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POLITICIZATION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AS A SOURCE OF POPULISM IN EUROPE

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Abstract: The process of politicization of European integration has accelerated after signing the Maastricht Treaty. In the politicized European Union, the "technocrat" appearance of the European Commission has also changed and has become a college where the political balances are mostly observed after the Lisbon Treaty. The electoral process of the European Parliament in 2019 and its election results have created an anti-EU opposition with the Europeanist majority, bringing debate over sovereignty to the top of the EU agenda. The rise of populism in Europe is not limited to the percentage of votes of populist parties, but also manifests itself by the reflection of the programs they propose to government policies and the increasing scepticism towards European integration. In the European Union, there has been no consensus as to the nature of the authority and the extent of its authority yet. This study examines the political architecture of the European Union as sources of populist politics and the debates on democratic deficit within the EU. In this analysis, the dynamics of the politicization process within the framework of regional integration theories are revealed. It is argued that identity politics has become more decisive than economic considerations in a politicized European integration. Identity politics, therefore, is a source of populism through discussions of both sovereignty and democratic deficits in the European Union.

Key words: democratic deficit, politicization, populism, sovereignty, the European Union.

Introduction

The most recent political development in Europe was the rise of nationalist populism. Brexiteers in Britain, Marine Le Pen in France and Alternative for Germany (AfD) have changed the political landscape of the countries. Italy and Poland are led by anti-order Eurosceptics. Viktor Orban's political dominance in Hungary undermines liberal democracy. Populism is an anti-pluralist political movement.[1] Populists argue that they represent 'the real people', or the 'silent majority'. They do not consider citizens, who do not support them, within the concept of 'the people', and thus, do not demand legitimacy from them. They claim that 'they, and only they, represent the people'. According to the populists, all of their political rivals lack legitimacy; their supporters are not seen as part of the people.[2] In this context, the former UKIP leader Nigel Farage, who is a strong supporter of Britain's divorce from the European Union (EU), considered the Brexit a 'victory for real people' and said that the 48 percent, who voted for Britain to remain in the EU, could not part of the 'real' British people.[3] As can be seen, the EU has also become a subject of national politics.

The elections in European countries have witnessed the rise of populism in recent years. Yet, this trend did not continue in recent elections. In the Dutch general elections of 2017, the anti-Islamic far-right Freedom Party (Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) could not poll as well as had been expected.[4] The general election in the Netherlands was important in terms of measuring the far-right and anti-immigrant tendency that, according to the polls, on the rise in Europe. Likewise, in the UK general election, nationalist concerns over national sovereignty and national identity. The Eurosceptic nationalist right-wing the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) defending the unity of the UK won only 1.8 percent of votes and thus failed to secure a seat in the Parliament.[5] Likewise, pro-European integration Emmanuel Macron, who is the representative of centrist politics, won the French presidential election.[6] President Macron's *La Republique En Marche!* (LREM), or 'The Republic on the Move', also won a large majority in the same year's parliamentary election. Despite all these, it would be wrong to consider the election results in the Netherlands, France and the UK as defeat of populism. The reason is that conservative parties in Europe, by including populist agenda in their election manifestos, have diverted votes from populist parties. Hence, immigration-related restrictions, which are part of exclusionary identity politics of populist parties, have entered governments' agendas.[7]

Likewise, national politics can no longer be isolated from the EU either. Governments purport to represent all citizens living within their territories, and this leads them to formulate their demands as expressions of national interests. However, national success (or victory) achieved at the EU level does not always produce a favourable outcome at the national level. During the Maastricht negotiations, the British Prime Minister and leader of the Conservative Party, John Major defended the national interests of his country and obtained concessions such as the exemption of his country from the European Social Charter. Nonetheless, in the first general election, political power changed hands, and the Labour Party took over the government. Perhaps his victory at the European level was the cause for his defeat at the national level.

