



What Crisis?

The multiple facets of crisis/es in the current EU

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1. Crisis
2. Europe and / as crisis
3. Current Challenges to the EU
 - Brexit
 - Financial Crisis
 - COVID
 - The Mediterranean
 - Right Wing Populism and democratic backsliding
4. Why Europe?



Crisis (Webster-Merriam)

- turning point for better or worse in a disease
- paroxysmal attack of pain, distress, or disordered function
- emotionally significant event or radical change of status in a person's life
- the decisive moment (as in a literary plot)
- unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending
- a situation that has reached a critical phase



Europe as continuous crisis?

- Europe as *essentially contested concept*
- EU as a polity developed in the course of an integration process since 1951
- different concepts, many controversies
- EPC declined in French National Assembly in 1957, then economic integration

EU integration is shaped by conflicts



The EU as moving target

- Five new Treaties since 1987: SEA to Lisbon
- Completion of inner market
- Political Union
- CFSP and JHA
- Successive enlargement rounds

Enlargement rounds





The EU is...

...a patchwork of institutions and levels:

- EU-Institutions
- Agencies
- Member states
- Additional treaties and bodies (Schengen, ESM, Troika)

The EU is marked by intransparencies and legitimacy problems



Brexit

- Hard Brexit on January 1st, 2021...probably
- Many No's that cannot find a common position in the negotiations
- Brexit voters will suffer most

But the EU has other challenges to face



Financial Crisis and ESM

- ESM = intergouvernemental Treaty
- Eurozone, Commission, ECB, IMF
- EP formally excluded
- Troika negotiates conditions of financial aid prior to ESM board decision

**insufficient transparency, legitimacy,
accountability**



Financial aid: Who decides?

Standard Mode	Crisis Mode	
	IMF and Comission: conditions + approval	
	Eurogroup: conditions + approval	creditor state governments
		creditor state parliament
	Troika negotiates and controls conditions	
Government proposes Budget	Government negotiates + approves (or declines)	
Parliament decides Budget	Parliament approves (or declines)	
Citizens vote on Parliament	Citizens vote on Parliament	



COVID

- A pandemic that hit most in states already deeply touched by austerity
- Severe recession forthcoming
- Member states thrown back on their core state tasks: saving lives, closing borders

EU reaction is a unique rescue package



The Mediterranean

- A site of humanitarian catastrophes
- Result of inner-EU conflicts and insufficient inner-EU regulations
- A daily contradiction to Article 1 CFR

