

# European Integration, Nationalism, and European Identity\*

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## Abstract

Early theorists of European integration speculated that economic integration would lead to political integration and a European identity. A European identity has not displaced national identities in the EU, but, for a significant share of EU citizens, a European identity exists alongside a national identity. At the same time, political parties asserting more traditional nationalist identities and policies have directed their dissatisfaction against immigrants, foreigners, and, sometimes, the EU. Those who participate in “Europe” are more likely to develop a European identity, while those whose economic and social horizons are essentially local are more likely to assert nationalist identities.

## Introduction

The endpoint of European integration has always remained ambiguous. The founders of the EU started out with relatively modest goals: the creation of a European common market and customs union. The European Economic Community thus began as an international organization with narrow purposes, limited authority, and six member states. Once started, however, the integration process produced the most extensive example of inter-state cooperation of the past 500 years. European political, legal, and economic integration has proceeded from the Treaty of Rome in 1957 to the Treaty of Lisbon in 2007. During this period, European Union (EU) membership has expanded from six to twenty seven, and EU authority has extended to almost every domain of modern economic and social life. That this has occurred peacefully and without threats of violence or coercion makes the EU project one of the most fascinating in world politics.

From the beginning, the architects of the EU thought that once the process of economic integration was established, political integration would follow. One of the early leading scholars of European integration, Ernst Haas, formulated this idea into a theory of regional integration (1961). Haas argued that cooperation would lead, through a “spillover” mechanism, to unintended consequences that would beget more cooperation and more supranational rule-making. As authority to generate rules and policies shifted to Brussels, more actors would engage the process of EU integration. In this way, firms, governments, political parties, and citizens would start to orient their expectations and political behavior toward the European Union.

Haas realized that the European project during the 1960s was not on the radar screens of most citizens of Europe (1968). But he expected that as the expansive logic of integration

worked its way across various policy issues, the citizens of European countries would gradually come to view “Europe” as a natural venue for their political activities and loyalty. Not only that, integration would gradually produce a convergence of beliefs, values, and aspirations that would unite the peoples of the European community and generate a “new nationalism” (Haas 2004 [1968], 13 – 14). The future of Europe, for Haas, would be determined in part by the degree to which the citizens in the member state countries came to see themselves as citizens of a broader Europe.

By the mid-1970s, it appeared as if both the political and economic projects of the founders of the EU had ground to a halt. Haas concluded that he had underestimated the continuing vigor of national interests and aspirations, which had kept the European governments from completing their project of integration. Haas even went so far as to argue that his theory of regional integration had become obsolete, overtaken by broader global developments (1975). But Haas’s pessimism turned out to be premature. During the 1980s, the EU was re-launched and a series of grand projects – the Single Market, the Schengen agreement, the multiple rounds of enlargement, and the creation of the Euro – created a more cohesive political structure for the EU and expanded the realms of cooperation both functionally and geographically. The member states also agreed to a series of institutional reforms that made it easier to reach political agreement. The power of the European Parliament expanded dramatically since the founding of the original European Coal and Steel Community, institutionalizing the principle of representative democracy in the EU (see Rittberger, in this issue). The European Court of Justice, having laid the foundations in the 1960s for “constitutionalizing” the Treaty of Rome, steadily extended the scope and reach of EU rules.

But this increased cooperation did not seem to be matched by a growth in public support for the EU. Though there is evidence that citizens grew more aware of the activities of the EU and were generally supportive of their governments' participating in it, there seemed to be little in the way of a shared European identity or politics. In the past ten years, and particularly since 2007 with the worldwide financial crisis, the sense of "Europeanness" (never strong to begin with) has seemed to lessen (see the papers in Checkel and Katzenstein 2009). Immigration, the so-called "war on terror," slow economic growth, and finally the financial crisis have caused citizens across Europe to view their national governments as the main focus of their identities and political activity (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009, ch. 1).

The continuing vitality of national identifications played out symbolically during the demonstrations in the spring of 2010 in Greece and Germany. The Greek government faced a financial crisis. As a member of the Eurozone, Greece turned to the European Central Bank (ECB) for help, which asked the Greek government to undertake a severe austerity program in order to secure assistance. The austerity program brought out waves of demonstrators. At the same time, the country providing the largest share of the funding for the bailout was Germany. German citizens saw the Greek government and Greek citizens as profligate and they went into the streets to protest their government's participation in the bailout. Some of the Greek demonstrators responded by protesting the German objections. Though this was a kind of European politics, it was certainly not the politics that Haas had envisioned. Instead, national concerns and national identity appeared to trump the European ideal that everyone was in the project together.

