

European integration has transformed the constitutional order of Europe in a way that is unparalleled in peacetime. A multi-level polity has been created that delivers, or co-delivers, several of the chief outputs of government, including monetary policy, competition policy, regional policy, market regulation, and elements of industrial relations, law and order, and education. There is a burgeoning literature on the normative implications of this for democracy. In this paper we ask prior, positive questions about the effects of European integration on democratic politics.

1. How has European integration shaped the substance of democratic competition?
2. How has European integration shaped the institutional character of democratic decision making?

Substantively, European integration has given rise to conflict over the meaning and implications of national identity. This conflict cannot easily be assimilated, if at all, into the left/right dimension that has long dominated politics in Europe. Conflict over identity appears to have reinforced a second dimension of contestation—a new politics dimension—which is concerned with individual and communal lifestyle choice, and which, on its right flank, mobilizes issues of immigration and national community. Because European integration is not assimilated into the conventional left/right divide, it is a potentially disruptive issue.

Institutionally, European integration has directly or indirectly contributed to two of the most important innovations in democratic politics since World War II: 1) the increasing use of nation-wide referenda, and 2) a general shift in the allocation of authority from central states to sub-national regions.¹

These claims rest on a particular understanding of how competition over European integration relates to

established patterns of democratic competition. So let us proceed by stages and examine how debates on Europe connect—or do not connect—with the structure of domestic politics.

Patterns of Political Contestation

The left/right divide and European integration

For more than a century, democratic contestation in Western Europe has been structured by a left/right dimension that encapsulates equality vs. economic freedom and government control vs. market society. To what extent does this dimension encompass conflict on European integration?

We can begin by saying that there is no *linear* relationship between the level of support for European integration and positioning on the conventional left/right divide.

For *political parties*, the association between positioning on European integration and left/right position takes the form of an inverted U-curve. Centrist parties generally support European integration, while extreme parties on both left and right tend to oppose. Figure 1 illustrates this for 125 national political parties in 1999.² On the extreme left, parties rated between 1 and 2 on the left/right scale, such as the German PDS, the French PCF, or the Swedish Left, are Euroskeptic, with scores of 3.2, 2.7, and 1.3, respectively, on a seven-point scale. Extreme right parties, such as the French Front National and the Danish People's Party, are on average even more Euroskeptic, with scores of 1.1 and 1.4, respectively, for support for European integration. Centrist parties, by contrast, tend to be pro-European. Moderate left parties, located around 4 on the left/right scale, such as the German SPD, the French Socialists, and the Swedish SAP, score from 5.3 to 6.4 on support for European integration. Similarly, moderate right parties, such as the German Christian democrats, the French RPR, and the French UDF, score from 5.4 to 6.7 on support for European integration.

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1 In this essay, we deal with the first, but not the second. European integration lowers the economic cost of political autonomy for sub-national regions by embedding them in an overarching market (Alesina, Perotti, and Spolaore 1995; Bolton and Roland 1997; Hooghe / Marks 1996.) Hence, transaction costs of international exchange are insulated from the allocation of authority within countries. European integration has gone hand in hand with a general and sustained process of regionalization (Hooghe / Marks 2001, Appendix 2; John 2002).

2 The data set is available at <http://www.unc.edu/~gwmrks/>

When we disaggregate by issue and by party family, the following linear effects come into view:

- There is a clear association between left/right ideology and support for European integration on issues having to do with regulated capitalism, including employment, environmental policy, and cohesion policy (Hooghe, Marks, Wilson 2002). On such issues, the left supports greater integration; the right opposes. The association is weak or non-existent for issues that concern national sovereignty, e.g. power of the European parliament, foreign policy, and immigration policy.³
- The association between left/right ideology and support for European integration is strongest among mainstream political parties, i.e. social democratic, Christian democratic, liberal, and conservative parties.

Figure 2 averages the positions of mainstream parties on issues of regulated capitalism, and reveals a downward sloping association from left to right. The simple correlation (R) of support for European cohesion policy with left/right position is -0.40 , which is significant at the one-percent level ($p < .01$). The correlation of left/right position with employment is 0.74 , and for environmental policy it is 0.43 .

So left/right contestation structures party orientations to European integration, but does so only on a subset of issues. As one can see from Figure 2, there is only a weak association (-0.20 , $p < .1$) for mainstream parties between their left/right positioning and the extent to which they support European integration *in general*. Issues that concern sovereignty escape the left/right divide (Hix 1999). It is therefore no surprise that conflicts arising from European integration are often sharper *within* mainstream political parties than *among* them.

