The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy

Edited by

Eri Bertsou and Daniele Caramani
Manifestations of technocracy have become frequent. They include “war” declarations from Mexico’s new president on the technocrats from the “Salinas revolution” in the 1990s, but also recent technocratic cabinets in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary and Italy, non-partisan ministers in Portugal, and the appointment of new versions of neo-liberal “Chicago Boys” in President’s Bolsonaro cabinet in Brazil. More generally, one observes the growth of supra-national technocratic bodies such as the IMF or the EU. Examples include also populist attacks to the independence of the Federal Reserve and the ECB (as aired by US President Trump or Greek Finance Minister Yannis Varoufakis, among others), pension institutions (by Interior Minister Matteo Salvini in Italy), courts and judges (by tabloids in Britain and populists in Switzerland) as well as the Yellow Vests’ protest against Emmanuel Macron, the French president often described as technocratic. Brexit Minister David Davis and the UK Independence Party have accused the civil service of sabotaging Britain’s exit from the European Union. Similarly, it is claimed that climate scientists and experts act based on “an agenda” that they are politicized and not neutral. On the opposite side, the reliance on experts finds increasing support driven by citizens’ scepticism toward bickering parties and politicians, and by distrust toward democratic institutions’ efficiency and competence in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Issues of technocratic neutrality, its politicization, its role as counter-weight to populism, the role it plays in responsible and responsive representation in democratic systems but also the “democratic deficit” of technocratic regimes are the themes of this volume.
Although the issue of technocratic politics is propelled in the public debate when technocratic forces manifest themselves, it has become clear that the questions it poses have roots in the very foundations of our governance systems and will become ever more pressing in the decades to come. As the complexity of political systems increases, due to technological advances and an interconnected world, and citizen demands for efficient outcomes grow, the tension between responsible and responsive governance will intensify. How can democratic systems manage to use independent knowledge and expertise to deliver effective governance without losing their democratic credentials? While the “technocratization” of politics (decision making being removed to unresponsive, unelected elites) is often considered the underlying reason for the current populist backlash, technocracy can also offer a corrective for democratic systems that swing too far toward irresponsible governance. We therefore see technocracy as a challenge, but also as a potential corrective force, as a “friend” and as a “foe” of democracy. The aim of the volume is to understand and explain these dynamics, both in theory and in practice, and to provide a common framework for the study of technocratic politics for the future.

The book developed out of various research initiatives. In 2006, the University of Zurich launched a broad research programme on the challenges to democracy in the 21st century funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (NCCR programme). While dealing primarily with populism and mediatization, parts of its research were devoted to the growing demands for expertise and supra-national governance in the context of globalization. At the closing of the programme in 2017, it had become clear that beside populism, technocratic governance constituted an equally challenging alternative to representative democracy, albeit a neglected one. This prompted theoretical work and, eventually, empirical research on technocracy, most notably with a new comparative survey on technocratic
attitudes among European publics (Bertsou and Caramani 2017). In October 2017, the new research cluster on technocracy at the chair of Comparative Politics in Zurich organized a two-day workshop on “The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy” followed up by a workshop at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops in Nicosia in 2018 and a book panel at the Council for European Studies in Madrid in 2019.

For these workshops, leading academics on technocracy and related subjects were able to come together for the first time and think systematically from comparative politics and public policy perspectives about technocracy in the current “crisis” of representative democracy. This book is the result of these efforts to address technocracy and the challenge it poses to contemporary democracies theoretically and empirically at the level of state structures, policies, politicians and citizens.

