Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse

University of Warsaw, Poland

ORCID: 0000-0002-7270-8900

A left-wing offensive in the European Union

Abstract: The article has three main research goals. First, to show the tenets of the strategy proposed by left-wing thinkers at the end of the 20th century. Secondly, the theoretical and philosophical assumptions of this strategy will be confronted with the practice of the functioning of left-wing groups in the European Parliament and other EU institutions, especially after the outbreak of the crisis in the euro area after 2010. Thirdly, to summarize the previous deliberations from a global and European perspectives. The aim of the article is to provide the answer to whether the offensive of the left, visible in the EU in the second decade of the 21st century, can contribute to the success of this formation and to the healing of the European project.

Keywords: socialist strategy, hegemony of leftist values, democratic revolution, radical democracy, constraint of exclusion

Abstrakt: Artykuł ma trzy główne cele badawcze. Po pierwsze, pokazać założenia strategii proponowanej przez myślicieli lewicowych pod koniec XX wieku. Po drugie, założenia teoretyczne i filozoficzne tej strategii zostaną skonfrontowane z praktyką funkcjonowania ugrupowań lewicowych w Parlamencie Europejskim i innych instytucjach UE, zwłaszcza po wybuchu kryzysu w strefie euro po roku 2010. Po trzecie, wcześniejsze rozważania zostaną podsumowane z perspektywy globalnej i europejskiej. Celem artykułu jest odpowiedź na pytanie, czy ofensywa lewicy widoczna w UE w drugiej dekadzie XXI wieku może przyczynić się do sukcesu tej formacji oraz do uzdrowienia projektu europejskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: strategia socjalistyczna, hegemonia lewicowych wartości, demokratyczna rewolucja, radykalna demokracja, wykluczające ograniczenie

Introduction

The article has three main research objectives. First, to show the tenets of the strategy proposed by leftist thinkers at the end of the 20th century. Along with

the collapse of the communist bloc of states and the popularity of the neoliberal doctrine and neoconservatism in the US and the UK, the Left struggled with waning popular support and the challenge of finding a programmatic prescription to rebuild its political influence. The concept of the political counter-offensive of the Left will be reconstructed based on the reflections of influential thinkers Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe [1985], who draw on the intellectual output of the icon of the European left, namely Antonio Gramsci. Secondly, the theoretical and philosophical tenets of the strategy of the Left will be confronted with the practice of the functioning of left-wing groups in the European Parliament and other EU institutions, notably after the post-2010 eruption of the Eurozone crisis. The aim of this comparison will be to trace the extent to which the prescriptions of Laclau and Mouffe could be put into practice within the reality of the integrating Europe. Thirdly, I will summarize the earlier reflections on the premises and practice of the implementation of the political strategy of the Left in a global and European perspective. The starting point for this assessment is Immanuel Wallerstein's famous assertion regarding the inevitability of the collapse of the global left, primarily represented by the progressive movements in the US and the EU. In other words, the objective of this summary will be to provide an answer as to whether the offensive of the Left, evident in the EU in the second decade of the 21st century, can contribute to the success of this movement and to the healing of the European project.

The socialist strategy

According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the global left was shaped by the revolution of 1968 [Wallerstein 2021: 19], which swept through many countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In the case of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, societies revolted against communist regimes and dependence on the Soviet Union. Thus, their protest was essentially anti-Marxist in character. The situation was quite different in the West, i.e., *inter alia*, in the Federal Republic of Germany, France, and Italy. There, the demands of the protesters were extremely far left, in many respects anarchist and anti-systemic. As it appears, between the two parts of the EU, this fundamental discrepancy in the focus of the revolt continues to have consequences today. In the Eastern flank of the organization, this is reflected in an aversion to the curtailment of national sovereignty and democracy by supranational institutions, as well as a suspicious attitude of societies towards the proposals of the extreme left. In the western part of the EU, on the other hand, there remains alive the legacy of the 1968 anti-systemic revolution, as well as a much greater openness to political proposals evoking the philosophy of Karl Marx.

According to Wallerstein, communist states, most notably the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC), were a great inspiration for the Western European and American left. It is also worth noting that this fascination was systematically stoked by Soviet policy, which infiltrated and supported circles of the radical left in the West. The collapse of the communist bloc of states after 1989 proved to be a great blow to the leftist movement in the capitalist countries. Another problem was the increasing popularity of liberal ideas, notably neoliberalism in economics, as well as neoconservatism in the United States. The period of Ronald Reagan's and Margaret Thatcher's administrations was marked not only by the collapse of the bloc of communist states and the defeat of the Marxist ideology they pursued, but also by the triumph of liberal and conservative thought, which it was even said would eventually and conclusively prevail as the leading political current on a global scale [Fukuyama 1992]. In other words, it was the Western states that achieved geopolitical success. Thus, ideas opposed to Marxist concepts were henceforth to be of dominant importance. This posed a serious challenge for the Left in the West – notably to that strand of the Left which was globalist in nature and therefore, in line with Marxism's premise, internationalist, while at the same time, ever since the 1968 revolt, possessing an anti-systemic and radical dimension.

It was for this reason that several works by left-wing thinkers appeared at the end of the 20th century, which sought to develop a political counter-offensive against this political milieu. These included works searching for a so-called third way, i.e., positions between neoliberalism on the one hand and discredited Marxism on the other [Giddens 1998]. In essence, this constituted a recipe for building a moderate social democracy which, on the economic plane, would mitigate neoliberal market principles, while on the political plane, it would approve of liberal democracy and intend to build a centre-left electoral position.

Another response to the problems faced by the Left was offered by radical thinkers who referred to Marxist concepts. Among those, there emerged an influential work on the search for strategies for socialist movements. The starting point for Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe [1985] consisted of the reflections by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian anti-fascist and Marxist. He considered that systemic change does not proceed through a revolutionary upheaval but requires a prolonged period of the creation of a cultural hegemony – a common platform of ideas and values connecting the intellectuals with the people. It was the realm of culture, or more precisely of narratives and ideologies, that was to

change social attitudes in such a way as to introduce uniform and universally accepted ideas, which Gramsci referred to as cultural hegemony. In parallel, the dominance of left-wing views was to systemically exclude fascist ideas, i.e., above all those referring to patriotism, national identity, and national community. In a broader dimension, that included other currents of thought that paid homage to right-wing and conservative ideals. A society shaped in this way should approve of the rule of the radical left, in addition, one operating in a supranational set-up. Thus, it constituted an excellent inspiration for radical left movements both at the European and at the global level.

