Introduction

Joanna Sondel-Cedarmas and Francesco Berti

The revival of the phenomenon of nationalism has become a major political problem both in and for contemporary Europe. In recent years, opposition to the processes of globalisation and the programme of closer European integration, understood as a threat to the sovereignty of individual member states, has led to an intensification of Eurosceptic sentiments on the Old Continent. The results of the European parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2019, the Brexit referendum and electoral results in different European countries are all testament to the considerable growth of radical populist-nationalist and conservative-sovereignist movements and parties. The common idea that binds these groups, both in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe, is a hostile attitude towards the idea of (an ever more integrated) united Europe. These parties reject not only the project of building a European federation, but also the current model of the European Union and the values underlying its attitudes. They are united by their criticism of EU policies, in particular those concerning security, emigration, multiculturalism, gender equality, the rights of minorities, as well as economic liberalism and the common currency. However, this criticism manifests itself with varying degrees of intensity, and not all parties fit the classic definition of Euroscepticism and represent its mild form of Eurorealism.¹ One may essentially delineate two main branches of anti-Europeanism. The first is manifested by the rejection and radical criticism of the policies and very existence of the current EU model, seeing it as an entity dominated by a liberal and leftist system of values as well as liberal elites. This position is represented primarily by parties grouped in the group of Conservatives and Reformists in the European Parliament, which do not, in principle, question the presence of their own countries in the EU, but rather propose the creation of an alternative model for it, namely a confederation of sovereign and free states, based on intergovernmental cooperation, respecting the autonomy of individual member states and attaching great importance to their national traditions and identities. The second model is characterised by a complete negation of the EU, which sees it as an artificial, technocratic and bureaucratic entity. This attitude is represented by the Identity and Democracy group (formerly, the Europe of Nations and Freedom), which

brings together parties which advocate leaving the EU or ending integration processes in the case of candidate countries.

This monograph attempts to bring together reflections on the organic and complex critique of the European Union, its policies and cultural and ideological character, as presented by the rather heterogeneous political constellation which is the European right wing. Its leading idea is a comparative analysis of this criticism (both as ideas, institutions and politicians), conducted through the prism of the narrative of contemporary national-populist and conservative-sovereignist parties, both at the transnational level, in Western and Central and Eastern Europe, and in terms of its intensity (whether they are Eurosceptic or Eurorealistic). This study therefore contributes to the ongoing research on a very important political phenomenon at the European level.² The original version of the chapters contained herein was presented at an international conference entitled *Europe of Nationalists. European Nationalisms From a Historical And Comparative Perspective*, which took place in Krakow on 24–25 October 2019.

The volume is made up of three parts. The first concerns the attitude towards the European Union and the process of European integration of contemporary nationalisms from a comparative perspective in Western and Central and Eastern Europe. What connects this diverse spectrum of forces is the negative element of criticism – characteristic primarily of groups representing ‘hard Euroscepticism’ – which definitely prevails over the positive. Essentially, this precludes the construction of an alternative joint project. This is the strength, but also the limit, of this political phenomenon which has gone from strength to strength in Europe over the past two decades. Fear is another element that connects all parties which are critical of the EU, both in Western and Central and Eastern Europe, since it enables them to attract growing support by preying on the fear prevalent in European societies. As deftly demonstrated by Daniele Pasquinucci, Euroscepticism is associated in countries such as Great Britain, Italy and France, with a kind of Germanophobia, which manifests itself in a widespread fear of the emergence of a Teutonic Europe, where Germany has gained a hegemonic position primarily through economic means. The role of the fear of ‘cultural others’, which are perceived in terms of a threat to national identity, are perhaps key to understanding the growing importance of national-populist and sovereignist parties in Central and Eastern Europe, and this factor is carefully analysed by Zdzisław Mach. There is no doubt that in recent years the ‘European threat’ has been increasingly related to the migration crisis and the EU policy in this area, long branded as ineffective by the Eurosceptics. Mach, paying attention to the unique nature of Euroscepticism in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, indicates that different historical and social conditions in the development of its nations made these Central European nationalisms take on more of an ethnic character. As a result, in this part of Europe, the fear of others (with Muslim emigrants to the fore) is felt

particularly strongly and these societies find it extremely difficult to accept any policy connected to multiculturalism.