In the rest of this paper, we explore how to think about European identity. First, we consider some of the theoretical literature about the emergence of national identities. Then we

consider what a European identity might mean to those who have it. We follow this up by reviewing what is known about how many Europeans there are and which citizens are most likely to think of themselves as Europeans. We then evaluate what identity might mean for EU politics. We examine the continuing vitality of national identities, their link to an ethnic conception of European identity, and the emergence of anti-immigrant right wing parties across Europe. Broadly speaking, the expansion of EU governance has increased the salience of identity issues, at least for some citizens of Europe. On the one hand, as EU influences have spread into new domains of economic, social, and political life, some citizens have embraced a European identity. On the other hand, the growth of the EU's institutions and competencies has led some citizens to view that growth as a threat to national identity and autonomy.

In our conclusion, we discuss the dilemma the EU faces going forward. On the one hand, the EU is so interconnected economically that it is almost inconceivable that any of the member states would actually leave. But on the other hand, the degree to which citizens hold a European identity affects their perceptions of the EU on a variety of fronts, from enlargement (Maier and Rittberger, 2008) to satisfaction with democracy at the EU level (see Hobolt, this issue). These perceptions in turn act as a constraint on governments as they confront EU institutional and policy decisions. Yet, to preview the conclusion, the EU can build and sustain a high level of integration without deep citizen identification with Europe. The current crisis has revived some feelings of national identification, but the policy responses have mostly pushed national governments into closer economic cooperation in the Euro-zone. The member states are considering ways to coordinate their fiscal policies in order to avoid a repeat of the bailouts of 2010-2011. These policies do not detach the nation from the EU as some citizens would prefer. Instead, they bind the member states more closely together.

## Theories of Integration and Identity

Sociologists, anthropologists, and political scientists have been interested in the formation of collective identities like national identities since the founding of their disciplines (for a critical review of the concept of identity in the post-war era, see Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Collective identities refer to the idea that a group of people accept a fundamental and consequential similarity that causes them to feel solidarity amongst themselves (Therborn 1995, ch. 12; Brubaker and Cooper 2000). This sense of collective identity is socially constructed, which means it emerges as the intentional or unintentional consequence of social interactions. Collective identity is also by definition about the construction of an 'other.' Our idea of who we are is often framed as a response to some 'other' group (Barth 1969). People grow up in families and communities, and come to identify with the groups in which they are socially located. Gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, social class, and age have all been the basis of people's main identities.

Anderson has written one of the seminal works concerning national identity, *Imagined Communities: The Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). He writes: "In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community -- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (1983, 5). Nations are imagined because members of even the smallest nation never know or meet more than a minuscule fraction of their fellow nationals. When connected to a state (institutions of government exercising authority in a defined territory), nations establish limits and boundaries. The state creates rules that define who citizens are, and who foreigners. Nations are communities

because, "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (Anderson, 1983, p. 5).

Deutsch defined nationality as "a people striving to equip itself with power, with some machinery of compulsion strong enough to make the enforcement of its commands probable in order to aid in the spread of habits of voluntary compliance with them" (1953, p. 104). But in order to attain this, there has to be an interconnection between the members of disparate social groups. "Nationality, then, means an alignment of large numbers of individuals from the lower and middle classes linked to regional centers and leading social groups by channels of social communication and economic discourse" (Deutsch, 1953, p. 101).

Deutsch's approach helps make sense of one of the most obvious difficulties with a theory of nationality. In different times and places, the basis of an appeal to a common culture can include language, religion, race, ethnicity, or a common formative experience (for example, in the U.S., immigration). Deutsch helps us understand that any of these common cultures can form the basis for a national identity and that which identity gets used in a particular society will depend on history. The historical "trick" in building a nation-state is to find a horizontal kind of solidarity that appeals to a wide group of people of differing social strata and offers a sense of solidarity that justifies producing a state to protect the "nation." Nationalism can have any cultural root, as long as that culture can be used to forge a cross-class alliance around a nation-building project. A nation-state can come into existence when such a national story exists and once in existence, the state apparatus will be used to reproduce the nation. But at its foundations, the nation is created through communication and exchange across social strata and groups.



Deutsch's theory helps us make sense of what has and has not happened in Europe in the past 50 years. If there is going to be a European national identity, it is going to arise from people who associate with each other across national boundaries. As European economic, social, and political fields have developed, they bring about the routine interaction of people from different societies. It is the people who are involved in these routine interactions who are most likely to come to see themselves as Europeans and be involved in a European national project as they begin to identify with people who are like them.