Like Gramsci, the authors of the socialist strategy were focused on achieving hegemony, i.e., a dominant position of left-wing ideas, in the cultural realm. They planned the systemic elimination from public discourse of liberal, right-wing, and conservative ideas, which, in Laclau and Mouffe's view, were dominant in democratic systems in the West. According to the views of both authors, the existing hegemony of liberal and conservative values had to be toppled, to become subsequently replaced with a new hegemony of leftist values and ideologies. They considered the political discourse in liberal Western democracies as, in essence, subordinated to conservative and liberal values which, in the name of individual freedom and individual rights, legitimize the inequalities and the hierarchy of the bourgeoisie's (elites') power over society, and notably over the broadly defined proletariat (that is, persons subject to multiple categories of exclusion and inequality) [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 176]. Therefore, they rejected the demands of those politicians or thinkers encouraging the search, by social democratic groupings, for a third way, i.e., measures to accommodate centrist positions in terms of programme and electorate preferences [Mouffe 2013: 163]. They also rejected any compromise with other ideological formations or trade-off politics, considering it as the product of an agreement with competing political forces. Instead, they proposed a fundamental shift in public perception towards leftist values, a redefinition of hitherto existing notions and values within liberal democracy, and subsequently, the imposition of the said leftist values upon society as a whole and upon the political elites. The public discourse, or in fact the offensive by the radical left, was to subjugate the entire spectrum of public debate. In this manner, Laclau and Mouffe encouraged the construction of a new society, and hence: a revolutionary change. This "new society" should internalize the values of the extreme left, and even profess them to be the only legitimate ones. These are essentially the postulates that have accompanied European civilization since at least the time of the Enlightenment [Burke 2009].

Another left-wing thinker, Claude Lefort, pointed out how a "democratic revolution" should be carried out in Western societies [Lefort 1986]. In so doing, he drew heavily on how totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe had operated prior to 1989. In his belief, the hegemony of the leftist narrative should be radical and totalitarian in nature. It must therefore include only the values of the extreme left, which will be imposed on society. It should also ideologize all spheres of social life and thus subordinate to leftist values not only new areas of social life, but also public policy and regulation, which will submit to the primacy of these ideas, even when this would contradict pragmatism or generate social costs.

All these ideas are also reflected in Laclau and Mouffe. In fact, they were urging the rejection of liberal democracy, that is, of a system based on the pluralism of different political values, and thus of the coexistence of those on the Left, with liberal or conservative values. Indeed, such action would compel tolerance of respective viewpoints and of the right to present them in public discourse. This kind of tolerance was rejected by both authors, and they also concluded that "the logic of democracy cannot be sufficient for the formulation of any hegemonic project" [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 188]. For the "logic of democracy" thus understood did not allow for an effective reconstruction of the social fabric, towards a definitive rejection of right-wing and liberal values in favour of socialist thinking.

Liberal democracy is based on majority voting, as well as compliance with the verdicts of the electorate within a plurality of divergent political ideas and values. Meanwhile, the aim of socialist strategy was hegemony and thereby exclusion from the discourse of values other than those of the Left. This entails the necessity to reject political pluralism and the associated tolerance of opponents. Moreover, "radical democracy" excludes the concept of political community as a basis for a politically diverse democratic order. The new community was not to be based on a diversity of views, but on their unification and totality, and hence on encompassing within the sphere of the political a broad spectrum of social phenomena, including those hitherto remaining essentially outside electoral politics.

This is the reason Laclau and Mouffe proposed a radical politicization of public discourse [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 181] and, more precisely, a broadening of the interests of the Left beyond the traditional problems of the proletariat, notably those pertaining to redistribution. The Left should take a greater interest in the realms of ecology, climate, feminism, ethnic and regional inequalities, and should politicize the private sphere of human life, especially the sexual domain, which

may constitute the most important arena in the struggle against discrimination and inequality [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 159]. This was of fundamental importance for the implementation of the postulate of the totality of action. Laclau and Mouffe mention the imperative of progressive homogenization and totalitarian ideology [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 174]. Essentially, the idea was to envelop as wide a range of social life as possible with leftist ideas. The aim was to politicize the private sphere, which had hitherto belonged to the realm of ethics or religiosity. The radical left thus aspired to the role of a "secular religion", extending its values onto as many aspects of life as possible.

The Left's classic concerns regarding social and economic inequalities lost relevance in the twentieth century since, particularly in rich Western societies, the proletariat became not only relatively wealthy but, most importantly, permeated by a culture of consumerism [Bell 1973]. This, in turn, made it difficult for leftist circles to construct a narrative that invoked a critique of capitalism and class struggle. Therefore, according to Laclau and Mouffe, the traditional Marxist narrative should have been expanded to include ideas of combating inequality and social hierarchy in other spheres of life. Thus, on the one hand, this is an example of the politicization of these new spheres, including the private realm or those hitherto regulated by religions rather than the state. On the other hand, it points to a strong ideologization. For it signifies the domination of left-wing values not only over all other axiological approaches (including an attempt to impose its own supremacy on churches and religious associations), but also aims at subordinating successive areas of public policy to the dominant left-wing values. It thereby – like any ideology – introduces the primacy of values over pragmatism or even common sense.

According to Antonio Gramsci, Western culture was synonymous with ideology, because it had a monopolistic position vis-à-vis other ways of thinking and was therefore essentially hegemonic in character. It also used an ideological apparatus that imposed on the proletariat a way of thinking that was in line with the interests of the bourgeoisie [Lukes 2021: 7]. Thus, for Gramsci's mode of thinking, the omnipotence of capitalist ideology and its associated liberal democracy, on the one hand, was essential, but so was the adoption of these ideas and values by the public and their strong internalization. This is somewhat reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence. It consists in the dominant classes influencing society in such a way that the subjugated perceive reality, including the very relationship of domination of which they are victims, in accordance with

the interests of the dominant classes. In this way, the subjugated perceive their situation as natural or indeed advantageous, or even as desired by themselves. This implies a very deep internalization of specific values, ways of perceiving the world, as well as basic values such as justice and democracy, as Bourdieu viewed it – to internalize them deep underneath the threshold of consciousness [Bourdieu 2000: 37]. In this manner, dominated individuals perceive social reality in terms created by the dominant classes for the purpose of legitimizing their dominant position.