The left/right divide has little aggregate bite on the structure of *public opinion* on European integration. For the EU as a whole, there is little evidence for an inverted U-curve, and the linear associations we find between left/right position and support for European integration across issues are weak and insignificant.⁴

The relationships we do find are mediated by country in a way that is consistent with the varieties of capi-

talism literature (Hall and Soskice 2001; Iversen and Soskice 2002; Soskice 1999; Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt forthcoming; Ray forthcoming). In social democratic systems, European integration appears to threaten redistributive welfare institutions. Hence, the left in Scandinavia tends to oppose European integration, while the right tends to support it ($R = 0.17$, $p < .001$). Liberal market systems (the UK and Ireland) can expect to be nudged in a more redistributive direction, and correspondingly, we find that the positions of left and right are reversed ($R = -0.09$, $p < .001$). In Europe's continental economies, the left is more supportive of European integration than the right, but the association is less pronounced than for market-liberal economies ($R = -0.04$, $p < .001$). Figure 3 summarizes this.

A recent multi-level analysis of public opinion concludes that varieties of capitalism account for around two-fifths of variation in support for European integration across countries, but a far smaller proportion of variation among individual respondents (Hooghe and Marks 2003). Once again, one is driven to the conclusion that left/right conflict only weakly structures attitudes towards European integration.

To probe the wellsprings of support and opposition to European integration one must engage how citizens (and parties) interpret their territorial—and, above all, their national—identities.

New Politics and Identity

The past two decades have seen the rise of issues concerned with life style, ecology, cultural diversity, nationalism, and immigration. This dimension of contestation has been labelled post-materialist/materialist (Inglehart 1990), new politics/old politics (Franklin 1992; Müller-Rommel 1989), green/traditionalist, and left-libertarian/authoritarian (Kitschelt 1994, 1995). Does the new politics dimension structure positioning on European issues? A subset of EU issues, such as asylum policy and environmental policy, has obvious substantive connections to the new politics dimension. Does this dimension structure positioning on EU issues more generally?

For *political parties*, the answer appears to be yes. Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between party support for European integration and positioning on the new politics dimension, ranging from *Gal* (green/ alternative/ libertarian) to *Tan* (traditionalist/ authoritarian/ nationalist).

3 European integration is a moving target. The relationship between left/right positioning and support for European integration has shifted over time. In 1984, social democrats constituted the largest pool of Euro-skepticism—measured according to electoral strength, while in 1999 they were the most pro-European party family (Gabel and Hix forthcoming; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002).

4 See chapters in Marks and Steenbergen (forthcoming) by van der Eijk and Franklin, Gabel and Hix, Marks, and Anderson and Gabel.

On the *Gal* side, Green parties have become more favourably disposed to European integration in the 1990s, but Green wariness about the lack of democratic transparency in the EU impedes a strongly pro-European orientation. Green support for European integration is focussed on environmental policy (the average position of Green parties is 6.6 on a 7-point scale) and strengthening the European Parliament (the average Green position is 5.6). We hypothesize that Green parties are more positively oriented to European integration to the extent they are pragmatic rather than fundamentalist, and green, not red-green.

Support for European integration falls off a cliff for parties on the right-hand side of Figure 4. The overall association between new politics position and support for European integration is -0.25 , but for political parties on the right side (i.e. which score 5 or more on the GAL/TAN scale), it is -0.63 . For example, centrist parties on this dimension—such as the liberal UDF in France or the Italian Christian democratic party (both of which are located around 6 on our GAL/TAN scale)—have high levels of support for European integration (scoring 6 or more on our seven-point scale). When one moves to the large conservative parties, such as RPR and Forza Italia (both of which are located at 7 on GAL/TAN), support for European integration moderates to around 5 out of 7. When one moves to the radical right—to the Front National, *Allianza Nazionale* and the MSI, which score near the TAN extreme—support for European integration drops to 2 or less.

What is going on here? The new politics dimension structures party support for European integration because European integration engages national identity. The EU is not merely an international regime that lowers barriers to trade, reduces transaction costs of inter-governmental bargaining, and reaps scale-efficiencies. In addition, the EU is a polity—a polity that patently constrains national institutions and rouses deep-seated emotions concerning national sovereignty and national identity. Political parties that set great store by these values, i.e. radical right and right-populist parties, conceive European integration as a threat. Such parties link European integration to other perceived threats to the national community: foreign cultural influences, cosmopolitan elites, international agencies, and above all, immigrants. Conservative parties with a *Tan* inclination are also reluctant to support deeper European integration on the grounds that it erodes the traditional national community.