The EU can be characterized as a means of mitigating economic transaction costs, facilitating social interaction across national borders and weakening national sovereignty. However, the EU has emerged as a product of an incomplete 'social contract'. As the breadth of the EU's scope of competence and the depth of European integration increase, so do the shortcomings in question. In a regime that governs economic activities, that is in the EU, there has yet to be a consensus on neither the nature of the authority that will exercise the powers nor what exactly the scope of its powers will be.

Debates over the EU and European integration can no longer be explained by reducing these to rational economic interests. Debates on the future of Europe have now become directly linked to national political conflicts.

This study seeks an answer to the question of which dynamics make the EU an important topic of debate in terms of national political competition. To this end, the political preferences that determine the extent and scope of European integration are presented in the context of this question. Below, the causes of the rise of populism in Europe are discussed in light of 'democratic deficit' in the EU and regional integration theories, as well as the relevant debates in the EU.

The Theoretical Framework

The concept of 'democratic deficit' refers to the deficit between the powers entrusted with the EU institutions and the capacity of European citizens to influence the decisions made by these institutions. Since the 1990s, the 'democratic deficit' in the EU has become one of the most debated issues in scientific publications and the media. Yet, there is no agreed-upon definition of what the democratic deficit in the EU is. One of the constituents of democratic deficit in this sense is the absence of 'European' general elections. That is, European citizens do not have the capacity to choose their own European government. Citizens, except in periodic referendums on the EU membership or treaty reforms, are not able to cast their votes regarding the EU policies.[8] For the first time in the history of the forty-year elections, the rate of turnout to the European Parliament rose from 43% to 51% in 2014. This can be explained by a combination of factors. The election of Mr. Trump, who is not a fan of the EU, and the Brexit vote reminded voters of the union's vulnerability. New tests across national borders, such as migration and economic deterioration, stressed the role of the EU. Support to the Union has increased, and even the Eurosceptic parties are talking less about leaving but more about changes inside. The result is a more plural, diverse legislature based on unity and greater public participation.

Another constituent of the democratic deficit in the EU is the governor (the EU institutions) is too distant from the governed (European citizens). Furthermore, due to the multi-lingual nature of the European Parliament, its sessions and deliberations are far from being productive. In addition to these, the EU policy process is highly technocratic. Therefore, it is not possible for actors and citizens to easily form their political preferences. The policy drift is the major constituent of democratic deficit. That the EU adopts policies[9], which the majority of citizens in many Member States do not support, leads to policy drift. In other words, policies disapproved by most citizens can be adopted in the EU decision-making processes, whose outcomes affect citizens.[10] Nevertheless, in recent years, the European Commission has informed the European Parliament and set European social and environmental standards for EU partners. The EU has ensured the participation of its citizens to the trade negotiations. That could be said that the EU is the most transparent trade negotiator in the world.

Contrary to the arguments given above, Giandomenico Majone argues that there is no problem of democratic deficit in the EU. Majone describes the EU as 'regulatory state'.[11] According to Majone, the EU should not produce redistributive or value-allocative outcomes. In fact, unlike 'welfare states', the EU does not require democratic legitimacy.[12] maintains that regulatory policies in the EU should aim to correct market failures, and therefore, rather than making some people better at the expense of others, it is the explicit goal of redistribution policies, they should be formulated so that they benefit everyone (what produce Pareto efficiency are policy outcomes).[13] Majone argues that a more politicised EU will not ensure the legitimacy of the Single Market, but rather will make it more questionable.[14] Majone also claims that in an EU dominated by the European Parliament or a directly elected an EU Commission, regulatory policy-making will necessarily be politicised.[15] Politicisation will make the EU face the outcomes of redistribution, rather than pareto-efficient outcomes benefiting everyone.

