

Book Reviews

Section edited by Carla Monteleone and Stefania Panebianco

MANUELA CAIANI AND SIMONA GUERRA (EDS.), *Euroscepticism, Democracy and the Media. Communicating Europe, Contesting Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). 284 pp., £52.99 (e-book), ISBN: 9781137596437

Weakening financial and economic equilibrium, rising political relevance of the immigration issue, the resonating anti-EU rhetoric of populist parties, and more recently the outcome of the UK referendum shed light on the ‘crises’ that hit European democracies and, specifically, European Union institutions from different angles. As a result, at the national level discontent towards European integration foments political conflict while gaining more and more salience. Within this context, old (i.e. newspapers) and new tools of communication (i.e. websites and social networks) bridge political actors’ positions towards the EU and shape the public debate over the EU legitimacy.

This book, edited by Manuela Caiani and Simona Guerra, offers an in-depth evaluation of the multi-layered concept of Euroscepticism considering citizens’ changing attitudes (both pro and con) towards EU politics and the role played by traditional and digital media in framing EU polity, politics, and policies. The all-encompassing approach adopted in this book, as stated in the introduction, aims to investigate political parties’ and civil society’s *contingent and qualified* or *outright and unqualified* contestation of the European democracy.

The volume consists of 12 original contributions covering the existing literature on Euroscepticism, democracy, and the media. These contributions analyse the extent to which mass media portray the EU in the political and public debate of different member states, such as the UK, France, Italy, Denmark, Greece, Poland, Germany, Spain, and the Netherlands. The book is organised in three parts. In the first section, the authors review the current academic debate on the themes and offer new theoretical suggestions. The second part focuses on the role played by traditional media in shaping and fuelling the so-called ‘spiral of Euroscepticism’ in comparison to online platforms, such as the internet and social networks. The third part analyses the extent to which new media channel Eurosceptic political conflict to civil society. In the introduction, Manuela Caiani and Simona Guerra provide a well-articulated review of studies on Euroscepticism and the impact that media can

have in influencing public opinions and attitudes. Contestation towards the EU may occur differently across ‘actors, tactics, and forms’.

There is no unique definition of Euroscepticism, rather, it is a nuanced phenomenon that originates from domestic political conflict. Although scholars tend to focus mainly on party-based Euroscepticism, citizens’ emotions play a crucial role in affecting the process of EU integration, as the result of the Brexit referendum demonstrated (Simona Guerra, chapter two). Under these theoretical premises, media can be seen as an *obstacle* or a *facilitator* to EU integration and European democracy. However, the dividing line cannot be reduced to a mere dichotomy between new and old means of communication. Media do not represent only an important political channel to inform and shape public opinions. They can, in fact, be dynamic actors in negatively framing the EU, and their bias produces direct effects in terms of public discontent (Galpin and Trenz chapter three). Significant events, such as the Eurozone crisis, increased the degree of Euroscepticism that has also become mainstream in quality newspaper (Bijsmans, chapter four).

On the demand side, in the emblematic cases of the UK and the Netherlands, evidence has also shown that newspaper readership is related to the common perception of journalists’ political bias on the left-right spectrum, as well as to the position they adopt in favour or against the EU (Leruth, Kutiyiski, Krouwel and Startin, chapter five).

Intensity in the use of news or social media also affects public preferences towards the EU. New media tend to capture more attention from young people while emphasising Euroscepticism, while traditional media tend to frame the EU in positive terms. Consequently, media framing effects can be seen in citizens’ Eurosceptic or supportive attitudes towards the EU (Conti and Memoli, chapter six). Similarly, despite context-related differences, voters’ *news diets* and party preferences relate to their positions towards the EU. Again, social media represent the main facilitators of EU discontent (Mosca and Quaranta, chapter seven). The internet in particular is the arena where extreme-right’s anti-EU rhetoric spreads cross-nationally while fuelling political discontent (Pavan and Caiani, chapter eight). Twitter networks show a clear distinction between Europhile and Eurosceptic camps. Social network analysis highlights that Europhile networks interact more transnationally than Eurosceptic ones (Heft, Wittwer, Pfetschnineth, chapter nine). In contrast to ‘hard’ Euroscepticism, the austerity policies’ effect produces a ‘soft’ EU discontent. This can be seen in the claims of movement parties such as *Syriza* and *Podemos* that support the idea of ‘another Europe’ rather than being completely against it (della Porta, Kouki, Fernández, chapter ten). Moreover, technologies may be used to develop a new model of citizenship and political representation that transcends national borders. A long-term and sophisticated EU ‘u-government’ model would be shaped by a mixed reality technology (Fanoulis and Peña-Ríos, chapter eleven). As further argued in the conclusion, moving beyond Eurosceptic parties’ strategies is an essential starting point to better understanding the different shades in which EU discontent manifests itself (chapter twelve). Empirical evidence shows a nuanced Euroscepticism and provides substantive arguments for further investigating this highly-contested phenomenon through a bottom-up approach.