In the early 1980s, Euroskeptical right-wing parties gained the support of 1.3 percent of voters in national

elections. By the late 1990s this had risen to 8.8 percent.

How about *public opinion*? Eurobarometer data do not provide good indicators of new politics values. But there are several measures of a key element underpinning the new politics dimension: citizens' territorial identities. Recent research reveals that citizens' territorial identities are the single-most powerful influence on public support or opposition to European integration (Carey 2002; Citrin and Sides forthcoming; Hooghe and Marks 2003; Risse 2003; McLaren 2002 for a related argument).

An understanding of the causal effect of national identity must make sense of the following two findings: 1) Individuals with strong national attachment tend to have high levels of support for European integration (Bruter forthcoming; Citrin and Sides forthcoming; Marks 1999; Risse forthcoming); 2) National identity is an extraordinarily powerful—perhaps the most powerful—*brake* on support for European integration (Carey 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2003; McLaren 2002).

Figure 5a shows one side of the paradox: a slight but significant *positive* association between national identity and support for European integration ($R=0.03$, $p<.05$).⁵ Individuals with strong national identities tend to have strong European and subnational attachments. The association between national and European attachment is 0.31 ($p<.001$) and that between national and regional attachment is 0.46 . Multiple inclusive identities are normal in Europe (Diez Medrano and Gutierrez 2001; Marks 1999).

Figure 5b reveals that *exclusive* national identity—i.e. to feel French *only*, or British *only*, or Danish *only*—is a strong source of Euroscepticism ($R=0.36$, $p<.001$). The key word here is *exclusive*. Support for European integration remains fairly stable for those describing themselves as European only, or a mixture of European and national, but declines sharply for the 40.5 percent who consider themselves national only.⁶

So varying perceptions of whether national identity is *inclusive* or *exclusive* in relation to other territorial identities have predictable effects on individual-level support for European integration.

5 The data are from Eurobarometer 54.1, and were collected in the Fall of 2000.

6 The proportion who consider themselves exclusively national ranges from 65.1 percent in the United Kingdom and 54.8 percent in Sweden to 20.7 percent in Spain and 22.5 percent in Italy.

Multi-level analysis reveals that the effect of national identity—especially *exclusive* national identity—varies across countries. In some countries, citizens with exclusive national identity are only slightly more Euroskeptical than those with multiple identities; in others, exclusive national identity is strongly associated with Euroskepticism (Hooghe and Marks 2003). Figure 6 illustrates the power of exclusive national identity across countries. The effect is strongest in Britain, where a unit change in exclusive national identity depresses support for European integration by 17.5 percent, and it is weakest in Portugal, where a unit change decreases support by 6.3 percent.

What is it about country contexts that mobilizes—or dampens—the effect of exclusive national identity for support for European integration? We take up this question in the next section. But let us first summarize the argument so far.

European integration constitutes an attempt to create a political community that overarches established national communities. This engages deep-rooted conceptions of territorial identity. As a result, territorial identity powerfully structures views on European integration among political parties and citizens. The strongest explanations of public opinion on European integration are centred on the character of those identities.

This has fundamental consequences for democratic competition. European integration is a source of disequilibria because it eludes the dominant dimension of political contestation. Left/right ideology cannot predict support for European integration among individuals. Divergent views on European integration escape conventional battle lines among political parties.

To the extent that European issues do connect to domestic patterns of contestation, their strongest affinity is with the new politics dimension. This is consistent with the rise of a radical and populist right, whose *raison d'être* is to defend the traditional national community against corroding influences—including, above all, immigration, cosmopolitanism, and multiculturalism. It is consistent with the tension in conservative parties between economic liberals and soft nationalists; and it is consistent with the shift of several Green parties towards a more pro-EU stance.⁷

7 For example, back in 1984, the German Greens condemned European integration in sweeping terms as an attempt to create a European superpower. By the early 1990s, the party supported European integration in principle: "Especially in view of increasing nationalistic and racist opinions and attacks in Germany and elsewhere, the Greens emphasize the importance and necessity of European integration" (Policy statement of the Land Council, October 1992, quoted in Rüdiger 1996, 263.) At the beginning of the 21st century, the German

Referenda

Combining Eurobarometer data, elite survey data, and expert surveys of political parties, we find a set of strong positive associations (at the country level) among the following:

- The extent of Euroskepticism in the national elite.
- Whether a country has had a referendum on Europe.
- The extent to which exclusive national identity depresses support for European integration.