Using the example of the most representative political parties and movements in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, the current development of nationalism, in its various forms from national-populism to sovereignism, is analysed in the articles that make up the second part of this volume. It opens with Marek Maciejewski's chapter on the evolution of the New Right (NR) in the Federal Republic of Germany, from the 1960s to the present day. Ever since German reunification, NR has been considered one of the most important representatives of right-wing extremism in Europe, regardless of the marginal role it plays on the German political scene. Due to its nationalist and anti-liberal ideas, it is critical of the programme of European unity, and proposes a loose union of individual states on the basis of a confederation in its stead, one which clearly maintains both national and cultural identities. On the other hand, a more complex position in relation to Europe can be discerned in the activity of National Rally (RN), a French far-right party whose criticism of European integration as a threat to national sovereignty has led it to become one of the most important Eurosceptic groups in Europe. In her contribution, Marta Lorimer shows the complex position of this political formation towards Europe and how it has evolved over the years. She highlights its initial support for the idea of cooperation between various European nations, based on their civilisational similarities, against the threat posed by the Soviet Union in the 1980s, through its moderate support for the creation of the European Economic Community, up until its strident opposition to the European Union from the 1990s. Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy (FdI), seen as the heir to the extreme neo-fascist right in Italy, in many respects welcomes the German New Right vision of a Europe of Nations. However, the FdI represents a milder 'soft' position in its criticism of the EU, one which permits it to be considered Eurorealist. As documented by Joanna Sondel-Cedarmas, the Brothers of Italy critique of the EU focuses on its centralist-technocratic character, liberal economic policy, migrant policies and the fact that the liberal European elites support multiculturalism. In juxtaposition to these, it favours conservative ideas, economic solidarism and nationalism. The criticism of the EU is much stronger in Matteo Salvini's League programme, which makes it very close to the Eurosceptic position of National Rally and other parties belonging to the Identity and Democracy group in the European Parliament. As shown by Gianluca Passarelli and Dario Tuorto, the League is a political formation that has undergone a significant evolution over the years, from an ethno-regional grouping, focusing its support exclusively on the north of Italy, to a nationalist-sovereignty formation of a national character. Passarelli and Tuorto, analysing the evolution of the position towards the EU and the transition from the idea of *l'Europe des régions* to the concept of a 'Europe of nations', highlight the role of the 'European threat' as a key factor in building

the political success of the League and taking advantage of the social fear of Europe being inundated by illegal emigrants, coupled with criticism of the ineffective European migration policy. Many of the themes covered by the League can be found in the accusations made by the English nationalist political groupings that led to Brexit. As Marcin Galent shows, their development should be analysed in terms of the unique nature of British history, which in many respects distinguishes it from continental Europe. The political history of Great Britain, with the dominant idea of the state-nation, meant that British identity stems from a multinational and multi-ethnic empire based on economic and political factors. The weakening of British identity as a result of the gradual disintegration of its empire created the requisite space for a nationalist resurgence. The revival of English nationalism, which led to a clash over national interests inside the UK and the EU, can be explained by the gradual sense of a loss of representation in national and international institutions discerned by English citizens. Agnieszka Grzechynka's text, which closes the collection of articles on Western Europe, focuses on the issues of Catalan nationalism and the role of the EU in the Catalan independence process. Catalan nationalism, which can be considered an emblematic example of cultural ethno-nationalism, one strongly rooted in history, related to the existence of a minority and understood as a bearer of a specific identity within the nation state, may be representative of other separatist movements in Europe. The article, which is a reconstruction of the main historical and political phases that led to the independence referendum in October 2017, focuses on the attitude of Community institutions towards the separatist desire of Catalonia, paying attention to the threats it holds not only for the current order in Spain, but also for determining the shape of the political affairs of the entire European continent.

