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Why European Citizens Will Reject the EU Constitution

by

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ABSTRACT

This study tests competing hypotheses about popular support for European integration. It introduces anti-immigration sentiments as a key variable for understanding reluctance towards integration. Drawing on survey data, it is found that anti-immigration sentiments, economic considerations, and the evaluation of domestic governments are the strongest predictors of both support for integration and individuals' propensity to vote "Yes" in a referendum on the enlargement of the EU. When extrapolating the findings to future referendums on issues of European integration, it may be predicted that such referendums will result in a "No" outcome under the conditions of high levels of anti-immigration sentiments, pessimistic economic outlooks, and/or unpopularity of a government.

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Introduction

Why do some people embrace the notion of European integration while others oppose it? This question has generated a considerable and growing amount of scholarly research and popular debate. The usual suspects for understanding variation in popular support for integration include levels of cognitive mobilization (e.g., Inglehart 1970), utilitarian and economic considerations (e.g., Gabel & Palmer, 1995), satisfaction with the incumbent government (e.g., Franklin, van der Eijk & Marsh, 1995; Ray, 2003), as well as social-demographic characteristics and political ideological preferences (e.g., Gabel, 1998). More recently, perceived cultural threat has been added to the equation (McLaren, 2002).

We review each of these explanations. Drawing on originally collected survey data we simultaneously assess the power of the different explanations. The article argues that the relative importance of the different predictors has changed so that today the relevance of, for example, political values is marginal. Much more important are immigration-related attitudes and economic considerations. The article explicates the role of immigration in understanding attitudes towards European integration and casts this in the light of the popularity of anti-immigration (and often anti-EU) parties in several European countries. The importance of public opinion about European integration is often underestimated and we demonstrate how the predictors can influence the outcome of future referendums on European integration issues. Our model of vote choice shows that the predictors driving attitudes towards European integration are also the strongest predictors when modeling vote choice.

Why public opinion about the European Union matters

The European Union is often referred to as an elitist project that does not have widespread public support. Considerable effort has gone into exposing and analyzing the democratic deficit of the EU. Inherent to this debate is the notion of legitimacy. As Scharpf (1970) argues, legitimacy builds upon principles of the authorization of power holders, responsiveness in the exercise of power and accountability. The democratic deficit is a lack of legitimacy in that EU decisions are not sufficiently responsive to public preferences and scrutiny (Scharpf, 1997). This gap between elite opinion and public opinion on European integration has also been established in more empirical terms showing differences in the areas in which political elites and European publics are willing to confer power to the EU (Hooghe, 2003).

Given the weak system of authorization of power holders through European Parliamentary elections (e.g., van der Eijk & Franklin, 1996), arguably legitimacy has to come not only from elections but also from the process of governance. This can take a number of forms. Most directly, public preferences can be established through referendums on issues of European integration. The Danish 1992 and Irish 2001 rejection of the treaties of Maastricht and Nice respectively are examples of the significance of public opinion for the trajectory of European integration. In fact, European integration is the most voted on issue in the world (Authors, 2004) and the use of referendums to decide on issues of membership, key policies, endorsement of treaties and constitutional documents is increasing. However, it is obviously only a small fraction of EU decisions that are legitimized by public support in a referendum.

Indirectly, public opinion about European integration can be seen to legitimate the system through national elections. Voters may opt to “punish” political parties and candidates by weighing performance records on EU matters in to their vote choice in national elections. In fact, this indirect process of legitimizing EU decisions is highly relevant given the influential role of the European Council, consisting of elected government representatives from the various member

countries, in taking key decisions. A second, indirect way in which public opinion plays a role for EU decision making is in the form of public protests. Recent research has demonstrated that during the 1980s and 1990s, “Europe” was the focus of a limited, but increasing number of protests and that these protests were fuelled by citizens’ sense that integration is threatening (Mig, 2002). Such protests are explicit manifestations of public opinion and can impact policymaking in the responses of authorities.

However, the authorization of power holders is far from limited to elections. A vast body of literature has discussed the emergence of the “permanent campaign” (e.g., Norris, 2000), in which governance has become campaigning and politicians are held accountable through frequent and rapidly collected opinion polls and performance ratings. Indeed empirical studies support the growing importance of public opinion. One study demonstrated how politicians in Germany were increasingly reacting to public opinion in their decisions (Brettschneider, 1997). Given the potentially increasing responsiveness of the political system and the decreasing popular satisfaction with Europe (Eurobarometer 35-60 shows an average decrease in support for EU membership from 70 percent to about 50 percent), public opinion has become a more important benchmark for political decisions and public opinion is more likely to be incorporated in policy making. In general, political systems are viable on the condition that they enjoy public support, but this is particularly so for the European Union which, in the absence of, for example, supranational means of law enforcement, depends on public support and acceptance (Caldeira & Gibson, 1995).

The ingredients shaping public support for European integration are, however, contested. Previous studies have concentrated on explanations around cognitive mobilization, cost/benefit considerations, and the impact of domestic political considerations for attitudes towards European integration. Many of these have been studied in a bi-variate form, not controlling for the impact of other influences. In addition, changes in the political climate in Europe in the 1990s may imply that one of the key indicators for public opinion about the EU has been omitted in our understanding of support for European integration. Below we briefly introduce previous strands of research as well as articulate the importance of immigration sentiments for public support for European integration.

Cognitive mobilization

Inglehart (1970) demonstrated the positive relationship between higher levels of political involvement and support for European integration. The “to-know-it-is-to-love-it” argument suggests that citizens with high cognitive mobilization are more at ease with a supranational entity. Moreover, according to later work by Inglehart (1977), citizens who have a political value system that favors non-material values such as self-fulfillment and concerns with democracy above material values such as security are more favorable towards European integration. The first group, dubbed as post-materialists, is likely to perceive European integration as a vehicle for social reform and tend to consider politics at a more abstract level, which – according to Inglehart – promotes support for the EU.

