

## **Coversheet**

### **The politicization of European integration**

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### Introduction

The European Union has had to deal with a series of crisis in the past, but currently, it faces an exceptional accumulation of tensions triggered by the Eurozone crisis, the refugee crisis, Islamic terrorism, the imperial aspirations of Putin and Brexit ambitions. Does the politicization of European integration increase under these conditions? And who are the possible drivers of a process of politicization of European integration? In this contribution, I argue the politicization of European integration is not only time-dependent, but also embedded in national political conflict structures which vary systematically between three European regions – the Northwest, the South and the East of Europe. In order to understand the impact of contemporary crisis conditions on the politicization of European integration, I argue, we have to take into account, how these crisis conditions are linked to the underlying region-specific national conflict structures. Given these different national conflict structures, and given the different types of crises experienced by the populations of the three regions, the type of politicization of European integration is likely to be very different from one region to the other.

As has been pointed out by Hooghe and Marks (2009), there is nothing inevitable about the politicization of European integration. It takes *partisan* entrepreneurs who are capable and willing to mobilize the latent structural potentials for Euroscepticism to become politically and electorally relevant. If an issue is not debated in public and is not articulated by political organizations, it can only be politicized to a limited extent (Hutter and Grande, 2014).

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Moreover, *national* politics are still the crucial arena for the politicization of European integration. As a result of the weakness of the partisan channel of representation at the European level, partisan entrepreneurs still focus on national politics and they will most likely continue to do so for quite some time to come.

Within national party competition, it is the Eurosceptics who have turned out to be the main drivers of the politicization of European integration (Grande and Kriesi, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 2009), given that the pro-Europeans have done everything to depoliticize the European integration process. The repertory of the pro-Europeans' depoliticization strategies has been vast (see Schimmelfennig (2014), Genschel and Jachtenfuchs (2013), de Wilde and Zürn (2012)), including techniques such as de-emphasizing the issue of European integration in national elections (as in the 2013 German elections), sidestepping treaty changes in order to avoid referendums (as in the case of the Fiscal Compact), delegation to so called 'non-majoritarian', technocratic supranational institutions (as the ECB, the ECJ or the Commission), euro-compatible government formation (excluding the Eurosceptics from government coalitions), adopting incomplete contracts (agreements which either cover up conflicts by vague wording or defer them to later stages of the political process), and, most generally, integration by regulation (the EU as 'regulatory state', which protects the illusion of sovereignty of the Member States). Depoliticizing the integration process has served the pro-Europeans well as long as they got away with it. In this contribution I suggest that the Eurosceptics are likely to be increasingly successful in calling the bluff of the pro-Europeans, but that, depending on the part of Europe, they will be of a different ilk.

I shall be painting with a very broad brush, disregarding details in order to draw attention to what I consider to be the broad picture. Given the patchy character of pertinent empirical results, there is necessarily a considerable element of speculation. My discussion is divided into five parts. First, I present the current state of politicization of European integration. Next,

I discuss the preconditions of politicization at the level of the Member States of the three regions – Northwestern (NWE), Southern (SE) and Central- and Eastern Europe (CEE). I first discuss the latent conflict structures that condition the region-specific party competition before I turn to the contemporary region-specific context conditions that are likely to precipitate the mobilization of these latent structures. Due to limitations of space, I only briefly touch on institutional conditions, which does not mean that they do not have an important role to play in the full account of the politicization of European integration. In the last two sections, I draw the broader implications of the politicization of European integration and conclude.

### **The current state of politicization of European integration**

According to Grande and Hutter (2016, p. 7), ‘politicization can be defined as an expansion of the scope of conflict within the political system.’ In the literature, a consensus is emerging regarding the components of what we mean by the term of ‘politicization’ (de Wilde et al 2016, p. 4). According to this consensus, we should distinguish between three conceptual dimensions of politicization: issue salience (visibility), actor expansion (range) and actor polarization (intensity and direction). Fully politicized issues are politicized in all three dimensions.

The politicization of European integration has been characterized by ‘a patchwork of politicizing moments’ rather than a uniform trend towards ever more politicization (Hutter et al., 2016). Thus, in his study of the public debates on European integration in six NWE countries (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK) during the early 2000s, Höglinger (2016) found that the public debate on European integration intensifies during extraordinary, but predictable institutional and policy-related events at the

European level (such as European summits) and the national level (such as national referendums on the issue). These events are initiated and scheduled by either the EU or national governments and public authorities who have largely succeeded so far in keeping them under control. Höglinger concludes that politicization of European integration remained limited, given the conflict-tempering effect of the multi-layered system of representation in the EU.

Hutter et al. (2016) have also analyzed the politicization of European integration in NWE, but over a longer period of time (1970s up to 2012), based on three ‘windows of observation’: public debates on integration steps, national election campaigns and Europeanized protest events. Overall, this broader study confirms that there is ‘something like politicization’ (Schmitter 2009, p. 211), but politicization has been neither systematically increasing over time, nor has it been sustained at a certain elevated level, which serves to disconfirm de Wilde and Zürn’s (2012) ‘authority transfer’ hypothesis. Politicization is certainly not a post-Maastricht phenomenon as some have maintained (see Hooghe and Marks 2009; de Wilde and Zürn 2012), but has been flaring up and temporarily reaching impressive levels at specific moments in time before and after Maastricht. Moreover, politicization has been rather moderate. There has been virtually no mobilization in the streets. In the protest arena, not only has the level of politicization been consistently low, it even declined in the 2000s. Grande and Kriesi (2016) use the term ‘punctuated politicization’ to characterize the overall pattern of politicization, but maybe ‘*intermittent politicization*’ would be a more appropriate term.