Another feature of ideology, that of comprehensive interpretation and transformation of the world, is also of great importance. In other words, ideology not only provides a coherent account of acquiring cognition and understanding of historical processes, and social, economic, and political phenomena that are at times complex and diverse. It also becomes a vehicle for the enactment of a specific vision of changing the political order, subordinated to specific goals and values. It is intended to lead to the realization of social justice, of an ideal or even utopian reality. This is why the concept of ideology spread thanks to Marxism, in which ideology was responsible for the phenomenon known as "false consciousness". It was about a set of views, whose function was to legitimize the capitalist economic and political order. These views were accepted as true by the people living within this order, although they were, in fact, created by ideological manipulation and against the interests of the oppressed classes dominated by the capitalist elite. Thus, ideology did not so much mask the actual relations between the elite and the dominated but created a false consciousness among the subordinated classes according to which they, as it were, voluntarily submitted to oppression and exploitation. This feature of ideology was seized by Michel Foucault, who pointed out that ideology did not create a screen or an obstacle to seeing the truth about social relations, but was rather a mechanism for creating knowledge, concepts, and values that created a new kind of truth for society [Foucault 1994 (2000): 15]. Thus, ideology was a formidable political weapon, or more precisely: an instrument of power.

In this context, another consequence of ideology is worth noting. According to Foucault's interpretation – it creates a new kind of social knowledge, including that which refers to scholarly authority, confirmed by research, as Karl Marx did in his works. Simultaneously, ideology subordinates this knowledge to the achievement of social change, and sometimes even to the realization of utopian goals, not only the great ones, but those possessing moral significance, as they are meant to make humanity happy. It is hardly surprising that such a concoction of value goals

underpinned by scholarly validation must also generate specific guidelines for public policies. The ideologization of these policies tends to lead to downplaying the costs and to mobilizing for sacrifices, in the name of the realization of political ambitions which, after all, have a moral dimension. In this way, public policies cease to be rational, i.e., subject to the calculation of inputs, costs, and potential to achieve an appropriate effect, and become the object of missionary and progressive actions, that is, those aimed at social modernization and the progress of humanity.

Even though Laclau and Mouffe fought against liberal and conservative hegemony and aimed to abolish hierarchy and inequality, it is difficult not to conclude that their demands lead to a new form of enslavement and exclusion. For it is essentially a project of Marxist revolution, aimed at replacing the existing power elites with new ones drawn from among the hitherto excluded, disempowered, or stigmatized. The introduction of equality is therefore largely illusory, and serves to construct a new, much more acute form of exclusion, inequality and hierarchization.

The projected leftist strategy was based on three important modes of operation [Laclau, Mouffe 2014: xii-xiii]. Firstly, it was based on the introduction of relativism of concepts and the removal of objectivity, for example, in relation to basic concepts or socially functioning values. The aim was to undercut the unquestioned foundations of political life, notably those on which morality or the liberal democratic order had hitherto been based. Of considerable importance here was the questioning of references relating to Europe's traditions, culture, and religious heritage. Subsequently, the aim of the political action was to redefine basic concepts and values to introduce the hegemony of leftist discourse into the public debate. Laclau and Mouffe, for example, referred to "radical democracy" or "democratic revolution" [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 193], but, at the same time, rejected the foundations of liberal democracy in place to date. The authors recalled pluralism in the context of new areas of politicization, while challenging traditional pluralism understood as respect for different political views and values. They redefined certain fundamental rights, including those of women and sexual and ethnic minorities. In so doing, they were actually privileging some social groups over others, or denying the majority of society the ability to decide the extent of freedom and privilege of minority groups. They were thus altering the understanding of equality and social justice, as well as placing some categories of rights above others. Traditional approaches to security were losing their meaning, including yielding to the norm of equality and emancipation of minorities. The category of citizenship – which is closely linked to the political community and democracy

– was also losing its importance. What was more important, in fact, were human rights defined on a global scale and thus not privileging the citizens of a given territorial community. There was no consent in this reasoning to the democratic regulation of the scope of rights granted to immigrants, i.e., to persons from the outside of a given political community.

The second *modus operandi* of leftist strategists was the pursuit of universalism and internationalism. A manifestation of this tendency was the stretching of values and human rights to a global scale, and thus beyond the borders of a given political community. This is precisely why the categories of citizenship and national democracy, which were essential for defining public policy towards, for example, persons originating from outside a given community, were losing their significance. By the same token, communitarianism, including membership in a political nation and a specific state, was also being depreciated. National identifications, the tradition and culture of a particular political community, its basic political identity, were also losing importance. This specific uprooting was to serve the construction of a new, egalitarian society, united around leftist values and ideology, and therefore no longer based on national tradition.

Let us note the change in the way the categories of justice and equality were understood. The former was no longer so strongly related to the distribution of taxes collected within a given community or, more broadly, to the distribution of national income and wealth. The narrowing of the distribution of taxes primarily within a given democratic community could therefore be considered unjust. Moreover, the new understanding of equality transcended the boundaries of that community. Henceforth, not only citizens, but also non-citizens, were deemed equal among themselves. This was fundamental for the discourse on democracy, the national community, and even security – understood as providing protection first and foremost for the citizens of a given political community. The cosmopolitanism is central to the construction of the ethos of the global left, which also has a huge space for action in the course of European integration, namely the construction of a new society in the EU and building associated EU values. In the Marxist tradition, internationalism is used to defeat capitalism, while the obstacle consists of national identities, i.e., a stronger loyalty to one's own political or ethnic community than to one's class affiliation. Therefore, the effect of introducing a progressive strategy of the Left can be to undermine the foundations of the state, not just the cultural ones of a given society. Furthermore, in Marxist thought, the proletariat does not form a political community with the capitalist class but is to

encompass a strong antagonism towards the latter and thus seek its overthrow, replacement, and elimination.

