by new and upcoming political entrepreneurs of various creeds.

AND WHAT ABOUT POPULISM? CONFRONTING THE BEAST

Since the rise of populism is a contemporary phenomenon, its concept cannot be considered as ‘archeological’. At present, there is an intense debate about populism going on in academia, which, however, is no less
conceptually wanting than it is normatively misleading. So far, this debate has failed to agree on what populism is, but also to distinguish between the several variants of European populism; in addition, it is misled by the heavily normative question whether populism is a threat to or a corrective to democracy (e.g. Mudde 2012).

We may, as we should, distinguish between three distinct types of European populism: primarily political, ethnic nationalist and regional separatist. All three set “the people” against some threatening “other” but, in each case, these seemingly undifferentiated categories take on different content. In brief: in primarily political populism the antithesis is between the “pure” people (il popolo) and the current “corrupt” political class (the political establishment); in ethnic nationalist populism, a national community with reputedly common cultural attributes (an éthnos or kulturnation) is pitted against menacing foreign forces (immigrants, the EU); regional separatist populism, finally, echoes Europe’s ancient centre-periphery cleavage as it sets secessionist regions (e.g., Catalonia, Padania, Scotland) against their respective national centres (cf. Roma ladrona).

I suggest that we understand, and therefore define, populism simply as democratic illiberalism (Pappas 2012). Therefore, populism is by definition democratic but also represents a fatal threat to political liberalism.

**POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY**

In the foregoing definition, populism is always democratic, but also illiberal; it is also distinguished from non-democratic parties. Consequently, we end up with the following understanding:

**Representative democracy**

- Liberal parties
- Populist parties
- Non-democratic parties

**POPULISM VS. LIBERALISM**

Besides making clear the three interrelated characteristics of all populist parties, this Table speaks volumes for the rise of populism in Europe as the other side of liberalism’s failure. It tells exactly where liberal democracy is currently failing in Europe: the reduction of previously multiple, but overlapping cleavages into one ostensibly dividing the ‘pure’ people from ‘established’ elites; the end of political moderation and consensual politics; and the erosion of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

**The two faces of representative democracy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Populist</th>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple cleavages</td>
<td>Single cleavage</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Overlapping consensus’</td>
<td>Adversarial politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constitutionalism</td>
<td>Majoritarianism</td>
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**Myths about populism**
- Populism constitutes an ideology, even a “thin” one (cf., Mudde 2004)
- Populism is an extreme right-wing phenomenon
- There is a close relationship between populism and charismatic leadership

**Realities about populism**
- Populism is non-ideological and highly opportunistic (hence some authors have seen it as a certain political strategy)
• Populism is to be found on both the left and the right of the political spectrum (for instance, in the first round of the 2012 French elections, there was hardly a single party that did not behave as populist)
• Contrary to common popular wisdom, charismatic leadership is rare among populist parties. Yet, most successful populist parties do have charismatic leaders.
• Populism is contagious as the cases of Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania clearly show (cf. Pappas 2013).

WHAT TO DO?

If there is one thing that emerges most clearly from the foregoing points it is that European liberalism is receding – and it is receding fast. European liberalism stands for (a) reinforcing supranational EU institutions and (b) the full opening of markets. European populism, on the other hand, is both anti-EU and anti-market; it stands against the erosion of national states and further market liberalization. It draws its voters among people in European societies who feel abandoned by their national traditional parties, threatened by open markets, and without sufficient state protection. There seems to be only one way out of Europe’s current political predicament: bravely pushing forward with more political integration and making Europe what its founding fathers wanted it to be – a liberal political Union.
CONCLUSIONS

The rise in Populism demands a more radical Europe

Conclusions of the Berlin meeting of December 1-2 2012
Conclusions

1. Populism: the response to the long “de-politicization of politics”

THE TECHNOCRATIC DIMENSION AND THE DUAL POWERLESSNESS OF CITIZENS

Populist movements are characterized primarily by forms of discourse, style and rhetoric based on a systematic reference to the people. They thrive on a shared feeling of resentment and want to be recognized. So populism is not just limited to precarious social groups but also resonates within the middle class.