#### Evidence for "Who is a European"

Who are the Europeans and how many are there? Evidence suggests that Europeans come from the highest socioeconomic groups in society. These include the owners of businesses, managers, professionals, and other white collar workers. They are involved in various aspects of business and government, travel frequently in Europe, and sometimes live in other European countries for a period of time (Fligstein, 2008; Risse, 2010). They engage in long term social relationships with their counterparts who either work for their firm, or are their suppliers, customers, or, in the case of people who work for governments, their colleagues in other governments. They speak second, or third, languages for work. Since 1986, they have created Europe-wide business and professional associations in which people gather regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest (Fligstein, 2008). Young people who travel across borders for schooling, tourism, and jobs (often for a few years after college) are also likely to be more European. Educated people who share common interests with other educated people around Europe, such as similar professions, interests in charitable organizations, or social and cultural activities such as opera or art will be interested in travel and social interaction with people in

other societies. Finally, people with higher income will travel more and participate in the diverse cultural life across Europe. They will have the money to spend time enjoying the good life in other places.

If these are the people who are most likely to interact in European-wide economic, social, and political arenas, then it follows that their opposites lack either the opportunity or the interest to interact with their counterparts across Europe. Most importantly, blue collar and service workers' jobs are less likely than managers, professionals, and other white collar workers to have their work take them to other countries. Older people will be less adventurous than younger people and less likely to know other languages. They are less likely to hold favorable views of their national neighbors and will remember who was on which side in the Second World War. They will be less likely to want to associate with or have curiosity about people from neighboring countries. People who hold conservative political views that value the "nation" as the most important category will be less inclined to travel or to know, and interact with, people who are "not like" them.

How many people identify with Europe? Fligstein (2008), using Eurobarometer data, shows that in 2004 only 3.9 percent of people who live in Europe viewed themselves as Europeans exclusively while another 8.8 percent viewed themselves as Europeans while also having some national identity. This means that only 12.7 percent of the people in Europe tend to view themselves as Europeans. However, this translated into 47 million people – not a small number. Scholars who have looked at this data have generally concluded that the European identity has not spread very far (Gabel, 1998; Deflem and Pampel, 1996; Citrin and Slides, 2004). But this misses several interesting aspects of European identity. An additional 43.3 percent of people viewed themselves as having a national identity and sometimes a European identity. These people who sometimes view themselves as Europeans can be viewed as "situational Europeans," i.e., under the right conditions they will place a European identity over a national identity. Risse describes them as "European lite" (2010). In the most recent survey asking the same question (June 2010), the proportions were slightly lower than the 2004 results. Seven

percent of respondents claimed a European identity first plus some national identity, 3 percent claimed a European identity only, and 41 percent expressed a national identity plus sometimes a European one. In other words, slightly more than half of Europeans in 2010 claimed a European identity at least some of the time.

Still, fully 46 percent of Europeans view themselves as having a strictly national identity (compared to 44 percent in 2004 – not a dramatic difference). Thus, almost half of people who live in Europe never think of themselves as Europeans. Taken together, these distributions imply that if a political issue comes along that brings people to see themselves as Europeans, 54 percent of people will favor a European solution to a problem. Risse (2010, pp. 61-62) concludes on the basis of this data that the sense of being a European may not be terrifically deep, but it is widespread. And as Figure 1 shows, the sense of being a European has been quite stable over time. Though the EU rule-making authority expanded dramatically over the period shown in the figure (1992 to 2010), the proportion of citizens who claim a European identity either primarily or in part stayed relatively even, with a recent dip tied to the financial crisis. Even during the crisis, the share of respondents who express some European identity has so far remained within its historical range.

(Figure 1 about here)

The question remains as to how deep this European identity runs and which issues will make people think of themselves as Europeans. If all of the situational Europeans remain true to their national identity on a particular issue, 87.3 percent of the people will not be European. Moreover, in Great Britain, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark, majorities of the population continue to view themselves mainly as having a national identity. These national identities may be grounded in a strong historical attachment to democratic governance and a general satisfaction with how democracy works in their country. In any case, the complex pattern of national and European identities explains much about the ups and downs of the European

political project. Most of the EU population is likely to see things from a nationalist perspective first, but some issues bring together majorities of the population around a European perspective.

### What Does a European Identity Mean?

The literature on national identities tends to distinguish two ideal types of nationalism: civic and ethnic (Kohn, 1944; Brubaker, 1992; Eisenstadt and Geisen, 1995; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010). Civic forms of national identity tend to focus on citizenship as a legal status obtainable by anyone willing to accept a particular legal, political, and social system (Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010). Ethnic forms of nationalism require that people adhere to national culture by virtue of having been born into it. Ethnic nationalism focuses on how common religion, language, national traditions, ancestry, and membership in a dominant ethnic or racial group are the bases for national membership. While both civic and ethnic conceptions of nationalism imply that a person has one and only one national identity, the civic conception allows that people who were not born and raised in a particular place can assume its national identity by agreeing to become a member of that society.