Andrew Moravcsik, too, criticizes democratic deficit arguments within the context of the EU.[16] Against the argument that power has been concentrated in the executive body, Moravcsik points out that the leaders of national governments are the most directly accountable politicians in Europe.[17] Against the criticisms that the executives are outside the control of representative institutions, he maintains that the increase in the powers of the European Parliament in the legislative process and in the election of the Commission has been the most significant institutional development in the EU since the 1990s.[18] After all, there should be no deficit between the preferences of elected governments and final EU policy outcomes, since governments are accountable to their voters. Hence, it cannot be said that the EU is undemocratic.

Democratic politics has a powerful shaping effect. It helps political identities evolve over time. For example, during the evolution of American and European democracies, competition between political parties and election process accelerated the replacement of local identities by national ones. The emergence of a belief among EU citizens that a political view or policies prevailing in the EU may change will strengthen the legitimacy of the EU. If this belief cannot be procured, opposition to the EU will continue incrementally. Given that elections will also be important for the EU, European identity will turn out to be dominant in a process similar to that of the emergence of national identities.[19] As long as an environment of democratic political competition over the EU policies is not created, debates on democratic deficit in the EU will continue.

With the increase in European-scale issues, European integration has entered a process of politicisation that has begun to occupy public discourse. Philippe Schmitter defined politicization as increased contentious debates in joint decision-

making when larger number of issues is addressed.[20] This will determine the scope and level of political integration. Politicization refers to a process in which at the beginning, controversial debates in joint decision-making heat up. This is likely to lead to a widening of those interested in integration and active in integration. Probably the redefining of mutual objectives will occur over time. These redefined mutual objectives will encompass the original objectives along with the new ones. Eventually, there will be a shift in actor expectations and loyalty towards the new regional centre.

Neofunctionalists envisage that politicisation would push national governments to further integration.[21] European state construction is assumed to similar to the process of nation-state construction. The people are expected to urge their national governments to centralize, that is, to delegate powers to supranational institutions. Stefano Bartolini, too, argues that European integration, by offering exit options for individuals previously restricted by national belonging.[22]

On the other hand, intergovernmentalists have not incorporated public debates in the framework of theory. Yet, the issue of European integration has now spread beyond the bargaining among interest groups to the public sphere. Andrew Moravcsik, with an aim to explicate the construction of EU treaties, has put forward the theory of liberal intergovernmentalism by conceptualising the nation-state as a means of merely economic interests.[23] The theory focuses on intergovernmental bargaining and the formation of the preferences of national governments. According to the liberal intergovernmental theory, demands for integration emerge during the political processes at the national level. Integration then advances in line with intergovernmental negotiations. As for supranational institutions, they have limited importance in integration processes.[24]

Both neofunctionalists and liberal intergovernmentalists analyse national preferences from the perspective of economics. The neo-functionalists argue that behind the demands for integration lie increasing economic gains. Transnational interest groups and supranational actors pursue an incremental economic reform with minimal resistance. These will eventually transform the nation-state and even identities towards Europe. On the other hand, liberal intergovernmentalists emphasise that preferences regarding European integration reflect the distribution of economic gains between Member States or business groups. The second similarity between these two theories is that they both focus on bargains between various interest groups over division. Neofunctionalists suggest that interest groups will operate at the supranational level as much as at the national level. On the other hand, intergovernmentalists have solely taken into account the pressures of interest groups at the national level. Interest groups engage in lobbying activities towards national governments, because this is the most direct way of having a political impact on the EU decision-making.[25]

In the 1990s, as the market integration expanded into monetary unity and political unity re-entered the agenda, debates between political parties intensified. In the pre-Maastricht Treaty period, a European legal system was formed due to the demand for adjudication of disputes between firms. However, except for firms and farmers, the implications of the said legal system for most people were limited. Public opinion was quiescent as regards the issue of European integration. Those were the years when the elite that were insulated from public pressure somewhat reached reconciliation, and thus permissive consensus was formed. The post-Maastricht Treaty was a period, during which the elite felt public pressure when making decisions and their dissensus constrained integration.[26]

Following the Maastricht Treaty of 1991, the politicization process of European integration gained momentum. European integration has become a controversial subject of competition between political parties, elections and referendums.[27] National voters' tendencies towards European integration urge national governments to act in line with their national voters at the EU-level politics too. To put it in another way, ruling parties have become more responsive to public pressures on the future of European integration. As a result, two different jurisdictions–national and EU jurisdictions–have become more closely linked to one another.