This idea was demonstrated using bivariate analyses of Eurobarometer data, and – as, for example, Gabel (1998) has suggested – the conclusions are at best tentative given the lack of consistent empirical support in the data and the absence of controls for other, potentially confounding factors such as education. Later analyses have found only limited support for this idea, either by limiting the argument to original member states only (Anderson & Reichert, 1996) or by controlling for a number of the explanations outlined below (Gabel, 1998).

Cost/benefit analysis

The second group of studies posits that “EU citizens from different socio-economic situations experience different costs and benefits from integrative policy” (Gabel, 1998, p. 336). These studies explain support for European integration in terms of income, education, occupational skills, and proximity to border regions (e.g., Anderson & Reichert, 1996; Gabel & Palmer, 1995). In studies of referendums on the entry to the EU it was also found that personal characteristics as outlined above were strong predictors in shaping the assessment of the economic consequences of EU membership and that these assessments were in turn predictive of the level of support for membership (Jenssen, 1998).

The proposition that attitudes towards integration, including the common currency, are driven by economic experiences and evaluations is also shared by Pepermans and Veleve (1998), who found national economic pride and satisfaction to be a key explanatory variable for support for the euro across the fifteen EU countries. This perspective, however, is not uncontested. Bosch and Newton (1995) did not find any coherent pattern in their twelve-country study of how economic variables may explain support for European unification. Anderson (1998) found that, when contrasting economic and political effects and in a simultaneous multivariate analysis, economic variables were in part mediated by political variables. This, he suggests, call for inclusion of political variables to understand variation in popular support.

Domestic politics and support for European integration

The key political variables come from the domestic political realm. The argument in this group of studies is that, given the low level of actual information about the integration processes, citizens are likely to resort to proxies when formulating their view on integration, and these proxies are likely to be based on national political considerations (Anderson, 1998; Franklin et al., 1994). In particular the importance of government approval and support for incumbent political parties has been considered.

Franklin and colleagues (Franklin et al., 1994; Franklin et al., 1995) even go on to say that domestic political considerations drive not only opinions about integration but also voting behavior in European elections and national referendums on European issues: “referenda conducted in the context of national party politics, with the government of the day urging ratification of a treaty they have themselves negotiated, will inevitably be contaminated by popular feelings about the government” (Franklin et al., 1994, p. 102). Later this thesis was modified to apply in particular to referendums on issues that are of low salience to the electorate (Franklin, 2002). Recent research has dealt with conditional nature of this relationship. Ray (2003) tested the importance of support for the incumbent government for the level of EU support and found the relationship to be particularly strong in years in which European elections or referendums on issues of European integration were held.

Perceived threats to the nation-state

A number of recent studies have provided evidence that citizens’ perceived threat to the nation-state is a potential consideration when expressing support for the EU (Kritzinger, 2003). McLaren (2002) argues that reluctance towards integration is a function of hostility toward and fear of other cultures. She concludes that it is the “changing nature of the nation and the nation-state that lead many Europeans to be critical of the EU since this institution is likely to be seen as contributing to this change” (McLaren, 2002, p. 554). The argument is that given that European citizens have been socialized to accept the power and sovereignty of the nation-state, the idea of

advanced European integration, which implies a potentially weakened role for the nation-state and redistribution of sovereignty, provides a threat to this symbol. Threats may come from non-national changes in society, including immigration and globalization.

Corroborative evidence was provided in a study of the particular case of Switzerland. The perceived threat to the nation-state and core Swiss values was also found to be an important predictor of support for potential Swiss membership in the EU (Christin & Trechsel, 2002). Relying on the first Eurobarometer data from Switzerland it was found that institutional attachments and the image of neighboring countries were linked to a perception of threat which drove the level of EU support.

However, the nation-state may not necessarily be considered threatened by European integration. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) demonstrated how domestic political considerations are important benchmarks in understanding support for the EU, also in a positive sense. He found support to be higher in countries that suffer from corruption and have less-developed welfare states. In such societies, the EU is seen as a positive comparison to the nation-state while it is perceived as a threat in other countries.

Immigration

Absent in the studies emphasizing the importance of domestic political considerations for citizens' support for European integration is a broader perspective of the political climate and composition of domestic politics. Recent political developments in a number of European countries make it necessary to consider the implications of changes in the national political landscape for certain attitudes beyond support for the incumbent government as a reference point for citizens when expressing their opinion about European integration. Europe has experienced an increase in popularity of popular anti-immigrant and often anti-EU political parties. Though these parties are not easily comparable (see e.g., Fennema, 1997), and though their supporters might have different motivations for voting for them (see Billiet & de Witte, 1995; Lubbers et al., 2002; van der Brug & Fennema, 2003 for competing explanations), they all contributed to bringing the issues of immigration and integration of foreigners to the top of the political and public agenda.

We argue that anti-immigration sentiments are of crucial importance for understanding popular support for European integration. Social identity theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding the link between people's attitudes towards immigrants and supporting or rejecting further European integration. In essence social identity theory posits that an individual's membership in a certain group (or category) provides characteristics that define that a member's self-concept by offering norms associated with the group (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Categorization into social groups is essential for an individual's development of self-concept and self-esteem, linking group characteristics to individual identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This categorization or group membership is labeled social identity and it is used to support positive self-distinctiveness when making social judgments. Accordingly, in order to promote a positive self-concept, people tend to positively evaluate groups from which their social identity originates (Tajfel, 1981), and tend to provide negative assessments of other groups. Thus, people have a tendency to make in-group versus out-group distinctions that are advantageous for their in-group and unfavorable for the out-group. Characteristics differentiating between in-groups and out-groups can be substantial, such as skin-color or language, but also trivial (Sherif & Hovland, 1961). The more "real" or perceivedly important the social characteristics used to categorize are, the stronger the group comparison process is (Doise, Csepele, Dann, Gouge, Larsen, & Ostell, 1972; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963).

Ethnicity is considered an important feature for people to distinguish between in-groups and out-groups (Sniderman, Peri, de Figueiredo, & Piazza, 2000, p. 63-64). These cues are very “real” (race, religion, clothing) and prominent and therefore easily activated. This explains why attitudes toward immigrants commonly emphasize negativity towards other ethnic groups. However, it does not fully explain why these attitudes matter for supporting European integration. Recent research investigating the antecedents of (negative) attitudes towards immigrants provides insights into this relationship (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). They demonstrate that individuals’ considerations of national identity are closely linked to perceptions of immigration as a threat to culture, norms, and values. Moreover, it has been shown that people who tend to categorize immigrants into an out-group are also more likely to categorize others into out-groups in general (Sniderman, et al, 2000, p. 87-88).