Hence, the third postulate concerning the methodology of action was the intro-duction of strong social antagonism, which was to lead to political polarization. This is in line with the Marxist tradition, which called for class struggle and therefore for extreme, if not murderous, antagonism between the classes. The aim would be, *inter alia*, to weaken the political community links found in society and thus to destroy the traditional ties that sustained the previous political order. Laclau and Mouffe's designing of radical conflict and political division served to eliminate political opponents and remove competing values from legitimized discourse [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 165]. Opponents were to be excluded from politics as populists, fascists, autocrats, and supporters of totalitarianism [Laclau, Mouffe 1985: 168]. In essence, however, the leftist method of polarization was in its very nature thoroughly populist. Indeed, a manifestation of this is Laclau and Mouffe's introduction of the category of the "people", of which both authors are the true defenders, as well as the designation of elites who defend traditional values and freedoms and refer to objectified natural laws that are meant to be supreme in social life. Essentially, the proposed polarization was intended to be transitional. Once the left-wing values had gained a hegemonic position, there was to follow a restoration of social unity and even the total applicability of the sole legitimate values in all areas of life and in all social groups.

Political practice in Europe
An integrating Europe provided ample scope for putting the idea of "democratic revolution" into practice. Laclau and Mouffe pointed out in their book that with the development of the integration project, proponents of Euro-communism grew active [Laclau, Mouffe, 2014: vii]. Thus, the socialist strategy could be used in constructing a new identity for Europeans, while at the same time breaking down the national identifications as well as the state structures that were impeding the progress of integration. For the emergence of a new European society, it therefore seemed necessary to deconstruct the old national societies while mobilizing the electorates around new values, under the noble slogan of furthering the integration.

This became particularly important in the face of successive European crises, which began with the problems of the Eurozone in 2010. These threatened the stability of the EU and even yielded clear disintegration phenomena, among which Brexit was perhaps the most significant. For left-wing politicians and intellectuals,

such an existential threat was also posed by conservative groups invoking tradition and national sovereignty, as well as demanding respect for the sovereignty of member states. These were perceived as an outbreak of Euroscepticism that could lead to the break-up of the Community. As one of the Canadian intellectuals put it: "Europe was treating the nations that compose it like conquered provinces, like rotten human timber, like the rubbish of history summoned to self-dissolve" to make room for the development and entrenchment of a new leftist regime [Bock-Côté 2021b]. Conservatives, meanwhile, considered themselves Europeans, while simultaneously recognizing that it was the liberal and left-wing circles that were abandoning traditional European values, such as the Christian-democratic ones, or the attachment to a national political community [Nowak 2021]. They considered that the sin against the notion of Europe lay in the notion that one could belong to Europe somehow directly, bypassing one's belonging to a particular national collective, bypassing one's duty to work on those issues that were pressing for that collective. It was thus the sin of a-historicity, of lacking a sense of history, that is, of depriving oneself of a genealogy, without which the concept of Europeanism became idle snobbery, a fashion, or a whim [Hertz 1997: 100].

The phenomenon of social mobilization against European integration has been aptly depicted by post-functional theory [Hooghe, Marx 2009, 2019]. In the wake of the crises, or more precisely the dysfunctional response to them on the part of the EU institutions – societies ceased to unreservedly trust the hitherto existing pro-European elites, and likewise to give tacit consent to further advances in integration. This marked the end of what academics call the "permissive consensus". It signified a consensus of European nations for the elites to decide on further advances in integration "in the dark", as it were – that is, with the tacit approval from the electorate. During the successive crises, we entered a new phase, which is referred to as the period of the "constraining dissensus", i.e., a growing Euroscepticism of the voters, who exerted pressure to limit integration. It can also be described as a time of mobilization of a significant part of the electorate against the previous formula of integration, exercised by the mainstream elites and based on increasingly strong centralization, thus taking competences away from the democracies in the member states, especially in the smaller ones or those less influential in the EU.

For the proponents of earlier integration processes, this represented voter mobilization by radicals, mainly on the Right. It was largely directed against groupings traditionally playing a major role in political processes. These new groupings thus

posed a serious threat to the power of the hitherto dominant formations, which constituted something akin to a pro-European cartel at the EU level. According to Peter Mair [2007], the hallmark of this cartel was a strong approximation in terms of programme, as well as a solidary defence of the power wielded in integration processes. It may be added that this programmatic consensus involved a largely similar view of the issue of EU values, while the defence of institutional self-interest resulted in the formation of a united front vis-à-vis factions perceived as Eurosceptic. Therefore, I propose to call this next phase of social mobilization in Europe an "excluding constraint", as the integration increasingly moved towards the exclusion of certain forces from legitimized politics and limited the scope of discussion about the future of the EU to the political mainstream's preferred orientations and values.

The counter-offensive of the pro-European milieus from the political mainstream was intended to mobilize in favour of integration emotionally and ideologically, and to exclude adversaries from the debate. This was particularly the case for opponents of the hitherto existing integration path from Central European countries, as well as for those from conservative and Christian Democrat groupings who held a different vision of the future of the Union. Within the framework of their vision, integration was to be more flexible, decentralized and subsidiary, i.e., supportive towards weaker states and their democratic communities. It was to give them back their voice in Europe. It was thus meant to limit EU centralization, which was increasingly occurring at the expense of the interests of weaker states, and by limiting the rights of their democratic communities to take independent decisions, not only in the EU but even in their own countries. A conservative vision of the future of Europe drew on the tradition of republicanism present in Central Europe, which linked a sense of citizenship with a duty to be active towards the good of a given political community [Nowak 2020: 302-381]. This constituted a markedly different tradition from the practice of "permissive consensus", and thus in essence from the encouragement of civic passivity and the maximum separation of democratic communities in the member states from influencing the course of European affairs.

Criticism of conservatism mainly referred to this current's preference for national interests. It equated the defence of the interests of a given political community with xenophobia, although it would be difficult to expect a democratically elected government to defend in the EU arena any interests other than its own constituents. It is also worth pointing out that the condemnation of nationalism had to

be confined only to the smaller states; those that were easiest to criticize, or those that blocked the political consensus established amongst the dominant forces. These forces included the largest states, which, after all, influenced the integration processes in accordance with their own national preferences.

Conservatism was particularly criticized in the case of the new Central European member states, as it assumed a political emancipation of the region from the traditional supremacy of Western Europe. Accordingly, pro-European mobilization increasingly took place at the behest of leftist and liberal values. These were gaining dominance in mainstream political discourse in Western Europe. Some Central European parties who wanted to curry favour with Western European decision-makers followed this example. Even occasionally extreme left-wing (or downright Marxist) views were thus granted a label of official pro-European ideology. On the other hand, groups attached to Christian Democratic or conservative values were labelled anti-European, populist, authoritarian, or fascist. The left-wing political offensive was increasingly and in a systemic manner, restricting the rights of right-wing voters, especially those from Central European countries, which bore all the hallmarks of actions incompatible with the standards of democracy.

