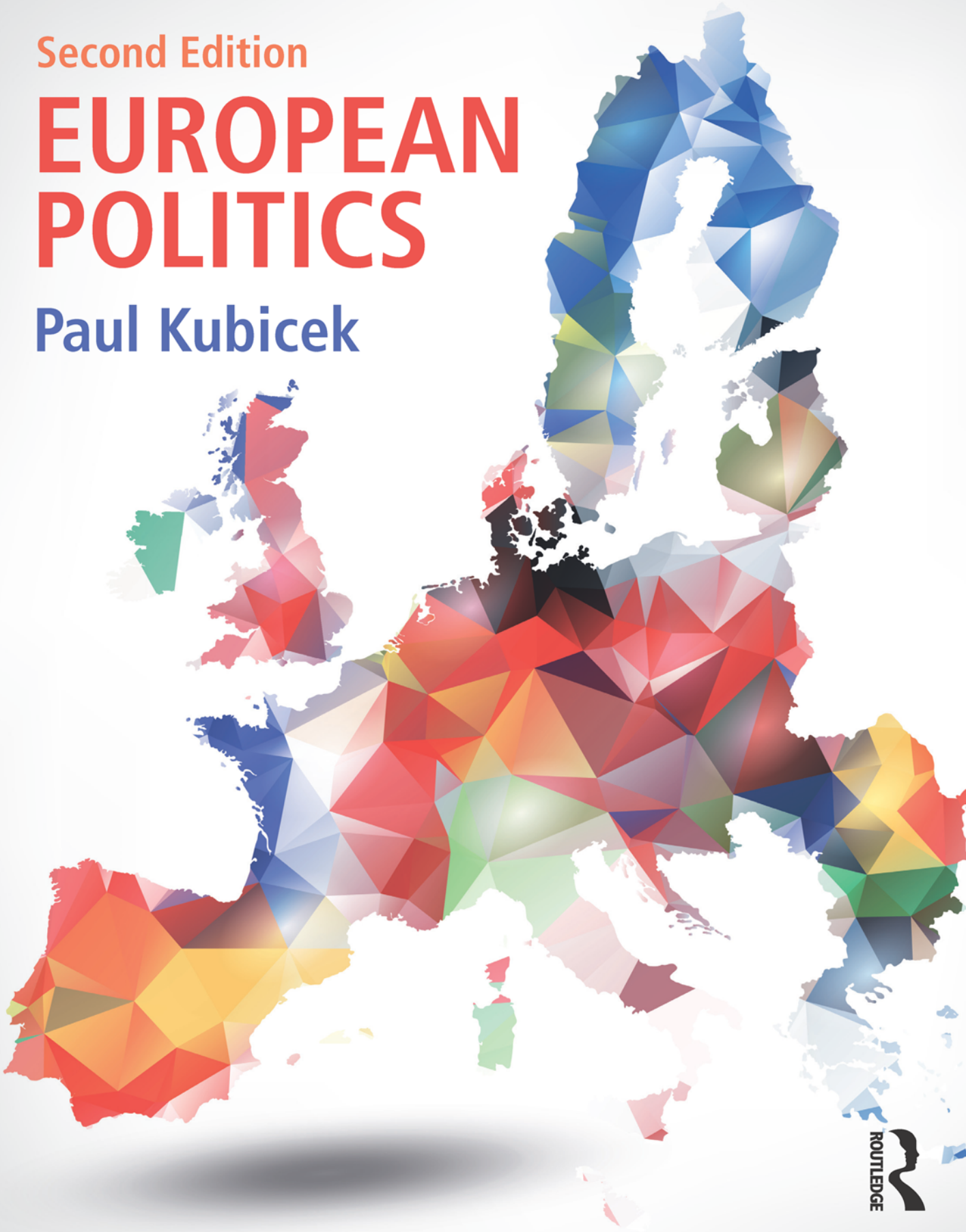


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Paul Kubicek



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# European Politics

Second Edition

Paul Kubicek

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# Preface

I finished writing and editing this edition of *European Politics* in late 2016. Amid all the dramatic events in 2016, including the refugee crisis and war in Syria, Brexit, and the US presidential election, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the final dénouement of Cold War received relatively little attention. I myself recall a class I took at that time, during which our professor, who had distinguished herself both in academia and in government service, was bewildered by the unexpected collapse of communism and disintegration of the Soviet Union. She observed that the world that she knew, a world predicated on divisions between East and West, had ended and that we, members of a new generation, might be better placed to look upon the emerging European and world order with a fresh set of eyes. In the initial post-Cold War years, there was a palatable sense of Western triumphalism and optimism, including discussions of the “end of history” as liberal democracy was seen to be ascendant, without a viable ideological challenger. While there were some immediate post-communist crises—the wars in the former Yugoslavia were the bloodiest in Europe since World War II—one could point to positive signs, including the growth of democratic institutions in most of post-communist Europe and more push for European integration, spearheaded by the European Union (EU).

The first edition of this textbook, written nearly a decade ago, was an attempt to look at a unifying Europe with a “fresh set of eyes.” Drafted after the introduction of the euro and the expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007, it exuded, in many ways, a sense of optimism or at least one of possibility for a more united, democratic Europe. However, even then there were signs of possible trouble, including concerns about terrorism and immigration. By the time the book was published, Europe was in a full-blown economic crisis, with some pondering the viability of the euro, the EU, and the social-democratic model in many European countries.

The second edition of this text focuses more on these developments, as well as the refugee crisis in 2015–2016 that had reverberations both at the EU level and within individual states. Momentum for a more unified Europe has clearly been lost. Indeed, with the Brexit vote in June 2016, the pendulum appears to be swinging the other way. This is not to say that the EU is doomed or that wholesale political changes within European states are likely. What is apparent, however, is that there is much political uncertainty across Europe, as new actors have emerged to challenge the idea of a single Europe, both in terms of its institutions as well as its fundamental values. While the book still takes a broad comparative approach and focus on common trends across the continent, the question about the future of Europe is far