The empirical literature generally supports the view that such a distinction exists (Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010; Bail, 2009). One interesting twist is that within any given country, some people hold a more ethnic conception of nationalism and some hold a more civic conception. The percentages in each category vary depending on the society in question. Those who hold a civic conception of national identity tend to be more educated and from higher socioeconomic statuses (Sides and Citrin, 2007; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010).

This leads us to the question of whether a European identity is more civic or ethnic in character. Most of the empirical literature (Green, 2007; Kufer, 2009; Risse, 2010) shows that the cultural meaning of “European” tends to follow the civic conception. People who identify as European view themselves as in favor of peace, tolerance, democracy, and cultural diversity and as in general agreement with Enlightenment values. They see being a European as an acceptance of those values. Many people in Europe who have both a national and a European identity also view their national identities in such civic terms. Risse argues (2010) that this means that having a European identity does not force people to choose between their nation and Europe. Instead, he concludes that holding dual identities is more or less consistent to the degree that identification with Europe is identification with modern civil liberties, rule of law, and democracy. Thus one’s view of who is a European may depend on whether one defines identity in civic or in ethnic terms.

Diez Medrano and Gutierrez (2001) argue that one can think of European identities as nested in national identities, regional identities, and even more local identities such as cities or neighborhoods. Since these identities require different kinds of activation, they may not be generally in conflict, but indeed complementary. Risse (2005), agreeing with Diez Medrano and Gutierrez (2001) and Diez Medrano (2003), reviews the literature on the topic of European identity and concludes that strong national and European identities are not incompatible because they refer to different communities which are nested in relationship to one another and are activated under different social conditions. Diez Medrano and Gutierrez (2001) show that Spanish national and regional identities are not only unthreatened by a European identity, but empowered by it. The Spanish view their membership in the EU and their identities as Europeans as proof that they are “modern,” and have arrived as members of a functioning democratic

society. Of course, the relationship between national and European identities varies across EU member states. As de Wilde and Zürn argue (in this issue), “national narratives about European integration” – which are “prominent accounts within member states that make sense of European integration vis-à-vis national history and national political aims” – differ from country to country and “may also change over time.”

There is, however, evidence that a more ethnic sense of what it means to be a European exists as well. Holmes (2009) has made the argument that one source of right wing political sentiment in Europe is the idea that Europeans are Christian and share a common history that excludes non-EU foreigners and immigrants. Holmes views people with such a European identity as also being comfortable with a strong ethnic-based national identity (see also Risse, 2010). The idea, then, is that those segments of the population that hold ethnic-based national identities are more likely than others to define a European identity also in ethnic terms. This “ethno-European” identity is based on culture, which can include “any form of common history; moral, religious, or ethnic traditions; philosophical, political, and moral norms and values” (Bruter, 2003, p. 1156). It is “an identity shared by fellow Europeans forming a distinct civilization with its own history, culture, tradition and religion” (Maier and Rittberger, 2008, p. 250). Experimental research offers some evidence that perceptions of cultural affinity affect people’s attitudes toward the prospect of EU accession by specific countries (Maier and Rittberger, 2008, p. 258).

The flip-side of the cosmopolitan or civic European identity is thus the “ethno-nationalist” side of Europe: an essentially ethnic-based version of European identity that excludes certain groups from the vision of Europeanness. For those who hold to ethnic conceptions of European identity, defining who belongs in the imagined European community

also entails defining who is out. Data indicate that many Europeans view immigrants from outside of Europe as well as indigenous minorities in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as “non-European” (Sides and Citrin, 2007). “Othering,” however, is less relevant under a civic European identity because anyone can, in principle, become a European by accepting European rules and values.

Three general and intertwined processes have reshaped national and supra-national identity politics in Europe. First, since the 1992 Maastricht treaty, the EU shifted from a project of economic integration to a project of political and cultural integration. For some Europeans, the expanded governance capabilities of EU institutions threaten national identity while formalizing Europeanness as a supra-national identity potentially accessible to all EU citizens. For instance, the Bologna Process not only standardizes the structure of higher education to increase workers’ competitiveness on the labor market but also introduces a set of distinctly European shared experiences across countries. Shore (2000) has documented that these kinds of projects have generated some backlash against the EU along national lines.

Second, rapid EU expansion has blurred traditional lines between Western and Eastern Europe. The accession of ex-communist countries has transformed the meaning and construction of threat. Whereas prior to the Soviet collapse communism presented the primary threat to the West, this fear of an authoritarian empire at the gates has practically disappeared. As the ex-communist countries raced to adopt Western style economic and political institutions to prove themselves worthy of EU membership, citizens of those countries have slowly shed the stigma of backwardness assigned to them (Case, 2009). In retrospect, the fears of mass migration from the East overwhelming Western European economies were exaggerated. Instead, the CEE countries exhibited high rates of economic growth in the post-transition period, providing a boost to the

European region (Fligstein, 2008). While some prejudices may remain, as holders of EU citizenship, Poles, Romanians, Hungarians and others no longer embody a threat against which Western Europe can define itself.