Following this we can expect that (1) Europeans who hold negative attitudes towards immigrants show a greater readiness for categorization in general, and (2) therefore they are more likely to categorize others into out-groups. (3) This categorization of others as out-group members is likely to yield unfavorable evaluations of these groups (or nations), and (4) negativity towards these out-groups is emphasized by seeing them as possible threats to culture, norms and values. Since European integration implies countries transferring national power to the European level, it can be perceived as posing a threat to the integrity of the in-group (the nation and existing culture). This fuels negative assessments of other groups and therefore people who hold negative attitudes towards immigrants are more likely to reject the idea of further European integration.

Indirectly, the importance of immigration sentiments for understanding support for European integration is supported by McLaren (2002). While she frames her argument as a perceived threat to the nation-state, the measures from the Eurobarometer utilized to operationalize this perceived threat are in fact indicators of xenophobia. Thereby she forcefully demonstrates that previous research on public support has missed a key variable driving hostility toward European integration. McLaren (2001) also provides evidence to suggest that immigration is perceived as a general phenomenon by most citizens and that they do not distinguish between the potential threat of immigration from current EU countries or future EU members (internal integration) or other countries (external integration). Our argument is that there is a great need to specify the role that anti-immigration sentiments play for support for European integration, in particular in the context of the increased electoral significance of popular parties campaigning on anti-immigration and anti-EU policies.

Hypotheses

We hypothesize the following relationships between a number of individual characteristics and attitudes and support for European integration: (1) higher levels of political sophistication are related to higher support (Inglehart, 1970); (2) positive evaluations of the incumbent government are related to higher support (Franklin et al., 1994); (3) positive economic evaluations are related to higher support (Anderson, 1998); and (4) low levels of fear of immigration are related to higher levels of support as argued above. In addition – for a full model specification – we control for gender, age, education, occupation, and ideology which, we predict, are related to support as follows: (1) men are more supportive (see Gabel, 1998); (2) higher educational groups are more supportive (see Gabel, 1998); (3) executive and managerial occupations are more supportive (see Gabel, 1998); (4) post-materialistic values are related to higher support (see Inglehart, 1970); (5) ideological center and right preferences are related to higher support (see Gabel, 1998).

We test these hypotheses in one model, thereby addressing a shortcoming of some previous research which has investigated the relationship between one or two independent variables and support for the EU or European integration while disregarding others. However, we take our ar-

gument one step beyond the perspective of assessing influences on public support for European integration. Public opinion about European integration matters above and beyond the arguments of legitimacy and accountability of the EU as outlined previously. Public opinion may matter in very direct ways to decision making. This happens when public opinion crystallizes and affects voting behavior in referendums on issues of European integration.

Previous studies of EU related referendums have not included measures for all the relevant antecedents of public support for the EU (for an overview, see Authors, 2004). Moreover, none of these referendum studies has specifically addressed the role that attitudes towards immigration may play. We therefore also assess the impact of the different predictors for support for European integration in the form of vote choice in a referendum on a European integration topic. We model vote choice using the same measures of support for European integration – also hypothesizing the same direction of the predictors – given that previous research on EU related referendums has emphasized these variables too (see, e.g., Authors, 2004; Franklin et al., 1995; Hug, 2003; Siune & Svensson, 1995; Svensson, 2002).

Methods

We test our model of support for European integration drawing on originally collected survey data in two EU countries: Denmark and the Netherlands. We sampled these two countries for a variety of reasons: first, they have a similar level of support for the EU (Eurobarometer 58).¹ Similarly the satisfaction with EU democracy is comparable in the two countries (Karp, Banducci & Bowler, 2003). Second, the economic situation in the two countries is comparable (OECD, 2002). Third, and to this study particularly significant, both countries have experienced electoral popularity of populist parties campaigning with strong anti-immigration and anti-EU messages. Immigration-related issues have been high on the public and political agenda throughout the last years in Denmark and the Netherlands (see e.g. Andersen et al., 1998 for Denmark and Sniderman et al., 2004 for the Netherlands). In Denmark *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) and in the Netherlands *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) have also both contributed to governing, DF by constituting the parliamentary majority for current Danish Liberal-Conservative government and LPF by forming a short-lived three-party coalition with CDA and VVD in 2002. Both of these parties campaigned on anti-immigration and anti-European integration issues. Our argument is that if immigration attitudes are believed to be of importance for public support for European integration, Denmark and the Netherlands should be two countries in which this hypothesis should be confirmed, given the relative political importance of the issue and the electoral popularity of anti-immigration parties.²

We rely on two identical surveys with a representative sample of the Danish and Dutch adult population. The surveys were fielded in November 2002.³ The sample sizes are 1,444 in Denmark and 2,396 in the Netherlands. The response rates were 77.9 percent in Denmark and 70.9 percent in the Netherlands.⁴ To assess the quality of our data we included the standard Euro-

¹ EB 58 showed that 61 percent in Denmark and 69 percent in the Netherlands support the membership of their country in the EU and 69 percent and 64 percent respectively believed that their country had benefited from membership.

² Admittedly a research design that would involve more variation in terms of the popularity of such political parties would make for a stronger test. However, given constraints in terms of data collection costs, the focus is on two countries.

³ The specific fieldwork days were: Denmark: wave I November 21-28, 2002, wave II December 14-18, 2002; the Netherlands: wave I November 19-26, 2002, wave II December 17-21, 2002.

⁴ In Denmark, the sample was drawn from the *GfK Danmark* database. A nationally representative sample of 1,807 Danish adults (age 15+) individuals was invited to participate in the study from which 1,444 did (response rate 79.9 percent). In Denmark the questionnaire was a postal self-administered paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Response rates of this magnitude are not unusual for survey research in Scandinavia, where

barometer “support for country’s EU membership”-question in our survey. Sixty percent of our respondents in Denmark and 66 percent in the Netherlands reported considering the membership of their country in the EU a good thing. This compares to 61 percent and 69 percent respectively in the fall EB 58, which was fielded in October 2002.