more open-ended than before. While one could argue that some events give cause for worry, one consolation, I hope, is that students will find the study of contemporary Europe interesting and engaging and will learn to appreciate competing perspectives both on where Europe has been and where it might be headed.

Numerous acknowledgements are in order. When I began my academic career, I did not consider myself a “Europeanist.” “*East* Europeanist,” perhaps, but not one with continent-wide expertise. To the extent that I am a bona-fide “Europeanist” today, I became so only with time and often through teaching. Thus, thanks must first go to my former students (in Turkey, Ukraine, Slovenia, and in the US), as this book is in part an outgrowth of how I learned to teach various classes on European and EU politics, often incorporating insights and feedback from students. Among my academic colleagues, numerous individuals stimulated my interest in European political issues and provided me with opportunities or inspiration to pursue research in the field. I would like to make special mention of Ilter Turan, Zvi Gitelman, Ronald Suny, Kevin Deegan-Krause, Amie Kreppel, Rudi Rizman, John McCormick, and Frank Schimmelfennig. Much thanks must be given to the numerous reviewers who provided feedback and suggestions on how to improve upon the first edition. I have tried to incorporate them into this volume, which no doubt resulted in many improvements. I thank Andrew Taylor and Sophie Iddamalgoda at Taylor and Francis for supporting this second edition and assisting in numerous large and small ways to produce a more engaging text.

Lastly, thanks to Alyce, Jonah, and Asher. They have been both companions on adventures throughout Europe as well as a constant source of support, for which I am most thankful.



Map of Europe



The fall of the Berlin Wall: A transformative moment of Europe

© Lionel Cironneau AP/PA Images

# Chapter 1

## Introduction: What is Europe?

In my view, the best place to begin an examination of European politics is with an anecdote from a trip to Berlin, a city that has been the locale of world-altering events throughout the past century and is once again the capital of Germany. I am standing in the center of the city, just outside the Brandenburg Gate. Although it has long been a symbol of the city, Brandenburg Gate is perhaps best known for the events that occurred there in November 1989. The Berlin Wall, the icon of the Cold War and a divided Europe, stretched in front of its western façade. In that month, the Berlin Wall fell, and Berliners from both the western and eastern halves of the city scaled the wall to celebrate the end of communism. The scene of jubilant crowds celebrating on top of a structure that was associated with violence and repression was one of the defining images of the end of the Cold War and of the twentieth century.