Third, changes in the composition of immigration to Western Europe are transforming the ethnic and religious composition of Europe. In the immediate post-war period, the largest share of immigrants came from Southern Europe. Since the 1970s, immigrants have tended to come from Eastern Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans. In the case of Turkish and North African immigrants, demarcation from European identity occurs along ethnic and religious lines, which are often conflated. Marking of difference occurs in everyday experiences and in the legal sphere, from France's infamous "headscarf controversy" and Switzerland's 2009 anti-minaret constitutional amendment to Angela Merkel's and David Cameron's 2011 remarks on the limits (or transformation) of multiculturalism in their countries. As opposed to the Soviet Union, which was an enemy from without, the newly constructed threat is the enemy from within in the shape of nonwhite, frequently Muslim immigrants. The discourse of the Muslim threat, imagined or not, is particularly salient in the post-9/11 "War on Terror" context.

All three processes – institutional integration, geographic expansion, and immigration – combine to produce a political and cultural environment in which a significant portion of the European public (holders of ethnic conceptions of identity) increasingly defines Europeanness in relation to "the other." This means that for some people, European identity is defined in part by who the out-groups are. The stereotyped non-European is often the non-white immigrant Muslim or the indigenous Roma or Jew. These three "special enemies" (Mudde, 2007:78)



represent the classic scapegoats against which national, and now sometimes European, identity is constructed.

### Nationalism, Immigration, and Radical Right Parties

Some who orient their identities and their political preferences toward the national level have found a home in far right-wing parties, whose emergence has been one of the most important political trends in Europe in the past 20 years (Mudde, 2007). (Of course, historical attachments to and satisfaction with national democracy – in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, for example – can also undergird national identities without inclining people to far-right parties.) Most of the rhetoric of the far right parties buttresses an ethnic conception of national identity. Such a conception is usually opposed to immigrant groups and others deemed as “outsiders” who are seen as a cultural and economic threat. The main appeal of the far-right parties is to people who have remained wedded to a national identity and may have been the losers in the European cosmopolitan economic and cultural project. They celebrate their national ethnic uniqueness invoke the Christian and historical heritage of European citizens as a way to justify the exclusion of outsider groups.

The oppositional view of Europeanness is visible in the recent electoral support for radical right parties<sup>1</sup> in Western Europe. The parties of the “New Right” seek to distance themselves from fascist movements of the inter-war period. They are generally populist and anti-establishment, and use authoritarian rhetoric (Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 1992; Kitschelt, 1995; Holmes, 2009). The radical right’s anti-immigrant and xenophobic ideology plays on the ambiguities between national and European identity. At its heart is a vision of Europe as a collection of

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter, the terms radical right, new right, far-right, extreme right, and right-wing are used interchangeably.

ethnic communities bound by a common European civilization, similar to Charles de Gaulle's 1960s motto of "Europe of the Fatherlands" (Liang, 2007, 12). This vision, however, also derives from a fear of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic loss or dilution that could result from the three processes of integration, expansion, and non-European immigration.

For the most part, Europe's radical right parties do not reject the EU as a whole, but they fear a loss of "pure" national identity if Europe moves towards a melting pot model or multiculturalism (Mudde, 2000, 2007). Mudde (2007, p. 162) classifies the major right parties, such as the French *Front national* (FN), Italian *Liga Nord* (LN), German *Republikaner*, and the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (VB), as "Eurosceptics": supporters of basic EU principles but simultaneously harsh anti-EU critics.<sup>2</sup> This stance allows the radical right to present itself as defender of liberal democracy, while espousing anti-immigrant rhetoric and proposing exclusionary policies such as strict border controls, rejection of Turkey's EU membership (despite the EU Council of Ministers' approval for Turkey's bid), and denial of social benefits to disadvantaged and immigrant groups.

Beginning in the 1980s, the radical right gained momentum and influence in Western European democracies for the first time since the Second World War (Norris, 2005; Hainsworth, 2008). As Hainsworth (2000) aptly points out, extreme right parties' populist appeal and consistent electoral support across Western Europe has pushed what used to be considered marginal political groups into the mainstream. Although an extreme right party has not received a ruling majority in any national parliamentary election, nationalist and anti-immigrant parties have formed coalition governments with center right parties in Austria, Denmark, and Italy, and have influenced mainstream parties' movement to the right. The *Sweden Democrats*, an anti-

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<sup>2</sup> Mudde (2007) identifies a set of other right-wing parties in the original 15 EU countries as Euro-rejectors: the British National Party (BNP) and Veritas, and the Danish *Dansk Folkeparti* (DFP).

immigration party, won 20 seats in Sweden's parliament in the September 2010 elections. In the European Parliament, a consortium of radical right groups have formed two political parties: the Identity, Tradition, and Sovereignty Group (ITS), which includes members of the FN, VB, the Bulgarian *Ataka*, and the Greater Romania Party (PRM); and the conservative Union for Europe of the Nations (UEN), which includes the *Dansk Folkeparti* (DFP), the *Liga Nord*, and the Polish *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (LPR) among others.

