Mild Euroenthusiasm or Euroapathy?
The Case of Romania

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STARTING POINTS

- “Europe – United by Hostility” (Financial Times, October 2013)

- What unites European citizens today is the Eurosceptic mindset that has become more pronounced in all of the member countries during the crisis, albeit in each country for different and rather polarizing reasons. (Habermas, 2013)
“DIVORCES” INSIDE THE EU

- Elites and citizens
- North – South
- East - West
OVERVIEW

- The Crisis of the European Union
- More Europe means many things to many people
- United by Euroscepticism
- The case of Romania
- Paneuropean euroscepticism?
WHAT CRISIS?

- Global crisis
- Euro crisis
- Eurozone crisis
- Sovereign debt crisis
- Financial crisis
- Banking crisis
- Fiscal crisis
- Trade imbalance crisis
- Competitiveness crisis
- Periphery debt crisis
- Europe debt crisis
- Solvency crisis
- Greek crisis/ Cypriot crisis/ German crisis …
IS EUROPE SOLVING THE WRONG CRISIS?

- All of the previous ones + the crisis of the European Union (Jurgen Habermas)

- The crisis in Europe is existential. It is a question of whether the EU survives as a recognizable entity (Giddens, 2012)

- Political crisis – with economical, financial, fiscal, symbolic etc. consequences

- What is at stake: the future model of the EU, its vision for the future
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MORE EUROPE, BETTER EUROPE, STRONGER EUROPE

- Federation - supranational democracy
- Europeanized European Union – a Europe of nation states
- Federal Europe - 2- or 3- or x-speed Europe (intergovernmental)
- The United States of Europe (a European superstate) - a federation of nation states
- Federation of nation-states - post-national Europe
- A citizens’ Europe – a banks’ Europe
- An alliance of sovereign states
- An informal UN
- A loose confederation
- A “market-conforming democracy”
- An “accidental empire” with capital Berlin
- EU28, or the eurozone with ins (Poland) and outs (Greece, the whole South)
MORE EUROPE VS. MORE EUROPES

The vision of Europe that will succeed will be that which “inspires the commitment of [EU] citizens whose faith in a European future is shaken”
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WHAT TYPE OF EUROSCEPTICISM?

- Everyday language - Euroscepticism = opposition to the European Union and its policies
- But, a fundamental differentiation:
  - *EU-scepticism* (opposition to the EU *per se*) – hard euroscepticism
  - *current-EU-scepticism* (scepticism to its current political direction, actual policies, decisions) – soft euroscepticism

- **Party-based euroscepticism** vs. popular euroscepticism
MIXING ONE FOR THE OTHER

- Crossed pressure:
  - Euro-optimism regarding the need for “Europe”
  - Euroscepticism regarding the actual form of the current EU

- Outcomes of the crisis:
  - soft euroscepticism feeds hard euroscepticism
  - hard euroscepticism disguised as soft euroscepticism (EU as an idea/l – collateral damage)
  - Euroscepticism of any kind – labelled as “anti-europeanism”
(NOT SO) EXTREME FIGURES

- 56% of the British people would probably or definitely vote for the UK to leave the EU if they were offered the choice in a referendum.

- Cyprus: 67% of respondents would prefer an exit from the eurozone and stronger ties to Russia.

- Spain: 72% of respondents tend not to trust the EU.
TRUST IN THE EU AND THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS: 2008-2013

Trust in the EU, EC, EP - EU average

Percentage

EU
EP
EC

EB69 (spring 2008)
EB70 (fall 2008)
EB71 (spring 2009)
EB72 (fall 2009)
EB73 (spring 2010)
EB74 (spring 2010)
EB75 (fall 2011)
EB76 (spring 2011)
EB77 (fall 2012)
EB78 (spring 2012)
EB79 (spring 2013)
EB80 (autumn 2013)
17% - NEGATIVELY UNINTERESTED