Our thanks go to Hanspeter Kriesi who launched and directed for most of its history the NCCR research programme. We are grateful to the University of Zurich for funding the first workshop in 2017. Thanks go to all participants to the Zurich workshop and to the ECPR workshop of 2018 in Nicosia. Reinout van der Veer thanks Markus Haverland and Michal Onderco for insightful comments and financial support from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. Claire Dunlop and Claudio Radaelli acknowledge support from the project “Procedural Tools for Effective Governance” (ERC grant no. 694632) and extend particular thanks to Sébastien Chailleux, Cleo Davies, Eva Kunseler and Patrick Marier. Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca wishes to thank Marina Costa Lobo, Robert Fisham and Adam Prezworski for comments. Silvana Târlea and Stefanie Baier acknowledge funding from the EU’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme for the project EMU_Choices (grant no. 649532) and thank Julia Dürr and Lara Eigenmann for research assistance. For comments on earlier versions of his chapter, Pier Domenico Tortola wishes to thank participants in the
2018 APSA panel on “Concept Formation and Comparative Historical Analysis” and in the 2018 colloquium in European Politics and Society at the University of Groningen. Marina Costa Lobo and Ian McManus’s work was funded partly by Project MAPLE (ERC grant no. 682125). Despina Alexiadou wishes to thank Hanna Back and Patrick Dumont for their extensive comments, as well as Hakan Gunaydin for help in the project. Marco Valbruzzi thanks Stefano Bartolini, Duncan McDonnell and Gianfranco Pasquino for comments on early versions of the chapter.

We are extremely thankful to Sonia Alonso Saenz de Oger and Sebastián Lavezzolo for their critical discussion at the book panel at the Council for European Studies in Madrid in 2019. For their guidance through the publication process we are grateful to the editors of the Routledge series on “Social and Political Elites” Patrick Dumont and Keith Dowding, as well as to the editors at Routledge Andrew Taylor and Sophie Iddamalgoda. Helen Belgian copy editing, index, figures/graphs. We are also very grateful to the anonymous reviewers of the draft manuscript for their insightful and constructive suggestions.

E.B. and D.C.

Zurich, June 2019
Contents

Preface and Acknowledgements iii
Tables x
Figures xii
Abbreviations xiv
Contributors xvi

Introduction: The Technocratic Challenge to Democracy 1
Daniele Caramani

Part I Concepts and Theory

1 Technocracy and Political Theory 45
Christopher Bickerton and Carlo Invernizzi Accetti

2 Neoliberal Technocracy: The Challenge to Democratic Self-Government 71
Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca

3 Technocracy and Depoliticization 99
Pier Domenico Tortola
Part III Comparative Perspectives

11 The EU between Technocratic and Democratic Legitimacy 318
Marina Costa Lobo and Ian McManus

12 Technocracy in Latin America: Between Stability and Democratic Deficit 344
Eduardo Dargent

13 Technocracy in Central-Eastern Europe and Its Impact on Democratization 370
Joshua A. Tucker and Jan Zilinsky

Conclusion: Technocracy as Friend or Foe for Democracy? 394
Eri Bertsou

Appendix 433
References 443
3.1 Technocracy and depoliticization: a unified conceptual framework
5.1 A typology of research in technocratic politics
5.2 Codebook for the analysis of technocratic discourse (excerpt)
6.1 A typology of “technocracy”
6.2 Technocrat-led governments in EU-28 member states, 1945–2018
6.3 Non-caretaker technocrat-led governments and their policies
6.4 A typology of technocrat-led governments
6.5 Types of technocrat-led governments in EU-28 member states, 1945–2017
7.1 Frequency of technocrats and experts in the portfolios of finance and social affairs (1980–2012)
7.2 The role of finance ministers in economic reforms
7.3 The role of social affairs ministers in social welfare reforms
7.4 The role of finance ministers in public social spending, old pensions and health
7.5 The role of expert finance ministers in public social spending, old pensions and health
7.6 The role of experienced finance ministers in public social spending, old pensions and health
8.1 List of technocratic governments during the Eurocrisis years
8.2 Average government position during EMU Reform negotiations 2010–15
8.3 Rejections and formal statements in the EU Council of Ministers
8.4 Unpopular reforms after a technocratic government came to power
10.1 Degenerations of epistemic learning
10.2 Possible roles of experts
11.1 Support for technocracy as crisis manager in the Eurozone (2009–14)
11.2 GIIPS country models
11.3 Centre and left effects in countries with governmental bailouts (2010, 2014)
13.1 Main results: government evaluation and experience with technocracy
13.2 Views about Government Performance Improvement
13.3 Openness to authoritarianism (LiTS data)
A.1 List of issues (Chapter 7)
A.2 Topic model results: top 20 terms by estimated probability, all topics (Chapter 8)
A.3 Full Model Specification of Table 13.1: Government Evaluation and Experience with Technocracy (Chapter 13)
A.4 Full Model Specification of Table 13.2: Views about Government Performance Improvement (Chapter 13)
Figures

