

ELITE ATTITUDES, MASS NATIONALISM AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: A MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT. While elites have played an important role in European Union (EU) integration, more research is needed on the impact of public opinion. In this paper I analyze individual and country-level variation in the relationship between nationalism and support for EU integration across 13 EU countries with data from 2007 and 2009, that is, from before and after the global economic crisis. I use two components of in the Integrated and United (IntUne) data set: (a) the samples comprised of members of the general public (i.e. masses), and (b) the samples comprised of national level parliamentarians. Findings suggest that elites are more supportive of EU integration than the masses regardless of the country's level of economic and political development. For both elites and the general public, higher nationalism is correlated with stronger support for EU integration.

Keywords: nationalism, European integration, elites and the general public

Introduction

Until recently, the study of European integration has largely been qualitative, with much attention given to the impact and influence of elites (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse, 2007; Ott and Vos, 2009; Phinnemore, 2009). This is primarily due to the significant role politicians have played in the drafting and signing of European treaties. For example, the Treaty of Rome that established the European Economic Community in 1958 lacked input from the larger public. Over time, however, elite-driven integration processes have started to change, a shift that is also reflected in the literature. While early studies of EU integration centered on the influence of heads of states and high level politicians, more recently scholars have begun to look at the roles of legislatures and, increasingly, of political parties.

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One crucial aspect – the influence of public opinion– continues to be understudied. The general public is the one voting national politicians in and out of office, and is voicing preferences for EU-related issues, such as its enlargement or greater political integration. As Zito and Schout (2009) argue, to date EU integration studies are largely macro and fail to incorporate a general understanding of the role that the masses play. Kaiser’s stance is even stronger: EU studies, he argues, are “in a sorry state of affairs” (2009: 36), because scholars have failed to generate theoretically grounded arguments and have generally ignored the role of civil society in promoting and inhibiting integration throughout the past 60 years.

There are notable exceptions to this situation, and the number of scholars who include public opinion into analyses of European integration is growing. The work of Schmidt (2007), Steenbergen, Edwards and de Vries (2007), Haller (2009), Sanders and Toka (2013) is especially relevant here, as it gives due attention to nationalism in the general population. This body of research suggests that the issue of contemporary EU integration raises complex questions about the relationship between attitudes of political elites and nationalism in the masses and, in terms of policy implications, suggests that the impasse between them must be rectified for integration to continue.

Traditionally, researchers have either focused on the role of elites, or on the general public. Regarding elites, thanks to their significant political power, historically they have been viewed as the main supporters and practitioners of EU integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2008). In a tangible way, political elites are the ones who *do* the integration. Yet, the mandate for further integration is an open empirical question. Political science focuses on structural and electoral factors that aid or hinders elites’ influence on EU integration. For example, elites are held to account by their constituents and political parties relative to the country’s electoral system and depending on the level of consensus within their party (Steenburger et al., 2007; Gabel and Scheve, 2007). The general public, on the other hand, vote and protest to make their voices heard. Most recently, masses across Europe have protested austerity measures. Public opinion can directly influence elite opinions (Carruba, 2001; Sanders and Toka, 2013).

I ask the following research questions:

1. How do elite opinions differ from those of the general population with regards to European integration?
2. What individual and country factors influence levels of support for EU integration?
3. What role does nationalism play in shaping attitudes toward further EU integration?

Following Sanders and Toka (2013), I address these questions using data from EU countries with different levels of development, length of EU membership and sentiments towards Europe. Specifically, I use two components of the Integrated and United (IntUne) data set: (a) the 2007 and 2009 samples comprised of members of the general public (i.e. masses), and (b) the 2007 and 2009 samples comprised of national level parliamentarians. Hence, I am able to capture a crucial time, namely the immediate precedent and aftermath of the global economic crisis.

Theory and hypotheses on support for EU integration

Education, Gender and Age

Gabel and Palmer (1995) analyze Eurobarometer data from the original six EU (ECSC) members and find that support for EU integration is positively related with personal potential benefit from “liberalized markets for goods, labor and money” (Gabel and Palmer, 1995: 3; see also Gabel and Whitten, 2009). Educational attainment is positively correlated with EU support (Anderson and Reichart, 1995). Gender and age matter, too: men are generally more supportive of the EU than women, and age has a linear, negative relationship with EU support (Andersen and Reichert, 1995; Nelsen, Guth and Highsmith, 2010).