Denouncing the technocracy of the exercise of power is a powerful populist resentment. It is equally a demand and a criticism strongly condemning the opaque and de-politicized practices of power, epitomized by the “elite consensus”, which erases divisions and clear political choices. When the citizen feels he is no longer concerned by public policy, populist reactions highlight the demand for re-politicizing the exercise of power. Paradoxically, populism strengthens the demand for more democracy, citizen access to the decision-making process and proper consideration in policy decisions.

Populism fuels this two-fold feeling of “powerlessness and invisibility” within the electorate: invisibility of the individual choice - “public action ignores me” - and the non-recognition as a national, regional and local people. This non-recognition is part of this empty cosmopolitan feeling and loss of identity which is related to the phenomena of supranational integration, such as Europe, or to globalization in general.
THE DISEMPowerMENT OF CITIZENS AND THE DE-TERRITORIALIZATION OF POWER

The connection between populism and European construction is linked to the feeling of growing insecurity from an ever increasing part of the population. Therefore, the economic and social issues which were considered for a long time to affect the lower classes living in precarious conditions, have allowed populism to thrive on a general feeling of insecurity among the more affluent classes who have, until now, felt less concerned.

Populism offers solutions which are based on a national framework that has disappeared, an appeal to “the Golden Age” myth, real or fantasized. This rhetoric is appealing and understandable and very much part of the common imagination. But European integration clashes with this vision: the European project has enabled the empowerment of socio-economic actors within a national framework but has not come up with something new at the European level.

The European structure of power has contributed to removing that territorial space and that is why there is no populism at the European level. We only find the phenomena of national populism, in other words “our ancestral nation”. However, populist agendas on the regional front could well come to the fore in the future.

EUROPE AND GLOBALIZATION: IMPOSSIBLE GOVERNANCE?

The European way of governance in the current state of European integration, is so heavy that it is ineffective. The current dynamic is increasingly ungovernable. A new reality has come about in Europe which has produced weak double governance at both national and supranational level through EU institutions. This pattern of “a double deficit of power” cannot bring about sustainable and legitimate political solutions and the parties in government cannot implement the necessary mechanisms to meet current challenges. In fact, part of the crisis is precisely European. It is the result of inertia from the states themselves and also from the European structures which must be reformed.

CAN POPULISM BE COMPARED TO THE MAQUIS? THE “RÉSISTANCE” METHOD

The motivations of populism are both symbolic and very real. The feeling of social insecurity on the social and economic level and the loss of identity (“cultural insecurity”) are all part of this crisis of European governance. The current situation is leading to a loss of recognition at all levels of the social spectrum to which the governments in place are unable to respond.

The populist movements are becoming an imaginary “maquis”, calling for resistance to a vague and non-identifiable power which has no roots. On the fringe of traditional politics and detached from the constraints of exercising power, populism is an outlet which is allowed to lose all restraint. So it is that populism can meet citizens’ expectations by embracing a transgressive style and practice of their own. Populist tactics can erase the contradictions inherent in the practice of power and propose an overall deconstruction.

The media play an important role in how
they depict the role of politicians, oscillating between the spectacular or the more sober professional method.

A “NON-LIBERAL” MODEL OF DEMOCRACY

The European system has promoted the development of individual freedoms and the liberal political mechanism has succeeded well in supporting real progress in European integration. But this system has been misguided because it has not given the European structure the necessary techniques to meet the current challenges and crises. The limits of the liberal and political model at European and national level are evident. Europe has shown a distinct lack of “kratos” which the liberal mechanism fails. So standing up for democratic values, populism criticizes and judges European and national authorities.