It is difficult to say unequivocally to what extent the socialist strategy outlined by Laclau and Mouffe was consciously used by the European left for its counter-offensive intended to defend the integration against Eurosceptics. Many politicians in the European Parliament – like the German Green faction member Daniel Cohn-Bendit – grew out of the 1968 social revolt. They were probably familiar with the tenets of the "democratic revolution". Yet, regardless of the extent to which the project of introducing a hegemony of left-wing values inspired policymakers, it is startling how much it has in common with the reality of EU politics.

Representatives of the Left present, *inter alia*, in the European Parliament sought to dominate the political narrative by imposing their own ideals and values on other political forces as the most pro-European. They thus pursued, consciously or not, the concept of the hegemony of left-wing ideology which was to dominate public and media discourse and thereby shape public perception in the direction of left-wing values. It was essential to brand left-wing values as European and thus accepted by all pro-integration circles. For example, the issue of women's right to abortion, or the rights of sexual or ethnic minorities became a pro-Europeanism benchmark. Shifting the discussion about the future of the EU to the level of values

was a success for the Left, as it allowed to focus in essence on left-wing axiology and to equate it with support for integration.

A special role in promoting leftist values under the label of "European" was played by the European Parliament. It passed resolution after resolution defending the rights of women or sexual minorities, treated as universal human rights and therefore not subject to political or world-view discussion. As an example, the possibility for homosexual couples to marry and adopt children was recognized as such a fundamental right. It was also prohibited for member states to restrict these types of freedoms [European Parliament 2021a]. Another resolution referred to the availability of unlimited abortion as a human right [European Parliament 2020]. There was also an attempt to broaden the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union to include a woman's right to abortion, thus seeking to regulate at EU level an issue that had hitherto been the exclusive competence of Member States [Sánchez Nicolás 2022a]. In both aforementioned resolutions, MEPs referenced a number of documents from other international organizations that took a similar position. This demonstrates the influence of the global left, which has been promoting its own ideas in various fora for many years. Interestingly, the resolutions in question were adopted by all the mainstream parties in the European Parliament, including the right-wing parties, which only a few years earlier had described themselves as Christian Democrat.[1] The "cartelization" of the European Parliament facilitated the imposition of left-wing values on the entire political mainstream. An additional factor aiding this process was the fact that the main opponents to such an approach to EU values, who were generally Eurosceptic politicians, were pointed out at every opportunity. The European Parliament was thus encroaching on the competences the treaties had entrusted to national democracies. This was an expression of expansionism or even a total stance on the part of Euro-enthusiastic circles, but also an example of a breach of the rule of law, even if motivated by concern over the future of integration.

The European Commission has often been left-wing MEPs' ally. In 2020, it adopted a strategy in which it stood up for the rights of – as it was termed – the "rainbow family" [European Commission 2020b]. As the EU has no competence to regulate the extent of these rights in the member states, the Commission therefore intended to broaden the standards for the rights of sexual minorities

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[1] I refer here to the European People's Party, which as recently as in 2015 was still invoking Christian values. See: *Protecting the Union* [2015].

in relation to the treaty-based freedom of movement in the internal market. It is difficult not to see this as a creative bypassing of the treaties. In another communication, the commission proposed to member states to expand the catalogue of crimes listed in Article 83 TFEU [Consolidated version 2012] that could be prosecuted at the initiative of the EU. These have so far included terrorism, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of women and children, illicit drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, money laundering, corruption, counterfeiting of means of payment, computer crime and organized crime. In 2021, the Commission proposed to broaden this catalogue to include actions (including verbal) directed against the LGBTQ+ community, as well as those of a racist and xenophobic nature [Goujard 2021]. The Left equated xenophobia with nationalism, and opposition to mass immigration with racism. The criminalization of certain behaviours or narratives may thus have facilitated for the Commission to push its own solutions in sensitive EU policies. This was also an example of a tendency to eliminate from the political discourse the arguments or values different from those of the Left. Greater sanctions for violations of European values, especially the rule of law, also served this purpose [Grosse 2022]. In this manner, the EU came dangerously close to de-legalizing the groupings that would hold political convictions different from those of the Left. Such a possibility had already been predicted by lawyers following the discussions on the infringements of EU values.[2]

Simultaneously, the method proposed by Laclau and Mouffe was used, namely: political polarization, i.e., antagonizing those supporting integration who invoked left-wing political values against those referring to other values, primarily conservative or Christian Democrat. The latter were labelled enemies of Europe. Polarization thus served to identify a clear opponent or even enemy of integration, who should be excluded from democratic processes, discarded outside the margins of legitimized views and positions. This conduct rallied most of the Brussels elite, as well as the existing political mainstream, around the Left. Even for liberal or centre-right politicians, the weakening of the forces described as Eurosceptic appeared to be a tempting idea. It was for this reason that the Liberal faction in the European Parliament proposed that politicians from Eurosceptic parties should not be allowed to take up any functions in the EU institutions, including those

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[2] The possibility of such a development was predicted by, *inter alia*, Anne-Marie Le Pourhiet [2020].

in the Parliament.[3] In turn, decision-makers with a more cosmopolitan mindset saw a threat in nationalism as an obstacle to the building of a European identity or the pursuit of federative ideas.

This was the way to realize the ideals of "radical democracy", which excluded all those political forces which held a different from leftist view on values. A special place among Europe's enemies was accorded to conservative governments from certain Central European countries that sinned not only with Euroscepticism but, even worse, had political convictions that differed from those of the Left. Jarosław Kaczyński, Viktor Orbán and Janez Janša acquired a status in EU politics described by sociologists as a "scapegoat" [Girard 1986]. It allowed the Left to dominate the discussion of EU values by its own axiology. Such stigmatization and systematic exclusion of opponents from the debate on the political future of the Union violated fundamental standards of democracy, above all pluralism guaranteeing different social and political groups the right to express their views and participation in public life [*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2008].