1.1 The triangular relationship between representative democracy, technocracy and populism

4.1 Strategic interaction between a technocratic executive and its environment

5.1 Classification of elite profiles

5.2 Attitudes towards experts in governance

5.3 Partyness of government in Western Europe, 1945–2012

5.4 Central bank independence: Index of Central Bank Independence in OECD countries

6.1 Possible graphical configurations of the concept of technocracy

6.2 Technocraticness of government in EU-28 member states (%), 1945–2018

6.3 Technocraticness of government in EU-28 member states in 1945–2018, by region (%)

7.1 Professional background of finance and social affairs ministers

7.2 Predicted number of economic reforms by technocrat finance ministers

9.1 Three-dimensional typology for regimes

9.2 Number of news updates by month for both campaigns

9.3 Topic prevalence and top topic terms in corpus

9.4 Difference in topic prevalence by campaign

9.5 Word choice by campaign for Topic 1

9.6 World choice by campaign for “Cost” topic
9.7 Word choice by campaign for “Movement” topic

9.8 Difference in tropical content for Topics 19 and 20

10.1 Expanding the epistemic mode

10.2 Conceptualising knowledge modes as policy learning

11.1 “The EU or the IMF are the most effective for solving the economic and financial crisis”: percentage who agree (EMU average vs. GIIPS average, 2009–13)
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANSES</td>
<td>French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BU</td>
<td>Banking Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Country-Specific Recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECB</td>
<td>European Central Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECJ</td>
<td>European Court of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFSA</td>
<td>European Food Safety Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIU</td>
<td>Economist Intelligence Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMU</td>
<td>European Monetary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERA</td>
<td>European Regulatory Agency or Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESFS</td>
<td>European Financial Stability Facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESM</td>
<td>European Stability Mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVS</td>
<td>European Values Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFI</td>
<td>International financial institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INPS</td>
<td>Italian National Social Pensions System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISI</td>
<td>Import substitution industrialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMT</td>
<td>Outright Monetary Transactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Proportional representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QE</td>
<td>Quantitative Easing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WVS</td>
<td>World Values Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contributors

Despina Alexiadou is Chancellor’s Fellow at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. She is the author of *Ideologues, Partisans and Loyalists: Ministers and Policymaking in Parliamentary Cabinets* (Oxford University Press, 2016). On technocracy, she has published articles in the Oxford Research Encyclopaedia and in the *European Journal of Political Research*.

Stefanie Bailer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Basel. Her research interests encompass decision making at the European and international level, parliamentarians and parliamentary careers in Western European parliaments, and negotiations in the EU and international organizations. Her work has been published in various scholarly journals.

Eri Bertsou is Postdoctoral Researcher in Comparative Politics at the University of Zurich. She published on citizens’ technocratic attitudes and the role of political distrust in *West European Politics* (2017) and in the *European Political Science Review* (2019). Her research focuses on comparative political behaviour in Europe, specifically citizen attitudes towards democracy and technocracy, political trust, representation and partisanship.

Christopher Bickerton is Reader in Modern European Politics and a Fellow of Queens’ College at Cambridge University. He is the author of *European Union Foreign Policy: From Effectiveness to Functionality* (Palgrave, 2011), *European Integration: From Nation-States to*

Daniele Caramani is Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Zurich. He is Co-Director of the Constituency-Level Data Archive (CLEA), the author of The Nationalization of Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2004) and The Europeanization of Politics (Cambridge University Press, 2015), and the editor of the textbook Comparative Politics (Oxford University Press, 2020, fifth edition). On technocracy, he has authored an article in the American Political Science Review (2017).

Miguel Ángel Centeno is Musgrave Professor of Sociology at Princeton University. He is the author of Democracy within Reason: Technocratic Revolution in Mexico (Penn State University Press, 1994), editor of The Politics of Expertise in Latin America (Macmillan, 1998) and author of several articles on technocracy and Latin America in various scholarly journals.