The crisis of European integration is also due to the downturn of the traditional mainstream parties which have dominated the political scene since the Second World War: the Christian Democrats, who held 22% of votes in Western Europe after the war, are only at 12% today; the Social democrats have gone from 32% to 26% in the years 2000. The Liberals have suffered very few losses, while the Conservative vote has increased by 8 points. The radical left as a whole (including the communist and extreme left parties) still represents 10% of the electorate, as after the war, despite the political and philosophical crisis following the fall of the Soviet bloc. But the Social and Christian Democrats who are losing votes are those political families who carried the political, social and economic consensus of the postwar period as well as the “European fusion.” The crisis of the representation of the social model within the circle of the executive authorities existed well before the rise of populism; globalization and the end of Keynesianism during the 1970s accelerated this trend. The new populist forces only had to creep into the breach which was already there.

THE ILLUSION OF REGIONAL SEPARATISM “SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, BIG IS POWERFUL”

The criticism for providing widespread politics and traditional ways of governance echoes a certain form of regionalist populism and its national-populists. Although very different in nature, regionalist thinking develops the illusion of a more efficient way of decision-making in regional economic, social or environmental matters. But this is based on an optical illusion: even Catalonia or Scotland would opt for the best possible environmental policies, but it would be inefficient in the globalization game. In this context, local and regional conditions can not be the only critical factors for growth.

Regionalist movements are much more against a centralized national power than European integration because they know they can find their autonomy in relation to the national capital. But accepting the multiplication of new member states would complicate the relationship between more sovereign entities and the viability of European institutions would be in danger. Institutions should discuss ex-ante the conditions for separatist entities wishing to attain the status of Member States.
THE IMAGINATIVE VISION OF PUBLIC POWER / POLITICAL EXPECTANCY

Europe is going through an exceptional period which emphasizes the weakness of political leadership within the EU. These difficulties feed populist imagination, so it is imperative to come up with new alternatives. Europe, like its great political families who exemplified its founding values, must abandon this “flexible rigidity” and engage upon a wide range of reforms.

RESPOND TO THIS INDIGNATION / PROPOSE A MORE CONTROVERSIAL EUROPE

The European model is so full of compromise that Europe itself is lost in negotiations and the culture of negotiation is neither respected by the media nor understood by the citizens.

The European project can only win over the support of European civil society by adopting a more controversial message in response to the populist rhetoric. Never have the achievements of European integration, especially peace and shared prosperity, been such a target and at the same time, never has federalism been stronger. Of course, it is implicit that federalism has gone beyond its usual circles (Eurobonds, European finance minister) but the next step must be a new story beginning with a confrontation of ideas between citizens. And this confrontation will be to engage citizens who will embody the story and write the Passion to spread the message through the media.

EMBODY HOPE

Clear and simple options require European citizens’ approval to avoid ideological stand-offs and the risk of political exploitation of the common project. So one fundamental European law could be submitted via continental referendum with no opting-out option and based on the double majority rule: the state and the citizens. This is giving the decisional responsibility to the Europeans. Alternative scenarios could be envisaged by offering special partnerships to Member States who do not want integration.

- Asking the right questions and proposing real alternatives
- Moving beyond the alternative between « Yuck! » and « TINA! »

Populism draws its strength from “Yuck!” confronting “TINA!”: “There is no alternative”. The structure is seemingly unassailable and alternatives are simplistic because they stand for the oppressed, the downtrodden and the poor in the name of the nation. But the federal model must stand up to this political discourse and a special effort must be made in this sense. The European Union is not and will not be a “super-State”, but it must be able to solve these problems.

IDEOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION

And this requires real ideological clarification. It is a question of reactivating the political divide to come up with concrete alternatives. Facing the implicitly conservative-liberal technocratic consensus, we must develop a progressive, centre-left alternative. This will have to go through a sort of political audit of policies that have been made in the name of European integration,
especially liberalization policies etc. and the questioning of national public service models. The institutions themselves and the policies carried out are not to be confused. An audit of all public policies is needed in order to remove any doubt about the intrinsic ideological nature of the Union.