Governance, which is defined as binding decision-making in the public sphere, has two different goals. The first goal is to derive collective benefits by coordinating human activities. This is the functional aspect of governance. Second, governance is also the expression of the community itself. People care about who exercises authority over them. This is the identity aspect of governance. A paradox is observed in the EU: the functional necessity of human cooperation does not overlap with the territorial boundaries of the community. Communities demand their own management. However, their preference of self-management remains inconsistent with functional demand. The politicisation of European integration has not emerged as a conflict between regulated capitalism and market liberalism.[28] Therefore, in order to comprehend European integration, it will be necessary to understand how and when identity manifests itself.

Politicization of European Integration and Identity Politics

People have an innate, egocentric tendency to see themselves as superior to others. This attribute does not instinctively lead to conflict with or hostility towards others. Identity is constructed politically. Individuals typically have more than one identity. However, the more privileged an individual is within a group, the more he or she keeps distance from a jurisdiction that also covers other groups. The perception of identity shapes individuals' attitudes towards the EU as well. In Europe, the jurisdictions have changed over time; yet the change in the identity of citizens has not occurred at the same pace.

Economic considerations marked European integration, because geopolitics allowed it. The EU is considered as a security community. A security community refers to a region, where a war between a group of states is very unlikely.[29] Historically, identities have been aligned with the boundaries of jurisdiction (national boundaries) of the state. In forming their citizens, national administrators have employed education and means of socialization; they have strengthened national solidarity by dragging their people into international conflicts. European integration has not witnessed interstate conflicts. Thus, the EU has emerged without coercions that contributed to the formation of the nation-state and its citizens.[30] Therefore, European integration can be regarded as an experiment of forming a political identity in the absence of fundamental dynamics that have shaped the political identity in the past.

Eurobarometer, which is the EU's tool to measure public opinion, has been conducting surveys on identity since 1992. In the surveys, citizens are asked to define themselves with one of the following three options: 'nationality and European', 'European and nationality' and 'European only'. Even though Thomas Risse states that Europeanness or 'becoming European' has become part of defining national identities[31], in the Eurobarometer surveys, the majority of EU citizens define themselves only with their national identity without a noticeable trend.[32]Despite increased mobility and transnational social interaction across national borders, and most importantly, jurisdictional transformation, European identity has not yet prevailed over national identities. Today, Europe is being tested by the tension between the rapid change in jurisdictions and the identities that remain almost constant.

It is not unusual for an individual to have a deep national attachment and yet to take a positive approach to European integration. What is important is whether a person considers his or her national identity as exclusive or inclusive of other regional identities. Individuals with exclusive national identities are inclined to Euroscepticism, if they believe that the love they feel for their country and its institutions is not compatible with European integration. The stronger a populist right-wing party, the more likely individuals with exclusive national identity are Eurosceptics. Individuals with inclusive identities do not apparently affected by the existence or strength of a populist right-wing party.[33]

Identity becomes important when the economic impacts of a problem cannot be fully identified, but their social consequences can be seen and discussed by mass organizations in the public sphere. Economic rationality constructs the attitudes of people enjoying economic benefits from European integration (mobile, educated, relatively wealthy, and cosmopolitan). On the other hand, the attitudes of those who economically suffer from integration are determined by identity.[34]

At the European level, first, there were expectations that politics, as in the case of national politics, would be shaped through the right/left conflict. In other words, it was envisaged that in Europe, coalitions would, too, be formed based on division, that is, between political parties representing the economic factors (labour or capital). Those coalitions had to be as inclusive as possible in order to be able to issue decisions (in order to achieve the qualified majority) in votes held in EU institutions.