Confirming Höglinger’s results, Hutter et al. (2016) find that it is ‘integration steps’ which constitute the perfect occasions for the politicization of the European integration process. Unlike national elections they directly focus attention on specific aspects of European integration – either transfers of authority and changes in the institutional framework of the

EU or the admission of new Member States. The so-called Northern enlargement in the early 1970s, the Maastricht Treaty, the failed Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty stand out as cases with particularly intense public debates, as do the accession debates in Austria, Sweden and Switzerland (the accession to the EES and the Bilateral Treaties). National referendums serve as catalysts of politicization in such debates, because they are not easily controlled by the authorities. Referendums provide dissenting voices with a public forum they usually lack. The risks of referendums for the public authorities are especially large in countries (such as the Netherlands or France) where the authorities do not have much experience with such institutions.

To the institutionalized integration steps, we should add the European crises, which equally constitute exceptional moments of politicization. The euro crisis certainly is a case in point. However, as Kriesi and Grande (2016) show, the results are mixed with respect to the overall politicization of the debate about the euro crisis: on the one hand, this debate has been exceptionally salient and has contributed to the increased visibility of Europe in the politics of the Member States. On the other hand, the euro crisis debate was confined to national and supranational executive actors and has not accelerated the transfer of European politics into 'mass politics', at least not in the six NWE countries (Austria, France, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and UK) in question. Rather, it has mainly taken place in the intergovernmental channel and has been dominated by supranational executive agencies and national governments. This is why it did not trigger an unprecedented level of politicization of European integration.

With respect to national elections, Hutter et al. (2016) find an overall increase of politicization of the European integration process over the last four decades, but the most important result in this respect is the large variation from one country to the other. There is no uniform politicization process in the electoral arena developing at more or less the same time

and with similar intensity across all countries. Instead, conflicts over the country's own EU membership, which occurred at different moments in time, spilled over into the electoral arena and led to an intense politicization of the integration process. Such conflicts have been especially intense in Britain and Switzerland. Membership conflicts concerning the accession of third countries also spilled over into national elections, as is exemplified by the conflicts over Turkey's EU membership in Austrian, German and French elections. The country-specific differences found by this study are, however, limited by the fact that they are all located in NWE.

To appreciate the full range of country-specific variations with respect to the role of European integration in national elections, we should, of course, take into account the experience of countries from all parts of Europe. For this purpose, we can rely on Haughton's (2014) overview over the impact of the EU on roughly 60 national parliamentary elections in EU Member States during the period from May 2004 to December 2012. Reducing his ordinal impact measure to a dichotomy of 'low' and 'medium-high' impact, we observe that the bulk of these elections fall into the 'low' category (82 percent). However, there are significant differences between the three regions: while the EU has a 'medium-high' impact in only 8 and 14 percent of the elections respectively in CEE and NWE countries, the corresponding share is as high as 40 percent in SE. Moreover, it is striking that all the elections with a medium-high impact fall into the more recent 'crisis' period, not only in the South, but also in the other two parts of Europe. In SE, three Greek elections (2009, 2012I+II), as well as the Portuguese (2011), Spanish (2011) and Cypriot (2011) crisis elections are characterized by a considerable EU impact. Outside of the South, there are three recent high impact elections in NWE (Finland 2011, Ireland 2011, and the Netherlands 2012), and two in CEE (Bulgaria 2009, Lithuania 2012).

European elections have been famously said to be secondary elections and mainly about domestic issues. In his analysis of the 1994 and 2004 European elections in Austria, France, Germany and the UK, Dolezal (2012) found, however, that the salience of European issues increased from 1994 to 2004, reaching more than 50 percent of all the issues debated in the EP election campaigns in three out of the four countries (Germany being the exception). However, the bulk of these European issues were related to constitutional matters, i.e. to issues for which the EP has only a limited role to play. Moreover, as Dolezal also documents, these issues mainly set the Eurosceptics against the mainstream parties

The most recent European elections have further substantiated these earlier results. While the ‘Spitzenkandidaten’ largely went unnoticed (Hobolt, 2015, p. 10), the context of the Eurozone crisis changed the European quality of these elections and turned them into ‘the most “European” electoral contests to date’ (Hobolt, 2015, p. 19). The clearest indication that voters were more concerned about European issues was the surge in popularity for political parties that proposed radical reform of, or even exit from, the EU. What is most striking from Hobolt’s results is that protest vote factors were secondary, while ideological factors (i.e. factors linked to Euroscepticism) dominated the vote and that the impact of these factors varied across European regions. It was in Western Europe (she does not distinguish between North and South) that the ideological factors were particularly important, while in CEE the explanatory power of all of the variables she considered turned out to be quite weak. What distinguishes the South from the North in Western Europe is the type of Eurosceptic party that proved to be successful. Table 1 presents the vote shares of left and right Eurosceptic parties from the three regions in the 2014 EP elections. As we can easily see, it is the Eurosceptics from the right who dominated in NWE, while the Eurosceptics from the left dominated in SE. In the CEE countries, the Eurosceptics from the right were also more important than those from the left – especially in Poland and in Hungary. The table presents



two sets of figures – one from Hobolt (2014) and one from Hernandez and Kriesi (2016). The latter figures differ from the former to the extent that they include only strongly Eurosceptic parties. Restricting Euroscepticism to the hard core leads to the conclusion that, with the exception of Hungary and Poland, Eurosceptics hardly played any role at all in CEE countries.