We consider it an asset that our study does not rely on Eurobarometer data. All previous research on public support for European integration has relied on this instrument. The Eurobarometer has many strengths and weaknesses (see Schmitt [2003] for a recent discussion of the EB instrument), and an important potential shortcoming of cross-country comparisons relying on either single-wave or pooled Eurobarometer data is the robustness of findings. The high number of respondents (ranging often from 9-50,000) yields most findings significant but not necessarily substantively important. Analyses drawing on data collected outside the Eurobarometer instrument are therefore a welcome addition to our knowledge base. Moreover, with our data we can provide a novel link between attitudes towards European integration and vote intention which is not possible using Eurobarometer data.

Measures

The *dependent variable* is an index of support for EU. This was measured by five items tapping general attitudes and opinions about (the extent of) European integration. The items form a scale of EU support (Denmark: $M = 3.12$, $SD = .86$, $\alpha = .82$; the Netherlands: $M = 2.99$, $SD = .61$, $\alpha = .68$). Answers were given on five-point agree/disagree scales: (1) European integration is being pushed too fast; (2) the EU is a threat to smaller countries such as Denmark OR the Netherlands; (3) I would be willing to make a sacrifice to help a less strong country; (4) the membership of Denmark OR the Netherlands is a good thing; (5) the EU has more disadvantages than advantages for people like me. The items were recoded when appropriate to form a scale of EU support.⁵

Our second dependent variable was a measure of vote intention in a referendum on the enlargement of the European Union. The question was: “If a referendum were held on the issue of the enlargement of the EU, would you vote in favor or against the enlargement?” We are fully aware of the potential problems with such a measure. It measures a behavioral intention (which may differ from actual behavior) and there is a tendency to over-reporting participation in intention measures (e.g., Belli et al., 2002). However, while *turnout* is often inflated, there is no reason to expect a structural bias in this vote *choice* measure. Moreover, we are not making inferences about the substantive level of support (“Yes” votes) in a referendum, but rather focusing on the underlying explanations. We therefore consider this less of a problem. Again, we compared the level of support for enlargement in our survey with Eurobarometer data which yielded comparable levels of support.⁶

actual turnout is also comparatively speaking high (Granberg & Holmberg, 1991). In the Netherlands, the sample was drawn from the *ITM International* database with more than 55,000 respondents. A nationally representative sample of 5,321 Dutch adults (age 15+) was invited to participate in the study from which 2,396 did (response rate 70.9 percent). In the Netherlands the questionnaire was Web-administered. Making use of a similar layout of the questionnaire in the two countries, potential confounds due to question and response category layout were taken into account (Dillman, 2000).

⁵ A factor analysis (PCA with varimax rotation) confirmed the one-dimensional nature with all item loading strongly on one factor, with Eigen value of 2.95, explaining 59 percent of the variance.

⁶ In our sample, 61 percent of respondents in Denmark and 52 percent in the Netherlands reported having the intention to vote in favor of EU enlargement. This compares to 71 percent and 58 percent reporting supporting the enlargement in the Eurobarometer data collected in the same period. We attribute the slightly lower level of support in our survey to the differences in question wording. The EB asks the respondent to assess whether enlargement is “generally a good thing” whereas our survey asked respondents to vote in

The *independent* variables included gender (coded as female), age (in years), education,⁷ and occupational status. For the latter we follow Gabel (1998, p. 343), who summarizes that “manual laborers and the unemployed will be less supportive of integration than executives and professionals.”⁸ Ideological preference was tapped by a ten-point left-right self-placement measure.

To test the “cognitive mobilization” theory, we use an index of political sophistication. This is a combined measure of political knowledge and political interest. Political values were assessed using a standard measure tapping post-materialism (Inglehart, 1990) and asking respondents to rate the two most important tasks of the government. The options were (1) Maintain law and order (materialism); (2) Give citizens a greater say in important government decisions (post-materialism); (3) Control prices (materialism); (4) Protect freedom-of-expression measures (post-materialism). The ratings were recoded to range from 1 (two materialism choices), 2 (one materialism and one post-materialism choice) to 3 (two post-materialism choices). To test the impact of domestic political considerations we used respondents’ assessment of the domestic government ranging on a five-point scale from very bad to very good. To test utilitarian perspective we included the occupational status and in addition we use a measure of economic evaluation (following Anderson, 1998) in the form of economic expectations in the coming twelve months ranging from “a lot worse” to “a lot better.”

Finally we included a measure of anti-immigrant sentiments: A five item index measuring anti-immigrant sentiment was used (Denmark: $M = 3.43$, $SD = .83$, $\alpha = .83$; the Netherlands: $M = 3.40$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .82$). The questions were (1) Immigration is good for the labor market; (2) immigrants’ children cause problems in the schools that they attend; (3) immigrants enrich Danish OR Dutch culture; (4) members of immigration groups misuse Danish OR Dutch social welfare, and (5) their religion is a threat to our way of living. The items were recoded when appropriate to form a scale of anti-immigrant sentiments.⁹

The means and standard deviations of the indexes as well as the specific wording of all items can be found in the Appendix. The specified regression models are Ordinary Least Square models. The vote intention model is a logistic regression model with “intention to vote ‘Yes’” (coded as 1) as the dependent variable.

Results

Turning first to the relationship between the various independent variables and our index of support for European integration, we find evidence of most of our hypotheses. As Table 1 shows, gender (coded as female) is negatively related to support, education is positively related, and low occupational status is negatively related while high occupational status is positively related to

favor of the enlargement which is potentially a stronger expression of opinion than the one solicited by the EB question.

⁷ Respondents’ reported level of completed education was recoded due to differences in the educational systems, see Appendix.

⁸ We therefore included these two groups as dummy variables in the analysis. A more elaborate model including unemployed, manual workers, managers, housewives/men, white collar workers, and executives separately (see McLaren, 2002) did not yield different results. We therefore include the recoded categories for presentational reasons.