In addition to the issues raised by Western Eurosceptic parties, the chapters devoted to nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe show the additional factors related to the political transformation which took place after the fall of communism and the process of European integration which had a special character in the region. Thus Małgorzata Maria Fijał, by analysing the populist political narrative on the vision of Europe and European integration, tries to present the reasons for the success of the national-populist formation of the Kuliz'15 movement, which entered the Polish political scene as a result of the parliamentary elections in October 2015. Fijał primarily connects the electoral success of this political grouping, which in many ways resembles that of other European groups, in particular the Italian Five Star Movement (M5S), with its explosive barrage of populist slogans directed against the ruling establishment and representative democracy. Also, in the case of the Polish group, the defence of the 'people' against the manipulations of the 'elites' and professional politicians is associated with a critical attitude towards Europe. However, this is not manifested in a complete rejection of the EU, but rather in the criticism of some of its policies and demands for EU reform in terms of securing greater autonomy and sovereignty for member states. Tadeusz

Kopyś's article, which presents the evolution of Hungarian nationalism after 1989, focuses on the analysis of the nature of two right-wing groups: the conservative Fidesz and the far-right Jobbik. In the programmes of both these parties, one can clearly discern the concept of an ethnic and cultural nation. In the case of Fidesz, a particular emphasis was placed on the role of the Christian religion in the life of the nation, which is also reflected in its characteristic vision of Europe. This it defines as a 'Christian Europe of sovereign states', whose heart should be in a Central and Eastern Europe which is seen as culturally distinct from Western Europe. The attitude of this party towards the EU can be classified, just like Law and Justice in Poland and Brothers of Italy in Italy, in terms of soft Euroscepticism. It does not see the EU as a threat to Hungary, but opposes the bureaucratic and technocratic model of the EU, its globalism and liberal democracy, and attaches greater importance to the autonomy and national sovereignty of the individual member states. Anti-European sentiment is much stronger in Jobbik's party political programme, where criticism of the EU is combined with support for closer economic cooperation between Hungary and Russia, China and Turkey. The part of the book devoted to Central and Eastern Europe ends with texts on the criticism of Europe in the narratives of nationalist groups in two countries – Serbia and Russia. The fact that neither belong to the EU means that their anti-European rhetoric takes a particularly interesting form. As Natasza Styczyńska and Haris Dajč have indicated, in the case of Serbia, the narratives of populist far-right parties are characterised by a dualism between the pro-Western direction ('direction West') and the tightening of political and economic cooperation with Russia and China. Serbia, although officially an EU candidate country since 2009, is considered to be one of the most Eurosceptic countries in the territory of former Yugoslavia. Styczyńska and Dajč emphasise that the legacy of the past plays a considerable role in contemporary Serbian nationalism and is represented by anti-EU attitudes. This is particularly true of the remnants of the nationalist tendencies that developed in the last period of Yugoslavia's existence (within Serbian communism), the break-up of Yugoslavia, the issue of the NATO intervention in 1999 and, above all, the problem of the independence of Kosovo. A peculiar anti-Occidentalism is also characteristic of Russian nationalism. As Joachim Diec shows in his chapter, there is a characteristic anti-European narrative amongst a complex constellation of Russian nationalist movements. Within this, two main ideological branches can be distinguished: 1) related to 'imperial nationalism' – the myth of imperial Russia and the need to rebuild Russia's global status as a superpower; and 2) representing the so-called ethnic and cultural nationalism, which is based on the ethnic concept of the Russian people, the defence of traditional Russian cultural values and the Orthodox religion, and ethnically pure Russian elements against the threat of both emigrants from the east, especially Muslims, and Western European influences.