In 2005, representatives from seven European right-wing parties met and developed the Vienna Declaration of Patriotic and National Movements and Parties in Europe.<sup>3</sup> This statement outlines a set of European ethno-nationalist policy prescriptions, calling for, among other things, a rejection of EU expansion to non-European regions, an immediate stop to immigration, restriction of social benefits and social justice to European ethnic communities, and rejection of an EU constitution.<sup>4</sup> International cooperation among right-wing groups, voter support for right parties in parliamentary elections, and coalition building with center right parties all point to the increasing influence of rightist ideology on European politics and identity.

The far-right agenda resonates with a significant share of the European public. For instance, public concern with immigration is increasing, with 60 percent of EU citizens ranking the immigration problem higher than terrorism, pensions, taxation, education, housing, the environment, public transport, defense and foreign affairs (Eurobarometer 2004). In the 2003 European Social Survey, 50 percent of the respondents expressed resistance to immigrants of a different race or ethnic group.

Public opinion, however, may not correspond to empirical political reality. Many researchers have tried to determine whether rising immigration causes increased support for

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<sup>3</sup> The parties represented were: FPÖ, Vlaams Belang, *Ataka*, FN, *Italian Azione Sociale* and Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore (MS-FT), as well as the Romanian PRM and the Spanish *Alternativa Española*.

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Liang (2007)

radical right parties, but currently there is no consensus in the literature. Some studies have found a positive connection between immigration level and electoral support for the far right (Anderson, 1996; Gibson, 2002; Golder, 2003; Knigge, 1998; Lubbers et al. 2002), but others have found a weak relationship or none at all (Swank and Betz, 2003; Kitschelt, 1995). The reason for such disparate findings is differences in measurement of “immigration,” variably measured as percentage of foreign born, refugees, asylum seekers or immigration inflow. Sides and Citrin (2007) present a way of thinking about this problem. They show that citizens with more conservative social views tend to overestimate the number of immigrants in their society. Thus, it may not be the actual threat of immigrants that produces support for far-right parties, but the perceived threat.

Right parties have been particularly successful in pushing mainstream parties to adopt anti-immigrant rhetoric and even change immigration laws in Denmark, Austria, Netherlands, and France (Norris, 2005). In an effort to steer votes away from extreme-right parties, center right parties in these countries have adopted the ethno-nationalist rhetoric (Schain, 2002). This political strategy, as opposed to a *cordon sanitaire* approach practiced by mainstream parties in Germany, has not had the intended effect of pushing extreme right parties out of politics (Art 2006). Instead, mainstream parties have moved further to the right on immigration and Turkish EU membership issues. This suggests that extreme-right parties are not single-issue parties but have broader appeal to the electorate and real effects on policy (Mudde 1999). Indeed, their rise may signal the emergence of a new dimension of politics in Europe, different from the traditional left-right divide and based more on ideologies concerning immigration, identity, and citizenship.

How does this matter for integration politics?

We have highlighted the connections among an ethnic conception of national identity, a European identity posed in opposition to “non-European” immigrant and minority “others” (North Africans, Muslims, Roma, Jews), and the rise of far-right parties. Yet it would be easy to overstate the significance of Europe’s far right for the integration project generally and for the development of a European identity specifically, for two reasons. First, not all reluctance to transfer policy-making to the EU level is grounded in far-right ideologies. Euro-scepticism can be based on beliefs about the appropriate level of governance and democracy. Second, it does not appear that an ethnic-based (oppositional) *European* identity is driving nationalist and anti-immigrant attitudes. Indeed, 44 percent of Europeans state that they do not have a European identity at all (p. 11 above). So one open question is, What share of those who do claim some sort of European identity define “Europeanness” in ethnic, exclusionary terms? For reasons we discuss below, we suspect that most of those who profess a European identity think of it in more cosmopolitan, civic terms.