IMAGINING A TRANS-REGIONAL SOLUTION RATHER THAN THE MYTH OF SEPARATISM

Reversing the federalism logic through institutional change is the real response to common goals, like the ability to solve problems. And the subsidiarity principle must be renewed through vertical and horizontal cooperation. Political power no longer lies in capital cities and centralized power is only a myth which a new political space in Europe can and must replace. The centralizing temptations of European Federalists who wish to create a European policy framework increasingly exacerbate populist claims. The renewed logic of federalism should allow local features and preferences to coexist in a broader context.

3. How federalism and European political integration can go beyond populism

REWRI TING THE SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS OF EUROPE, “THE LIST OF CITIZEN S’ GRIEVANCES TO THEIR EUROPE”

Working on different structures of federalism and potential models: The federal solution does not have a good press, is ignored or hardly known and frightens off people. A proposition would be to discuss several scenarios of federalism with citizens throughout the Union but also to debate the process of validating their choice in order to avoid the pitfalls and obstacles that may arise as a result of contrary decisions from a minority of states and citizens. Beyond the institutional debate, we must also consider a real analysis of the consequences of political integration on the work of national governments and the impact on the daily lives of Europeans.

POLICIES OF REDISTRIBUTION AND OF THE SOCIAL MODEL IN EUROPE

Despite local differences there are common traits in the different European social models and even the same characteristics for the same European social model; a minimum wage and legislation enabling a universal social security coverage etc. Even though the differences between the most developed and the poorest countries do not allow for a sustainable social standardization. However, there are specific issues to defend and a common desire for maximizing the well-being of citizens. And with these common traits Europe must commit itself over a long period of time to encourage social convergence towards higher standards of social protection.

THE MEANS FOR PUBLIC ACTION

The EU budget is a highly political, sensitive and explosive issue. And to reply to the demand for public action and for solving the problems which could break the populist dynamic, the EU must be given the means to achieve its ambitions. This implies a substantial federal budget, gradually
increasing from the miserable 1% to 20% of current GDP, which represents the critical threshold of real federal government action. This quantitative leap necessarily entails a fundamental qualitative change in the structure of the budget which must be echoed in the EU’s own resources: financial transactions tax, carbon tax etc. Besides giving financial means to European policies, such resources will relieve member states of their obligations towards a national contribution. This will alleviate the European debate of all its bargaining between national egoisms and the disrupting of the re-nationalization of EU policies which were also part of the end of the personal contributions system in the mid-1980s.

**REVERSING THE LOGIC OF TAXATION / REPRESENTATION**

The budget question would also correct the historical anomaly of a European Parliament which is the only representative body in the political history of Western democracies which was not elected for organizing the collection of resources. Since it is assumed that there is no taxation without representation, we must defend the same logic for the European Parliament: no representation without taxation. And therefore, it is possible and even imperative to imagine a European governance of the budget which would include decision-making by the citizens themselves.
Biographies
Isabelle DURANT
Since 2009 MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament. Isabelle Durant worked in the education and social development sector before entering politics in 1991 in the regional Parliament of Brussels-Capital. She was Federal Secretary and Spokesperson of ECOLO (Belgian Green Party) between 1994 and 1999 and in 2004. She was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Mobility and Transport from 1999 to 2003 in the Belgian government. She was Co-Chairwoman of ECOLO in 2007 before being elected MEP in 2009 and has been Vice-President of the European Parliament since 2009. She is responsible for the Lux Prize and the Citizens’ Agora. Isabelle Durant is member of the Commissions for Transportation, for Budget and for Constitutional Affairs (citizen participation, European Year of Citizens, ICE). In 2010, Isabelle Durant founded the Spinelli Group in the European Parliament with Sylvie Goulard, Guy Verhofstadt and Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