Political Ideology

Many studies on perceptions of EU integration focus on political factors. Anderson (1998) finds that in older EU member-states, political party affiliation is the strongest determinant of support: parties leaning to the far left or far right are less supportive than moderate parties. Anderson also argues that the economic determinants of support for EU integration moderate this relationship.

Carey (2002) suggests that levels of nationalist sentiment trump political party affiliation, such that high levels of nationalist sentiment lead to lower support for EU integration. Marks et al. (2002) ranks party groups along issues of political and economic integration and finds that extreme left and Communist parties are strongly opposed to integration while liberal and social democratic parties strongly support integration. Nelsen et al. (2010) find that neoliberals are the most supportive of the EU across member states.

Other research analyzes the extent of the division between political parties within countries and finds that increased polarization is associated with a decrease in support for EU integration (Hooghes et al., 2005). In this research I will assess whether political parties continue to favour European integration, and the extent to which political ideology plays in impacting elite and mass opinion.

Many hypotheses regarding cross-national differences in support for EU integration have been tested (Kopecky and Mudde, 2002; Hooghe, 2003; Hooghe and Marks, 2004). Countries with more secure economic and political conditions can benefit from further European integration, but, as the recent global economic crisis showed, their ties to lesser developed European nations puts them at risk. Regarding military security issues, some countries are geographically positioned in a way that makes them more susceptible to interstate conflict; those countries may therefore be more supportive of further integration (Hooghe, 2003). Issues regarding economic and democratic development and length of EU membership should influence levels of support for European integration.

The Relationship between Elites' and the General Public's Support for EU Integration

Analyses of the relationship between elites' and masses' support for European integration (Haller, 2007; Bijmansa and Altides, 2007; Carruba, 2001) have led to two competing theories– the policy mood theory, and the cues theory. Carruba neatly summarizes these theories: “The policy mood argument claims political elites would be responding to electoral pressure, while the cue-taking argument claims political elites would be shaping weakly held public preferences” (Carruba, 2001:144). Some research suggests that political elites are generally more tolerant than the general public. As Jackman (1972) argues, “political elites or influentials demonstrate a level of tolerance [for minority groups] over and above that which would be expected from a knowledge of their social status alone” (Jackman, 1972: 754). Others suggest that elites are more active in promoting integration, while the general public takes a more passive role (Gabel and Palmer, 2006).

Nationalism and EU Integration

The relationship between nationalism and European integration has received significant attention among scholars. A main focus of this literature is on European supra-nationalism and why a European identity has not surpassed the national identity of individuals across the EU (Cowles, Caporaso and Risse 2001; Bruter 2004; Fligstein, Polyakova and Sandholtz, 2011). As EU integration increases individuals should identify more and more with the EU. As Risse (2001) argues, “If more and more competences are transferred to the EU level and made subject to joint decision-making involving supranational institutions... when EU developments more and more erode national sovereignty, one would at least assume challenges to given nation-state identities” (Risse, 2001: 200). Generally speaking, EU integration is a process that theoretically could produce a new type of supranationalism, which could supersede and repress nationalism.

Rather than EU identity replacing national identity, it seems that the two manage to coexist (Fligstein et al., 2011; Buter, 2004). Fligstein et al. (2011) show that individual interaction with the EU is very important in determining whether one develops an EU identity. People who have more local contacts, jobs and political affiliations continue to think and feel more nation-oriented; only those who regularly interact with supranational institutions have stronger European-level identity. Fligstein et al. argue that attitudes towards immigrants and nationalism are qualitatively distinct: “the question ‘Do I have a European identity?’ is not identical to the question ‘Who counts as a European?’” (Fligstein et al., 2011: 21). Thus, attitudes towards EU integration are analytically distinct from nationalism.

There are studies that find that nationalism, as expressed in political parties, is positively correlated with EU integration. Hooghe and Marks (2008) find that as EU integration issues become politicized in elections, identity and political parties significantly impact EU support levels.

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical discussions summarized above, I propose the following testable hypotheses:

H1. Elites will be more supportive of EU integration than the masses both before (2007) and after (2009) the first stage of the economic crisis.

H2. Support for EU integration by elites and masses will decrease from 2007 to 2009 because of the economic crisis.