Finally, in so-called “times of crisis” this book outlines the state of the art on the theoretical and empirical implications that sit behind different Eurosceptic labels. A positive connotation of EU contestation is adopted and, often, shared as a dominant frame across countries and actors like citizens, social or political movements, and the extreme right. The book proposes new and interesting stimuli to the study of dissent towards the process of European integration. It also highlights the double-sided role media play as agents and arena for political conflict. By so doing, it represents a valuable starting point for further studies on European politics and political communication.

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PAOLO CHIOCCHETTI, *The Radical Left Party Family in Western Europe, 1989-2015* (London, New York: Routledge, 2017). 244 pp., £88.00 (hardback), ISBN: 9781138656185

The book is based on an analysis of quantitative data, historical records and public statements that characterized the parties of the radical left in seventeen countries in western Europe, from 1989 to 2015. The analysis of the individual parties follows four lines of research: the electoral strength, organizational characteristics and the political strategy. The strength of the parties is measured both in absolute terms and in the systemic context, with the number of votes, of members, of parliamentary seats won and the members’ ability to influence the government, in particular the ability to increase public expenditure in terms of the GDP. The book proposes a “new holistic approach” to conceptualizing and analyzing the party family of the radical left and is developed along three dimensions: the family of radical parties, the individual parties, and the most important fields of investigation. The family party is characterized as opposed to the dominant tradition of social democracy.

According to the author, firstly relating the specific identity of the radical left in terms of class clearly distinguishes it from other family parties, maintaining at the same time its internal pluralism; as well as enabling its changes in space and time to be understood whilst maintaining a cognitive compass.

In the first chapter the author outlines the theoretical and methodology framework of the book. Chiocchetti defines the new European left as the family which responds to the class and communist left, which is separate and distinct from the dominant tradition of social democracy; and acknowledges its constitutive pluralism and historicity. The second chapter reconstructs the parable of the radical left in Europe from 1914 to 1988. It originated as a radically anti-capitalistic branch of labor socialism: it was divided between the defense of the soviet model and “real existing” socialism and the acceptance of a reformist model centered on the

redistribution of wealth and the expansion of welfare. The third chapter reconstructs the panorama of the radical left in Western Europe after the historic breakup in 1989, until 2015. In fact 2015 represented the turning point in the history of the radical left, which in three countries gained exceptional electoral success (45.0% in Greece with SYRIZA, 25.8% in Spain with PODEMOS and 21.5% in Portugal with BE and PCP – p. 66). Instead, in the three major countries of the Eurozone (Italy, France, Germany) its electoral proposal did not meet in the same way with the favors of the electorate, who preferred other center and right policies. Chapters 4 to 6 deal with three special cases of the development of the European left in Germany (“A success story”), Italy (“History of failure”), and France (Failure or success?). The final chapter attempts a comprehensive reading of the political trajectory of the left in Western Europe after 1989 (“Filling the vacuum?”).

The disappearance of the Soviet Union and the profound crisis of the years 1989-1993 almost led to the disappearance of the revolutionary left of the communist matrix, to the dispersion of their members and voters. The new revolutionary left that emerged from its ashes has highly diversified characteristics, although it is mostly composed of long-standing militants of the communist movements, Trotskyists, Maoists and of the socialist left. Some legacy of the 20th century communism continues within it but only a small minority cultivates this legacy as the basis of a political project. The vast majority tried to amalgamate very different political-cultural references: Marxism, Keynesian, anarchism, social democracy, libertarian left, radical democracy, environmentalism and populism, trying to create a “modern” political organization, which is pluralistic, inclusive and hostile to neoliberalism. The political project is vague and shaky, evoking an idea of transition toward a distant socialist society, towards an anti-capitalism system defined now as communism, now as democratic socialism; a society that affirms the primacy of man over profit. In fact, the political identity of the radical left is undefined, ideology has little to do with political daily choices. It tries to stay focused on the representation of the interests of the working classes, the defense of the welfare state, and the promotion of the values of the libertarian left.