⁹ Unlike the Eurobarometer these questions were not asked after a question probing the respondent for whether s/he feels that s/he belongs to one of the majority or minority groups in a country. This potentially biases Eurobarometer respondents toward thinking about in-group and out-groups prior to answering questions about immigration.

support. Left ideological preferences are negatively and right ideological preferences positively related to support. Post-materialistic values are positively (but weakly and only significant in the Netherlands) related to support. Anti-immigration sentiments are strongly related to lower levels of support, in fact this relationship yielded the strongest (negative) bi-variate correlation. Political sophistication, positive evaluations of the incumbent government, and positive economic evaluations are all associated with higher levels of support. The correlations reported in Table 1 give credit to the hypotheses formulated on the basis of previous research. They also strongly support the argument made in this article that feelings about immigration are an essential – negative – predictor for support for European integration.

Table 1
Bivariate relationships (correlations) between
various predictors of and support for European integration

	Denmark	The Netherlands
Gender (female)	-.097 ***	-.017
Age	-.050	-.128 ***
Education	.208 ***	.171 ***
Unemployed / blue collar	-.138 ***	-.086 ***
Executive / managers	.166 ***	.022
Left ideological preference	-.107 ***	-.103 ***
Right ideological preference	.098 ***	.094 ***
Anti-immigration attitudes	-.316 ***	-.388 ***
Post-materialist values	.001	.065 ***
Political sophistication	.249 ***	.087 ***
Evaluation incumbent government	.152 ***	.055 ***
Economic evaluations	.153 ***	.297 ***
n	1,405	2,136

Note: Correlations are Pearson's r . *** $p < .001$.

Turning to the multivariate analyses in which the explanatory value of the different predictors is assessed simultaneously, we find the following: In both countries the strongest predictor was anti-immigration sentiments which was a negative predictor of support for European integration. Positive evaluations of the incumbent government and optimistic economic assessments were, as predicted, positive, significant predictors of support. Political sophistication was positively predicting support for integration and this was significant in Denmark. In Denmark, post-materialist values were negatively related to support for European integration.

In addition we found no significant effects of occupational status. Left ideological preference was a significant negative predictor in Denmark while right ideological preference was a significant negative predictor in the Netherlands. Gender was a negative predictor of support for European integration (significant in Denmark) while age was a significant negative predictor in the Netherlands.

Table 2
Regression analysis of support for European integration

	Denmark		The Netherlands	
	Std. Beta coefficient	Standard error	Std. Beta coefficient	Standard error
Gender (female)	-.08 **	.05	-.01	.03
Age	.02	.00	-.06 **	.00
Education	.06 *	.03	.06 **	.02
Unemployed / blue collar	-.04	.06	-.04	.03
Executive / managers	.03	.06	.00	.03
Left ideological preference	-.09 **	.07	.00	.03
Right ideological preference	.04	.06	-.06 **	.03
Anti-immigration attitudes	-.39 ***	.06	-.34 ***	.00
Post-materialist values	-.08 **	.03	-.00	.01
Political sophistication	.18 ***	.02	.01	.01
Evaluation incumbent government	.19 ***	.03	.12 ***	.01
Economic evaluations	.07 *	.04	.21 ***	.02
n	1,084		2,040	
R ²	.24		.22	

Note: OLS regression. Entries are standardized beta coefficients and standard errors. *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05.

We finally estimated a model of “Yes” vote intention in a referendum on the enlargement of the EU. Using the same predictors as in our previous model we find – by and large – a confirmation of the relative importance of the different predictors in understanding not only opinions, but also behavioral intentions. Table 3 shows the results of a logistic regression model estimating the likelihood of voting “Yes.” Coefficients that are positive and significant indicate a higher probability of voting “Yes.” The results show that anti-immigration sentiments were a strong negative predictor for a “Yes” vote, i.e., fuelling the propensity to vote “No.” Government approval and positive economic evaluations were the most important predictors for understanding a “Yes” vote. Additionally, as was indicated by the bi-variate correlations in Table 1, political sophistication was a positive predictor (though only significant in Denmark). Right political leaning is negatively associated with voting “Yes” in the Netherlands while women were less likely to vote “Yes” in Denmark. Finally age was positively associated with voting “Yes” in Denmark. While the analysis not only enables us to distinguish relevant predictors for understanding a “Yes” vote, the model also allows for a comparison of the relative importance of each predictor. This is listed in the second and fourth column of Table 3.

Given the robustness of our findings that anti-immigration sentiments, economic evaluations and evaluation of government support are consistently the strongest predictors, we model the effects of each of these key predictors on the likelihood of voting “Yes.” In Figures 1-6 we illustrate the relative effects of government approval, economic evaluations, and anti-immigration sentiment for a “Yes” vote. The predicted probabilities of voting “Yes” are calculated by holding all variables constant at their mode (dummy variables) or their mean (remaining variables).

Table 3
Logistic regression analysis of YES vote in referendum on EU enlargement

	Denmark		The Netherlands	
	Beta coefficient	Standard error	Beta coefficient	Standard error
Gender (female)	-.73 ***	.17	.01	.10
Age	.03 ***	.01	.01	.01
Education	.13	.11	-.11	.09
Unemployed / blue collar	-.05	.23	.04	.12
Executive / managers	-.21	.21	-.03	.11
Left ideological preference	-.31	.27	.02	.14
Right ideological preference	-.04	.21	-.42 ***	.12
Anti-immigration attitudes	-.26 ***	.03	-.19 ***	.02
Post-materialist values	-.18	.11	-.05	.05
Political sophistication	.23 ***	.06	-.05	.03
Evaluation incumbent government	.36 ***	.10	.16 **	.06
Economic evaluations	.34 *	.14	.61 ***	.06
n	846		2,041	
Correctly classified	76.5		68.2	
Nagelkerke's pseudo R	.30		.22	

Note: Logistic regression. Entries are standardized beta coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses). *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Figures 1 to 6 demonstrate the likelihood of voting “Yes” by a one-unit increase in the level of government approval, economic evaluations and anti-immigration sentiments respectively. The figures are illustrations of the estimates provided in Table 3 and they show the independent effects of the three most important predicting variables. The anti-immigration scale runs from being pro-immigration to being anti-immigration. The government approval scale runs from an unfavorable evaluation of the incumbent government to a favorable evaluation. The economic evaluation scale runs from pessimistic to optimistic economic evaluations.