A tourist approaches me, asking, “Where is the Wall?” Ironically, he is from the divided island of Cyprus, which until recently also had a wall through the middle of its capital city. I tell him that it has been removed from here and one has to look elsewhere in the city to see areas where it still stands. He walks away disappointed, and I reflect on the fact that indeed, if one did not know the history, one could easily walk around and through the Brandenburg Gate and never know what had transpired here. Perhaps this is a good thing, a reflection that the Cold War division of Europe and of Germany is a thing of the past.

Yet, history is clearly present, if one wants to look. Just north of the Brandenburg Gate is the refurbished Reichstag, the German parliament building, which the Nazis purposefully set on fire in 1933 to justify repression of their opponents. South of the gate is Hitler’s bunker, where, presumably, he committed suicide in the waning days of World War II. Adjacent is a memorial to victims of the Holocaust, a square city block of giant coffin-like boxes laid out in rows. There are not many old buildings of the type one would find in central Paris, Prague, or Porto, a reminder that Berlin was subjected to massive bombing by the Allies in World War II. Just east of the gate is the hulking Soviet (now Russian) embassy, a vivid reminder of the Cold War. A couple of blocks further one sees concrete barriers reminiscent of the Wall, but these now surround the US Embassy, structures that are now *de rigueur* in the post-9/11 world.

Perhaps such physical reminders of Berlin’s past are beside the point. Since the fall of the Wall, Berlin has turned into a giant construction site, and the symbol of today’s Berlin is arguably a new, if garish to some, commercial complex on Potsdamer Platz. Asking young Berliners to reflect upon their past may elicit the



response *Wir sind jetzt alle Deutsche* (“We are now all Germans”) or, even, *Wir sind jetzt alle Europäer* (“We are now all Europeans”). They did not experience the Cold War and the division of their city.

Look closer, however, at two older ladies chatting amicably on the park bench. Despite sharing a common language, they grew up in two different countries (West and East Germany) with diametrically opposed political systems. The aged pensioner walking with a cane is a veteran of Hitler’s army, although, becoming a citizen of West Berlin after the war, he says he completely embraces democratic values and his wartime allegiance to the Third Reich is no longer relevant.<sup>1</sup> The businessman rushing to a meeting—could he have been, as hundreds of thousands of East Germans were, employed by the *Stasi*, the communist secret police? Further along you see a group of dark-haired young men speaking a language that is clearly not German. Perhaps they are some of the millions of people of Turkish heritage now living in Germany, or maybe they were part of the wave of Syrian refugees that streamed into Germany in 2015.

### Establishing the main theme

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#### European Union (EU)

collection of twenty-eight countries (as of 2016) that aims for economic, political, and social integration in Europe. The EU possesses its own political structure and assumes an important role in formulating public policies.

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The breaching of the Berlin Wall, the end of communism, and the subsequent expansion of the **European Union (EU)** in the 2000s to post-communist states can be seen as evidence of a “new” Europe, one that is breaking down barriers and unifying countries and peoples. This perspective, reflected in many parts of this text, scraps the older notion of dividing Europe into various parts (e.g., “Eastern” or “Southern” Europe) and emphasizes both the common features of European political systems and societies today and the drive, at the transnational level, to unify the continent in political and economic terms. Institutionally, this push is spearheaded by and manifested in the EU, but it also has social and cultural dimensions, ranging from mass tourism to the ubiquitous Irish pubs, Spanish tapas bars, Italian pizzerias, and French bistros throughout Europe to the multi-national composition of European football (*soccer*, in American parlance) clubs and the wildly popular Eurovision pop music contest to formation of a common “European” identity. Looking at various aspects of European unity in the mid-2000s, perhaps, in retrospect, the pinnacle of Euro-optimism, some spoke of Europe as the new “superpower.”<sup>2</sup>