<Table 1>

These results provide strong confirmation for the point stressed by de Wilde et al. (2016) that politicization of European integration has not only been varying over time, but that it has also been highly differentiated across countries. In order to understand this differentiation in space, I suggest, we need to take into account the development of national conflict structures into which the politicization of European integration is embedded. Doing so requires that we take a longer-term perspective.

### **The national political conflict structures**

In his *Reflections on the revolution in Europe*, Dahrendorf (1990, pp. 79-93) distinguished between three speeds of the political transition to democracy – the hour of the lawyer, the hour of the politicians and the hour of the citizens. He suggested that the hour of the lawyer, i.e. the formal process of constitutional reform, takes at least six months. After the establishment of the constitution normal politics takes over and sets in motion political and economic reforms. This is the hour of the politicians, which takes at least six years before a general sense that things are moving up is likely to spread. The third speed refers to the citizens, i.e. to ‘the social foundations which transform the constitution and the economy from fair-weather into all-weather institutions which can withstand the storms generated within and without, and sixty years are barely enough to lay these foundations’ (p. 93). I

think, Dahrendorf's three hours are applicable not just to the democratization of CEE, but to processes of political development more generally. In other words, to understand the politicization of European integration, we need to keep in mind the important transformations of the social foundations that have been giving rise to the national conflict structures in the different parts of Europe over the last sixty years. While acknowledging that the national conflict structures differ from one country to the other, I suggest it still makes sense to reduce the complexity by insisting on the respective differences between three large European regions: the Northwest, the South and the East.

In NWE, two social transformations have been highly consequential for political conflict: a first set of structural transformations that were endogenous to the NWE nation-states – processes of increasing affluence, secularization, deindustrialization, tertiarization, expansion of tertiary education, feminization of the work force and occupational upgrading – together attenuated traditional cleavages of religion and class and brought about a value change – a 'silent revolution' (Inglehart, 1990). This change was driven by the expanding new middle class, or, more precisely, by the socio-cultural segment of the new middle class that articulated its demands in the so called 'new social movements' (e.g. Kriesi, 1989). These new social movements – environmental, peace, solidarity, squatters', women's and 'rights' movements' of different kinds – stood at the origin of the rise of the New Left, of 'new politics', of the Green parties and of the transformation of the West European social-democratic parties which, in the process, have become middle-class parties in almost all countries of NWE (Gingrich and Häusermann, 2015, Häusermann, 2015).

Second, structural transformations that were exogenous to the West-European nation-states – processes of 'globalization', 'denationalization' (Zürn, 2001), of opening up national borders in economic, political and cultural terms (Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012) – have brought about an increasing awareness of the fragility of the sovereignty of the nation-state and of national

culture more generally. European integration has been part and parcel of this ‘denationalization’ process (Kriesi, 2009, p. 222), but this process cannot be reduced to European integration. In addition, immigration from culturally ever more distant shores has been another important element of this overall process. Economic pressure on certain segments of the workforce (especially low-skilled workers) who have become doubly squeezed by competition from abroad (in the form of offshoring of their jobs) and at home (in the form of competition from immigrants) (Dancygier and Walter, 2015) is also part of this process. As we have argued (Kriesi et al. 2008, 2012), these processes created a heterogeneous set of ‘globalization losers’ who have been mobilized mainly by the radical populist right (or the New Right), which, in the process, has become the party of the working class in many West European countries (Oesch, 2013). Some of the parties of the New Right have been newly emerging (such as the French Front National, the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), or the Sweden Democrats (SD)), while others (such as the Austrian FPÖ, the Swiss SVP, or the True Finns) are actually transformed (liberal-) conservative mainstream parties that have existed already for a long time.

From the point of view of the politicization of European integration, it is crucial that these social transformations and the double wave of political mobilization they gave rise to have been much weaker in the other two regions of Europe. In SE, Greece, Portugal and Spain remained under authoritarian regimes until the mid-seventies and the cultural revolution of the late sixties/early seventies simply did not take place. Accordingly, the mobilization by new social movements was comparatively weak or non-existent in SE<sup>1</sup>, and there was no New Left at the time. When these countries emerged from their authoritarian regimes, traditional cleavages of religion, class, and region still prevailed and prevented the establishment of a New Left or a New Right comparable to that in NWE. To a certain extent,

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<sup>1</sup> There are comparative data for Spain in the 1980s, which show the weakness of these movements (Koopmans, 1996, pp. 38-40).

the same applies to Italy, even if the cultural revolution of the late sixties had left a stronger imprint on this country. Across SE, class cleavages in particular remained stronger than in the NWE because of the divided left and the competition between its two components – the (more radical) Communists and the (more moderate) Socialists –, which left little room for the autonomous mobilization by the new social movements. The New Left developed in the shadow of the ‘old left’ and remained weak. Accordingly, Green parties have been equally weak in SE and the socialists have assumed less of the characteristics of the New Left than they did in NWE.