In the case of anti-immigration sentiments, respondents expressing skepticism and reluctance towards immigration were more likely to vote “No” than voters generally in favor of or less hesitant towards immigration. The slopes in both countries are relatively steep indicating that any increase in the level of anti-immigration sentiments is associated with a considerable increase in the likelihood of voting “No.” In the case of government approval, respondents expressing more satisfaction with the government were more likely to vote “Yes.” In Denmark this slope is relatively steep, while in the Netherlands the slope is not very steep, indicating that an increase in government approval is related to a modest increase in the likelihood to vote “Yes” in the Netherlands and a considerable increase in the likelihood of voting “Yes” in Denmark. In the case of economic evaluations, this pattern is reversed. In both countries respondents expressing more optimism about the economy were more likely to vote “Yes.” In Denmark, however, this slope is not very steep while in the Netherlands the slope is rather steep. This suggests that an increase in economic evaluations is related to a modest increase in the likelihood to vote “Yes” in the Denmark and a considerable increase in the likelihood of voting “Yes” in the Netherlands. These findings stress the importance and relevance of all predictors.

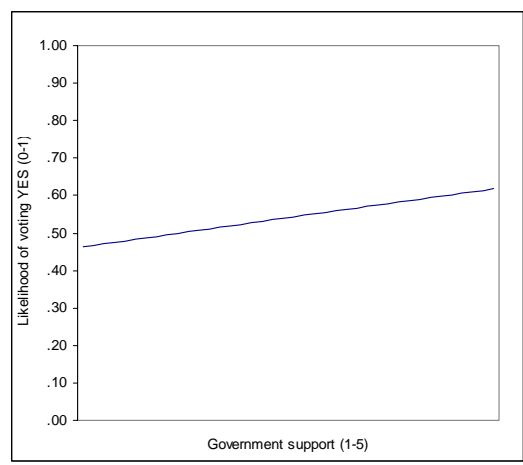
Looking at Figures 1 to 6 we see that in all cases (except economic evaluations in Denmark) the slope crosses the .50 line which is the decisive point for a “Yes” or a “No” vote. This

means that each of these explanations can lead to significant changes in the propensity to vote in favor or against a proposal in a referendum. It is particularly important to note that a slight increase in the level of anti-immigration sentiments decreases the likelihood of voting Yes.

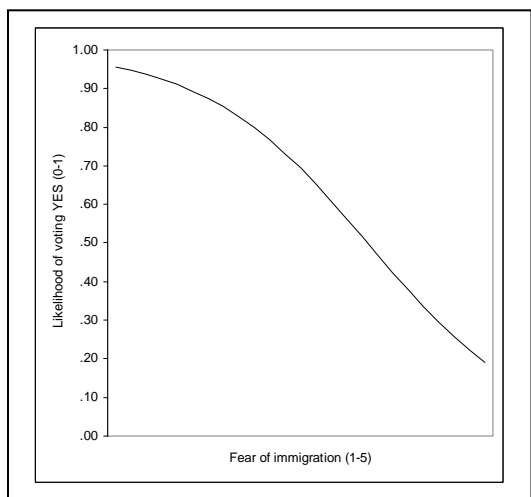
Figures 1-6
Likelihood of voting YES when changing the level of (a) government support,
(b) economic evaluations, or (c) fear of immigration