H3a. Strong nationalists will be less supportive of EU integration than weak nationalists.

H3b. Demographics matter, as men, political leftists, and those with higher levels of education will support European integration more than women, political rightists and those with lower levels of education.

H4. Countries’ level of development, as captured by the Human Development Index, will impact support for EU integration. Specifically, more developed countries will be less supportive of European integration than countries with lower levels of economic development, *ceteris paribus*.

H5. Length of EU membership matters, as the EU member countries older EU member-states will be less supportive of EU integration than Western Europe.

Data and analysis

To test the above hypotheses, I use data from the Integrated and United (IntUne) project, funded by the EU and coordinated by the University of Siena (www.intune.it). The project focused on European citizenship and its main

dimensions: citizenship, representation and scope of government. IntUne has collected and analyzed empirical data on mass and political and bureaucratic elites' attitudes, as well as media content and deliberative polling results, in seventeen European Union member and candidate countries. I restrict my analyses to the 2007 and 2009 IntUne surveys on the general public and on political elites. These surveys cover 13 European Union countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, and Spain. For the political elites, the survey has a sample from 60 to 90 persons drawn from national level parliamentarians for each country. For the masses, a representative sample of around 1,000 individuals per country is included.

For my dependent variable I generate a scale of support for European integration from four questionnaire items that appear in the Elite and Mass surveys in both the 2007 and 2009 waves. These items are:

1. Regarding the character of the European Union in 10 years. Tell me whether you approve or disapprove of a unified tax system in Europe.
2. Regarding the character of the European Union in 10 years. Tell me whether you approve or disapprove of a common system of social security.
3. Regarding the character of the European Union in 10 years. Tell me whether you approve or disapprove of a single foreign policy toward outside countries.
4. Regarding the character of the European Union in 10 years. Tell me whether you approve or disapprove of more help for regions with economic or social difficulties.

Each of the four items has four response categories: (1) *Strongly Disapprove* (2) *Disapprove* (3) *Approve* and (4) *Strongly Approve*. The items are useful because they treat European integration as a process that has political, economic and social ramifications. By combining the responses into one factor, I am able to successfully estimate a fairly holistic "EU integration" variable.

I combine the items using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Since this technique requires metric variables, I first use the midpoint of the cumulative distribution of each item going into the factor to assign each response category a certain score. Using CFA Bartlett scores of a factor were assigned to each individual, generating a continuous dependent variable that theoretically ranges from 0 to 100. In each of the measurement models, I assess the goodness of fit of the CFA and conclude that each model is acceptable with the RMSEA < 0.03 in all models and the CFI > 0.98.

My nationalism measure is so-called "civic nationalism". I define and operationalize civic nationalism similarly to Marquart-Pyatt (2011). Respondents were asked to answer each of the following five questions:

In your view, how important is each of the following to be a true national?

1. To share the culture
2. To follow and respect the laws of the country
3. To master the language
4. To share the culture
5. To be a legal citizen

To generate a measure of civic nationalism, I combine individual responses to the five items, again relying on confirmatory factor analysis. Individuals chose how important they believe each of these items to be and I again combined them using CFA and generated Bartlett scores so that a higher score signifies greater latent civic nationalism.

Regarding other independent variables on the individual-level, I include gender, educational attainment, and political ideology.

For gender, I code male as 1 and female as 0.

Education: For the masses, I generate four educational categories based on the number of years of schooling: 8 years or less signify elementary level education (reference category), 9, 10 or 11 years mean incomplete secondary level of education, 12 to 14 years refer high school education, and above 14 years indicate university or post-tertiary level of education. In the case of elites, I use a dichotomous variable to distinguish between those who have a university degree (1) and those who do not (0).

Political ideology: Given the diverse nature of political parties across European countries, I rely on individual assessments to a question that asks where respondents would place themselves on a scale of 0-10 with 0 being very left and 10 being very right. After reverting the scale, I group these scores into three categories, with 0-3 being right (reference category) ; 4-7 being moderate, and 8-10 being left.

For country level variables I include Western Europe (WE) *versus* Central and East Europe (CEE, reference category) and the Human Development Index (HDI) that includes indicators of wealth, health, and education.