Engaged in the tradition of the communist left and revolutionary socialism, the radical left in contemporary Europe had moved by the 1990s toward a new ideological identity centered on antiliberalism and has thus claimed to be the authentic heir of both historical communist organizations, both of the socialist tradition and of the libertarian left. The radical left appears today as the product of three distinct elements: the decline of the historic tradition of communism and of the socialist left; the adoption of the founding themes that characterized the social democrats and the ecologist left in the 1970s and early 1980s; and finally it is the product of a new anti-neoliberal reflection.

The radical left must contend with three challenges and many contradictions: coherence between an antiliberalist position and unity of the center-left; between anti-neoliberalist and anticapitalist; and between loyalty to the tradition and the requirements posed by the economic and social transformations. Consequently, there are difficulties in relations with the other left-wing parties (social democrats

and environmental movements), the ideological oscillations, the organizational weakness and the continuous oscillations between fragmentation and regrouping.

According to Chiocchetti, the great recession of 2007-2008 offered new and great opportunities to the radical left in Europe but, at the same time, it highlighted its limitations. The non-homogeneous electoral successes of the radical left are a barometer of widespread rebellion in many areas of European society against the dominant neo-liberalism, but certainly they are not the only barometer. The successes of the new radical European left are the fruit of anti-austerity mobilisation however, it has not gained success everywhere or been seen as an alternative to existing coalitions of center-right governments or as a partner for the governments of the center left.

Radical left, neo-communist left, revolutionary left? Or just left? The question that arises after reading this thorough research concerns precisely the political-ideological boundaries of the study. And perhaps the answer is that however you translate this “radical” nature, it is still difficult to speak of a “family party”, of a radical left family in western Europe after 1989: though the author actually believes this is possible.

I believe that what Chiocchetti’s careful and very detailed reconstruction does is to highlight the great differentiation among partisan subjects who would like to be grouped into a single family. The non-homogeneity between parties who share the same anti-liberal orientation is very strong and, above all, does not tend to decrease over time, as demonstrated by the evolution of the parties of this shaky radical left in the period following the end of Chiocchetti’s research (2015) until today.

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STEFANIA PANEBIANCO (ED.), *Sulle onde del Mediterraneo. Cambiamenti globali e risposte alla crisi migratoria* (Milan, Italy: Egea, 2016). 230 pp., €24.30 (paperback), ISBN: 9788823845275

In 2016, over 180,000 migrants crossed the Mediterranean in the attempt to reach Italy. After the March 2016 deal between the European Union and Turkey, the Central Mediterranean migratory route, heading from the Western Coast of Libya towards Sicily, has become the largest avenue of irregular migrations to Europe. The death toll – amounting to around 4,500 estimated casualties in 2016 only – has turned the Mediterranean into the theatre of a complex humanitarian emergency.

In spite of the policy-relevance of migrations across the Mediterranean and its salience in the public discourse, academic research on the subject has lagged behind. To be sure, existing scholarship has shed light on different aspects of the phenomenon, such as the securitization of migrations, EU and non-governmental organisations’ law enforcement and Search and Rescue (SAR) operations, and pub-

lic opinions' (mis-)perceptions of migrations to Europe. There is, however, hardly any research seeking to bring together all these different dimensions in order to provide a truly comprehensive overview of the so-called migration crisis. The absence of such an overarching analysis is regrettable, as all the issues mentioned above are tightly intertwined and can hardly be investigated in isolation. Decision-makers' policies are informed by public opinions' perceptions, but also shaped by social norms, and international law and institutions. Consequently, an in-depth explanation of the migration crisis requires a thorough examination of the material, institutional, and ideational factors affecting foreign and domestic policy decision-making processes.

Sulle onde del Mediterraneo. Cambiamenti globali e risposte alle crisi migratorie (On the Waves of the Mediterranean. Global Changes and responses to migratory crises) – edited by Stefania Panebianco – is the first attempt to provide such a comprehensive analysis. Based on an impressive amount of empirical research conducted at the University of Catania within the framework of the research project 'FIR 14', the volume systematically examines the nature, drivers, and implications of the Italian response to the latest surge in maritime migrations by analysing the phenomenon in each of its most relevant aspects.