Marina Costa Lobo is Principal Researcher at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. She is director of the Observatory of the Quality of Democracy at ICS-UL and vice-director of Instituto de Políticas Públicas. Currently, she is Principal Investigator for the ERC Consolidator Project MAPLE, on politicisation of the Eurozone crisis. She was one of the founding directors of the Portuguese Election Studies. Her research interests include the role of leaders in electoral behaviour, economic voting, political parties and
institutions. Her latest book was co-edited with John Curtice and is *Personality Politics: Leaders and Democratic Elections* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Claire A. Dunlop is Professor of Politics at the University of Exeter. A public policy and administration scholar, her main research fields include the politics of expertise and knowledge utilization, epistemic communities and advisory politics, risk governance, policy learning and analysis, impact assessment and policy narratives. Her recent co-edited volume (with Claudio M. Radaelli and Philipp Trein) is *Learning in Public Policy: Analysis, Modes and Outcome* (Palgrave, 2018). Her work has been published in various scholarly journals and she is editor of the journal *Public Policy and Administration*.


Larry Liu is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Princeton University. The co-authored chapter in this volume is his first publication.
Ian McManus is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Marlboro College. He was formerly an LSE Fellow in Social Policy at the London School of Economics and Political Science, a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Lisbon and a recipient of a German Academic Exchange Service doctoral research grant (Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science at the Free University of Berlin). His research interests include welfare state politics, social inequality, political parties and institutions, political polarization, and public opinion.

Jean Nava is a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton University and currently works as a data scientist. His research focuses on discourse, narratives, sentiment analysis and political economy. He has conducted research on developmental institutions in Portugal and Latin America, and on the U.S. economic policy focusing on the Federal Reserve System after World War II.

Claudio M. Radaelli is Professor of Public Policy at University College London. He has published on the politics of evidence-based policy, governance, policy learning and technocracy in the European Union, including Learning in Public Policy (co-edited with Claire A. Dunlop and Philipp Trein, Palgrave, 2018) and Handbook of Regulatory Impact Assessment (co-edited with Claire A. Dunlop, Edward Elgar, 2017).

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca is Associate Professor of Political Science at Carlos III University, Madrid, and Director of the Carlos III-Juan March Institute of Social Sciences. He is the author of The Historical Roots of Political Violence (Cambridge University Press, 2019) and co-editor of Controlling Governments (Cambridge University Press, 2008), as well as various articles in scholarly journals. On technocracy, he published an article on EU technocracy in the Annual Review of Political Science (2017).
Silvana Târlea is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute for European Global Studies and the Department of Political Science of the University of Basel. Previously, she was a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute, Florence, after obtaining her Ph.D. from the Oxford University, Nuffield College. Her work on the European financial crisis and on the political economy of education has been published in various scholarly journals.

Pier Domenico Tortola is Assistant Professor of European Politics and Society at the University of Groningen. He has recently co-edited Governing Europe: How to Make the EU More Efficient and Democratic (Peter Lang, 2017) and published various articles in scholarly journals. On the topic of technocracy, his interests revolve around the role and politicization of the European Central Bank during the euro crisis. His latest work on this subject has appeared in the European Journal of Political Research and the Journal of Common Market Studies.

Joshua A. Tucker is Professor of Politics, affiliated Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies, and of Data Science at New York University. He is a co-founder of the NYU Social Media and Political Participation (SMaPP) laboratory, the Director of NYU’s Jordan Center for Advanced Study of Russia, and a co-editor of the award-winning blog The Monkey Cage at The Washington Post. His research has appeared in over two-dozen scholarly journals, and he is a co-author of Communism’s Shadow (Princeton University Press, 2017).

Marco Valbuzzi is Research fellow at the University of Bologna and Adjunct Professor at Gonzaga University, Florence. He is the author of A Changing Republic: Politics and Democracy in Italy (Epoké, 2015) in addition to two books in Italian. On technocracy, he has

Reinout van der Veer is a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. His research focussed on the responsiveness of insulated, technocratic executives to their wider political context, with a specific interest in the European Union, its institutions, and their relationship to public opposition. His work on technocracy and the EU has appeared in *European Union Politics* (2018) and the *Journal of European Public Policy* (2018).

Jan Zilinsky is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Politics at New York University and Research Associate at the NYU Social Media and Political Participation (SMaPP) laboratory. His research focusses on political knowledge, voter learning and mass political behaviour. He has co-authored an article in the *Journal of Comparative Economics* (2016).