Third, anti-immigrant sentiments and policies may be only loosely linked to the core of the integration project. If the core of the European project consists of the unified market for goods, services, capital, and labor, and the euro zone, then how citizens define “Europeanness” may not be directly related to how they evaluate the European project itself and their relationship to it. Put differently, people can value the European Union and their country’s membership in it, and think of themselves as part of it, while at the same time defining who is a European in narrow or exclusionary terms. The question, “Do I have a European identity?”, is not identical to the question, “Who counts as a European?” We have asked both whether a European identity is

spreading among publics (a question with an important quantitative character) and explored what the nature of that European identity is (a more qualitative question).

Slightly more than half of citizens in EU countries claim some sort of European identity. Those who think of themselves, at least sometimes, as European tend to work or travel in other EU countries, speak other European languages, and belong to trans-European networks or associations. The European identity that has developed is probably therefore a cosmopolitan or civic one: regardless of race, ethnicity, language, religion, or culture, anyone who accepts the rules and values of the European Union can be an EU citizen. Far-right groups advocate a more ethnic or exclusionary European identity, but that message contains a paradox: supporters of right-wing parties are almost certainly among those who state that their identity is national, not European. If the ethnic-based, exclusionary forms of nationalism that have gained ground in some national settings (Belgium, Denmark, France, Netherlands, for examples) move to the European level, and compete effectively with more cosmopolitan notions of identity, European immigration, social, and cultural policies could become more closed and exclusionary. What do our theories and observations of European integration suggest?

There have always been those who thought that a process of economic integration would eventually lead to more political integration, i.e., some form of European nation-state. The main empirical problem with this expectation is that neither a European identity nor a groundswell of support for far-reaching political integration has come into existence (Imig and Tarrow, 2001). Political scientists have spent a great deal of time and energy trying to understand exactly why this is.

But this is not just a scholarly debate; it is also an ongoing political debate among the citizens of the various European nation-states about how best to manage their

affairs. Governments have already given up some power to the EU and they have been rewarded with increased trade, economic growth, and job creation. But the future of economic growth and European welfare states, and the role of the EU in this, are being debated across Europe. National and European collective identities are playing a role in this debate. For the vast majority who hold primarily national identities, preserving their national welfare states may be paramount. For those with more mixed identities, the value of trying to cooperate at the European level is obvious.

In some countries, such as Great Britain, there is a fair amount of skepticism about moving additional policies to the EU level. Indeed, the dominant British point of view is that the EU is an intergovernmental organization oriented toward a free trade area that allows freedom to travel and invest, but not much more than that. Not surprisingly, the citizens of Great Britain are the most national in their political collective identity. On the other side are citizens who want Europe to have a stronger set of social policies. Not surprisingly, such points of view are frequently expressed in societies where there is more European collective identity, such as Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. Jürgen Habermas has expounded a set of arguments about why there should be a European constitution, a civil society or public space where there is ongoing political discourse about solving European problems, and a welfare state to guarantee that the European model of state and citizen is upheld (1992; 2001). And German politicians have frequently been in the forefront of proposing more European political union. The political struggle over whether there will be or should be a European state, identity, and politics is ongoing.

But how is this struggle over the EU, its politics, and European identity being

waged and who are its partisans? There is ample evidence that the EU bureaucracy and some of the Europe's political elites are trying to behave as if the EU were a proto-state (Shore, 2000). But as we have noted, a large number of Europe's citizens remain attached to their national identity. This attachment is a strong predictor of their attitudes toward European integration, regardless of other social characteristics (Hooghe and Marks, 2005). There are two sorts of obvious opponents to a European collective identity project. First, the political elites who run the nation-states are potentially threatened by having more of their authority removed to a larger political entity. The states with the strongest sense of that sovereignty – Great Britain, Denmark, Austria, Sweden, and now some of the new member states from Central and Eastern Europe – are the most skeptical of increased political cooperation. From Gellner's point of view (1983), if state elites do not back a nationalist collective identity—or indeed, oppose it—then the possibility of its success is not high.

But equally important to the ultimate fate of the EU is how ordinary citizens view the role of Europe in their lives. After all, politicians in democratic societies generally follow voters' preferences. Those preferences will determine to a large degree the willingness of political elites who run governments to consider building more state capacity at the European level. So, the degree to which the people of Europe either accept or deny a European identity and favor it over a national identity will have a profound effect on the future of Europe.

This brings us to the issue of the winners and losers in the economic integration project of the EU. As we have noted, the empirical evidence shows that European economic and cultural integration have involved citizens from the higher end of the socio-economic spectrum. Not surprisingly, they identify with that project and tend to see the EU as mainly a good thing. As the winners of Europe's Single Market project, they are going to be inclined to favor political parties



that continue market opening and protect the gains of those who have benefitted from European integration. Blue collar and older workers who have benefitted less economically and culturally from Europe are going to look to their national governments to protect them from the encroachments of foreigners in particular and even from the EU.