Fulvio Attina's introduction places the present crisis within the framework of the academic scholarship on migrations and EU migration policies, a subject examined more in-depth in Francesca Longo's and Rosa Rossi's chapters. Longo's chapter examines the evolution of EU asylum and migration policies, arguing that EU policies are no longer capable of addressing large-scale migratory flows. Most notably, the Dublin regulations – which oblige refugees to embark in a dangerous journey and apply for asylum in the country of first entry – should be reconsidered to both guarantee a better protection of refugees and ensure fairer burden sharing across EU member states. Rossi's chapter broadens the perspective to other international organisations, presenting elite survey data of Italian elite perceptions of international organisations' response to the crisis. The contribution by Luigi Caranti goes beyond a legalistic understanding of the obligations enshrined by European and international law by examining the moral underpinning of the duty to rescue and provide for refugees and economic migrants alike.

The chapters by Stefania Panebianco and Daniela Irrera then turn to the operational aspects of the migratory crisis offshore Libya, examining SAR and law enforcement operations. Panebianco's contribution focuses on state-led migrant rescuing, and most notably the Italian Navy operation Mare Nostrum, launched in October 2013. In spite of being capable of rescuing over 150,000 migrants, Mare Nostrum was discontinued after one year due to Italy's frustration over the lack of burden sharing and other European states' criticism that the operation was a pull factor on migration. As argued by Panebianco, while Mare Nostrum did not become a template for future EU operations, it at least succeeded in putting maritime migrations at the centre of the EU policy agenda. The EU maritime operations that followed Mare Nostrum, Triton and EUNAVFOR Med do not have SAR as their primary mandate. Consequently, a number of non-governmental organisations started to conduct their own migrant rescuing operations to try and fill the gap left

by the end of Mare Nostrum. Daniela Irrera's chapter focuses on the non-governmental provision of SAR, providing data that illustrate NGOs' contribution to mitigating migrants' loss of life.

The chapters by Simona Gozzo, Fulvio Attina' and Rossana Sampugnaro rely on a large amount of survey data to look at how existing Italian and European policies are perceived by elite and public opinion alike, thereby providing an ideal conclusion to the volume.

As epitomized by this short summary, the volume edited by Panebianco examines Italy's perceptions of and response to the migration crisis in a truly comprehensive and multidisciplinary fashion, combining the use of survey data, the in-depth examination of existing policies and the legal frameworks they are embedded in, as well as legal normative perspectives on the responsibility to rescue and welcome migrants. *Sulle onde del Mediterraneo* is not only an important reading for scholars of international relations, comparative politics, political theory, and international and European law alike. Thanks to its empirical richness, comprehensiveness and clarity, the collection also provides a useful compass for the wider community of informed readers seeking to navigate a public debate that often provides more heat than light on such a complex subject.

In spite of its merits, Panebianco's volume cannot – nor does it seek to – provide a conclusive examination of the subject, suffering from the inevitable limitations associated with the timeliness and complexity of the issue it investigates. Given the ongoing nature of the migration crisis, examining the phenomenon is like shooting at a moving target. This leaves ample room for further research looking at very recent developments such as the growing role of and mounting criticism against NGO SAR operations. Likewise, the in-depth, empirically rich examination of the Italian case provided by the volume can only occur at the price of renouncing a larger comparative analysis. Contrasting the policy responses to migrations across the Central and Eastern Mediterranean routes would allow future research to better investigate the role played by public opinion and European and international law, norms and institutions in shaping policy responses to migration crises in Europe and worldwide.

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GIANLUCA PASSARELLI (ED.), *The Presidentialization of Political Parties. Organizations, Institutions and Leaders* (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). 300 pp., \$39.99 (paperback), ISBN: 9781349577675

This volume is an important contribution to the field of comparative political institutions because it focuses on the growing role of party leaders who assume a relevant institutional power in many advanced democracies. The notion of “presidentialization” is a

dentialization” is at the core of the volume’s theoretical framework. However, in contrast to other pieces of empirical research emphasizing the impact of institutional changes on the development of party structures, the volume endeavors to explore the phenomenon of the increasing importance of party leadership independently from the evolution of the institutional setting. This is, as noted by the editor in the introduction, the “missing link” in the study of presidentialization. More precisely, Passarelli aims to explain the varying intensities of “party presidentialization” one can observe by comparing certain countries using a simplified framework built on two separate dimensions: *institutional presidentialization* and *party genetic presidentialization*.

