

# CULTURE, PRACTICE & EUROPEANIZATION

## CALL FOR PAPERS SPECIAL ISSUE

EDITED BY

MAURIZIO BACH

### **COVID-19-Crisis, Nationalism, Populism and the Future of the European Union**

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, the reactions of governments across Europe immediately came under scrutiny, provoking a vast spectrum of criticism ranging from a return of “authoritarian state-hood” to the accusation of a “hesitant laissez-faire” approach to flattening the curve. Regardless of such value judgements, the infectious disease was met with unprecedented measures aiming at the cessation of everyday social activities (“lockdowns”) – something that post-war societies in Europe had little experience with. This presented a challenge to liberal democracy: Should democratic states go beyond appeals to self-limitation? Could they responsibly refrain from imposing lockdowns locally and closing borders within Schengen and elsewhere? Where some observe an epidemiologically informed response that ensures the liberal values of European integration and global economic transactions, others see the emergence of illiberal prohibition states which rely on emergency rules, border restrictions and police power, thus bringing the sovereignty of the nation state and even “strong” leadership back in.

Both may have a point: As disruptive as crises may be, they always occur in a social frame defined by structural continuity and predominant tendencies. Thus, continuity and disruption are dialectally linked to each other. Before the Covid-19 crisis, a substantial tendency towards nationalism and rightwing-populism gained impetus in political society. Correspondingly, the European Union experienced already almost a decade of re-nationalization and progressive disintegration. The ongoing Covid-crisis, therefore, appears to be just the climax of a cycle of multiple and self-enforcing downward trends which shatter the fundamentals of European integration since the outbreak of the financial crisis and the so-called migration crisis.

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Against this background the question arises how the Covid-crisis will affect nationalism and right-wing populism in Europe and the world. Will the crisis enforce the current trend towards ethnic nationalism or weaken it? At the moment, the situation seems ambivalent. On the one hand, there are signs of a loss of influence of populist parties in the polls – on the other hand, the political center of the nation state itself absorbs elements of right-wing ideology and authoritarian attitudes: government by coercion and emergency decrees, closing state borders etc. What will be the consequence for the further development of “statehoodness”, for representative democracy, for the selection of political leadership, and the transformation of the political systems as a whole? Is there a shift of power taking place within society, e.g. regarding the class structure, the relationship between the sexes and/or the generations?

Conversely asked, how do the manifestations of nationalism and populism influence the dynamic of the pandemic? There seems to exist a link between populist or semi-populist governments (eg. Trump in USA, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Johnson in UK) and an uncontrolled spread of the virus. The same seems to hold true for regions in Germany, where the AfD has relative high records of voters. How does the new Anti-Covid-19-measures movement in Germany, the “Querdenker”, and the dissipation of conspiracy narratives affect the pandemic on the one hand, the politics of crisis on the other?

Finally, it should also be asked, how the Covid-Crisis impinges on the European Union, until now the most powerful supra-national regime: Will its powers increase, will it recuperate political and administrative steering capacity, or will the downward spiral in legitimacy and confidence continue?

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In sum, the following questions – individually or in combination – could be addressed in the paper:

1. How does the COVID-19 crisis bear on the development of “statehoodness” and national conflicts in Europe?
2. Does the COVID-19 crisis enforce ethnic nationalism and chauvinisms, or weaken them? Which impact will it have on the political fortune of right-wing populism?
3. With what kind of new challenges is the national state confronted in the COVID-crisis? How resilient is the state, and if so why?
4. What types of criticism are governments facing? Is there a political dimension to them, and do political consequences follow?
5. Which consequences may the COVID-crisis have for democratic regimes and the rule of law?
6. How will the ongoing crisis affect the European Union? Is “the new normal” going to stay?

The issue welcomes both national perspectives and transnational or supranational perspectives. Submitted analyses (e.g. case studies, empirical analyses, comparisons to other crises, and the like) are asked to touch one of the above-mentioned issues and questions.

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## **Submission and timeframe**

Authors may submit structured abstracts of up to 250 words until 31 March 2021. Empirical, theoretical and conceptual submissions of significant originality will be considered for publication. All methodological approaches are welcomed. Authors whose abstracts are accepted will be asked to submit a full draft of their paper until 15 August 2021 which will then be subjected to peer review. Publication is planned for the fall of 2021. CPE publishes in English.

Please submit your abstract to Maurizio Bach ([maurizio.bach@uni-passau.de](mailto:maurizio.bach@uni-passau.de)).

## **CPE: An international, double-blind peer reviewed journal**

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