



European Union Politics

DOI: 10.1177/1465116505057817

Volume 6 (4): 445–467

Copyright© 2005

SAGE Publications

London, Thousand Oaks CA,

New Delhi

Nationality and the Preferences of the European Public toward EU Policy-Making

◆ Konstantin Vössing

Ohio State University, USA

ABSTRACT

Analyses of covariance for Eurobarometer data from 1990 to 1994 demonstrate a significant effect of individuals' nationalities on their preferences toward the *scope* and *content* of European Union policy-making, while controlling for sociodemographic characteristics. The observed national differences are more pronounced for the scope than for the content dimension. An investigation of the causal mechanisms underpinning these effects concludes that it can be either national identities or nation-specific constellations of political conflict that mediate the effect of nationality for a particular nation. These novel findings qualify the expectations of the European political space approach concerning the existence of an integrated and somewhat autonomous space of political contestation toward the EU, but the observed decline of cross-national differences over time indicates that at least a trend in this direction exists.

KEY WORDS

- European Union
- European political space
- national identity
- nationality
- public opinion

Introduction

The goal of this article is to investigate national differences in citizens' preferences toward European Union (EU) policy-making; or, in other words, to analyze the causal effect of nationality as an individual-level property on the formation and expression of these preferences. To this end, I estimate the size and the significance of such differences between European nations, and then suggest a framework for explaining the causal mechanisms underpinning the observed effects of nationality more comprehensively.

According to the contributions from the 'European political space' approach,¹ there are two major dimensions of conflict about EU policy-making: the first one refers to the substantive content of European policies and the second one to the scope of influence to be attributed to the EU vis-à-vis the nation-states. In previous research, the effect of nationality on the formation and expression of these preferences has not been studied yet. At the same time, national differences have frequently been investigated with respect to other aspects of EU politics – such as trust in European institutions (Rohrschneider, 2002) or the implications of national variations in democratic attitudes for the prospects of European integration (Fuchs and Klingemann, 2002). Most recently, some contributions have found an effect of national contexts, represented by different types of welfare regimes, economic backgrounds and institutional factors, on support for European integration (Brinegar and Jolly, 2005; Hooghe and Marks, in this issue; Christin, 2005).

The estimation of national variation in public opinion is located at the intersection of these two lines of research. It is concerned with preferences toward both dimensions of European policy-making (scope and content) as the two dependent variables, and it will analyze the effect of the independent variable *nationality* on these preferences. I have conducted analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) for Eurobarometer data from 1990 to 1994 to estimate this effect of nationality, while controlling for a set of sociodemographic variables.²

It will be shown that public opinion on EU policy-making depends significantly on nationality. Even more so than preferences toward the content of EU policy-making, preferences toward the desired scope of EU activities vary strongly across national publics. These novel findings contribute to extending and qualifying the expectations of the 'European political space' approach about the emergence of an integrated EU-wide space of political contestation. Overall, the existence of such a 'political space' cannot yet be observed at the European level. But, at the same time, this study also finds a decline in the importance of nationality and the corresponding cross-national differences over time. This indicates that at least a trend of Europeanization

or an approximation toward the establishment of an integrated European political space can be observed for the time period under investigation.

Based on these findings, an analytical framework is developed that can be employed to explain more comprehensively the causal mechanisms mediating the observed effects of nationality. This framework builds on a third line of research in which national identity is regarded as the relevant factor affecting preferences toward European policy-making (Cederman, 2001). I suggest an alternative way to conceptualize the effect of nationality – as an indicator for nation- and time-specific constellations of political conflict. These constellations represent the configurations of political discourses and background conditions within a particular case at some given point in time. Rather than being triggered by differences in national identity, a particular national public's typical preference concerning EU policy-making might be the result of the characteristics of a particular constellation of political conflict within that country.

In this paper I outline a systematic set of expectations and a measurement strategy that can be applied in further research to adjudicate which of these two causal mechanisms is responsible for mediating the effect of nationality in a particular case and point in time. A preliminary data analysis based on this framework will illustrate the causal mechanisms underpinning the estimated effect of nationality for a selected set of ideal typical cases from the preceding analysis.