Not just the class cleavage, but also the religious cleavage remained comparatively strong and aligned with the class antagonism: a secular and rather radical left opposed a conservative and religious right. Moreover, the Centre-Periphery cleavage also kept political importance – at least in Spain and Italy, where strong regionalist movements continued to mobilize in Catalonia and the Basque country, as well as in Northern Italy. Given the legacy of authoritarian/fascist regimes, and given the fact that they have mainly been emigration countries, the radical populist right also remained weak or non-existent in SE. Where it did develop, as the Lega Nord in Italy, it was linked to the regionalist cause. Moreover, Euroscepticism, to the extent that it existed at all, was mainly located on the old Communist left (Verney, 2011).

In CEE, it is less the impact of traditional cleavages than the absence of clear-cut cleavages that has characterized the political conflict structure. It has been argued that the Communist inheritance left a fragmented society and an unstructured pattern of political conflict. This thesis has been contradicted by subsequent empirical analyses, which showed that CEE countries were characterized by social cleavages of ethnicity (especially in the Baltic countries), religion (especially in Poland), region, class as well as age and education (Evans, 2006). But the multiplication of conflicts does not yet make for a clear-cut cleavage structure.

Indeed, as Casal Bertoa (2015) has argued, cross-cutting cleavages constrain party system institutionalization, too. If measured against the four criteria of institutionalization that have been introduced by Mainwaring and Scully (1995), the party systems in CEE still appear to be poorly institutionalized. They have not (yet) developed stable roots in society<sup>2</sup>, the concept of cleavages structuring the party system hardly applies to them; they are hardly considered legitimate by the citizens of their countries, their organizations tend to be unstable and they are characterized by an extraordinarily high level of volatility (Powell and Tucker, 2013).

Coman's (2015) recent study suggests that the main dimension of conflict in CEE countries is, indeed, strongly connected to cultural issues. However, given the absence of the cultural revolution of the late sixties/early seventies in these countries, and given the absence of immigration and the generally low salience of European integration after accession (Haughton, 2014), these are not the cultural issues that have come to structure the party systems in NWE. The common denominator of the cultural issues mobilizing the conservative side of the CEE electorates seems to be rather a defensive nationalism asserting itself against internal enemies (such as ethnic minorities, Roma, and Jews) and external ones (such as foreign corporations colonizing the national economy). This defensive nationalism is fueled by the existence of contested national borders (e.g. national diasporas in neighbouring countries), by the unassimilated legacy of World War II and the Communist regimes, and by 'more deep-seated vulnerabilities' (Haughton, 2014, p. 80). Given the lack of institutionalization of the party systems, parties in CEE countries have a greater latitude in the mobilization of structural conflicts (see Sitter, 2002), and the strategies of the parties on the right prove to be decisive for the mobilization of this defensive nationalism, as is exemplified

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<sup>2</sup> '...the magnetic affinity between parties, voters, and social groups that existed in the West during the Golden Era of parties never formed in CEE, certainly not to the same degree' (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012: 157). [My general rule of thumb is if something is only important enough for a footnote it should be one of the first things to be trimmed. Perhaps just put the reference to Rohrschneider and Whitefield's book in the text and cut the text of the footnote]

by the Orbán's Fidesz in Hungary (Enyedi, 2005) and Kaczyński's Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland.

### **The contemporary European context conditions: The assessment of the economic and political crises**

The accumulation of crises in the contemporary European context is likely to precipitate the mobilization of the latent political potentials which I have sketched in the previous section. In this respect, it is important to distinguish between two types of crisis – an economic crisis and a political crisis of representation. I would like to show that the three regions of Europe are quite distinct with respect to their experience of these two types of crises. This demonstration is based on very simple aggregate indicators. For the *economic* crisis, I use an attitudinal indicator that refers to the individuals' assessment of the current situation of their national economy. Figure 1 presents the development of this indicator (i.e. the share of people who consider the situation as rather/very good) over time for the three regions of Europe. The vertical line in the figure indicates the beginning of the Great Recession in autumn 2008.

<Figure 1>

Three points become quite apparent from this figure: first, people's assessments of the state of the economy are generally much more optimistic in NWE than in the other two regions, where they have been equally pessimistic all along. It is well known that SE and CEE have been hit much harder by the Great Recession than NWE, but we may have been less aware of the considerable economic pessimism that prevailed in the former regions already some time before the onset of the Great Recession. Second, in all three regions, the positive assessments peaked in spring 2007, before the collapse of Lehman Brothers. In fall 2008, they dropped

precipitously to much lower levels across the board<sup>3</sup>. Third, while the assessments in NWE began to recover already in late 2009, great pessimism continued to characterize the overall economic sentiment in the other two regions. Only more recently, the assessments also picked up a little bit in CEE countries. Note, however, that even in NWE, the overall sentiments have not reached the levels of optimism that were characteristic for this region before the crisis.