However, political parties that have formed coalition with one another within the EU have continued to be rival at the national level. At the European level, social democrats advocating market-corrective measures and Christian democrats supporting social market capitalism formed a coalition. Yet, they remained rivals as regards redistribution at the national level. At the EU level, on the opposite camp of the coalition of social democrats and Christian democrats were conservatives and economic liberals aiming at the abolition of supervision at European (or wider) scale. As for the political parties representing workers and other social movements, they supported social democrats at the European level, but took a stand against Christian democrats representing the business and financial world.[35]

Questions pertaining to the EU issues do not materialise in the manner that the right/left conflict on national policies do, for the fact that the scope of redistribution in Europe is narrower. Convergence to a single European model will bring significant costs to various national welfare systems. Moreover, at the European level, redistribution will take place not only from rich to the poor but also from rich north and west to the poor south and east. That is, redistribution among citizens will also involve redistribution among Member States. Liesbet Hooghe found that national elites were more willing to yield national authority in national sovereignty areas, while citizens' attitudes towards EU social policies were more favourable. On the other hand, both national elites and citizens opposed to high spending policies at the EU level. The reason is that the changing authority (jurisdiction) poses the risk of loss of interests achieved at the national level.[36]

Apart from these, left-wing parties have faced the challenge of cultural diversity, which has significantly increased with the EU's expansion into Central and Eastern Europe. Citizens are not pleased to engage in redistribution with people who are perceived not to belong to the same community. The EU redistributes 75 percent of its total income through agricultural and harmonisation policies. This contribution is very small compared to the states in Europe, but is greater than that of any international institution. The level of redistribution is at the highest level in homogeneous communities, where citizens share a common destiny and have a strong sense of sacrifice for general well-being, as in Scandinavian communities. However, it is lower in heterogeneous populations.[37] Therefore, given the cultural diversity in the EU, the redistribution rate should not be expected to increase in the EU in the near future.

Thus, the right/left rivalry at the European level manifests itself within the context of social regulations rather than redistribution. This alienates the radical leftists from European integration, because they see the EU as a unilateral

capitalist project that jeopardizes social protection at the national level. The attitude of the social democrats is ambivalent. While on the one hand, they choose to protect their national welfare systems against the 'joint decision trap' in the EU, on the other hand, they support the coordination of fiscal policy at the European level and the formation of a 'citizens Europe'. Fritz Scharpf states that during the EU decision-making process, the EU decisions are hindered because of the heterogeneity of national preferences and interests, in particular; yet, the national solutions of the Member States are also affected by the legal obligations arising from EU membership. Among the examples of these policy areas are taxation of capital movements, employment policy, industrial relations and social policy.[38]

Accordingly, in the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997, the EU's powers in employment, women's rights, human rights and environmental policies were expanded with the support of social democratic parties holding the political power in the thirteen of the fifteen EU members at the time. The Treaty of Amsterdam later paved the way to the Lisbon Strategy[39] with an aim to alleviate poverty, to raise employment rates, to modernize education and training systems and to coordinate policies regarding the pensions reform.

EU membership restricts policy-making at the national level.[40] However, the nation-state has a keen instinct for far adapted to new challenges.[41] Jean Bodin and Thomas Hobbes first elaborated the notion of sovereignty in the 16th and 17th centuries, they were concerned with establishing the legitimacy of a single hierarchy of domestic authority.[42] In the contemporary world, sovereignty describes the autonomy and independence of states. A necessary consequence of this claim is the principle of non-interference: one state has no right to intervene in the internal affairs of another. In this regard, the EU is out of the traditional rules of sovereignty. The member states have established supranational institutions (such as the European Court of Justice, the European Commission) and Council of Ministers which can make decisions even opposed by some member states. In one sense, the EU is a product of state sovereignty because it has been created through treaties among its member states. But, in another sense, it fundamentally contradicts conventional understandings of sovereignty because these same treaties have undermined the juridical autonomy of its individual members.[43]