Concepts and measurements

The European political space

The two dependent variables of this analysis – public preferences toward the scope of European policy-making and public preferences toward the content of European policy-making – can be regarded as two dimensions of an integrated space of political contestation at the European level. Previous contributions from this 'European political space' perspective have shown the applicability and plausibility of this conception (Hooghe and Marks, 1999; Marks and Steenbergen, 2002; Imig, 2002; Gabel and Hix, 2002; Hooghe et al., 2002; Gabel and Anderson, 2002). They presume that opposing political projects and political contestation at the EU level are to some significant extent autonomous from political conflict within nation-states. Against this background, authors attempt to analyze the positions of competing sets of actors across a European space of political contestation: political parties (Gabel and

Hix, 2002; Hooghe et al., 2002), social movements and contestation in the streets (Imig, 2002) as well as the mass public (Gabel and Anderson, 2002).

It is shown that a conventional left–right scale and a distinction between preferences for and against supranational regulation are the most important ‘issue-set cleavages’ in constituting Europe’s two-dimensional space of political contestation (Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). In this framework, the first of these two dimensions (left vs. right or regulation vs. market) stands for public preferences about the content and direction of European policy-making. The second dimension represents conflict over the scope of European decision-making powers (greater scope of decision-making powers for the EU vs. national supremacy over the European level).

Measuring public preferences toward the scope of EU policy-making

A set of items introduced into the Eurobarometer survey in autumn 1989 can be used to measure the first dependent variable – individuals’ preferences toward the desired scope of European policy-making. In each of these questions, respondents are asked whether they want a specific policy area to be regulated at the national or the European level:

Some people believe that certain areas of policy should be decided by <country’s> government, while other areas of policy should be decided jointly within the European Community. Which of the following areas of policy should be decided by the <National> government, and which should be decided jointly within the European Community?

Over the entire survey series, items relating to 19 different policy areas appear in different Eurobarometer issues at various points in time. In order to obtain a scaled measure for an individual’s preference toward the scope of European policy-making, I created a composite national vs. supranational (European) regulation score from eight of these items that were continuously part of the Eurobarometer from 1990 to 1994. These items cover the following policy areas: science; foreign policy; environmental protection; currency; security and defense; press standards; health and welfare and education.

For each individual respondent, responses to these items were coded as ‘0’ for favoring national regulation and ‘1’ for favoring European regulation of the policy area in question. Adding scores on these items for each individual then results in a composite measure for supranational vs. national regulation where ‘0’ stands for being very strongly in favor of national regulation and ‘8’ for being very strongly in favor of supranational regulation, and the continuum in between these extremes represents the corresponding intermediate positions.

Measuring public preferences toward the content of EU policy-making

The second dependent variable – the ‘desired content or direction of policies on the European level’ – represents the left vs. right or regulation vs. market dimension of the ‘European political space’. Preferences toward this dimension are measured through the left–right self-placement of individuals on a scale from 1 (left) to 10 (right).

This item is not explicitly related to a specific regulatory level; it represents a general disposition toward policy-making that is independent of the polity level to which it can be related post hoc. This measurement is admissible because empirical evidence suggests that citizens conceive of left vs. right primarily in terms of economic policies and issues of economic liberty vs. equality – the left–right dimension of political conflict is routinely used as shorthand for preferences concerning these types of issue (Erikson et al., 2002).

Measuring the independent variable ‘nationality’ and control variables

Nationality as the independent variable is measured as the citizenship of the respondent. It therefore represents the factual belonging of an individual to a particular nation-state, but not necessarily the individual’s self-perception of national belonging. If we were to use a measure for the intensity of someone’s attachment to his or her nation, we would directly measure the extent to which ‘national identity’ influences preferences, thereby precluding the possibility of adjudicating between alternative explanations for the observable effects of nationality.³

In addition to nationality, many other factors obviously contribute to the formation of public opinion on EU policy-making. Theoretical propositions about these determinants of political preferences are already contested for analyses in the domestic context. Moving to the European level complicates matters even more, since the question about the role of the EU vis-à-vis the nation-states enters the equation as a dimension that cross-cuts domestic lines of conflict. This is why the goal of this paper is explicitly not to outline a comprehensive theory for the position of individuals within a ‘European political space’; its theoretical interest focuses exclusively on the causal effect of nationality.

Various control variables are introduced to adjust estimates of the effect of nationality on public preferences in both dimensions of EU policy-making for the variation in preferences that is due to relevant

sociodemographic factors. These controls (age, religiosity, class, education, rural–urban divide and sex) capture important theoretical propositions about the sources of preference formation in the domestic context.⁴ It goes without saying that, in addition to these included controls, there are other causal factors that might have an impact on the phenomena we are interested in. The validity of the causal links between nationality and public opinion to be estimated here therefore quite naturally needs to be scrutinized for the potential effects of alternative sources of preference formation.