Netherlands

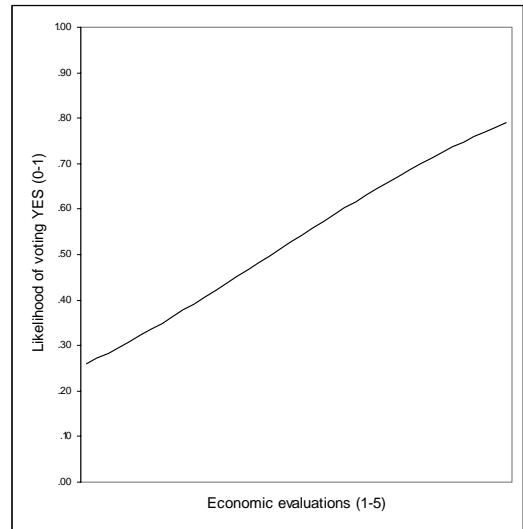
Government evaluation



Fear of immigration

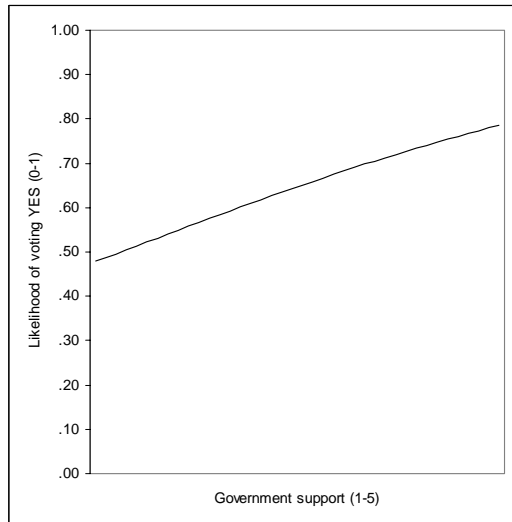


Economic expectations

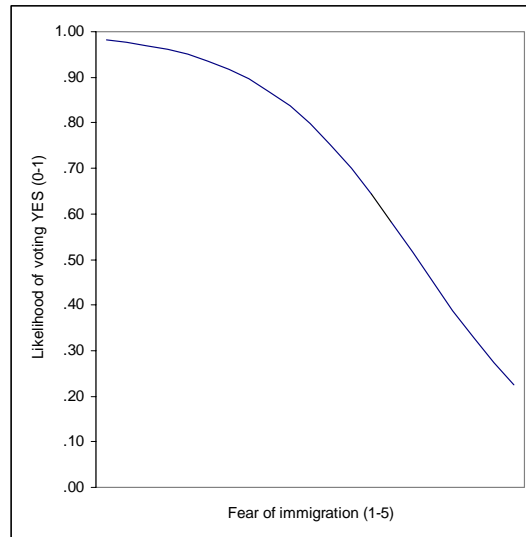


Denmark

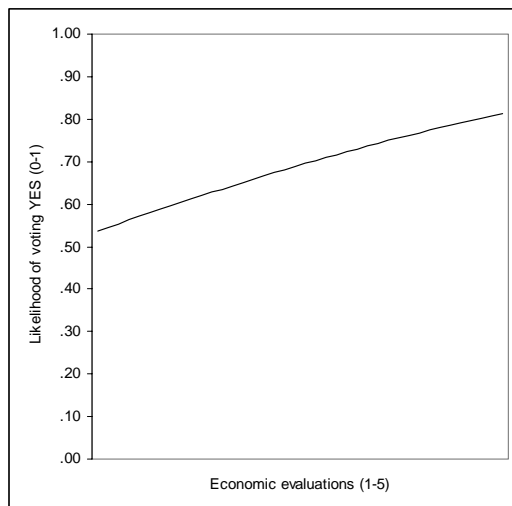
Government evaluation



Fear of immigration



Economic evaluations



Discussion

This study has demonstrated the relevance and substance of our existing knowledge about the forces that drive popular support for European integration. At the bi-variate level all relationships that could be predicted from previous studies were confirmed. Women, individuals with lower levels of education, and low occupational status are less supportive of European integration than men, highly educated and individuals with high occupational status. Left is negatively and right positively associated with support. Post-materialists, individuals high in cognitive mobilization (knowledge about and interest in politics), as well as individuals evaluating the incumbent government and the economy favorably are all associated with higher levels of support. Anti-immigration sentiments are strongly related to lower levels of support.

In the multivariate analysis three explanations emerge as particularly powerful for understanding variation in support for European integration: anti-immigration sentiments, economic evaluations, and support for the government. Public attitudes towards immigration have not yet been explicated as an important predictor for public support for European integration even though immigration and integration have been key topics on both the public and the political agendas in many European countries for a considerable amount of time (e.g., Lubbers et al., 2002).

Economic considerations have been articulated strongly in the literature on public support for the EU (e.g., Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Gabel, 1998). We find partial evidence of this argument in the multivariate analysis. The liberalization of labor markets in the EU is likely to favor individuals with high job skills and high levels of education (Gabel & Palmer, 1995). We find this relationship confirmed in our analysis but education is a stronger predictor than occupational status. Our findings corroborate Anderson (1998) who found economic evaluations to be significantly linked to the level of support for EU membership.

The evaluation of domestic governments as a predictor for support for European integration has been articulated in particular in relation to referendums on European topics (Franklin et al., 1995). The relevance of domestic political considerations for general EU support, however, has also been confirmed in most studies of diffuse support outside the electoral situation (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Gabel, 1998; McLaren 2002). We also find that citizens draw on how the national government is perceived to be performing when expressing support for or opposition against European integration.

From the analysis the question arises why the evaluation of the government is more important than economic evaluations in Denmark while economic evaluations are more important as a predictor than government support in the Netherlands. We explain this by the political situation in the two countries in fall 2002. Denmark was governed by its current Liberal-Conservative coalition government that took office following the general elections of November 2001. This was a stable government and therefore likely to be a point of evaluation for citizens when expressing support for European integration. The Netherlands, however, was governed by the three-party coalition that emerged out of the dramatic May 2002 elections in the aftermath of the assassination of Pim Fortuyn. In November 2002 the government had already announced new general elections in January 2003 and was therefore not perceived to be a powerful acting entity. This de-emphasized the importance of government evaluations as a predictor for support and highlighted economic evaluations. Moreover, Danes are used to voting in referendums on European matters while the Dutch are not. Danes are therefore more acquainted with the situation of having a proposal put to them by their government and therefore more likely to make the connection between referendum votes and government standing. Beyond these explanations stemming from the particular situation in the countries included in the study, we stress the importance of including

measures of both economic evaluations and government support as these are related (as demonstrated by Anderson (1998) and Clarke et al., 2000).

In this study we went beyond explaining public opinion to also assessing vote intention. We modeled a “Yes” vote intention in a referendum on the enlargement of the EU and illustrated how differences in economic evaluations, government support and anti-immigration sentiments can influence the likelihood of voting “Yes” in such a referendum. We emphasize that we do not draw any substantive conclusions about the level of support for the enlargement (as expressed in the share of “yes” votes), but we stress the importance of the underlying dynamics and predictors of the vote. Given the increase in use of national referendums on European issues we take our findings one step further to speculate rather directly about the EU-related referendums, including the wave of upcoming national referendums on the EU Constitution. This exercise is obviously speculative given the absence – at the time of writing – of a final Constitutional text that can be put to a vote. It does however seem likely (by March 2004) that a final text will be ready by June 2004. Several countries (including the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) have committed themselves to holding national referendums to ratify the constitution – some by choice, others given constitutional requirements.

Extrapolating our findings, we predict that in an economic climate which is characterized by recession or economic stagnation, a continuance of the social and political importance of immigration and integration issues, and – partly as a consequence of the former two factors – a maintained electoral popularity for populist anti-immigration parties, the conditions are present for European citizens to reject their constitution in a referendum. Of course this argument is tentative. Citizens may differentiate between supporting the enlargement (the measure used in our study) and endorsing the constitution. However, our analyses clearly show that the same mechanisms are at play when understanding both diffuse support for European integration and specific support for the enlargement. If that is the case, a vote in a national referendum on the constitution is likely to be driven by the same factors.