The model we have in mind is as follows:

- To the extent that European integration leads to divisions within governing political parties, so government (i.e. governing party) leaders are induced to hold referenda to offload the issue to the wider public.
- To the extent that European integration gives rise to elite dissent, so governing parties or coalitions will be pressured to gain popular consent for major European reform. Elite demands for referenda are difficult to resist because European reform involves basic constitutional issues.
- EU referenda raise the salience of European issues, intensify conflict among elites, and mobilize exclusive national identities against European integration.

Table 1 lists, for the fifteen current member states, referenda held on European integration between 1950 and 2002, as well as referenda on non-EU issues. Countries are ranked according to ascending number of EU referendums. Altogether 18 referenda were held on EU issues, against 104 on non-EU issues. When we exclude Italy, the figure for referendums on non-EU issues becomes 50.

The 18 EU referenda listed in Table 1 do not include Italy's consultative referendum in 1989, two aborted attempts to schedule referenda (Portugal and Austria), two Norwegian referenda rejecting EU membership, and referenda in Switzerland, Norway, and Liechtenstein on the European Economic Area (EEA). The number of referenda on EU issues has since grown by ten after referenda in nine of the CEEC accession countries and a referendum on EMU in Sweden. A proposal to have a referendum on EMU in the UK is on hold. The French, Spanish, and Italian governments have indicated they would hold referenda to approve the outcome of the European convention (*Financial Times* 3 April 2003, 10).

Greens, spearheaded by their leader and German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, pressed for a federal European constitution.

Italy aside, 42 percent of all referenda in the EU since 1980 have been triggered by European integration. In Denmark, the last five referenda dealt with Europe; the last non-EU referendum dates from 1978. Only Ireland, Italy, and to a lesser extent France, use referenda to settle non-EU issues.

With the exception of Ireland, and the partial exception of Austria and Denmark, referenda on European integration have taken place at the discretion of governments. Referenda on European integration in Ireland have been held under Article 46.2, which requires votes in both houses of its parliament followed by a referendum to amend the constitution. Article 43 of the Austrian constitution requires a referendum for legislation that amends the fundamental principles of the constitution. Government and opposition parties agreed that accession to the European Union constituted such an amendment. In Denmark, referenda are necessary for legislation involving any surrender of Danish sovereignty to an international body that does not receive the support of five-sixths of the Folketing (Article 20). Five of its six referenda on European integration have been so triggered. In the UK, Finland, and Norway referenda are constitutional innovations.

In Germany, where the Nazi experience has discredited referenda, some politicians have openly discussed the merits of an EU referendum on enlargement and the outcome of the EU convention. The 1989 referendum in Italy providing a mandate for Italian MEPs to promote a European federal constitution stretched the national constitution, which forbids referenda on international issues. In 1998, the Portuguese government proposed a referendum on the Amsterdam Treaty, but was blocked by the Supreme Court on the grounds that the constitution prohibits referenda on international treaties.

In almost all countries, referenda are initiated by the government or a parliamentary minority, not citizens (Budge 1996; Hug 2002; Hug and Sciarini 2000; Leduc 2002), which means that the decision to hold a referendum is to a large extent controlled by mainstream political parties. Most EU referenda have taken place because party-political leaders want them.

Why would political leaders hold a referendum on European integration? Several referenda on European integration have been held to shunt decision making from the government to the public because the governing party was deeply split. The 1975 accession referendum in the UK is an example of this. It was an innovative piece of constitutional engineering to minimize the consequences of dissension in the leadership of the governing Labour Party. Harold Wilson, the Prime Minister, had made his career as a conciliator,

and took the opportunity to shift the decision beyond his divided cabinet to the public, in the expectation that the vote would be positive. Since that time, the prospect of a referendum has hovered over the debate on Economic and Monetary Union.

The last two Danish referenda in 1998 on the Amsterdam Treaty and in 2000 on the Economic and Monetary Union are examples of elites shying away from taking binding decisions in the face of elite division. Both sides agreed that there should be a referendum even if there were a five-sixths majority in the Folketing. In the eyes of two observers, "this tradition [of holding a referendum on EU issues] is very often legitimised with reference to the divided population and the many narrow 'yes' or 'no' majorities—the logic being that (...) major decisions cannot be made without consulting the voters" (Buch and Hansen 2002, 9).