The third part of the volume contains contributions on the attitudes of European national-populist parties towards the EU and its policies. Giorgia

Nesti and Paolo Graziano highlight this issue through an analysis of the votes cast by representatives of populist parties in the European Parliament in 2014–2019. They emphasise the weakness of the extreme right in terms of promoting the postulates which are important to it at the European level, mainly due to its internal fragmentation. The article also addresses the problem of how to classify a multitude of contemporary populisms, noting the incompatibility of the classic right/left division and proposing to replace it with the categories of inclusivism/exclusivism. This would classify those who are radically hostile to EU politics and values as exclusivist, while moderate Eurosceptics would be termed inclusivist. The weakness of the message proclaimed by nationalist-populist groups in the European Parliament, against the background of the convincing and often triumphant rhetoric which can be seen in national contexts, also appears in the chapter by Grzegorz Pożarlik, who sees a form of (neo)ideocratic power based on a very polarised political message in nationalist rhetoric in Central Europe. This message builds its foundations on the juxtaposition of *real people* versus *corrupt political elites* and *the will of the sovereign* versus *the rule of law*. As emphasised by Pożarlik, the political narrative developed by the Fidesz party in Hungary and Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland is also an emblematic example of the anti-liberal revolution in Central and Eastern Europe. The article advances the thesis, also put forward by Zdzisław Mach, that the EU is perceived as a foreign entity, one representing a system of liberal values and left-wing ideas which are hostile to national unity, national tradition and religion. The rhetoric even stretches as far as to claim that such parties are the genuine representatives of true European values. An analysis of nationalist parties in Central Europe was also undertaken in the last two chapters, this time in light of legal and educational issues. Using the example of the politics of the Law and Justice and Fidesz parties, Przemysław Tacik highlights how a tension born of permanent opposition to liberal-democratic constitutionalism, both in the national and European arenas, has led to something akin to a ‘European civil war’ being fought in the field of law in Poland and in Hungary. Populist-nationalist parties have used the liberal model parasitically in order to strengthen their own executive power. For her part, Elżbieta Mach, analysing the educational reform introduced in Poland by the Law and Justice (PiS) government in 2017, presents the issues of education in a nationalist spirit. The aforementioned reform, modelled on the ideas proclaimed by PiS, is aimed at educating citizens in the spirit of patriotic, religious values, ones which are hostile to ‘the other’ and closed to all external elements. Chief amongst these is multiculturalism, which is seen as particularly threatening to national identity, and the educational reform is intended to instil different (even opposing) values in the younger generation than those which underpin the EU.

Confronting the challenges of contemporary nationalism and populism is a far from easy task and in some European contexts it may even be akin to ‘swimming against the flow’. It is primarily a cultural challenge that requires a highly developed system of values and identities, one which includes Christian

ones which have been linked with European civilisation for over two thousand years. For Ewa Kozerska, Pope Francis is the most emblematic herald of this battle. His non-European cultural background allows him to critically evaluate contemporary political and cultural tendencies that predominate in the Old Continent. In the opinion of Pope Francis, Europe should stand for the basis of its cultural integration by referring to its common Greek-Roman-Judeo-Christian tradition, in the spirit of openness to others, true solidarity and dialogue. Constraining this identity, fosters the emergence of extremist attitudes and perhaps will lead to the disintegration of the Old Continent.

Notes

- 1 Using the distinction proposed by Aleks Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart, one may divide Euroscepticism into hard and soft varieties. Alex Szczerbiak and Paul Taggart (eds), *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, 2 vol., (Oxford University Press 2008); see also Liubomir K. Topaloff, *Political Parties and Euroscepticism*, (Palgrave 2012); Dieter Fuchs, Raul Magni-Berton and Antoine Roger (eds), *Euroscepticism. Images of Europe among Mass-Politics and Political Elites*, (Barbara Budrich Publishers 2009).
- 2 The radical right in Europe is an extremely timely research problem. The programmes and character of these parties belong to the category of the most widely studied problems in social science, usually with a dominant Western or Eastern European perspective. The programmes and character of extreme right-wing parties have been the subject of numerous seminal analyses. Among others, one should mention the following: Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan and Andrea Petö, *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, (Palgrave Macmillan 2016); Andrea Pirro, *The Populist Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe*, (Routledge 2015); Michael Minkenberg (ed), *Transforming the Transformation? The East European radical right in the political process*, (Routledge 2015); David Art, *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*, (Cambridge University Press 2011).