

Euroscepticism, radical views, populist parties, are the dangerous for the future of Europe?

Written by Orsolya Szabó
July, 2018

Nowadays Europe, more specific the European Union faces with numerous threats, one of the most serious is the newest political trend, which is blooming already for a few years. In my essay I would like to prove how this new trend, namely the populism, and the euroscepticism endangering the future of Europe, and who are representing them. In the second part I'm examining the issue of the United Kingdom, and the effect of euroscepticism to the country. To be clear, in my view the EU is the key for the future of Europe, that's why I care with it the most.

Populism vs. European Union

The European Union represents the values which were mostly developed after the Second World War and they designated their goals to protect these values. [1] The community expects from the members to respect these principles, like human dignity, freedom of movement; abstention; religion; freedom of speech; deliverance and individual franchise. They care about human rights, equality, democracy and rule of law too, and the last two are the most imperiled by radical-right populists. Member states of the integration to protect the values promote peace, well-being of its citizens, sustainable development, scientific progress, offer security and justice without internal borders, fight with discrimination, respect cultural and linguistic diversity, also aspire economic, social and territorial cohesion among EU members and last but not least established a monetary union. So from these facts we can say that the Union is a really important member of the international community and we should guard it.

In the last years the political life changed a lot, new directions appeared on the political palette around the globe. Populism is a strong new movement, we can connect it with euroscepticism and re-arousal of radical views. But what is populism? The Oxford Dictionary says it is a „political approach that strives to appeal to ordinary people who feel that their concerns are disregarded by established elite groups”. [2] So the populism in my interpretation¹ try to work like a good grandma, who try the comfort her grandchild who had a fight with his parents, but in the real life this grandma is like the wolf from the Red Riding Hood. Maybe it is too harsh, but in the following I will try to prove how populism is more a threat and not something that can revive the political conversation between the parties and citizens.

The populist parties try to reach the people who have daily problems and they feel like the government abandoned them thus these parties offer them an alternative way, to help them, and posing as they care with them the most. [3] Because of it I think the key is the people, so the European Union should make a more direct connection with its citizens and get to know their problems deeper, show tolerance and propagate pluralism. With this, the EU could stay fresh and look like more philanthropist. From these progresses comes the question, what lead to the emerge of populism? The answer is complex, but we can see how the voters are frustrated and displeased.

This discontentment could be observed during the Austrian election in 2016, that led the voters to choose the first green President of the country, Alexander Van der Bellen². Because the other option would be a right-populist nominee, more voters could be activated for voting the opposing person, as a kind of protest. It showed a tension between the government and the

¹ I used the definition and my previous knowledge about the topic to create my adaptation.

² The second was a far-left nominee, it is show too, how the austrian system conserved and the voters didn't like it.

citizens, who became infuriate from the decades of bipolar political system. This phenomena is exchange to practice among EU member states, fringe parties gain power aside mainstreams parties, and in this point, we can, how populist parties can be good for the union, because these new parties bring fresh energy to politics and democracy (also the EU) can profitate from it with revive dialogues about inequality and corruption. But it has a little chance, because they use different guidelines and it can be dangerous with push the argument to right.

From one side, it could be seen as fresh, new energy for the EU politics, which revive dialogues about important topics like common security, inequalities or corruption. From other side, this is not a valid argument for the populist parties, instead should the old parties regain the lead, and be innovative about how to speak to the people. When we give right to these populist parties, to speak about these topics in the way they speak about them, we will be in a course which will be always more extreme. For this is a good example the migration: thanks to the populist-rightist parties, the language is increasingly extreme, liberal politicians using words which were used by right-wing parties around 2015. It leads the whole debate to the right, which has then nothing to do more with european values or liberalism.

We can say about these movements that they have an ambition to lead in their home countries and bring through their goals in the EU, too. In countries where they are not governing,³ the democratical institutions, new parties have chance to emerge and all the institutions can work well. This leads to a culture of debate, the liveness of democracy, and human rights. Maybe more and more people are discontented with their old parties, and want some new air in politics, they maybe not realise that they have a chance to rule their country, to tell their opinion, to go to the streets, to elect, to write freely articles, and more. This should be the main point of democracy learning, already from young years, to propagate these rights, and with that, it will be more appealing for the people to elect democratic parties, because they value what they have.

Radical-right populists are the ones about we should feel anxious. They refuse the values and institutions of the European Union. Nowadays lot of EU member states have populist parties, who are on power, or are very strong in opposition. This has the effect, that in the EU Parliament the number of populist representatives is growing, which shows: although they are opposing the existing institutions, they want to use them for their own goals.

That's why the EU shouldn't give up its old principles, because it can weaken its credibility. Although the Union elaborates strategies to cope with these difficulties but its tough to cooperate developing solutions when member states slowing the integration processes. The EU could be stronger if it finds new ways to reform and revive its policies, and become more flexible. It should reach the citizens directly, focus on their problems more (or more sightly and transparent) and strengthen consensus about its value base.

The EU is in crossfire between nationalist and internationalist, populists and liberals in political debate, the migration crises and eurozone speeds up the polarization and fragmentation, old parties disappeared in the fight for power. We should stand together and protect what is the key of our future.

The United Kingdom was always a separated country among the old continent's one, their joining the the EU was tough, but they managed it. But in the last ten years [4] populist

³Not like in Hungary.

attacks against immigration, establishment and settled minorities and it culminated in the referendum about EU membership in June 23, 2016. The result was disturbing, the citizens voted beside to exit. The process which started in 2013 with the UK Independence Party, a radical right populist party, led the country to break out from the integration.

Conclusion

The events of UK show us, how we have to be prudent and up-to-date about populism, if we want to save our community. In my view, without Euroscepticism, populist parties can be a refreshing to the aged political systems.

Bibliography

- [1] www.europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/eu-in-brief_en
- [2] The Oxford Dictionary – www.en.oxforddictionaries.com
- [3] Heather GRABBE - Stefan LEHNE: Can the EU survive populism? – June 14, 2016; Carnegie Europe
- [4] Matthew J. GOODWIN: What we can learn from the United Kingdom's EU referendum? – September 2016; Spotlight News

Huge thanks to Lilla Tamási to checked my essay!