

LESSON 1. GLOBALISATION AND EU-SCEPTICISM

1. Introduction

The seemingly confusing processes of Globalisation are perceived by many people as a threat. Risks and opportunities can often be difficult to weigh up. Many people have a similar attitude towards the European Union. Scepticism towards the European Union and Globalisation is brought together by many people in a close connection and is often even regarded as one phenomenon.

But what exactly is the situation? How can Globalisation and Scepticism towards the EU be described in more detail? What is the context of both issues?

A closer look at the two terms quickly reveals that they need to be treated separately. In the following, therefore, both issues will be examined individually and finally their interrelationships will be examined:

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2. Globalisation

Globalisation is not a new phenomenon that has only emerged since the fall of the Iron Curtain. Global interdependencies reach far back into the past and are to be seen as a result of the human urge to discover. In the past, trade in goods was one of the driving forces behind global networking, alongside cultural relations.

What distinguishes Globalisation today from the processes of the past, however, is the speed at which it progresses. In addition to trade in goods, capital flows and cultural exchange, it is increasingly becoming a knowledge-based process as technological progress accelerates.

2.1. Changed framework conditions for European nation states

At the latest since the end of the 1980s and the fall of the Iron Curtain, which divided Europe into East and West, the processes of Globalisation have gained momentum. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, primarily the economies of the western hemisphere were networked, but now –supported by technological developments– a globally operating trade network spans the planet, putting the economies of every country in mutual competition with each other. By being able to switch to different production sites, economies can react more flexibly to changes in different markets. The realization that the European states today, as individual actors on the world stage, could play no or only a very minor role strengthened the motivation to push forward joint economic activities in addition to the peacekeeping intentions (SCHMUCK 2015).

2.2. Changed framework conditions for citizens

Since the end of the 1980s, the changed framework conditions of the economy, which is geared towards more flexible global markets, have increasingly made everyday life and lifestyles more flexible (BPB 2003). For example, until the 1990s it was normal for many people to work for an employer for many years, but nowadays job changes are much more frequent. This new form of flexible living is demanded of many citizens, and sometimes also desired by many. Further examples for this would be the frequent use of home office offers, as well as work flexitime (RERRICH, WEX 1993).

2.3. Actors of Globalisation

Globalisation processes are mostly evident in the scope of action of modern nation states. These are less and less congruent under the conditions of Globalisation. While social multi-level systems within federal nation states have long been part of everyday life, many processes of Globalisation take place between and above national sovereignties. Global financial markets operate between national money markets. Transnational companies define themselves by having branch offices in several countries, where they produce and sell (MEINERT, STROLT 2010). However, identifying the economy as the driving force behind Globalisation is not enough. Since the 1970s, the trend towards an international division of labour has been accompanied by worldwide social pluralisation and increased mobility in many social milieus (LUHMANN 1990).

2.4. Globalisation criticism

Parallel to the Globalisation of the economy, criticism of Globalisation has also become networked worldwide. Even if there is not always agreement

among the individual actors of the Globalisation critics about the origin of the individual problems, some problem areas emerge which are increasingly at the center of criticism. These are, for example, the privatisation of public tasks (education, health or retirement provision), the sale of public goods such as water or energy supplies, the decreasing influence of workers' organisations, the destruction of the environment and the disregard of human rights. On many of these points, however, there is disagreement among the various groups as to the extent to which regulatory intervention should be made in global processes (BPB 2017).

3. EU-Scepticism

After the elections to the European Parliament in May 2014, the media and political experts spoke of an earthquake of EU-Scepticism. Never before had so much dissatisfaction been expressed about the European Union during the elections. Since then, EU-sceptic parties have also had success at national and regional level. The economic and financial crisis that began in 2007 damaged one of the main foundations of the European project: the promise of prosperity. Since then, the EU has played a central role in the political debates, which, depending on the country or party, is often expressed in conflicting accusations of lack of solidarity, excessive austerity measures or demands for more protectionism. The term "EU-Scepticism" has meanwhile become a collective term that is often misunderstood.

EU-Scepticism is expressed in various forms at various levels. EU-sceptics have to be distinguished between "soft" and "hard" EU-sceptics. The moderate EU-sceptics are sceptical about certain aspects of European unification. In contrast, the harsh EU-sceptics usually reject the European Union as a whole (BERTONCINI, KOENIG 2014).

3.1. Citizens

If one considers sceptical attitudes towards the EU expressed in surveys, it can be seen that the sceptical attitudes of citizens often vary widely. Thus, it can usually be seen that many people consider the EU itself to be very meaningful, but adopt a sceptical attitude towards national or regional challenges in the European context.

3.2. Parties

Since the last elections to the EU Parliament, the EU-sceptical parties often appear in public perception as a large unified bloc. But here, too, a distinction needs to be made between moderate and hard EU-sceptics. For some parties, the boundaries between soft EU-Scepticism and hard EU-Scepticism are blurred. An important aspect here is that EU-sceptical parties do not have to come from the right-wing populist or right-wing extremist party spectrum. EU-Scepticism is present in various forms

throughout the party landscape and also includes left-wing parties (OBERKIRCH, SCHILD 2010).