Conceptually, the models look like this:

MASS

Individual-level: $Y_{ij} = \beta_0j + \beta_1j\text{NATIONALISM} + \beta_2j\text{SEX} + \beta_3j\text{EDUCATION} + \beta_4j\text{POLITICALIDEOLOGY} + e_{ij}$

Country-level: $\beta_0j = \gamma_0j + \gamma_01(\text{WE}j) + \gamma_02(\text{HDI}j) + u_0j$

ELITE

Individual-level: $Y_{ij} = \beta_0j + \beta_1j\text{NATIONALISM} + \beta_2j\text{SEX} + \beta_3j\text{EDUCATION} + \beta_4j\text{POLITICALIDEOLOGY} + e_{ij}$

Country-level: $\beta_0j = \gamma_0j + \gamma_01(\text{WE}j) + \gamma_02(\text{HDI}j) + u_0j$

Findings

First, I look at levels of support for EU integration in each of the four domains: a unified tax system, a European wide social security system, a European-wide foreign policy and further economic aid to member states who are facing economic crises for both the Elite (parliamentarian) sample and for a representative sample of individuals across my 13 EU countries. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Supporting EU Integration: Mass and Elites 2007 and 2009

Issues related to EU Integration	Year	
	2007	2009
Mass Opinion		
Tax Code	57.6	58.4
Social Security	74.9	75.0
Foreign Policy	74.6	74.4
Economic Aid to Member-States	86.3	86.5
Elite Opinion		
	2007	2009
Tax Code	58.8	61.4
Social Security	67.0	69.2
Foreign Policy	86.7	86.3
Economic Aid to Member- States	88.1	90.3

Among both the general public and elites one observes very high levels of prospective EU integration. Even with the economic recession, it seems that elites and masses still view the prospect of further integration favorably. Given the current euro crisis and bailout, perhaps the most surprising result in Table 1 is that for both the masses and elites, individuals are more supportive of helping out other member-states than any other type of further integration. Furthermore, this level of support increases for both masses and elites from 2007 and 2009. The most notable difference between the two groups is in regards to foreign policy. In 2007 and 2009 over 85% of elites want to increase EU integration in this dimension while less than 75% of the masses want the same. However, the masses are more supportive of further integration around social security than political elites. With this exception, elites are in fact more supportive of European integration than the masses. Thus the hypothesis H1 is generally supported.

However, in neither the mass nor the elite samples do I find significant variation from 2007 to 2009; thus, I have no support for hypothesis H2. Even with the economic recession, the overall level of support for EU integration does not change much, if anything it increases over time. In addition, it is worthwhile to note that there are not any major gaps between mass and elite attitudes along this line.

In my next set of analyses, I conduct multi-level regression comparing individual and country variation in support for EU integration. Tables 2 and 3 present the results for the masses in 2007 and in 2009, respectively.

Table 2.

**Two-Level Models of Attitudes Towards EU Integration:
The Masses, 2007**

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.
Nationalism (scale)	3.141***	0.540	3.150 ***	0.540
Male	3.208***	0.378	3.209***	0.377
Left ^a	1.823***	0.575	1.828***	0.545
Moderate ^a	0.393	0.479	0.396	0.479
University ^b	2.342***	0.706	2.342***	0.706
High School ^b	0.704	0.716	0.703	0.726
Incomplete secondary ^b	0.291*	0.691	0.292	0.691
HDI	-11.041*	4.834		
Western Europe			-7.461*	3.926
Constant	9.935*	4.467	2.461	3.345
N	9789		9789	
Groups	13		13	
<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Variance</i>	χ^2 (<i>df</i>)	<i>Variance</i>	χ^2 (<i>df</i>)
Country-level random effect	0.115	138.01 (8)	0.109	136.40 (8)
Individual-level random effect	0.185		0.185	

a. The reference group for political ideology is right

b. The reference group for education is elementary

As Table 2 shows, I have found that for the masses, nationalism, as defined in this paper, is positively associated with EU integration. A one unit increase in civic nationalism significantly raises one's level of support for EU integration by 3.14 points. I also find that males, rather than females are more

supportive of EU integration. Individuals with left political ideology compared to individuals in the reference group with right political ideology are more supportive of EU integration. However, individuals with moderate political views do not differ significantly from individuals with right political views. Having a university degree, relative to those with only an elementary level, provides a 2.34 point increase in EU integration support.