Daniel COHN-BENDIT
Daniel Cohn Bendit is journalist, MEP (GREENS), Co-President of the GREENS / European Free Alliance (EFA) in the European Parliament. He was born April 4, 1945, Montauban, France. He returned to Germany in 1958 and passed his Baccalaureat in 1965 at the German school “Odenwaldschule” in Oberhambach. He returned to France, studied Sociology in Nanterre. He was spokesman and leader of the revolt of May 1968, nicknamed “Danny the Red”. He was expelled from France in 1968. Between 1969 and 1973 he worked as a Teacher/Educator in an anti-authoritarian” nursery in Frankfurt (Sachsenhausen) and in a bookstore. In 1976, Daniel Cohn-Bendit was editor and journalist in Frankfurt for the anarchist magazine (“Sponti-Szene”), le “Pflasterstrand” (Under the paving stones, the beach”). In 1984, Daniel Cohn-Bendit joined the German party “DIE GRÜNEN”. From 1989 to 1997, he was local Councillor for Multicultural Affairs in Frankfurt for the Red/Green coalition. In 1994 he was MEP for the GRÜNEN of Germany and in 2009 he founded the group “Europe Ecologie” with politicians and persons working in social organisations. He won 16.28% of votes in France. He was re-elected to the European Parliament as head of the list for Ile de France. Since January 2002, Daniel Cohn-Bendit is Co-President of the GREENS / EFA in the European Parliament.
Gesine SCHWAN

Gesine Schwan (born 22 May 1943) is a German political science professor and member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. In 1962, she began her studies in history, philosophy, romance languages, and political science at the Free University of Berlin and later at the University of Freiburg. After research conducted in Warsaw and Kraków, she obtained her Ph.D. in 1970 from FU Berlin for a dissertation on the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski. In Krakow University, she became assistant professor and continued her work on the critique of Marx for which she received a habilitation in 1975. Schwan was appointed full professor at the Department of Political Science at FU Berlin in 1977. The SDP has nominated her twice as a candidate for the federal presidential elections.

Martin HIRSCH

Martin Hirsch was born December 6, 1963. State Councilor and President of the Civic Service Agency. He has held various administrative responsibilities, such as Director of the Central Hospital Pharmacy, Director of the Office of the Minister of Health, Director General of the French Agency for Food Safety and associative responsibilities as President of Emmaus France. From 2007 to 2010 he was a member of the government, as High Commissioner for Active Solidarity against Poverty and High Commissioner for Youth. Martin Hirsch was a member of the Bachelet Committee on the global social protection, Member of the Committee chaired by Joscka Fischer, for the Council of Europe, which brought out the report “Living together in Europe in the twenty-first century”. Since October 2012, he is Special Advisor to the Commissioner Andor. He co-chairs the Action Tank Companies and Poverty and Social Chair for Business at HEC.

He is the author of several reports (The new social equation for the government in 2004, How to reduce high salaries for Terra Nova in 2012) and a dozen books, the most recent being “Pour en finir avec les conflits d’intérêts” (Stock, 2011) and “La lettre perdue : les racines de l’engagement” (Stock 2012).
Jean-Michel DE WAELE

Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Science, at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, he teaches political science. His research focuses on the political situation in Central Europe, the political regimes in Europe and the current changes in democracies. He also leads a research group devoted to the sociology of sport. He has led several collective works and most recently: “The rightward shift of the working class in Europe,” and “The parties of the anti-capitalist left in Europe” and “Compulsory Voting” These three books are published by Economica. He is preparing two books on social democracy in Europe.