Estimating the effect of nationality on public preferences toward European policy-making

Estimation technique

In order to estimate differences between nations, or the effect of nationality as an individual-level property, on both dimensions of public preferences toward European policy-making several analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were conducted for 1990–4.⁵ ANCOVA uncovers the effects of a categorical independent variable on an interval dependent variable. This technique tells us whether groups formed by the independent variable (i.e. nations) are significantly different from one another with respect to the dependent variables in question. Before computing this effect of nationality, ANCOVA takes into account the influence or amount of variance explained by the included controls.

The key statistic in ANCOVA is the *F*-test. It shows whether the means of the groups formed by values of the independent variable (nations) are different enough not to have occurred by chance. The higher the *F*-value, the stronger is the causal power of the particular independent or control variable. If the *F*-test shows that overall the independent variable (nationality) is related to the dependent variable, then multiple comparison tests of significance can be used to explore exactly which value groups (nations) have the most to do with this relationship. These post hoc tests estimate the size and significance of mean differences between the included nations.

Nationality and public preferences toward the scope of European policy-making

An ANCOVA test of inter-respondent effects shows that nationality is a strong and significant factor in explaining individuals' preferences toward the scope of European policy-making, even when accounting for the effects of the included controls. As indicated by the respective sizes of the *F*-values in

Table 1, the effect of nationality trumps the explanatory power of all other variables. Within the set of control variables, age, education, social class and sex have a strong leverage on individuals' preferences too. The rural–urban divide is marginally significant, whereas religiosity is not significant at all.

The statistical significance of these results does not stem only from the comparatively large size of the sample employed. When repeating the analysis for each of the included Eurobarometer issues separately, nationality maintains its significance for all points in time under investigation (see Table 2). Nevertheless, the effect size of nationality is subject to variation over time. Although it is unchallenged as the most relevant factor influencing public preferences in the 'supranational vs. national regulation' domain for the first six time points (autumn 1990–spring 1993), other factors become more influential than nationality in autumn 1993 (education and social class) and spring 1994 (education and age).

The fluctuation over time in the explanatory power of these and the other control variables shows that policy initiatives and/or the behavior of EU actors might sometimes speak to a generational divide, but in other instances they trigger responses based on sex or educational differences: an increase in the explanatory power of one particular control variable is an indicator for an increase in salience of the particular social characteristic for the formation and expression of preferences.

The results of a post hoc test reported in Table 3 show that the strong effect of nationality is not just anchored in the existence of one or two outliers. Sizable and significant differences exist for the vast majority of investigated cases. Nevertheless, some nations are obviously 'more different' than others, and some groups of cases form clusters of similarity: Danish, Irish and British citizens are clearly less in favor of supranational regulation than are their counterparts, but, even within this group, the degrees of 'Euroskepticism' are significantly different from one another. At the other end of the continuum, Italian citizens are clearly 'most different' from all other nationalities in their comparatively strong support for supranational over national regulation.

Nationality and public preferences toward the content of European policy-making

Nationality is also a strong and significant factor in explaining individuals' preferences toward the content of European policy-making (Table 4). The effect size, however, is much greater for the 'supranational vs. national regulation' than for the 'left vs. right' domain: public preferences toward the scope of European policy-making vary much more strongly across nations than do public preferences toward the content of European policy-making. Moreover,

Table 1 The effect of nationality on public preferences concerning the scope of European policy-making (supranational vs. national regulation dimension), 1990–4: Test of inter-respondent effects with ANCOVA

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial eta sq.</i>	<i>Noncentric parameter</i>	<i>Observed power</i>
Corrected model	19240.77	16	1202.55	235.07	0.000	0.067	3761.10	1.00
Intercept	21796.42	1	21796.42	4260.66	0.000	0.076	4260.66	1.00
Age	371.82	1	371.82	72.68	0.000	0.001	72.68	1.00
Religiosity	4.74	1	4.74	0.93	0.336	0.000	0.93	0.16
Education	841.38	1	841.37	164.47	0.000	0.003	164.47	1.00
Rural–urban	30.23	1	30.23	5.91	0.015	0.000	5.91	0.68
Social class	686.73	1	686.73	134.24	0.000	0.003	134.24	1.00
Sex	777.70	1	777.70	152.02	0.000	0.003	152.02	1.00
Nationality	13520.35	10	1352.04	264.29	0.000	0.048	2642.90	1.00
Error	266724.10	52138	5.12					
Total	1347091.00	52155						
Corrected total	285964.88	52154						

Notes: Inter-subject effects from ANCOVA analysis for a cross-section of all the Eurobarometer issues between autumn 1990 and autumn 1994 for which measures of covariates and preferences concerning supranational vs. national regulation are available.