For the general *political* context conditions, I rely on two aggregate attitudinal indicators. The first one refers to the overall assessment of the quality of democracy at the national level based on the widely used question ‘How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?’ Despite its wide use among political scientists, this indicator is not uncontroversial, but for the assessment of the quality of liberal democracy in particular it provides a relatively reliable measure (Ferrin, 2016). The second indicator measures trust in the European Parliament as a proxy for the general assessment of support of the EU. Figure 2 presents the development of these two indicators over time for the three regions of Europe. The vertical lines in the two subgraphs of this figure again indicate the beginning of the Great Recession in fall 2008.

<Figure 2>

The first part of Figure 2 documents the dramatic regional differences with regard to the development of assessments of the quality of democracy at the domestic level: in NWE, large majorities of the citizens have been fairly/very satisfied with the way democracy works in their country ever since the 1990s. The economic crisis has not changed the overall satisfaction in these countries. Democratic satisfaction has remained at the high level it had reached by the time of the fall of Lehman Brothers. By contrast, the level of satisfaction has

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<sup>3</sup> Note that there are, unfortunately no figures for spring 2008, which enhances the impression that the precipitous decline already set in before fall 2008. Given the much higher pre-crisis level in NWE, the drop was especially spectacular in NWE.

been much lower in the CEE countries ever since the early 1990s, hovering around one third of the citizens. The Great Recession did not change much in this respect in these countries either. There is widespread dissatisfaction of the CEE publics with the way their politics work and a deep-seated disenchantment of citizens with democratic politics. Finally, SE presents a third pattern, which is distinct from both of the other regions. The assessment of the quality of democracy by the Southern Europeans proves to be more variable over time. Most importantly, however, it has dramatically decreased since the onset of the Great Recession and reached the low level of CEE countries by 2013.

The second part of Figure 2 presents the corresponding development of trust in the European Parliament (EP). As we can see from this figure, trust in the EP has been higher in SE and CEE countries than in NWE before the crisis. As a reaction to the crisis, trust in the EP decreased in all three regions, but while the decline remained limited in NWE and CEE, it took on dramatic proportions in SE. Only towards the end of 2014, after the most recent European elections, trust in the EP started to pick up again across Europe.

To be sure, there are country-specific variations within each one of the regions – variations I cannot go into here for lack of space. The key point is that in the aftermath of the Great Recession the dramatic disenchantment with both their national politics and with European politics sets the Southern Europeans apart. They are not only very pessimistic about the state of their national economy. In the aftermath of the Great Recession, they have also become disillusioned politically, with respect to both domestic and European politics. Slovenia is the only other country that is characterized by a similar pattern of precipitous double disenchantment. In SE, we currently witness a combination of an economic with an acute political crisis. Northwestern Europeans, by contrast, remain satisfied with their national politics and, while they have lost some confidence in European politics, a majority of them still trusts the European institutions. In CEE, finally, people have already been disenchanting with their



domestic politics long before the Great Recession, but majorities of them continue to trust European institutions, even if these majorities have become smaller.

### **Implications for the politicization of European integration**

As we have just seen in the last section, the NWE countries have rather rapidly recovered from the economic crisis and their public still supports the EU to a large, although somewhat reduced extent. Against this background, rather than a reaction to the Great Recession, the continuing rise of Euroscepticism in NWE is likely to be part of a long-term rise of the New Right, which dates at least as far back as the early 1980s, when the French Front National achieved its first electoral success. Although the recent spectacular score of this party in the 2014 EP elections constitutes its so far greatest electoral achievement, it only marks the latest step in a long-term development that is characteristic of the transformation of the national party systems in NWE in general. The series of recent breakthroughs of UKIP, the Sweden Democrats, the True Finns and the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), while being spectacular in a short-term perspective, is nothing but an expression of the fact that the corresponding party systems are belatedly catching up with the general long-term trend. Particularly inhospitable institutional (UK) and structural conditions (Sweden and Finland) as well as adverse political legacies (Germany) have previously prevented the rise of such parties in these countries. According to this interpretation, their success should not be attributed to the more recent crises in the European integration process, but to the general conflict between universalism and particularism, which has been articulated by the New Left and the New Right and of which the European integration process is an important part. If this interpretation is correct, we may expect the current refugees' crisis to provide additional fuel for the rise of Eurosceptics in this part of Europe, because it directly plays into the hands of the anti-immigration position of the parties from the New Right in NWE.

By contrast, the euro crisis in combination with the national political crisis has served as the catalyst for the rise of the New Left and a specific type of Euroscepticism in SE. To understand this development, it is important to keep in mind that in SE the crisis has been a combination of an economic and a political crisis that has given rise to two overlapping conflicts (an economic and a political one) with two targets (a domestic and a European one). The economic conflict has been about austerity, while the political conflict has been about corruption and democracy. The main target of both conflicts has arguably been the domestic elites. The salience of European targets, by contrast, has varied from one country to the other: while European targets have been crucial in Greece, their importance has been much more limited in the other SE countries (Hutter et al., 2016a). In all of these countries, however, the conflict with the established domestic elites drove the rise of new challengers.

In SE, the compromised historical legacy of the radical right and the extent of economic hardship have favored new challengers from the left, i.e. challengers who call for national and European social solidarity. Tellingly, however, the beneficiaries on the left were not from the 'old', communist left, but from the 'new' left: Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, M5S in Italy, and Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal. What these parties have in common is their opposition to the established national elites. In the Spanish case, we need to add Ciudadanos, a party that is best compared to parties like D'66 in the Netherlands, left-liberals who mobilize for the renewal of politics while at the same time supporting an economically liberal program (Rodriguez-Teruel and Barrio, 2015, p. 10). As recent electoral analyses show (Vidal-Lorda, 2016), both Podemos and Ciudadanos have mainly been chosen for their challenge to the established political elites.