The stigmatization of Central European conservatives was understandable from the point of view of left-wing circles in pursuit of "weak links" among the European right, i.e., political groupings originating from countries that could be most easily attacked. The violation of the rule of law, along with other EU values, was a particularly catchy accusation. What was offensive was the lack of tolerance regarding the attitude towards political difference and cultural sensitivity on the part of some new EU members in comparison to the attitude towards other cultur-ally different groups, including non-European immigrants. While immigrants were treated as descendants of exploited colonies and as representatives of exotic cultures deserving of respect, quite a different attitude was adopted towards the inhabitants of the new member states, who, after all, belonged historically to the inner European periphery that had been subjected to frequent economic exploita-tion and geopolitical domination. At least since the Enlightenment, the backward peripheries of central and eastern Europe have been disregarded by the elites of the western part of the continent as inferior in terms of civilization. According to Larry Wolff [Wolff 1994], the idea of civilization originated in the 18th century Western Europe, and it was this part of the continent that was recognized among

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[3] *"The liberal group Renew in the EP wants a cordon sanitaire-exclusion from EP posts of the ID group and part of the ECR i.e., @pisorgpl, contrary to d'Hondt representation, and puts this as a condition for the agreement of the 3 mainstream groups on the position of EP President".* Cf. [Saryusz-Wolski 2021].

its intellectuals as its destined model. Opinions about the Eastern part of Europe, obviously backward and peripheral, were formed in relation to this model. In the opinion of Andrzej Nowak, Central and Eastern Europe was not exotic enough for Western Europe. It was simply treated as an inferior Europe, not as interesting and different as the Chinese, Persian, Japanese, or New World Indian worlds. As such, those worlds deserved tolerance, while the territory of Central and Eastern Europe needed to be civilized from without, if not by good word, then by force [Nowak 2020: 258].

Promoted as European values, leftist ideas referred to universalism and interna-tionalism, which is yet another parallel to the methodology designed by Laclau and Mouffe. It was universal human rights that were to be central in the approach to EU values, which signified that they had supremacy over national constitutions or the decisions of democratic communities in member states. This is precisely why some referred to the European Union as a cosmopolitan empire [Bibo 2012: 79], while others considered the dispute between imperialism and nationalism to be the most portentous in the EU [Hazony 2018].

A singular example of the phenomenon of placing universal principles above national law was the defence by left-wing politicians of the rights of economic migrants and refugees, who often crossed the EU borders illegally. At the time, reference was made to universal human rights, rather than to local law concerning the protection of national borders or to legal provisions setting the framework for migration policy. The value of security, hitherto held supreme by most national communities, thus had to step aside in favour of universal human rights, which are not constrained by national or even European borders. This was evident during discussions on the crisis surrounding the situation on the EU's eastern border with Belarus. In 2021, Alyaksandr Lukashenka used immigration pressure to gain political concessions and funds from the EU side. During the debate on this issue in the European Parliament, representatives of the Left and liberal factions focussed their attention on the issue of migrants' rights to asylum, rather than on the geopolitical context or on the responsibility of the authorities of Belarus for destabilizing the eastern border of the Union [European Parliament 2021b].

This universalism accorded well with the expansion of the powers of the EU, and thus provided an excellent argument for the proponents of the advancement of integration. For it allowed successive national competences to be transferred to the EU level, while systematically deprecating the rights of local communities to

decide the fate of foreigners on their own territory. Moreover, it enabled the realization of leftist ideals of equality between citizens and non-citizens, as well as the weakening of national identities and democratic communities at the national level.

Further similarities with Laclau and Mouffe's concepts involve the relativization of discourse and the redefinition of pre-existing terminology. As mentioned earlier, leftist values were equated with European values. Traditional European values – including the Christian values referred to by the founding fathers of the European Communities – have been marginalized. "European democracy" was not bound by the democratic standards known from the member states, as the EU was neither a state nor a federation. Therefore, it could question pluralism of views, and systemically exclude politicians labelled as Eurosceptics, even if they supported further integration, albeit thinking about it differently from the mainstream. Gradually, a leftist understanding of the categories of equality, justice, and other concepts relevant to the functioning of the EU was introduced. The left-wing offensive in the EU also ushered onto the agenda a broad spectrum of topics encapsulated by politicization, which were subordinated to new interpretations of EU values. In line with the demands of Laclau and Mouffe, the interest of policymakers extended to the environment, climate, feminism, ethnic inequality and migrants' rights, as well as the private domain of EU inhabitants' lives, notably sexuality. These became important areas of EU policy, irrespective of the treaty provisions which, at least in some of these areas, granted exclusive competence to member states and national democracies. To change this situation in the name of EU values became fundamental for the political offensive of the Left; therefore, the EU institutions increasingly boldly encroached upon these national competences, and, interestingly, often under the guise of defending the rule of law.

All the areas of European policy mentioned above became examples of growing ideologization, i.e., the subordination of public policy to the influence of left-wing values. The domination of ideas over political practice was most evident in the case of EU climate policy, which disregarded the practical feasibility of the implementation of its objectives and their social costs. This was particularly visible on the benches of the European Parliament. One example was the EP's response to the European Commission's legislative proposals for a new border tax or the so-called Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism. The very idea of introducing this tax was already controversial, as it could lead to a trade war with the EU's largest trading partners (especially the US and the PRC). Nevertheless, MEPs were in favour of tightening this legislation, including the widening of the scope of

EU imports covered, i.e., extending the list of sectors covered by the new climate tax, as well as the shortening of the transition period for the mechanism under discussion. The parliamentarians' demands obviously received strong support from environmental think tanks [Sánchez Nicolás 2022b].

The ideological commitment to saving the climate, but irrespective of the costs of such a policy, became a major issue during the energy and food crisis triggered by Russian aggression against Ukraine on 2022. It raised doubts, especially among conservative politicians, who watched with concern the offensive of the Left in successive domains of public affairs. One of the Polish MEPs summarized the mainstream arguments in the European Parliament in the following manner. "In many circles, a dogma reigns that energy prices, especially prices of energy derived from fossil fuels, ranging from coal to gas, should rise because this will cause people to use less of this energy and energy producers will try to generate it from other sources. For many, especially the Greens, the Liberals, and the Socialists, the more expensive the better. And this is the opinion that persists in the European Parliament. (...) This is utopia. (...) Climate policy in the European Union is being proposed and pursued not by sensible people, but by those who have been seduced by theories claiming that by not burning coal in Europe we will reduce global temperatures, which is of course a nonsense" [wPolityce.pl 2021]. The above opinion is corroborated by academic research, which shows that the European Parliament's discussion of the climate agenda was framed in the context of pro-Europeanism. This fostered climate ambitions and reinforced the demands of the Left, especially the position expressed by the Greens' groups [Buzogány, Ćetković 2021]. Opposition to the Union's climate ambitions was increasingly treated as a manifestation of populism and anti-European attitudes, even in academic research [Huber et al. 2021].