Michael HASTINGS

Michael Hastings, after studying law and history, received the aggregation of Political Science, and is currently University Professor at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques in Lille (France). His teachings include political theory, political anthropology and political philosophy. He was a visiting professor at the Universities of Montreal, Quebec, Tampere, Brussels, Minsk, Vilnius, Katowice. His main research focuses on political parties, political speeches, comparative political systems, and the symbolic dimension of politics. He has many academic responsibilities at the national level (valuation reports, juries, competitive examinations, editorial boards). He has recently published “The paradoxes of transgression” (CNRS Editions, 2012), “Compulsory voting” (Economica, 2011, in collaboration with A. Amjahad and JM de Waele), “The political pamphlet”, (special issue of Words, 2010) and “The electoral surprise” (Karthala, 2008).
Nicolas LEVRAT

Nicolas LEVRAT is Professor of International and European Law at the University of Geneva. Since 2007 he has been Head of the European Institute (founded in 1963 by Denis de Rougemont) and was elected in 2012 to lead the new “Center for Global Studies,” which will integrate the European Institute. He was Program Advisor to the Council of Europe from 1991 to 1995, Professor at the Free University of Brussels from 1998 to 2010. He has been Professor at the University of Geneva since 2001. He is co-founder of the doctorate school “Foundations of International and European law” (2008) made up of Swiss Universities, and also co-founder of the doctorate school “Erasmus mundus: Globalisation, EU & Multilateralism – GEM PhD School” which brings together nine of the best universities in the world. He published his thesis in 1994 on cross-border cooperation (PUF) and has since worked on the political representation of minorities (“Minorities and Organization of the State”, Bruylant, Ed, 1998), the role of regions in the EU (“Europe and its Local Authorities: Reflections on the Exercise of Local Power in a Global World”, Peter Lang, 2005), European federalism (“Europe: from Integration to Federation”, Bruylant, Ed 2010), European democracy (“Is the Construction of Europe Democratic?”, French documentation, 2012) and the coherence of the European legal order (“European legal (dis) orders”, Schulthess, 2012).

Gerassimos MOSCHONAS

Gerassimos Moschonas; PhD, University of Paris-2, is currently an Associate Professor in Comparative Politics at the Department of Political Science and History of Panteion University, Athens (Greece). He was a visiting scholar at the Universities of Yale (2005) and Princeton (2008-9) and a visiting professor at the Institute of European Studies of the Free University of Brussels (2006-2010) and at the University of Montpellier 1 (2006 and 2011). He is the author of “In the Name of Social Democracy, The Great Transformation: 1945 to the present” (Verso: London, New York, 2002) and of “La social-démocratie de 1945 à nos jours” (Montchres-tien: Paris, 1994). His current research interests focus on European integration and political parties, notably the parties of the Left.
Takis Pappas

Takis S. Pappas (Ph.D., Yale University 1995) is associate professor of comparative politics at the University of Macedonia, Greece, and, currently, a Marie Curie Fellow at the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the European University Institute in Florence. He has taught at Yale University; the University of Athens, Greece; the Institut d’Études Politiques, University of Strasbourg, France; the European University Institute, Italy; and the University of Oslo, Norway. He has been a Stanley J. Seeger Visiting Research Fellow in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University; a Visiting Fellow at the Center for International and Area Studies, Yale University; a Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute, Italy; and a Research Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council, New York. He is the author of “Making Party Democracy in Greece” (Palgrave 1999), “The Charismatic Party: PASOK, Papandreou, Power” (in Greek, 2009), and various articles that have appeared, or are forthcoming, in Comparative Political Studies, Government and Opposition, Party Politics, Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica, South European Society and Politics, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, West European Politics, and elsewhere. His work extends, and tries to bridge, such diverse areas as democracy; democratization; political parties; party systems; political leadership; populism; mass movements; radical change; and crisis politics. He is currently working on a book under the tentative title “Flawed Democracy: Populism and Crisis Politics in Greece.”
# Table of contents

**PART 1.**

*The irresistible attraction of populism in Europe*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT OF VIEW</th>
<th>Conclusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isabelle DURANT, Daniel COHN-BENDIT, Martin HIRSCH</td>
<td>The rise in Populism demands a more radical Europe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PART 2.**

*Is Europe powerless?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANALYSIS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michel HASTINGS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolas LEVRAT</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerassimos MOSCHONAS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takis PAPPAS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biographies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>