Except for Ciudadanos, these parties also oppose the austerity policies that have been imposed by domestic and European elites. Contrary to the principled Euroscepticism of the old Communist left in SE, however, the Euroscepticism of this New Left is not incompatible

with EU and euro membership (e.g. Altiparmakis, 2016). What these parties desire is a different, more social Europe that is solidary with the predicament of the populations in the South – a predicament for which they blame both their domestic and European elites.

Arguably, Syriza is the paradigmatic case of this New Left. It has forcefully mobilized against both, domestic and European elites: Alexis Tsipras, Syriza's leader, used the phrase 'external troika – internal troika', where the three-party coalition government (ND, PASOK and DIMAR) was effectively equated with the country's emergency lenders (EC, ECB and IMF). Syriza's double goal was to overthrow two-partyism and austerity policies (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014).<sup>4</sup> Originally a splinter from the Greek communist party, Syriza remained in the shadow of the 'old' left for quite some time, but definitely shed its communist legacy with the schism that led to the departure of its remaining old-left components in the run-up to the autumn 2015 elections. Typical for a party of the New Left, Syriza is 'one of the most consistent advocates of the immigrants' equal rights and their full inclusion in Greek society' (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014, p. 132). By contrast, the Italian M5S at first sight seems to fit least into the New Left category, as many of its supporters have defected from the right. But this challenger, too, has a number of features in common with the new social movements and the parties they spawned: as Biorcio (2014, p. 37) has observed, in many ways, this movement recalls the German Greens thirty years ago. As the German and other new social movements in the late sixties and early seventies, M5S criticizes representative democracy, the established political elites (la 'casta') and the established media in the name of direct and deliberative democracy (to be practiced through the Internet).

Finally, the euro crisis has not had much of an impact on CEE countries, because they were either less affected economically or recovered rather quickly, and probably also because their

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<sup>4</sup> See Featherstone's contribution to this volume.

population had a higher pain threshold (Coffey, 2013). As a matter of fact, several of these countries (Slovakia (2009), Estonia (2011), Latvia (2014), Lithuania (2014)) were happy to join the Eurozone in the midst of the euro crisis. Politicians in these net-recipient states tend to see the EU as a 'cash cow to be milked' (Haughton and Rybar 2009). The domestic political crisis, by contrast, significantly influenced the more recent electoral outcomes (Hernandez and Kriesi, 2015), confirming Haughton's (2014, p. 80) observation that '[a]nti-corruption and a general feeling that the existing political elites are incompetent is a particularly potent theme in the contemporary politics of CEE.'

However, to the extent that the EU is no longer part of the solution to the problems of its CEE Member States, but rather becomes perceived as a source of problems, Euroscepticism may also increase in CEE countries. Rising Euroscepticism in CEE is expected to be an expression of the defensive nationalism which is characteristic for this region. While opposition to Europe in SE is above all economically motivated, it is likely to be above all culturally motivated in the East. Accordingly, and in contrast to the euro crisis, the refugees' crisis is likely to fuel Euroscepticism on the basis of the defensive nationalism. Thus, in tune with the general style of Hungarian party politics, which emphasizes cultural issues, Orbán's Fidesz is exploiting this crisis for its own purposes, in line with its earlier strategy of re-aligning the political field and re-profiling its own electorate on the right of the political spectrum (Enyedi, 2005). Similarly, Kaczyński's PiS is exploiting this crisis, with a decidedly religious bent: for PiS, the refugees' issue is about protecting Poland's culture, tradition and heritage from a perceived external, non-Christian threat. The refugees' crisis also lends itself to the organization of cross-national coordinated efforts of defensive reactions: in February 2016, Hungary and Poland were joined by Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the other two partners of the so-called Visegrad group, to discuss border protection against refugees. To the extent that the defensive nationalism becomes the defining feature of the East Europeans'

Euroscepticism, it brings them closer to the situation in NWE, i.e. to a Euroscepticism driven by the New Right.

## **Conclusion**

In the tough intergovernmental bargaining processes during the euro crisis, the European governments represented their national interest as ‘debtor’ or ‘creditor’ nations – whatever their partisan composition. Given the importance of intergovernmental crisis management, the public debate on the euro crisis has been dominated by supranational executive agencies and national executives. Most importantly, this debate has led to the dominant role of the German executive not only in the German debate, but also in the debate in the other countries (Kriesi and Grande, 2016), a process that has been replicated in the refugees’ crisis.