## Conclusions

What does the “other” side of European identity – increasing fears of immigration and resurgent support for right-wing political parties – mean for the EU now and in the future? The recent protests against austerity measures in Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain brought to light some of the EU’s dilemmas. Optimism for continued progress and shared culture quickly devolved into tit-for-tat arguments attributing social and cultural defects to the citizens of countries undergoing financial crises. Where Germany once clung to the EU and pushed for increased integration, during the 2008 financial crisis it became clear that German citizens saw themselves as carrying all of Europe instead of sharing in a partnership.

We should not overestimate the influence of right wing parties in this process. After all, most Europeans, most of the time, think of themselves as having mainly a national identity. It is not surprising that the German or Greek or Irish publics should organize to support political parties that preserve their systems of governance. National identity remains strong and though a majority of Europeans sometimes view themselves as Europeans, contemporary politics suggest a resurgence of a nationalist oriented politics. The European economic and political projects have created far more integration than has the cultural and social project of unifying Europe around a sense of shared identity.

That said, it is difficult to imagine an economically and even politically autonomous France, Germany, Portugal, or Greece. Even the right wing ethno-nationalist groups recognize this phenomenon in their attempt to reshape their vision of nationhood and “Europeanness.” As a set of political and economic supra-national institutions, the EU is probably here to stay. But we can expect that struggles over visions of nationhood and resistance to supra-national identities will continue, perhaps in an even more intense fashion. Shifting national narratives of integration imply evolving connections between European and national identities, which in turn affect the level of public mobilization and contestation over EU policies and institutions (de Wilde and Zürn, in this issue). Far right parties are, in part, a response to increased interdependency and its perceived effects on national communities.

Consider two sets of Europeans. For one set, interaction with people across borders has been greatly circumscribed either by choice or by lack of opportunity. The EU has not delivered more jobs and better pay to blue collar and service workers or to the less educated. Members of this group tend to suspect that the EU is an elite project that has mainly benefited the educated, and the evidence bears out that this is what people experience. The elderly still remember the Second World War and its aftermath. They have less interest in knowing more about their neighbors and more in keeping a strong sense of national identity. Those politically on the right have decided to defend the traditional nation. They view immigrants as a threat to their livelihood and to the nation. They promote the national story, though they may also propose a Christian and “historical” European identity. If this group is growing faster, we are at the limit of European identity and the European national project remains a distant prospect.

The other set of Europeans represents forces that might push the other way. Educated people and those with high status occupations are more likely to become at least partly

Europeans, but there are not enough of them to have a large effect on creating a mass "European identity." Which group is more likely to grow more quickly?

With enlargement to 27 countries, a variety of people are entering the EU who do not yet have a history of interacting with their counterparts across countries. The middle and upper-middle classes of what was formally Central and Eastern Europe do not necessarily feel affinity with the western European project. There is already evidence that many of them feel ambivalent about their future in the EU and are skeptical about having a European identity.

Still, it is possible to present a scenario that implies that the process of European identity building is just starting and that over time, the forces that push toward more Europe will rise. First, the European project has only really been going on since the mid 1960s. The biggest expansion of opportunities to interact with other people in Europe occurred beginning with the Single Market in the mid-1980s. It might be too early to expect broad-based support for a European nation. After all, national identities took hundreds of years to evolve and entailed war and conquest. Europeans have only been interacting in large numbers for 25 years or so. Second, demography is working in the EU's favor. Young people are more likely to know second languages, be educated, and travel – and to be more open to the EU. As older generations pass on, there may be more people who think of themselves as Europeans.<sup>5</sup> Third, as skill levels rise and education increases generally, people will be more interested in cultural interactions with other Europeans.

Finally, as European markets continue to integrate, people will have more opportunities to interact with people in other countries. This could occur through work. But it could happen as trans-European media, tourism, and resulting awareness of culture in other countries expands.

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<sup>5</sup> The effect of generational change may, however, be shaped in part by the economic and social positions that young people occupy as they enter the workforce and age. That is, young people with less education who enter low-paying service jobs will be less Europe-oriented than their age peers in higher socio-economic strata.

The middle and upper middle classes in Central and Eastern Europe will eventually come to interact with and relate to their colleagues in Western Europe. This interaction will make them more favorable towards European integration.

At the moment, we mostly observe the unevenness of European integration. The most educated, the most well off, and the young see the benefits of integration and think of themselves as cosmopolitan Europeans. Right wing parties have exploited the issues of immigration and social protection to propose an exclusionary European identity that appeals to those national groups that have not experienced the benefits of integration. In any case, it is clearly possible to construct a great deal of economic integration and EU-level regulation without the development of a deep European identity. We expect that it will continue to be possible to sustain that level of integration with a wide, if shallow, sense of European identity.

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Figure 1: "In the near future, do you see yourself as . . .  
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