Eurosceptics and optimists in the European Union electorate
Classification based on answers to multiple questions, Sep 13-23, 2013

- Eurosceptics: 43%
- Euro-optimists: 40%
- Undecided/uninterested: 17%

Sources: Eurobarometer; Gallup
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NEW COMERS VS. OLD MEMBER STATES

- 2008: NMS largely more optimistic ( +10-20%) than EU average and than other older MS
- Trend in time (2008-2013): - declining levels of trust in the EU and its institutions; the decline is sharper in new member states with serious debt problems (eg.: Cyprus)
- The difference in levels of trust between old and new member states - reduced in the last 5 years of economic crisis;
- Although the new comers still exceed average results at the European level, the Eurobarometer results in NMS are fairly similar to those in older member states
Euroscepticism in Romania

- Elite
- Party-based (no eurosceptic/ europopulist party)
- Popular
- Media (exclusive local focus, EU topics – only background information)
EUROSCEPTICISM AMONG THE ROMANIAN ELITES

- 10 in-depth interviews
- March-April 2014
- Experts, (former) members of the EP, journalists specialised in EU affairs
Elite consensus around the EU

- EU is the right/only way for Romania
- Agree that the EU lacks leadership and long-term vision
- The gap between the EU and the Member-States
- Germany – has the power to unite or break the EU
- The center/periphery dichotomy feeds euroscepticism among the European public
- Europeanness – ideology (“you must be lunatic not to trust the EU”, “now it’s fashionable to be eurosceptical”)
POPULAR EUROSCETICISM (I)

- Eurobarometers during 2007-2013 (fall)
- Constant decrease of trust in the European Union

2007: 68% of Romanians stated that they trust the EU, meaning 20% above the European average

2013: 45% tend to trust, 43% tend not to trust
INTERPRETATION (I)

- Constant decrease of public euro-optimism – more sober public; “Great expectations” (post - EU accession syndrome)
- EU the savior (saves us) – EU the headmaster (penalizes us); ‘EU as Messiah” frame – less dominant
- Lack of trust in national institutions and political life
- Feel inferior (big league vs. the periphery)
- Feel left alone in Europe
EU – still seen as “corrector of external corrective for dysfunctional politics at home, but although popular anger is directed at […] elites who are blamed for poverty and rampant corruption, the EU was no longer invoked as the cure. Private investors from other MS also came under fire, suggesting a shift to economic nationalism that might also provide fertile ground for Euroscepticism in the future” (Torreblanca & Leonard, 2013)
INTERPRETATION (III)

- Trigger of downward trend - the (national) financial crisis and the ensuing austerity measures (2009)
- Austerity measures – although implemented at the request of the IMF and the European Commission, were largely perceived as being imposed only by:
  - IMF (face – Jeffrey Franks)
  - Romanian government (face – President Basescu)
  - Faceless Europe – not so bad after all?
- EU – not necessarily collateral victim of the euro crisis, but subject to indiscriminate dissatisfaction
EUROENTHUSIASM OR EUROAPATHY?

- “EU is like a religion - nothing bad can come out of it”
- Mild, uncritical euro-optimism (ultrasoft euroscepticism)
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UNITY IN DIVERSITY

- North vs. South
- West vs. East
- Euro vs. non-Euro
- Schengen vs. non-Schengen
- 2-speed Europe – 2-periphery Europe
  - Eurozone periphery (the South)
  - EU periphery (the East)
- Creditor vs. debtor
- Virtuous vs. vicious
- Belt-tightening vs. profligate
EUROPEANIZED EUROSCEPTICISM?

- NO
- The type of eurosceptic that you are depends on your location in Europe
  - Unclear goals
  - Great expectations
  - No geopolitical alternative
  - I want my money back
  - Where is my money?
  - Where is my job?
  - The German grasshoppers paying for the lazy Greeks
  - Etc.
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THANK YOU!