Referenda may provide a way for a government to tie its own fate to a European issue, particularly when public support seems high or the opposition is divided. President Mitterrand's decision to hold a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 is an example. The tactic backfired when populist right parties and anti-European single-issue groups almost defeated the government (Franklin, Marsh, and McLaren 1994).

Figure 7 is consistent with the argument that party divisions and elite dissent on European integration induce governments to offload the issue to the public by holding a referendum. Countries that had a EU referendum (on the left side) tend to have higher levels of elite dissent on European integration. The striped bar refers to the percentage of the national elite that finds EU membership "bad," or "neither good nor bad"⁸ Elite dissent is highest in Denmark, Sweden, the UK, Austria, and Finland—all referendum countries—and lowest in Germany, Spain, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands—all countries without EU referenda. As the horizontal broken lines show, average elite dissent in referendum countries is more than double that in non-referendum countries: 11.1 percent against 4.9 percent. The findings are similar when we use a narrower measure of elite dissent, the percentage that finds EU membership "bad" (solid bar.) Opposition to

8 EOS Gallup drew a representative sample from a database of 22,000 individuals from five elite sectors: elected politicians (national and European parliamentarians), senior national civil servants, business and trade union leaders, media leaders (including heads of broadcast and print media), and cultural elites (persons playing a leading role in the academic, cultural or religious life). The survey was conducted by telephone (N=3778).
http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/top/top_en.htm.

EU membership is most pronounced among Swedish, Danish, British, and Austrian elites, and it is lowest in Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Spain. While elite opposition against EU membership in the European Union as a whole is only 2.1 percent, elites in referendum countries are four times more likely to be opposed to European membership than elites in countries that have not held an EU referendum. Elite divisions and referenda are positively associated. Only in one referendum country, Ireland is elite dissent low. Referenda on EU treaty revisions are constitutionally mandated in Ireland.

Do referenda shape contestation on European integration? Figure 6 shows that exclusive national identity has the greatest effect in countries where referenda on European integration have taken place. Ireland, once again, is an exception.

Divisions within governing parties and elite dissent create incentives for holding EU referenda. Referenda exacerbate conflicts within and among elites and empower single-issue anti-European protest movements, and this, in turn, mobilizes nationalism in an anti-European direction. Referenda, elite dissent, and the power of exclusive national identity appear to go hand in hand in shaping support for European integration.

Conclusion

We have argued that European integration has disrupted established patterns of democratic competition in the member states.

First, it mobilizes issues that are largely orthogonal to the left/right dimension of party competition. While it is true that European integration motivates a struggle between a centre-left project for regulated capitalism versus a right-right project for market liberalism, the strongest predictor of individual and party positions on European integration is a new politics dimension, pitting Green/Alternative/Libertarianism (GAL) against Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalism (TAN). Identity, rather than distribution, provides the key to attitudes on issues raised by European Integration, and identity maps on the new politics dimension of democratic contestation more powerfully than it maps on to the left/right dimension. In Europe, where left/right has structured national political life, European integration has been a spanner in the works. It has engendered conflict within political parties and it has strengthened identity-driven opponents of European integration, particularly on the populist right.

European integration has helped to bring about important changes in the democratic institutions of the

member states. It has induced governments to hold referenda, which are a key constitutional innovation in several European countries. More than half of all referenda in the European Union are directly related to questions of European integration. One reason for this is that European integration is rightly perceived as changing the basic constitutional structure of democratic decision-making in its member states. But there is a more partisan-political reason for the flood of referenda in recent decades. Political elites are happy to shift responsibility for an issue that precipitates intense conflict within their political parties.⁹ But the unintended consequence of this innovation is to weaken the hold of political parties on the agenda, shift authority beyond the legislature to the people at large, and inject populism—often with an anti-elite animus—into national politics.

In conclusion, European integration has deeply affected democratic politics and institutions in the member states, but these effects have not been planned, or even foreseen. The developments analysed in this paper have taken place as an entirely unintended consequence of the creation of a system of multi-level governance, both from the standpoint of the framers of the European Union and from that of leaders of national governments.

⁹ As noted above, European integration is largely orthogonal to inter-party contestation, and as a result, engenders intra-party conflict.

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