Observed power is computed using $\alpha = 0.05$. $R^2 = 0.067$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.067$).

Dependent variable: composite supranational vs. national regulation score.

Table 2 The effect of nationality on public preferences concerning the scope of European policy-making (supranational vs. national regulation dimension) over time: Results from tests of inter-respondent effects with ANCOVA

	<i>Autumn 1990</i>	<i>Spring 1991</i>	<i>Autumn 1991</i>	<i>Spring 1992</i>	<i>Autumn 1992</i>	<i>Spring 1993</i>	<i>Autumn 1993</i>	<i>Spring 1994</i>
Nationality	46.01***	51.85***	31.03***	44.99***	39.58***	47.26***	26.74***	32.76***
Age	1.12	0.56	2.97	4.78*	13.17***	11.44***	12.51***	48.27***
Religiosity	0.03	0.66	0.05	0.01	0.16	1.50	3.87*	0.14
Education	17.25***	26.16***	19.03***	26.09***	9.07**	16.24***	31.84***	39.06***
Type of town	2.21	0.06	9.26**	1.37	0.04	10.56***	0.95	0.37
Social class	15.04***	4.10*	12.97***	11.16***	24.27***	14.57***	54.72***	21.18***
Sex	8.93**	29.10***	17.88***	14.02***	18.87***	33.25***	20.67***	12.45***
<i>N</i>	6351	6639	6291	6647	6708	6547	6554	6417

Notes: Inter-subject effects from separate ANCOVA analyses for all the Eurobarometer issues between autumn 1990 and autumn 1994 for which measures of covariates and preferences toward supranational vs. national regulation are available.

Cells contain *F*-values from these analyses and indicate the level of significance: *** 0.001; ** 0.01; * 0.05.

Dependent variable: composite supranational vs. national regulation score.

Table 3 The effect of nationality on public preferences concerning the scope of European policy-making (supranational vs. national regulation dimension), 1990–4: Multiple comparisons between nations with ANCOVA, adjusted for the effects of control variables

	FR	BE	NL	DE	IT	DK	IE	GB	GR	ES	PT
FR		0.24***	0.47***	0.03	0.78***	-1.18***	-0.52***	-0.8***	-0.12	0.20**	0.01
BE	-0.24***		0.23**	-0.21***	0.54***	-1.42***	-0.76***	-1.04***	-0.36***	-0.04	-0.23***
NL	-0.47***	-0.23**		-0.44***	0.32***	-1.65***	-0.99***	-1.27***	-0.59***	-0.26***	-0.45***
DE	-0.03	0.21***	0.44***		0.75***	-1.21***	-0.55***	-0.83***	-0.15**	0.18**	-0.02
IT	-0.78***	-0.54***	-0.32***	-0.75***		-1.96***	-1.3***	-1.58***	-0.91***	-0.58***	-0.77***
DK	1.18***	1.42***	1.65***	1.21***	1.96***		0.66***	0.38***	1.06***	1.38***	1.19***
IE	0.52***	0.76***	0.99***	0.55***	1.30***	-0.66***		-0.28***	0.40***	0.73***	0.53***
GB	0.8***	1.04***	1.27***	0.83***	1.58***	-0.38***	0.28***		0.68***	1.0***	0.81***
GR	0.12	0.36***	0.59***	0.15**	0.91***	-1.06***	-0.4***	-0.68***		0.33***	0.14
ES	-0.2**	0.04	0.26***	-0.18**	0.58***	-1.38***	-0.73***	-1.0***	-0.33***		-0.19**
PT	-0.01	0.23***	0.45***	0.02	0.77***	-1.19***	-0.53***	-0.81***	-0.14	0.19**	

Notes: Pairwise comparison of nations' mean differences for the dependent variable 'supranational vs. national regulation score' with ANCOVA, adjusted for multiple comparisons with the Bonferroni procedure.

Table should be read from top to bottom; cells contain the mean difference for 'nation in column minus nation in row'.

Comparison is between the means adjusted for the effects of the included control variables.