The phenomenon of the ideologization of EU energy and climate policies was highlighted by Professor Francisco Contreras of the University of Seville. "Another new primitive religion consists of believing in the environment as something most important. Our planet is an object of worship, it becomes more significant than the human race. We fight against fossil fuels, saying that their elimination will bring us salvation. (...) Those who claim that global warming is anthropogenic should promote nuclear power, but this is not the case. Europe's carbon dioxide emissions are only 9 per cent of the global total, while China's reach 30 per cent. Europe has reduced its emissions by 25 per cent since 2000. In that time, China has tripled its emissions, but it is Europe that suddenly has the Green Deal that will make energy

even more expensive. Germany currently pays the most for electricity, which will affect its growth potential. Europe is contradicting itself, which could lead to its self-destruction" [Przyszłość europejskiej prawicy 2021: 13].

Other conservative intellectuals also pointed out the ideologization of the said EU policy. "Our share, the EU as a whole, of emissions is below 10 per cent, so creating a zero-carbon economy will hit the Union countries hard, but globally it will not contribute much to decarbonization. The rationale behind this policy is insane – it claims the EU needs to teach the whole world a lesson in ecology. We are putting ourselves in a position of a "top student", something that is frivolous and foolish. None of the important EU politicians will dare to put the brakes on this process. It is impossible to have a substantive conversation on this issue because the ideological pressure is so strong. There are also interests involved – if we are aiming for a carbon-free economy across Europe, we need to remember that only few companies can supply this market with technology" [Warzecha 2021].

Ryszard Legutko's remarks resonated with the political correctness surrounding the discussion on EU climate policy, which has exerted overwhelming pressure on policymakers, actually hindering them from undertaking rational actions that adjust climate ambitions to the opportunities and particular conditions in individual sectors or member states.

Increasingly, the Left has pursued total politics in the EU. This included the systematic expansion of the powers of the EU institutions into further areas hitherto falling within the remit of the Member States. It also encroached more and more boldly into private life, sometimes depriving the right of moral judge-ment to religious organizations, which were further pushed onto the margins of social and political life by the promoted principle of secularism. A telling example of this tendency was the attempt by the Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, to eliminate Christmas from the language of political correctness in the EU. Earlier, she had already promoted a left-wing agenda, including by proposing the Gender Equality Strategy [European Commission 2020a] and supporting the Union's accession to the Istanbul Convention. Amidst the wave of criticism of the Commission's proposals, perhaps the loudest voice was that of Pope Francis, who considered such conduct to be the offshoot of the secularism of the EU institutions. He likened such actions to past practices of authoritarian regimes attempting to curtail religious life in Europe. Furthermore, he warned Brussels not to follow the path of ideological colonization regarding countries attached to Christian

values. In his view, the Union should respect the tradition and culture of individual countries, as well as their domestic historical and legal circumstances; otherwise, it could easily turn into a dictatorship or a supranational empire [Roberts 2021].

Conclusion

Immanuel Wallerstein propagated the thesis that the offensive of the global left launched with the 1968 revolution was doomed to failure [Wallerstein 2021: 19-28; Wiewiorka 2021: 91-94]. His main argument was that, as an anti-systemic movement, it was eroding the foundations not only of American globalization, but also of the geopolitical order created by the West after the Second World War. In other words, it was undermining the geopolitical structures of the US and EU world supremacy and thus paving the way for a change in the global order in favour of powers competing with the West for leadership, most notably the PRC.

Indeed, it is difficult not to notice that the demands of the Left contained in the socialist strategy were weakening nation-states, including both in North America and Europe. The policy of fostering the hegemony of universal leftist values negated the previous foundations of the political order relating to national tradition and culture, which had to impact the state structures. Thus – at least in relation to some countries – Alan Milward's thesis that European integration helped to strengthen nation-states was compromised [Milward 2000]. Additionally, left-wing values provided a tenuous axiological basis for EU structures, including legitimizing the growing power of EU institutions and the supremacy of EU law over national constitutions. The lack of trust in left-wing ideas was particularly evident in the new member states from Central Europe, which had endured communism after the Second World War.

It is difficult, moreover, to build integration upon actions that are essentially nihilist in character. The Left in the West harboured a loathing for the very foundations of Western civilization. It essentially rejected liberal standards of democracy, adopting instead a fundamentalist progressive stance, seeking to negate the West's previous cultural foundations [Bock-Côté 2021a]. It attempted to weaken national identities, which was particularly evident in the EU and which was a difficult task to achieve. According to Matthieu Bock-Côté, instead of abolishing national identifications, ethnicity- and race-related consciousness was stimulated and, accordingly, so were the social divisions arising between the indigenous population and the inflowing immigrants. This created an explosive mixture and a serious destabilization factor, notably in Western Europe.

The cultural nihilism of the progressive left is mentioned by scholars looking at the transformations of Western civilization in terms of a culture war. While in the past wars were mainly waged in Europe between different religious denominations, at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a conflict was mounting between a conservative approach represented by different religions and a leftist approach that was hostile to religiousness and which focused on the construction of new social relations [Hunter 1992]. Left-wing intellectuals rejected not only religious tradition, but also historical experience and previous culture, a phenomenon that has sometimes been termed a "cancel culture". As Renato Cristin, professor at the University of Trieste, pointed out:

"The European Union has suffered a kind of atrophy because for a very long time it has been governed by the politically correct anti-European leftist thought, which leftist intellectuals have imposed on public opinion in Europe. The European mind today suffers from a disease whose primary cause is the desire to erase historical identity. This will for spiritual annihilation is demonstrated by the EU institutions in everything they undertake" [Przyszłość europejskiej prawicy 2021: 12].

It is impossible to succeed geopolitically, both in the process of European integration and in extra-European relations, while denying one's own culture and rejecting the roots of one's own civilization, which was based, to an immense extent, on the traditions of European nations. As it seems, such a strong radicalism of the Left extended beyond a simple dichotomy between a national and a universal approach. Rather, it was a source of serious weakness, as it deprived the European Union of the foundations of civilization, which are of vital significance for the geopolitical success. The basis for social mobilization in favour of the European project was thus undermined within the Union itself, and the attractiveness of the Union's values was diminished externally.