This is not to say, however, that a single, united Europe is, in fact, the current reality, as one can point to a number of divisive issues and problems, such as heated debates over immigration and multi-culturalism, desires to uphold one’s own national power and identity, and concerns about the downside of globalization and economic integration and how best to promote economic growth. Indeed, if the first edition of this text, written mostly prior to the European debt crisis that emerged at the end of the 2000s, took a more optimistic tone, one will find in this second edition—written mostly in 2016—more skepticism about prospects for a united Europe, reflected in divergent responses and heated debates over economic crisis of the late 2000s (which extended into the mid-2010s in several states) and the refugee crisis of 2015–2016, which led some countries to close their borders and argue for re-considering basic tenets of European integration. Some observers suggested that

due to these problems the EU had reached a “breaking point” or that it was “on the verge of collapse.”<sup>3</sup> This was, notably, *before* the 2016 vote for “Brexit”—British withdrawal from the EU—which led to even more economic and political uncertainty, both in Great Britain and across Europe, as some feared (or welcomed) the prospect of a weakened or dismantled EU.

This book explores the notion of “one Europe,” both how it can help describe, analyze, and explain contemporary European politics as well as its limitations that have become more apparent in the 2010s. Of course, a complete understanding of the drive for European unity would weave together various cultural, economic, historical, and sociological threads into a complex fabric. This book gives attention to each, but, as a text for a course in European politics, it focuses on political institutions, political culture, and various domestic and international political challenges facing European states and citizens today.

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**Europeanization**

a process emphasizing how national-level political processes and practices have become more similar over time and informed by transnational European-level concerns and institutions.

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One key concept that stretches across these issues and will appear, at least implicitly, in each chapter, is **Europeanization**, an often contested notion that highlights how changes in national-level political systems can be attributed to the developments of European integration.<sup>4</sup> Europeanization is, however, a multi-dimensional process that can be understood in a variety of ways. A top-down, diffusion-oriented conceptualization focuses mostly on the EU, emphasizing how formal and informal rules, procedures, styles, “ways of doing things,” and beliefs and norms develop in the EU policy process and are then incorporated into domestic political systems.<sup>5</sup> An example of this type of Europeanization is the adoption of a common currency, the euro, which was the outgrowth of closer economic integration among states and takes away powers traditionally exercised at the state level. Europeanization, however, can also be conceived in a bottom-up fashion, examining in particular how the rise of a pan-European identity among citizens contributes to common practices and the empowerment of continent-wide political institutions. It can also be viewed as a process—driven by factors such as common economic and social challenges as well as transnational communication—that leads to political convergence across Europe, as ideologies and parties align similarly in different national contexts and electorates respond to the same stimuli.<sup>6</sup> However one defines Europeanization—this volume will look at all of these possible elements—it clearly is a process that transcends the borders of individual states, blurring traditional, state-level concerns of comparative politics with those of international relations. Looking beyond Europe itself, one should also note that the quest to transform Europe—historically a region of intense conflict and bitter national rivalries—into a more coherent, stable, and peaceful entity is one of the great issues in international politics and, potentially, represents a model for other regions.

Yet, recognizing the EU’s motto, “Unity in Diversity,” it is also worth remembering the different historical experiences of European peoples and the peculiarities of their domestic political institutions and socio-economic systems. The EU, while important, has not made the nation-state obsolete. Despite Europeanization in a number of fields (e.g., media markets, environmental policy, interest groups, political culture), “one Europe” in its fullest manifestation is a highly contested notion that has not been realized and is far from an inevitability or given for the future. Despite the pledge in the 1957 Treaty of Rome to create an “ever closer union of peoples,” many reject a united Europe as a normative goal. Schisms—both between countries and within them—are real, and often Europe does not speak with a single

authoritative voice or act like a superpower. For example, despite vowing “never again” in the wake of the Holocaust and asserting that managing the disintegration of Yugoslavia would be the “hour of Europe,”<sup>7</sup> European countries sat largely idly by while genocide occurred in the Balkans in the 1990s. In 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel asserted that sheltering refugees was a reflection of European values, but it was clear from the responses of countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Denmark, Great Britain, and Hungary that leaders in those states held different values or priorities.