As a result of this development the divergence of the positions on European integration among Member States has been accentuated. However, divergence between Member States in this respect is nothing new. In our analysis of the European integration debate we have uncovered a stable configuration of four actor clusters that has been characterizing the European integration process ever since the seventies (Maag and Kriesi, 2016). This configuration reproduces the antagonism between Europeanists and Eurosceptics at the Europe-wide level, but adds considerable detail with respect to the predominant Europeanist camp. In fact, this camp turns out to be divided into (at least) three clusters, based on the different views of European integration among executive actors in the multilevel governance structure. First, there are the ‘integrationists’ (the supranational actors and their national allies, with the German government the most important among them), who fully endorse the integration process as it has been shaping up over recent decades. They face the ‘protectionists’ (the French and Italian governments and their allies), who support the integrationists

but are more sceptical about economic liberalisation, and the neoliberal ‘minimalists’ (the British government and its allies), who, on the contrary, endorse market liberalisation and enlargement but consistently reject any other kind of integration. The important point is that the major structuring conflicts at the European level are those between governments representing their national interests, and not those opposing parties which represent the interests of social groups that cut across national borders.

The structuring of conflicts at the European level is, however, connected to the structuring of partisan conflicts at the national level, given that the composition of the national governments which represent the Member States in the intergovernmental governance structures is determined by the outcome of the national elections. One of the most important findings of Hutter et al.’s (2016) study is that the two kinds of structuring conflicts – the intergovernmental conflict between different visions of European integration, and the inter-partisan conflict between pro-Europeanists and Eurosceptics at the domestic level – feed into each other. Therefore, to the extent that the Eurosceptics gain in electoral weight at the national level their influence will also make itself increasingly felt at the intergovernmental level.

To the extent that it will no longer be possible to keep them out of governing coalitions, the Eurosceptics will introduce national resistance into supranational governance, while the conflicts between the Member States that become visible in the intergovernmental crisis management are likely to feed back into national politics where they pitch pro-Europeans against Eurosceptics. Already, Eurosceptics from the populist right in NWE have become part of governing coalitions in Austria (FPÖ), Finland (True Finns), Norway (People’s Party), or have supported minority centre-right governments from the outside in the Netherlands (PVV) and in Denmark (DPP). In other NWE countries, the dominant governing party has had to deal with internal Eurosceptic opposition, most notably the British Conservatives (divided by the ‘Brexit’ referendum), the German CDU-CSU (under pressure both in the euro

and the refugees' crisis), and the French Socialist Party (torn apart by major treaty reforms causing anxieties about a 'neoliberal' Europe). In SE, Eurosceptics from the populist right have been in government in Italy for quite some time (Lega Nord), while the New Left Eurosceptics from Syriza have become the dominant governing party in 2015. In CEE, Eurosceptics like Fidesz or PiS currently dominate their governments.

Finally, to the extent that the Eurosceptics increasingly become part of the governing coalitions in the different regions of Europe, they are likely to become mainstream parties themselves. They can be expected to introduce their regionally different visions of Europe into the intergovernmental process – visions reaffirming the sovereignty of the Member States in NWE and CEE contrasting with visions insisting on European-wide solidarity in SE. With the expected 'mainstreaming' of Eurosceptic parties, the politicization of the European integration process is likely to shift from the debate between principled support (defended by the 'old' mainstream parties) and principled opposition (defended by the 'old' Eurosceptics) to the conflict with respect to the kind of European Union that we Europeans wish to construct – essentially the choice between a minimalist, neoliberal union of sovereign nation-states (defended by the 'mainstreamed' New Right) and an ever closer, solidary union of an as yet still to be defined institutional architecture (defended by the 'mainstreamed' New Left).

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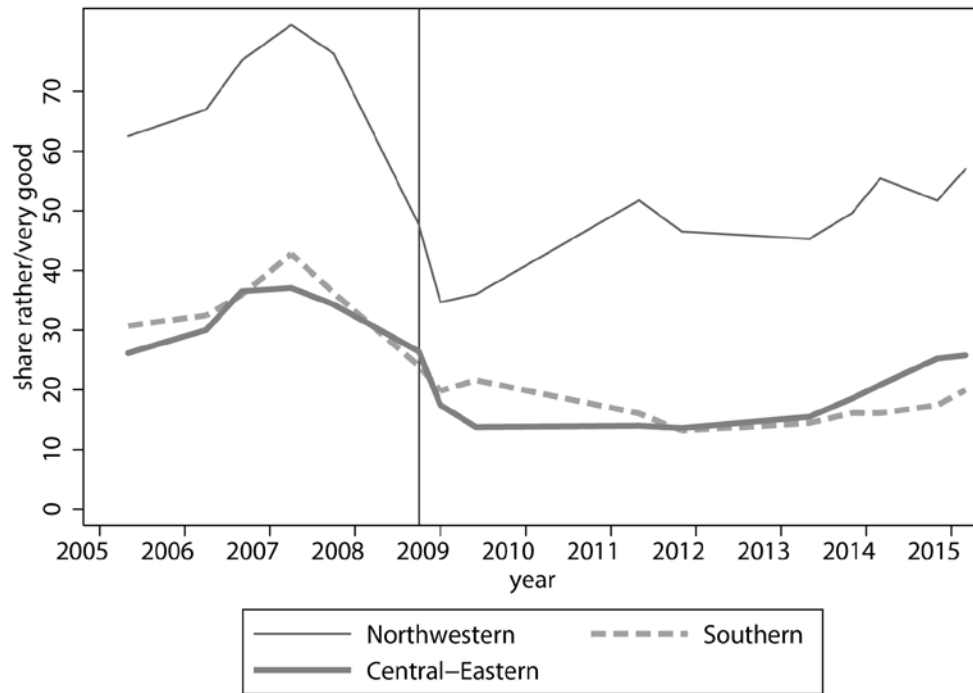
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**Table 1:** Vote shares of left and right Eurosceptic parties from the three regions of Europe in the 2014 EP elections: percentages