3.3. Media

Media plays a special role within this subject area. First of all, it is helpful to examine their social functions: Their main function is to create publicity on various topics. The second most important function is the control of the political process, which at the same time should lead to a political socialization of the population. At the same time, however, in their dual function they act as value-neutral information providers and actors in political discourse.

Concurrent, the question arises as to which news make it into the media and why. Here it can be stated that the degree of awareness of the actors, the size of the disagreement and the extent of the conflict are decisive factors. The extent to which citizens are affected also contributes to the media's discussion of the issue. These media mechanisms lead, among other things, to the fact that the EU is usually mentioned in public perception in crisis or certain events (OBERKIRCH/SCHILD 2010).

4. Criticism of Globalisation and EU-Scepticism

As a supranational organisation, the European Union has so far been the best opportunity for European nations to speak with a strong European voice in the globalised world. As a consequence, criticism of Globalisation often mixes with criticism of the European Union. In the following, two questions in this context will be explored.

4.1. The EU as a Globalisation booster?

To answer this question, it is helpful to take a closer look at the economic processes of Globalisation. Looking at the global flows of goods and services, it is noticeable that various regional trading areas have developed that are closely related to each other in terms of their internal economies. The economic areas in North America, Europe and Asia stand out. Among these regional economic areas, Europe has the largest gross domestic product. Europe is thus the largest domestic market in the world, ahead of Asia and North America. If one compares the economic figures for the years 2000 and 2016 with one another, it becomes apparent that the regional economic areas have gained in importance globally. Of course, there are also strong relationships between the global domestic markets. Globally you can say that the processes of economic Globalisation also lead to economic regionalisation. Global trade relations thus simultaneously strengthen regional trade links (WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION 2017).

According to these simultaneous processes, the opinion of Europeans on Globalisation is divided. In a survey conducted in 2016, 55% of Europeans viewed Globalisation as an opportunity. Accordingly, 45% of those surveyed see Globalisation as a threat. If the question about the economic opportunities offered by Globalisation is put in concrete terms, 65% of the citizens surveyed are confident in this respect (EUROPEAN COMMISSION 2017).

But as already mentioned above, where there are opportunities, there are risks as well. By creating a single European market, the EU has developed its own strategy to absorb these risks. With a few exceptions, the individual European states would have grown less and less in the future due to the international competitive pressure of global markets. Through a single European market based on the four freedoms (free movement of goods, services, capital and persons), the European states can jointly survive in a global market through intensified trade among themselves.

4.2. Concern for the identity and sovereignty of nation states

For many Europeans, the public perception is often that Globalisation threatens to blur their identity, traditions and lifestyles. Many are afraid of losing control over their own future and consider their children's chances to be worse than their own. One reason for this is the view that national governments have lost control in the global dynamics of Globalisation.

But in the course of the internationalization of the nation states, as well as through European integration, various processes and principles have been introduced in the member states of the European Union, which can be regarded as a strategy for controlling Globalisation processes within Europe.

The principle of subsidiarity and the principle of proportionality regulate which competences of the nation states may be transferred at European level and when.

The principle of subsidiarity states that the EU level only has competence if it deals with social problems that can be tackled better by it than by individual member states.

The principle of proportionality states that measures may only be taken by the EU if they are suitable, necessary and at the same time appropriate for solving the problem.

Within these two principles, the transfer of competence from the member states to the EU takes place in the European Union. These states transfer competences and responsibilities in different ways to the supranational level of the EU.

4.3. Complexity pitfall

If we now look at the concepts of Globalisation and EU-Scepticism separately, it becomes clear that they should not be thrown together in one pot. Just as Globalisation cannot be described by economic processes alone, neither can one speak of EU-Scepticism as a unified attitude towards the European Union.

Behind both of them there are complex processes which make it necessary to deal with the mechanisms of our society.

5. Conclusion

Even if the world seems to turn faster due to technical developments, it is worth taking the time to curiously get to the bottom of seemingly confusing processes. This is the only way to keep the opportunity open to participate constructively in the processes.

ADDITIONAL CONTENTS

Websites:

- [Globalisierungskritik](#)
- [Was ist Globalisierung?](#)
- [Motive und Leitbilder der europäischen Einigung](#)
- [World Trade Report 2017](#)
- ["Globalisierung der Weltwirtschaft - Herausforderungen und Antworten".](#)
- [Council of Europe: Globalisation.](#)
- [United Nations: Globalisation.](#)
- [Globalisation](#)

Videos:

- [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.](#)

Additional documentation:

- [Globalisation: how the European Parliament is making it work](#)
- [reflection paper on harnessing globalisation \(2017\).](#)
- [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.](#)
- [European Commission: Understanding Eurosceptic voters.](#)
- [World Trade Organisation \(2017\): World Trade Report 2017.](#)
- Oberkirch, T.; Schild, J. (2010): Wachsender Euroskeptizismus – Anatomie eines Phänomens. Trier.

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- Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (2017): Globalisierungskritik.
- Europäische Kommission (2017): Reflexionspapier. Die Globalisierung meistern. Brüssel.
- Luhmann, N. (1990): Die Zukunft kann nicht beginnen. Temporalstrukturen einer modernen Gesellschaft. IN: Sloterdijk, P (Hrsg.) Vor der Jahrtausendwende: Berichte zur Lage der Zukunft. Frankfurt a.M..
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- World Trade Organisation (2017): World Trade Report 2017.