Nationalist parties such as the National Rally in France or Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs-FPÖ*) are opposed to European integration on the ground that it undermines national sovereignty. These parties, by rendering the issue of identity as the focus of debates, take a stand against European integration claiming that national identities are weakened and national values are eroded by the introduction of foreign ideas as a result of European integration, thus leading to social disintegration. Their stance towards immigration policies is the same. According to these parties, migrants erode national identity and thus weaken national solidarity.[44]

Conservative parties, like the nationalist parties, prioritize national identity and national sovereignty. However, since the Maastricht Treaty, within the economic approaches of conservative parties, nationalism and neoliberalism have been in competition. While nationalists resist the erosion of national sovereignty under all circumstances, neoliberals, for the sake of accomplishing economic integration, choose to share national sovereignty with other Member States (i.e., erosion of national sovereignty in the economic sphere). As in the case of debates within the Rally for the Republic in France (*Le Rassemblement pour la République-RPR)* and Conservative and Unionist Party in the United Kingdom, the centre-right parties' attitudes towards European integration has become ambivalent as well. In Germany, Christian Democratic Union (CDU)–traditionally pro-European integration–had to come closer to Christian Social Union (Christlich-Soziale Union-CSU), which was sceptical of European integration. Thus, in 2005, the CDU supported the CSU's opposition to Turkey's full membership to the EU.[45] Whilst left-wing parties, with some exceptions, opposed European integration prior to the Single Market, the political spectrum opposing European integration became complex in the post-Single Market period. In the 2000s, nationalist conservatives and nationalist parties were, in general, against European integration.

Green parties, on the one hand, criticize the democratic deficit and the centralized bureaucratic structure in the EU, and on the other hand support European integration for the sake of forming a multicultural society, one of the most important issues of their political projects. As for left-wing parties, European integration continues to be a controversial topic. They face the challenge of reconciling internationalism and capitalism. Accordingly, at the referendums on the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2005, Greens (*LesVerts*) in France and Green Left (*Groenlinks*) in the Netherlands took a 'Yes' stance. Yet, both France and the Netherlands rejected the Treaty. Post-referendum surveys found that left voters said no due to social concerns (i.e., social consequences of market economy), while right voters, because of nationalist concerns (over the erosion of national sovereignty and national identity).[46]

The Single Market has been seen as a form of trade liberalization with large and quantifiable impacts on importers and exporters, whose salient consequences for the public are unclear. As citizens make up their minds about the EU, they become more sceptical of European integration than centrist parties do. Christian democrats and liberal parties have long supported European integration. As for social democrats, at first, they had concerns about economic integration. However, after the formation of the Single Market, they have endeavoured for an economic integration within the framework of regulated capitalism. The issue of identity that was politicised by European integration has shaken the positions of parties regarding the traditional mode of distribution in Europe.

Debates on European integration have shifted from the economic sphere to political one. This shift has brought the issue of identity into the focus of debates, since populist parties now politicise European integration with a louder voice. Whereas

for the right-wing electorate, the erosion of national sovereignty is at the same time a threat to national identity, for the left-wing electorate, this erosion manifests itself in the form of social security concern. That the political dimension of European integration has become debatable boosted Euroscepticism. Populist parties have begun to voice Euroscepticism more explicitly in their political discourses.

In the EU, qualified majority voting is the most common form of decision-making process, which points out to a structure that is supportive of the formation of coalitions in the Council and Parliament. Nonetheless, this does not bring about such a necessity for Eurosceptics. Since any amendment to the EU's founding treaties requires unanimity, one country's veto is enough to block it. Thus, decision-making processes in the EU have situated populist parties and populist powers in a strategic position in European politics. Anti-EU populists have become more popular in many European countries, including stalwart members such as Italy and Germany. However, there was no increase in the European Parliament elections of May 2019, as predicted by populists and nationalists, was achieved, but such parties won seats in Italy and Britain.