Indeed, to preview an overarching theme of this volume, one that I believe gives one purchase on understanding much of what is transpiring in Europe today, one can point to tensions between the logic of Europeanization and the pull of domestic politics. By “logic of Europeanization,” I embrace a functional perspective (developed more in Chapter 3) that argues that for practical reasons, numerous international issues require cooperation and integration. One could argue that it “makes sense,” in aggregate economic terms, for the small and medium-size countries in Europe to work together, eliminate trade and investment barriers, allow labor to move freely, and develop a common currency to cement a common market. It “makes sense” for issues such as environmental protection to have a pan-European dimension, and, in terms of foreign policy, a united Europe is a far more capable global player than one that is divided and working at cross-purposes. This perspective was adopted by the founders of today’s EU, and has long been embraced by political leadership on the continent. Indeed, up through the 2000s, the idea of a single Europe was attractive to many, as post-communist states made numerous reforms to qualify for membership in a club which they believed yielded significant benefits.

However, one can push the “logic” of functionalism only so far. One can debate, for example, how far economic integration “logically” should go, with many (some using the advantage of hindsight) arguing that the adoption of the euro may have been a step too far, given the problems that emerged within a decade of its creation. More significantly, perhaps, political considerations may trump the “logic” or “objective good” of a more united Europe. Trade and immigration may, as most economists would argue, make the whole better off, but both can create losers as well. Some companies are unable to compete, and some individuals lose jobs. Integration means surrendering national sovereignty, which many may value as they continue to have a closer political and emotional connection to their national states. States may thus be weaker—or, at least, many citizens may believe their states to be weaker—inside the EU, in which they may have to go along with the decisions of more powerful states or, perhaps even worse, of faceless “Eurocrats” in Brussels. Many in Europe also believe the EU and Europeanization have long been driven by the preferences of economic or technocratic elites, who have lost touch with the “common” people. In the 2010s, these perspectives, captured by growing **Euroskepticism** throughout the continent, gained more political traction. Indeed, fears of immigration, perceived loss of national power, and backlash against political elites were all factors that drove the “Brexit” vote, a vote that proponents claimed allowed Britons to “take their country back” and is the clearest indication yet that Europeanization is not an inevitable or irreversible process. To put it somewhat differently, it now seems clear—to answer a riddle posed about European

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**Euroskepticism**  
doubt or fear of  
the prospect of  
greater  
European unity  
and a stronger  
role for the EU.

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Greece bailout: Members of left wing parties shout slogans behind a burning European Union flag during an anti-EU protest in the northern Greek port city of Thessaloniki, Sunday, June 28, 2015

© Giannis Papanikos AP/PA Images

integration—that integration is not like a bicycle that you have to keep pedaling and from which one cannot get off.

Furthermore, even under the rosiest scenario of those embracing the notion of “one Europe,” it is clear that Europe will not politically unify to have a single government. Instead, scholars try to capture the current reality by referring to **multi-level governance**, meaning that political power is territorially dispersed (and often contested) among European-level decision-makers in the EU, national-level political leaders and institutions, and, in many countries, sub-national or regional actors. The idea of multi-level governance does not wholly contradict the idea of “one Europe.” Rather, multi-level governance recognizes that European-level institutions and rules are *one* of the defining characteristics—but not the *only* characteristic—of political life in Europe today. In this way, use of multi-level governance requires one to take approaches that bridge the disciplinary divide between comparative and international politics, as “states no longer serve as the exclusive nexus between domestic politics and international relations.”<sup>8</sup>

This book embraces the idea of multi-level governance, which reflects both how the EU and Europeanization have advanced but also that individual states (and in some cases, regions within states) remain important actors. While not a text on the EU, it recognizes that the EU plays a key role in European politics. The rise of multi-level governance, epitomized by the expanding reach of the EU, can thus be seen as a “watershed in European political development.”<sup>9</sup> Earlier, traditional approaches to European politics that are rooted exclusively in domestic political

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**multi-level  
governance**

idea that political power in Europe is territorially dispersed among European-level decision-makers in the EU, national-level political leaders and institutions, and, in many countries, sub-national or regional actors.

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institutions or that tack on brief consideration of the EU as a sort of after-thought thus do not capture the broader reality of Europe today. At the same time, however, national governments (and, as clearly evidenced in the case of “Brexit,” voters) still matter. Study of European politics should, as suggested above, weave together comparative and international politics in a way that the study of Middle East or Latin American politics (where the Arab League and Organization of American States, respectively, are relatively weak actors) would not. This might make a more complex presentation, but such is political life in contemporary Europe.