First, this volume is a very interesting contribution to our understanding of the changing role of party (and institutional) leaders in many contemporary democracies because it emphasizes the complicated relationship between historical party transformations and macro-institutional (or constitutional) changes. To solve this puzzle, Passarelli proposes a systematic analysis of the multifold dynamics of the process of *party presidentialization*), which should be in conflict with the “natural” attitudes of any European parliamentary democracy (dominated by collegial executives controlled by legislative bodies). Supposedly, it is very likely that a pure presidential form of democracy has been established in those systems. The structure of the volume confirms that such dynamics are, in the real world, much more compound and mutable, corroborating the arguments presented at the end of the comprehensive review on the literature on presidentialization and party personalization provided by Passarelli in his introduction. This ambitious proposition can be somehow tested by a large country-by-country comparison. For this reason, the rest of the volume, shaped on the idea of an extensive research strategy, includes eleven chapters devoted to different cases of parliamentary, semi-presidential, and presidential systems, thus covering a significant variety of political systems and democratic experiences.

Further, other examples of “institutional presidentialization” are covered in the first part of the volume, where the systems in Chile, the United States, and Brazil and the peculiar “semi-presidential” case of the French Fifth Republic are included. The cases of parliamentary democracies (or “premier-parliamentary democracies” like those recently developed in Central-Eastern Europe) included in the second part of the volume are also rather different from each other. For example, Poland and Ukraine represent the family of “newcomers,” while a good sample of the Western political systems from the UK to Australia and from Germany to Japan and Italy covers an evident variability including the typical “Westminster” and “power-sharing” examples of democracy.

Such a research strategy proves very useful in unveiling the complicated set of factors determining a great deal of variance in party presidentialization. The study of a relatively neglected case such as Chile (Chapter 2) shows, for instance, how the impact of party organizations has been rather malleable since the end of the Pinochet regime. On the other hand, some parliamentary democracies show that despite their stable rates of democratic performance and practices, their overall rates of presidentialization (or “missing presidentialization”) have changed considerably

over time. The presence of specific institutional devices and the emergence of hierarchical party organizational cultures, for instance, have determined high levels of personalization in Germany (Chapter 10) and, to some extent, in the UK (Chapter 8). Conversely, the expectation of crucial “majoritarian turns” connected to the emergences of strong leadership and the consolidation of personalized styles of electoral campaigns did not come true in typical power-sharing democracies, such as Italy (Chapter 12). This is due to the persistence of several institutional and partisan characteristics. In other words, following the theoretical framework used by Passarelli, personalization cannot be a surrogate for the absence of institutional presidentialization.

We have no space here to cover the myriad of findings included in all the empirical chapters of this rich yet extremely harmonized collection of studies. We can simply say that the deep complexity of party presidentialization emerges in all the diachronic analyses included in the volume. This brings the reader to the conclusion that different factors must be considered to understand the comparative evolution of the phenomenon. Among them, historical path dependencies and the different developments of the constitutional settings—including the actual powers of the legislatures, the various steering capabilities of the executives, and, not least, the electoral regimes—are revealed as crucial variables. However, historical transformations of party organizations can make the difference, especially when they are originated by the peculiar visions of strong, long-standing leaders.

The editor’s final chapter provides the volume with a precious element of comparative assessment. According to Passarelli, many of the empirical findings provided in the country chapters support the idea that the typical approach based on the role of institutional setting on the transformation of party leadership should be somehow completed considering the findings of a more comprehensive comparison of the evolution of party genetic presidentialization. This is the main message the reader receives from this volume, which seems to pave the way to a new generation of studies based on the idea of a mutual interactive influence between the macro-institutional framework and the historical evolution of the most significant and long-standing political organizations at the core of democratic competition.

As always happens to any new path-breaking piece of research, the highest, most provocative point becomes the weakest (at least in terms of empirical robustness), and the most debatable argument surfaces at the end. In this case, the map portraying the dynamics of party presidentialization in the 11 political systems covered by the volume (p. 257) looks impressionistic and, as admitted by the same author, rather vague, especially if one looks to the relative distance between the measures of the party genetic presidentialization dimension. However, the implications discussed by Passarelli are fascinating. The phenomena of presidentialization and party leader personalization must be discussed in their continuous interactions under an adequate comparative research framework. By providing important evidence for such a basic but not irrelevant proposition, this volume thus proves to be an important text for scholars concerned with the future of party politics and the perspectives of political leadership within the democratic sphere.

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