European politics was dominated by the two large-tent political families, the center-right European People's Party (EPP) and the center-left, and now the Socialists and Democrats (S&D). Parties belonging to these two groups led most EU countries; In Brussels, the two served as exchange houses for disputes. In recent years, however, EU societies have become more pluralistic, voters' interest in established institutions has undergone social change, and debates and identity have displaced the old left-right competition.

The political geometry of European power is becoming scattered. First, there is more division: the old center-right and center-left families no longer spread to Europe. In the European Parliament election of May 2019, conservatives were the most successful in central and southeastern Europe (eight out of nine center-right governments came from the east of the Rhine). The social democrats are based in Iberia and Scandinavia. Meanwhile, the new strong liberal and green groupings in parliament are the strongest in the north and west of Europe, while the right-wing populists are the most successful in the east and south. However, the new European Parliament is more fragmented than before.

The European Commission - the executive body of the Union, the guardian of its law order and the only institution capable of initiating European legislation- sets the EU's long-term agenda (unlike the presidency of the European Council). Therefore, it can be claimed that the president of the Commission is the brightest of the jobs in the EU's post-election turnover. The process in which it had been allocated has changed. For decades, national leaders had dictated the elections, but in 2009 the European Parliament won the right to elect a president and in 2014 the Spitzenkandidat agreement was concluded. According to the agreement, the largest (or majority) can take the job. In this context, Jean-Claude Juncker owed the majority to two major groups: the center-right European People's Party (EPP) and the Socialists and Democrats. The Council did not expect it but had to accept it.

The quarrel on the presidency of the commission would take place on two fronts. The first is the power struggle between the council and the parliament. MEPS has gained strength in recent years and has been strengthened by increased participation in the election. Parliamentarians would be expected to run the Spitzenkandidat process. Otherwise, they will reassign their authority to the council. The second front is the competition between France and Germany. Macron wants to break the EPP's conservative sovereignty and alliance to do so with the liberal and socialist-led bloc of states and a new, expanded liberal group in parliament. Following an election summit on May 28th, he had lunch with leaders from Spain, Portugal, Belgium and the Netherlands. They lined up against the EPP, the most powerful in central and southeastern Europe, dominated by Merkel's Christian Democratic Union.

Referendums are processes that are launched with the initiative of ruling parties. Yet, the results of the referendums may not always be in line with the expectations of the initiators. The reason is that since they diminish the role of political parties, referendums open up more space for identity politics. Therefore, the party elites' influence over issues submitted to the referendum is replaced by citizens' initiative and populist discourses. Referendums in the EU are held on issues such as accession to the EU as a full Member State, accession to the Monetary Union (the replacement of the national currency by the euro) and ratification of amendments to the founding treaties, namely decisions on the European political architecture. Out of 44 referendums held between 1972 and 2015, only 9 resulted in rejections, or changes in planned adaptations of EU treaties, or the amendments to the EU treaties, which were first rejected, were subsequently approved following certain revisions. In 2003, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia said 'Yes' to the EU membership with percentages between 83 percent and 94 percent. 'No' votes on EU membership generally reflect concerns about national sovereignty and loss of control over natural resources. In order to protect its national sovereignty and not to share power in revenue-generating areas of policy such as energy (oil) and fisheries, Norway has rejected membership of the EU twice in referendums in 1972 and 1994. In 1985, Greenland, to be able to protect its sovereignty and control over fishing rights, left the EU (the then European Community) following the referendum of 1982.[47] Irish voters have agreed to increase the powers of the EU in seven referendums held since 1972 (albeit one of them was the revised version of a previously rejected proposal), while saying 'No' in one referendum.[48] As of 2018, Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greek Administration of Southern Cyprus, Portugal and Romania remain the only EU countries that have not yet held a referendum on EU issues.