## Defining Europe

Before proceeding further, one should address a central definitional question: What is Europe? While the question appears simple enough, it can elicit a number of different answers.

### Geography

At a most basic level, one could define Europe as a continent defined by geography. However, the borders of Europe, unlike those of Africa or South America, are not clearly delineated. Excluding islands, one can say that Europe stretches from Scandinavia in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south and from Portugal and Spain in the west to . . . well, therein lies the problem. Indeed, by focusing on its eastern border—wherever that may be—one might argue that Europe is less a continent and more a peninsula (or series of peninsulas) of Asia (thus, some refer to “Eurasia”). Students in elementary school often learn that Europe stretches eastwards to the Ural Mountains, thereby encompassing part of Russia. Many would dispute Russia’s European credentials, but by this definition several other post-Soviet states, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, would be European by virtue of lying west of the Urals. By similar logic, Iraq and Syria could even be considered part of Europe. Perhaps one could follow another long-standing tradition<sup>10</sup> and argue that the border between Europe and the Middle East (usually defined as part of Asia) is the Bosphorus Strait, which bisects sprawling Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey and at one time, when it was known as Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine (Greek) Empire. Yet, Turkey has been declared eligible to join the EU, which, in crucial ways, trumps mere geography in defining Europe. Of course, many oppose Turkish membership in the EU, and, if Turkey is allowed to join, the boundaries of Europe might stretch further: On what grounds could Georgia and Armenia then be excluded? For that matter, what of Israel, which, even though it has been deemed ineligible to join the EU, participates in the European basketball and football championships and the Eurovision music competition? Suffice it to say that consensus on Europe’s geographical borders remains elusive.

### Europe as an idea

Perhaps, one might say, Europe today is best conceived as an idea, or even as a political or social *project*. Put in the jargon of social science, Europe is a construction,

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**Cold War**

ideological conflict from the end of World War II to the late 1980s—early 1990s between the US and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies. As a consequence of the Cold War, most of Europe was divided into two ideological-military blocs.

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not a geographical entity but a product of human agency.<sup>11</sup> Notably, during the **Cold War**, “Europe” as a united political or social unit did not exist. Instead, Europe had to be modified by adjectives. Western Europe not only had clear geographic borders but was also defined by its democratic political systems and opposition to Soviet-inspired communism.<sup>12</sup> Most classes and textbooks on “European politics” were—and in many cases, still are—overwhelmingly devoted to this part of Europe. Eastern Europe, in contrast, was defined by its communist political and economic systems and in opposition, in its ideological orientation at any rate, to the “decadent,” “imperialist,” capitalist West. Since the end of the Cold War, the division of the continent into two opposing ideological camps is over, although the old West/East division still has some meaning while some now speak of an emerging North/South division on the continent.<sup>13</sup> Such observations, however, do not undermine the claim that today’s Europe is more unified than at any previous time in modern history. Still, however, one could ask, what lies behind this “Europe”?

Note that citizens of most nation-states would not normally ask this question of their own countries. Most Americans, Britons, Poles, Germans, Italians, Spaniards, and so on, beset as they might be with internal divisions in their own countries (think “red states” versus “blue states” in the US, English versus Scots, or northern versus southern Italians), could nonetheless agree on a set of values or traditions—regardless of how vague or banal—that help define their national identity. Countries usually have a history with a set of narratives or myths on which they can draw. Europe, with a history of conflict and populated by diverse peoples living in dozens of national states, has no such luxury. There is no “founding father” of Europe that resonates like George Washington does for Americans, a singular event like the French Revolution, or a unifying cultural figure like Shakespeare for the English or Cervantes for the Spanish. How then can one define Europe? Or, to put it differently, what is Europe for?

### Europe as an economic community

Helene Sjursen, a Norwegian political scientist, suggested that there are three possible answers to this question.<sup>14</sup> First, one could view Europe—best epitomized by the early history of the EU—as a “problem-solving entity,” based on economic citizenship, functionalism, and material economic interests. Arguably, this was the main basis for European legitimacy in the formative years of the EU. However, as we’ll see in Chapter 3, in the 1990s the EU and concomitant processes of Europeanization began to move beyond mere economic concerns, and in discussions of EU expansion to former communist countries, an economic definition or conception of Europe was far less pronounced and compelling, giving way to moral, cultural, and political claims.<sup>15</sup> In other words, as “Europe” has grown in recent years and new issues and challenges have emerged, its definition and mission have changed.