The EU accepts a permanent violation of its core values



Democratic backsliding

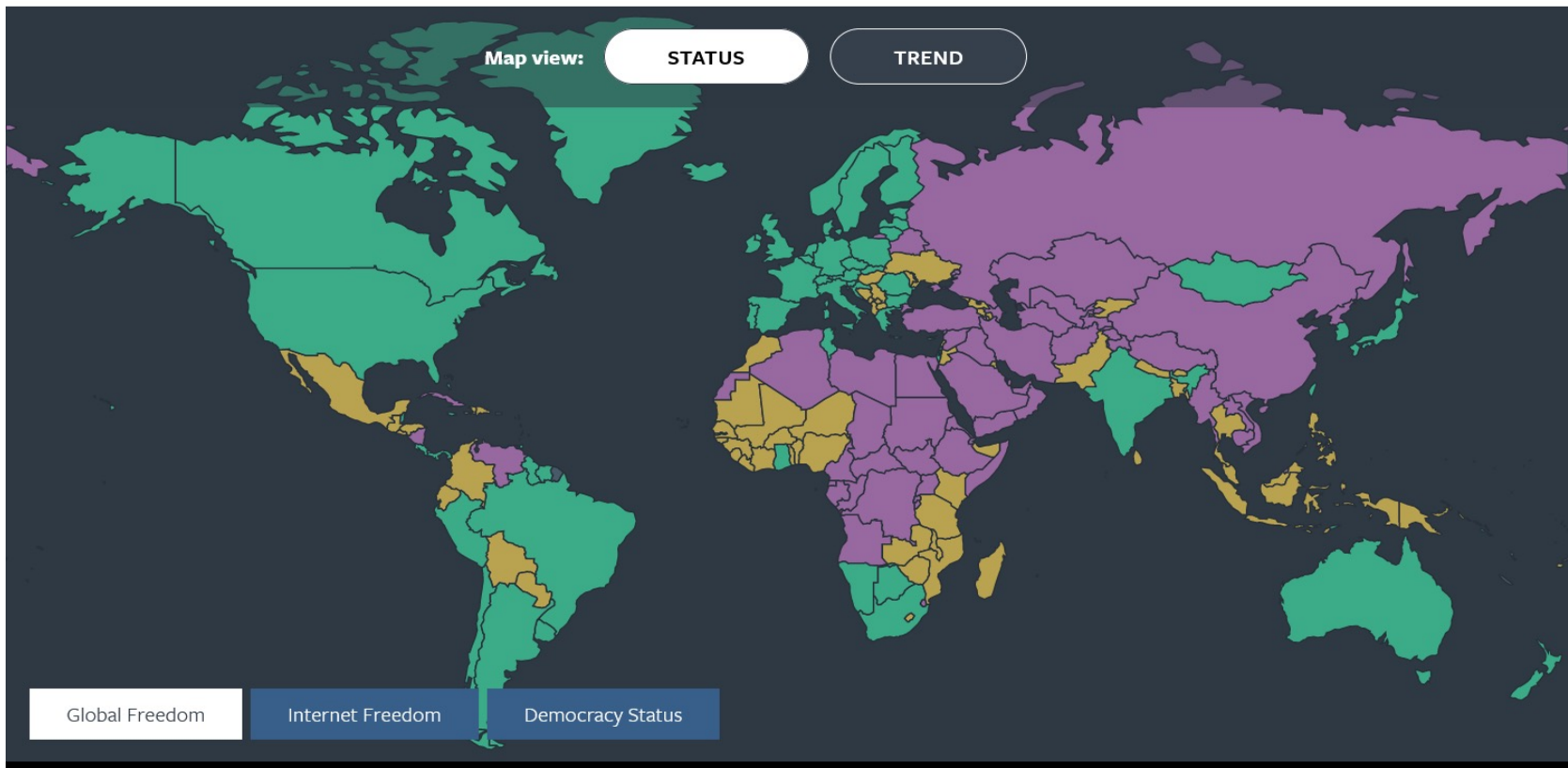
- Hungary
- Poland
- Romania

See

<https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fiw&year=2020>



Freedom in the world 2019





Hungary

- Limitations of checks and balances, freedom of the press, civil society and freedom of research (CEU)
- Sept 2018: EP recommends Article 7 procedure, but: EC needs to decide with 4/5 majority
- March 2019: EPP suspends Fidesz
- Several infringement procedures



Poland

- Limitations of checks and balances, intervention into the judiciary
- New appointment rules for professors: government appoints (even without Ph.D.)
- Limitations of civil society and freedom of assembly
- December 2017: Article 7 procedure launched by Commission



Romania

- Corruption, intervention into the judiciary
- Continuous critical EU reports
- PSD temporarily suspended in april 2019, now member again in S+D



Right Wing Populism

- Right Wing Populists without government position
- Try to change political culture
- Attack core democratic values
- For example...



Who said it?

„In einem 1000 Seiten dicken Buch über den Zweiten Weltkrieg nehmen die Konzentrationslager zwei Seiten und die Gaskammern zehn bis 15 Seiten ein, das nenne ich ein Detail“

„Wir haben eine ruhmreiche Geschichte, die länger dauerte als 12 Jahre [...] Hitler und die Nazis sind nur ein Vogelschiss in unserer über tausendjährigen Geschichte.“



Who said it?

Jean Marie Le Pen, 1998 – he was convicted for the statement (as he has been before)

Alexander Gauland, 2018 – he was not convicted, as he deliberately kept attention of the fine line between legal and illegal statements



„Ich sage diesen linken Gesinnungs-terroristen, diesem Parteienfilz ganz klar: Wenn wir kommen, dann wird aufgeräumt, dann wird ausgemistet, dann wird wieder Politik für das Volk und nur für das Volk gemacht – denn wir sind das Volk, liebe Freundinnen und Freunde“

Markus Frohmaier (MdB, ehem.
Bundesvorsitzender Junge Alternative



And currently...

- The COVID rescue package is blocked because the EP negotiated a package deal of multiannual financial framework and mechanism to protect rule of law

Another crisis?



European integration as Crisis/es

- Rather than seeing the EU in a crisis, crisis should be regarded as a defining trait of the EU
- Previous crises (e.g. empty chair) have been overcome, so can the current ones



Why EU?

EU has values to offer and defend:

- Human Dignity,
- Freedom, democracy,
- rule of law
- welfare states,
- equality of women and men,
- equal treatment and non-discrimination



Why EU?

- These values represent the European Success Model: democratic stability, economic prosperity. Democracy and the rule of law
- The EU needs to build on these values – internally and externally