The Maastricht Treaty signed in 1991 was a turning point for European integration. The process legitimating the said treaty has triggered the public debate on the complex bargaining between political elites. Thanks to that, the public has confronted the fact that European integration undermines national sovereignty. In a referendum held in 1992, Denmark rejected the Maastricht Treaty, which proposed economic and monetary cooperation. In the French referendum, the Treaty was approved with a narrow margin, 50.4 percent to 49.7 percent.[49] It took 11 months for Europe to survive this political shock. A settlement was reached by granting Denmark special rights. Denmark would stay outside the Monetary Union. Eventually, the Maastricht Treaty came into force in 1993. The EU managed to overcome this crisis only through such a compromise. The enforcement of the Maastricht Treaty has proved that the EU decisions can no longer be made and legitimized through bargaining between the political elites.

Anti-EU parties are argued to be the main drivers of the politicization of European integration, whereas pro-European parties are trying to depoliticize European integration in many ways.[50] The steps towards political unity require popular support. Centrist parties continue to resist the politicisation of European integration. Populist parties, on the contrary, find it appropriate to use politicisation of European integration in favour of their own interests. Populist parties' attitudes towards the EU are accompanied with the Euroscepticism of citizens. While left radicals oppose European integration through anti- capitalism, the populist right takes an opposing stand in view of a desire to protect the nation. EU policies are gradually becoming more truly European. The old sewing days made by EPP and S&D or France and Germany disappear. Ideological conflicts cross the borders more often. A more fragmented EU is also a more politicized Europe.

Conclusion

After the Single Market, the EU agenda has focused on which social and economic policies to pursue. The extent and depth of European integration has increased; national sovereignty has been eroded; mass migration and intense economic competition have made the impact of integration felt by citizens. The new EU policies have winners and losers. In such a situation, the EU is reshaping its economic and social policies in order not to lose public support.

Starting from the second half of the twentieth century, politics in the European nation-states has been marked by the right/left rivalry over the consequences of politics in social distribution. The issue of where the boundaries of political society should be, i.e. identity, has not been debated in this period. As for European integration, it has placed, along with the distribution issues, the issue of identity once again onto the agenda of politics in the context of the redefinition of political society. The EU has entered a process driven by identity politics and pressures regarding function and distribution.

Regional integration theories acknowledge that integration is triggered by the incompatibility between efficiency and the existing structure of authority (existing jurisdictions, i.e., the nation-state). EU democracy does not share the existing field of legitimacy equally with Member States.[51] In this regards, European integration is increasingly becoming politicised via elections and referendums. As a result of this politicisation, the preferences of the public and national political parties become decisive in deciding what the powers of the EU will be and where the boundaries of its powers begin and end. Therefore, identity is of key importance as to how Europe will be shaped.

Since the EU politics and national politics have now become highly interrelated in Europe, the manoeuvring space of ruling parties has narrowed as well. That exclusionary national identities have come to the forefront across the peoples of Europe, leads to limiting frameworks of possible amendments to the treaties within the EU and restricting governments' concessions in negotiations. In essence, whilst governments have become responsive to public pressure on European integration, the interaction between national and EU policies has increased. Thus, politics at the national level has become more correlated with the policy outcomes at the EU level. The framework of treaty negotiations between national governments is constrained by the fear of referendum defeats. Even if referendums are not on the agenda, ruling parties are concerned about the negative impacts of EU policies on their national general elections.

European integration has been the project of the centre-right and centre-left parties. Debates on Europe have primarily been shaped by the opponents of European integration, such as nationalist parties, radical left parties and nationalist conservatives. Populists and nationalist conservatives oppose European integration through identity, whereas radical leftists, through the issue of distribution. The multi-layered governance structure of the EU has made identity a determining variable. Thus, 'identity' will determine how the EU will evolve.

A short bio-note

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[8] Andreas Follesdal and Simon Hix, "Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44 no. 3 (2006), 536.

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