Sniderman’s et al. (2000) “right-shock model” predicts that, when a society is exposed to an external shock such as economic recession or increasing levels of immigration, anti-immigration sentiments will flourish. This view is supported by studies explaining the rise of right-wing parties in western Europe, which show that high rates of unemployment (Jackman & Volpert, 1996), great numbers of non-Western residents in a country (Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002) or high numbers of asylum seekers (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2001) are contexts which favor these parties. If Sniderman et al.’s (2000) model travels beyond the case study of Italy, there is reason to worry about the level of public support for European integration. The almost Europe-wide economic stagnation in the years 2000-2003 may generate higher levels of anti-immigration sentiments. Such attitudes are, as demonstrated in this study, of key importance for understanding public opinion about European integration, and they are likely to affect public support for European integration negatively.

The literature on right-wing voting suggests that dissatisfaction with the political system and anti-establishment sentiments are important to understand the popularity of these parties (Biliet & de Witte, 1995; Lubbers et al., 2002). Might such sentiments also be of importance to understand variation in support for European integration? This perspective has not been developed yet in the literature, but we suggest this as a path for future research to pursue. Lubbers et al. (2002) found that dissatisfaction with democracy was a strong predictor for voting for a right-wing party as an expression of protest voting. Taken to the European level, we may find that lower levels of satisfaction with the political system are general in nature so that they also affect satisfaction with and support for European integration negatively. Karp et al. (2003) demonstrated that satisfaction with EU democracy is partly being driven by satisfaction with domestic democ-

racy, though this relationship is conditioned by political knowledge so that more knowledgeable individuals rely more on evaluations of EU institutions when assessing democracy in the EU.

In our surveys we included measures of external efficacy, i.e., citizens' level of trust in the responsiveness of the political system. In an additional analysis we find that inefficacious individuals are significantly less likely to support European integration. Adding efficacy to the model presented in this article does not alter the direction and strengths of the relationships presented here. It adds a significant predictor that increases the explanatory value of the model. We do not present this as part of our model given our reliance on efficacy as a proxy variable for assessing political dissatisfaction, but we stress the importance of this for future research.

With our study we have demonstrated the clear implications of understanding public opinion about European integration. Of course an investigation with more variation at the contextual level (in terms of differences in economic conditions and popularity of anti-immigration parties) is desirable. We demonstrated our model in two comparable societies with a similar economic situation and experience with popular anti-immigration parties. We hope this study will spark broader comparative studies to create more variation and power to the explanations. We stress the importance of public support as an inherent requirement of the legitimacy of European integration. This support may be indirect and expressed in surveys data such as the Eurobarometer, but at significant occasions, the opinion of citizens matter in very explicit and direct ways for political decision making, such as in the case of referendums on European integration issues. Considering the importance of anti-immigration sentiments and economic evaluations to insuring a "Yes" vote in a referendum, any government calling a referendum must be very popular to compensate for the negative impact of economic pessimism and anti-immigration sentiments in order to see its proposal endorsed by Europe's citizens.

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Appendix: Overview of independent variables

Gender: Female = 1; male = 0.

Age: in years.

Education: was recoded in to four categories, comparable across the two countries, ranging from 1 (primary school), 2 (high school or equivalent [about 13 years of training]), 3 (BA or three years vocational training or equivalent [16 years]), and 4 (Masters or postgraduate training [19+ years]).

Low occupational status: Recoded dummy variable. Occupation was recoded based on Eurobarometer occupational classifications (see e.g., Eurobarometer 60). Unemployed and blue-collar workers were recoded as 1, otherwise 0.

High occupational status: Recoded dummy variable. Occupation was recoded based on Eurobarometer occupational classifications (see, e.g., Eurobarometer 60). Executive and managerial occupations were recoded as 1, otherwise 0.

Left political ideology: Self placement on left/right scale where 1 equals left and 10 right between 1 and 3 = 1; otherwise = 0.

Right political ideology: Self placement on left-right scale where 1 equals left and 10 right between 7 and 10 = 1; otherwise = 0.

- Political sophistication: A combined measure of political knowledge and political interest. Five questions tapped political knowledge (Question wording: 1. What is the number of Commissioners in the EU Commission [open-ended, correct {20} coded as 1, otherwise as 0]; What is the name of the current President of the European Commission [open-ended, correct {Prodi} coded as 1, otherwise as 0]; What is the name of the Danish OR Dutch Commissioner [open-ended, coded as 1 or 0]; Which country currently holds the Presidency of the EU? [correct answer "Denmark" coded as 1; otherwise coded as 0]. 2. What is the number of countries seeking membership of the EU? [correct answers 10, 12 and 13 coded as 1; otherwise coded 0]. A single item ranging from [1] no to [4] high tapped political interest.) The sophistication index ranges from 1-9. Denmark: $M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.60$; the Netherlands: $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.64$.
- Anti-immigrant sentiments: Five-item index measuring anti-immigrant sentiment. Denmark: $M = 3.43$, $SD = .83$, $\alpha = .83$; the Netherlands: $M = 3.40$, $SD = .78$, $\alpha = .82$. (1) Immigration is good for the labor market; (2) immigrants cause problems in the schools that their children attend; (3) immigrants enrich Danish OR Dutch culture; (4) members of immigration groups misuse Danish OR Dutch social welfare; and (5) their religion is a threat to our way of living. The items were recoded when appropriate to form a scale of anti-immigrant sentiments.
- Post-materialism: Two questions in which the respondent was asked to rate the two most important tasks of the government. The options were (1) Maintain law and order (materialistic); (2) Give citizens a greater say in important government decisions (post-materialism); (3) Control prices (materialism); (4) Protect freedom of expression measures (post-materialism). The ratings were recoded to range from 1 (two materialism choices); 2 (one materialism and one post-materialism choice) to 3 (two post-materialism choices). Denmark: $M = 2.12$, $SD = .82$, the Netherlands: $M = 2.29$, $SD = .98$.
- Evaluation domestic government: A scaled measure ranging from 1 to 5 where 1 equals very bad, 3 neither good nor bad, and 5 very good. Denmark: $M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.08$; the Netherlands: $M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.06$.
- Economic evaluation: A scaled measure ranging from 1 to 5 of economic expectations in the coming 12 months, where 1 equals a lot worse, 3 neither worse nor better and 5 a lot better. Denmark: $M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.08$; the Netherlands: $M = 3.07$, $SD = .82$.