### Europe as a cultural community

An alternative conception of Europe, according to Sjursen, would be a value-based community, based upon social and cultural citizenship and drawing a firm line

between Europe and other states and actors. From this perspective, Europe would be an entity that seeks to revitalize traditions and memories of distinctly “European” values, to forge a “we-feeling” as a basis for integration. Ironically, Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union (1985–1991), advanced this type of argument, maintaining, “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals [a phrase used by French President Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s] is a cultural-historical entity united by the common heritage of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.”<sup>16</sup> What precisely that “we-feeling” is would be a subject of dispute and may crucially depend upon what Europe is trying to define itself against. Former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt wrote an interesting essay entitled “Who Doesn’t Belong in Europe,” where he argued that for cultural reasons Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and (Muslim-majority) Turkey lie outside.<sup>17</sup> Since Turkey has applied to join the EU, it is the Turkish case that has elicited the most debate on the questions of “what” or “where” is Europe. According to Pat Cox, former President of the European Parliament, “This [Turkish membership in the EU] is the most difficult question of all. . . . It’s about how we define Europe.”<sup>18</sup> On this issue, religion—if not pious belief then at least a Christian heritage—is often used, especially by those who oppose Turkish membership, as a marker for what defines “Europe,” but, of course, Christianity is far from unique to Europe<sup>19</sup> and, as noted in Chapter 9 of this volume, secularism is increasingly embraced as a “European value,” as many Europeans have turned away from religious belief and practices. Alternatively, some Europeans,



A man waves a French flag on top of a destroyed tank belonging to forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi in Ajdabiyah, March 27, 2011

## In focus

## European political values

Individual countries, one might say, rest upon core political values. These values are usually promulgated in their constitutions. “Europe,” of course, is not a single country, and it lacks a common constitution. If, therefore, one is to conceive of “Europe” as an already existing or at least a potential political community, on what values does it rest? What documents would express these values?

To the extent that the EU is the most powerful expression of European unity, one should expect that if “Europe” rests on political values, they could be found in EU documents. Indeed, this is the case. As we’ll see in Chapter 3, the EU is built on a foundation of various treaties that date to the 1950s. Each of these treaties—while focusing on construction of institutions or development of policies in particular issue areas—includes statements of political vision and values. Specific rhetoric and the overall emphasis of these statements have changed over time. For example, the 1957 Treaty of Rome, which sets the goal of “an ever closer union” of peoples in its first preambulatory clause, does not mention the terms “democracy” or “human rights” in its entire preamble, emphasizing instead elimination of trade barriers, balanced trade, and coordination of commercial policy. In contrast, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty confirms Europeans’ “attachment to the principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and of the rule of law” in its third preambulatory clause, subjugating economic issues to later in the document. The ill-fated Constitutional Treaty of 2004 stated in its first preambulatory clause that it draws inspiration from “the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law,” and goes on to mention the goal of “peace, justice and solidarity throughout the world” (second clause) Europeans’ “common destiny” (third clause) and the continent as a “special area of human hope” (fourth clause). This document, ambitious as it was, was not approved, but the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, its replacement-of-sorts, puts democracy and freedom front and center, including—at the risk of sounding a bit repetitive—both the clauses from the Maastricht Treaty on the attachment to democracy and human rights and the first clause from the Constitutional Treaty linking such values to historical and cultural inheritances.

While one can debate both how effectively these documents and the EU as a whole work in practice—issues we’ll return to several times in the text—as well as their eloquence or coherence compared to national constitutions, the overall message is clear—the EU, whose goal is to eliminate divisions in Europe, is built on political values. Given the EU’s importance in the construction of “Europe,” it makes it easier to view the latter as more than mere geography or an economic arrangement to bolster trade and more as a political community.

## Critical thinking questions

1. Do you think common values such as commitment to democracy and human rights are enough to form a cohesive political community among countries with different histories and political experiences?
2. The US started as thirteen separate states but over time evolved into a more cohesive political community. What factors facilitated this? Do you think conditions to form such a community in contemporary Europe are as propitious as those in early US history?