Regarding cross-country differences, the empty model (not reported) shows variation in support for EU integration at the group level (i.e. attributable to country - level variables). With highly correlated country - level variables and because of a small level-two sample size (13), I look at the effect of HDI and of Western Europe separately. I find, as expected, that countries with lower levels of development are more supportive of the EU. The effect of Western Europe is also as hypothesized: negative and significant.

Table 3.

**Two-Level Models of Attitudes Towards EU Integration:
The Masses, 2009**

Variable	Model 1		Model 2	
	B	s.e.	B	s.e.
Nationalism	1.986***	0.358	1.358***	0.358
Male	3.051***	0.420	3.053***	0.420
Left ^a	3.471***	0.688	3.477***	0.688
Moderate ^a	1.839***	0.501	1.842***	0.501
University ^b	2.227**	0.786	2.225**	0.786
High School ^b	-.189	0.832	-.194	0.832
Secondary ^b	-.344	0.778	-.348	0.778
HDI	-10.533*	4.970		
Western Europe			-8.389*	4.051
Constant	9.410*	4.593	2.687	3.465
N	8877		8877	
Groups	13		12	
<i>Parameter</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>χ² (df)</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>χ² (df)</i>
Country-level random effect	0.109	126.59(8)	0.103	126.35 (8)
Individual-level random effect	0.196		0.196	

a The reference group for political ideology is right

b The reference group for education is elementary

For 2009, I have found that the predictors for individual variation in support for EU integration do not change much. Those with higher levels of nationalism, males, higher educated and those from left orientations are more supportive of EU integration than women, less educated and those with right political ideologies. Regarding the country-level variables, HDI and WE are statistically significant and in the expected direction. As level of development goes up, I find less support for EU integration. Western European countries are less supportive of EU integration than CEE countries. This is likely related to the effect of length of EU membership (see Slomczynski and Tomescu-Dubrow, 2010 for the full argument).

Table 4 shows the results for models for Elites in 2007 and 2009 using similar predictors to the general public. Since no country-level predictors were significant, I present regression models clustered by country and generating robust standard errors.

Table 4.

Regression Models of Elite Attitudes towards EU Integration 2007 and 2009 with Robust Standard Errors

Variable	2007		2009	
	B	se	B	se
Nationalism	3.942**	1.544	2.696*	1.202
Male	-.269	2.706	.645	1.970
Left ^a	14.209***	3.515	15.467**	5.258
Moderate ^a	9.282***	2.468	9.120**	3.502
University ^b	4.266	6.250	-1.835	2.905
Constant	-11.882***	7.092	-1.803	5.415
N	790		820	
R2	0.061		0.061	

a The reference group for political ideology is right

b The reference group for education is other than university

Again, I find that nationalism is positively associated with EU integration. A one unit increase in nationalism will increase support for EU integration by 3.99 points in 2007 and 2.70 points in 2009, other things equal. For elites, I find no support for gender differences. Here, political ideology seems to be the main determinant of levels of support for EU integration. Compared to the reference category of right orientation, both left-leaning and moderate-leaning persons are more supportive of EU integration. Relative to right ideology, those on the left are expected to have a score of 15.47 points higher. For moderates the analogous value is 9.12.

Conclusion

Overall, my analysis shows mixed support for my initial hypotheses. Regarding EU integration, there is no significant variation in attitudes towards EU integration across the EU countries of this study. I find clear support that nationalism, as measured here, impacts EU integration. The hypothesis on gender did not have empirical support. Education is a key determinant of level of support for EU integration. However, across the elite and mass samples the main predictor is political ideology, and this holds across Europe.

An interesting line of scholarship of the EU points to a dual process model, where the masses impact elite opinion and, simultaneously, elites impact public opinion (Steenbergen et al., 2007; Hooghe 2003; Ray 2003). We can envision that political elites respond to the pressures of voters, but that their influence on mass attitudes will be greater than the other way around. Such effects could be explored using, for example, lagged effects of support of nationalism grouped by political ideology. If the elites are trying to cue the masses or if the masses are generating some sort of policy mood, time is needed for this to occur. Recent research on elite and mass cueing provides empirical support for the idea of the dual process model and finds that political party affiliation impacts both elite and mass sentiments (Sanders and Toka, 2013). Future research could add to the literature by examining the relationship between mass nationalism and attitudes that elites and the general public hold about further EU integration.

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