In addition, European universalism based on the social revolution proposed by the Left was destroying the rationalism and authority of science, which, since the Age of Enlightenment, were supposed to be one of the most important mechanisms providing legitimacy for Europe's external expansion. Left-wing circles encroached ever more boldly on the humanities and sciences by treating them in an ideological manner and exploiting them as a tool for the reconstruction of society, including the liberation of enslaved minorities [Lee 2004]. Most active in this field were constructivist sociologists, creating radically new perceptions of the world and social relations. Academics involved in remaking the social world took a similar missionary approach

to, *inter alia*, history, political science, medical science, etc., essentially denouncing rationality and scientific methodology [Lee 2004: 197]. Thus, universities became some of the most important fronts of the culture war, and academics became hostages to political correctness, which increasingly made it impossible to present arguments and research that negated a progressive way of interpreting reality. A similar phenomenon was also present in European studies, in the framework of which criticism of integration processes was being received ever less favourably. Instead, academics were getting increasingly committed ideologically to promoting this project, while seeming to overlook the manifold costs it entailed.

Moreover, the universalism of the human rights of immigrants promoted by the Left, as well as the ambitious climate agenda, impacted on the interests of the proletariat, i.e., the traditional social base for leftist groupings. The massive influx of immigrants into the EU strained the states', even the richest ones', redistribution capacity, which led to the pauperization of the poorest strata of society, and to the debt crisis that plagued southern European countries. This was one of the structural causes of the vulnerability of the eurozone. Furthermore, climate policy pushed the costs of transitions primarily onto the poorest, above all due to the rising energy prices and increased inflation (this was evident, *inter alia*, in 2021 and 2022). This may have eroded voter support for left-wing parties and their proposed integration model. It could also have led to support for those right-wing parties that combined European policy with appeals to national identity and with a broad programme of social benefits.

The methodology of the "democratic revolution" undermined the existing standards of democracy binding in both the United States of America and the European Union. The weakening of national democracy in the EU was not sufficiently counterbalanced by the democratization of political procedures and institutions at the EU level. Thereby, the strategy of the leftist forces was turning the EU into an increasingly less democratic system. The lack of political pluralism manifested in the conduct of the European elites was summed up powerfully by Francisco Contreras.

"Postmodern Marxism has become the official new pseudo-religion of the European Union, an ideology of an ever more totalitarian nature. Of course, it is not the same totalitarianism as communism or fascism. It is a new kind of totalitarianism that brings with it new strategies, new forms. Nevertheless, it is just as intolerant" [Przyszłość europejskiej prawicy 2021: 13].

Referring to the thought of the ancient philosophers, above all Plato and Aristotle, it is worth recalling that a democratic system – not held in very high esteem by either of these two thinkers – could easily turn into tyranny. This could be the case notably in a situation of a major internal conflict, which was stirred up by – as Plato phrased it – the "drones", that is, the equivalent of today's politicians. Their overarching purpose of action was to polarize and to incite the poor against the rich, for example, on behalf of some group of their own choosing deemed to be persecuted. Andrzej Nowak concluded that we are facing such turmoil in Europe.

"We are wondering whether a soft tyranny is preferable, one which flows from ideologues in Brussels deciding on the curve of the cucumber, though also on many much more important matters, concerning, for example, upbringing, human nature and human life and its boundaries, trying to control and change reality. Or will there arrive an immediately tangible, hard tyranny in the form of Sharia law, which will be incorporated over large swathes as an effective, efficient, and proven tool of Islamic civilization?" [Nowak 2020: 258].

An additional factor of destruction was the strong ideologization of the actions of left-wing politicians, which was shared by other pro-European mainstream decision-makers. As a result of the alignment of European values with left-wing norms, groupings representing other perspectives were also permeated by the spirit of revolutionary change in Europe, or subjected to normative pressures or self-censorship that suppressed the voices of common sense. Hence, several European policies have been guided more by the logic of emotion and ideology rather than by a pragmatic assessment of the capacities for change and the calculation of costs that can be shouldered by the EU and the member states. As the redistributive capacity in the EU was limited, primarily due to the organization's relatively modest fiscal potential, the costs of ambitious projects often had to be carried by the most vulnerable social groups and the least prosperous countries. Moreover, in numerous instances, EU values were far more important to decision-makers than the effectiveness of the Union's ability to counteract the mounting problems. Examples of this tendency included, inter alia, the migration crisis (of 2015) and the energy crisis (as of 2021).

All these processes did not serve European integration well. According to the assumptions of the leftist elites, which were also supported by other pro-European forces, the offensive relating to EU values was supposed to mobilize voters in Europe in favour of the centralization of power in the EU, as well as to limit the

influence of Eurosceptic circles, i.e., those who had other ideas concerning the future of the integration project. In so doing, they failed to notice the deterioration of democratic standards (or the growth of the so-called democratic deficit in the EU [Follesdal, Hix 2006]) stemming from the policies that were being pushed. Thus, a feature of the political system was the phenomenon I refer to as "exclusionary constraint", i.e., a simultaneous exclusion of certain political forces from legitimized electoral discourse and the restricting of the political correctness of this discourse predominantly to left-wing values.

The intended ideological cohesion within the Union proved to be ephemeral, as instead of building a united front in the face of successive crises, another crisis was, in fact, triggered: one relating to the rule of law and EU values. This resulted in powerful internal tensions within the EU, which were even more perilous, as they touched upon axiological issues and national sovereignty. For many citizens of the Union, these were of fundamental importance and hence not subject to compromise. Therefore, this created a subsoil of mistrust in the EU and between the Member States, and thus threatened to reinforce disintegration tendencies in Europe.

The model of ideological hegemony pushed by the Left was part of a vision of integration, which had strong centralizing, undemocratic and even totalitarian tendencies. It was a "democratic revolution" of an anti-systemic nature, in keeping with the tradition of the 1968 revolt, and with the earlier tenets and political practice of Marxism. Not only did it strike at liberal democracy, at the hitherto dominant culture and religion in Europe – it also eroded the structures of nation-states. This anti-systemic overtone of the actions of the radical Left may, unfortunately, contribute to the destabilization, and indeed the collapse, of the European project. The more so because, as practice shows, the concepts, and ideals of the Left have gained fertile ground among other electoral alliances constituting a pro-European cartel at the EU level. In other words, the success of the Left in implementing a socialist strategy in the EU may prove to be short-lived. For it heralds, not so much the creation of a new European order, but rather an additional undermining of the geopolitical system, based on the primacy of Western Europe and the USA on a global scale.

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