region	left		right		n
	Hobolt (2014)	Hernandez/ Kriesi (2016)	Hobolt (2014)	Hernandez/ Kriesi (2016)	
Northwest	5.6	4.0	<b>17.4</b>	<b>14.7</b>	11
South	<b>17.1</b>	<b>17.3</b>	7.6	4.1	6
Central-East	2.0	1.1	<b>21.4</b>	<b>13.8</b>	10
CEE (without HU/PL)	2.5	<b>1.4</b>	13.2	<b>3.6</b>	8
Average	6.8	5.9	16.7	12.0	27

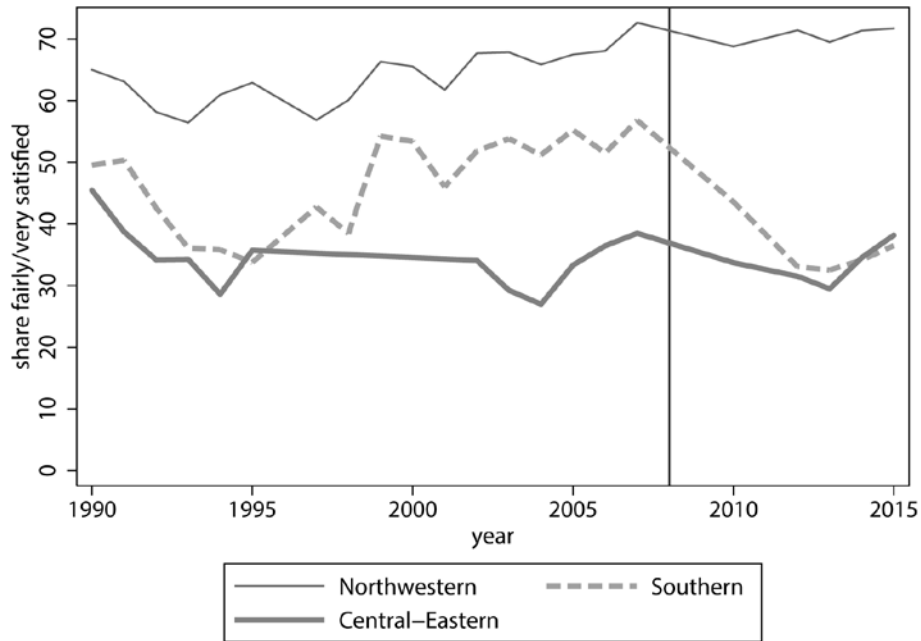
**Figure 1:** Assessment of current national economy (share of citizens assessing the state of the national economy as rather/very good), by region



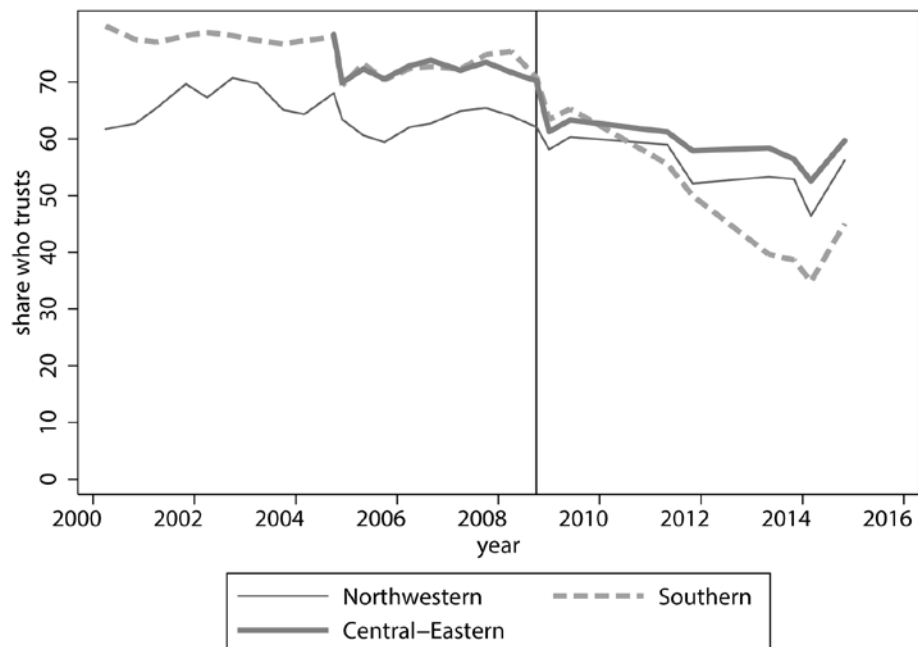
The vertical line indicates the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008  
 Source: Eurobarometer, on average two measures (spring and fall) per year

**Figure 2:** Assessment of the quality of democracy/of the EP by region

a) Satisfaction with the way democracy works at the domestic level (share of fairly and very satisfied citizens)



b) Trust in the European Parliament: share of the trusting citizens (share of citizens who trust the EP)



The vertical line indicates the fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008  
 Source: Eurobarometer, on average two measures (spring and fall) per year