The adjusted, or estimated, grand (i.e. European) mean is 4.50 (SE = 0.010).

Significance levels: *** 0.001; ** 0.01, * 0.05

unlike the scope dimension, all the controls except education are significant (and stronger) predictors of European citizens' preferences toward the content of EU policy-making.

The decreasing size of the nationality effect over time that has already been observed for the 'supranational vs. national regulation' dimension can also be found for public preferences toward left and right (Table 5). In this domain, the fluctuation over time is even more pronounced, almost to the extent that we can speak of a truly integrated European political space in spring 1994, when the dependence of left–right placements on nationality falls to a particularly low level.

The results of a post hoc multiple comparison (Table 6) show that the general effect of nationality in this domain, too, is not just the result of some strong deviations of extreme outliers. The vast majority of nations are different from one another with respect to the preferences of their citizens toward the content of European policy-making.

Nevertheless, specific national publics are much 'more different' from one another in their preferences toward the scope of European policy-making than they are with respect to its content: unlike the 'supranational vs. national regulation' domain, there is not a single national public on the left–right dimension that is significantly different from all other nations; we can observe a variety of even more obvious clustering effects.

Cross-national differences in a two-dimensional European political space

The strong and significant effect of nationality on public preferences toward EU policy-making can also be illustrated through the representation of adjusted national means and the resulting cross-national differences shown in Figure 1. The findings presented here qualify the expectation of the 'European political space' approach that an integrated space of political contestation exists at the European level: it is shown that at least it does not exist to the extent that national differences have become obsolete in the formation of preferences. Nevertheless, the declining effect of nationality over time indicates that the Europeanization of preference formation is an ongoing process – at least for the period between 1990 and 1994. This period clearly saw an approximation toward an integrated space of political contestation at the EU level, although not yet its full establishment.

In this process, public preferences toward the content of EU policy-making become more integrated and less dependent on nationality than do preferences toward the desired scope of EU decision-making powers. Europeanization develops more thoroughly in terms of issues reflecting choices that can

Table 4 The effect of nationality on public preferences concerning the content of European policy-making (left vs. right dimension), 1990–4: Test of inter-respondent effects with ANCOVA

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Partial eta sq.</i>	<i>Noncentric parameter</i>	<i>Observed power</i>
Corrected model	15069.20	16	941.83	252.42	0.000	0.074	4038.74	1.00
Intercept	34794.77	1	34794.77	9325.45	0.000	0.155	9325.45	1.00
Age	804.63	1	804.63	215.65	0.000	0.004	215.65	1.00
Religiosity	3682.56	1	3682.56	986.98	0.000	0.019	986.98	1.00
Education	2.92	1	2.92	0.78	0.376	0.000	0.78	0.14
Type of town	442.97	1	442.97	118.72	0.000	0.002	118.72	1.00
Social class	3001.82	1	3001.82	804.53	0.000	0.016	804.53	1.00
Sex	184.31	1	184.31	49.340	0.000	0.001	49.40	1.00
Nationality	6715.06	10	671.51	179.97	0.000	0.034	1799.72	1.00
Error	189878.89	50890	3.73					
Total	1742878.00	50907						
Corrected total	204948.10	50906						

Notes: Inter-subject effects from ANCOVA analysis for a cross-section of all the Eurobarometer issues between autumn 1990 and autumn 1994 for which measures of covariates and left–right preferences are available.

Observed power is computed using $\alpha = 0.05$. $R^2 = 0.074$ (adjusted $R^2 = 0.073$).

Dependent variable: respondent's left–right self-placement.

Table 5 The effect of nationality on public preferences concerning the content of European policy-making (left vs. right dimension) over time: Results from tests of inter-respondent effects with ANCOVA

	<i>Autumn 1990</i>	<i>Spring 1991</i>	<i>Autumn 1991</i>	<i>Spring 1992</i>	<i>Autumn 1992</i>	<i>Spring 1993</i>	<i>Autumn 1993</i>	<i>Spring 1994</i>
Nationality	25.44***	36.15***	43.13***	31.56***	23.22***	18.48***	16.51***	6.45***
Age	30.13***	46.16***	14.94***	27.94***	36.16***	44.87***	10.84***	14.46***
Religiosity	174.67***	146.79***	159.91***	133.35***	104.30***	126.21***	90.45***	56.22***
Education	0.82	0.97	2.56	0.96	2.90	0.01	2.00	0.12
Type of town	11.40***	17.64***	16.21***	25.95***	5.99*	30.04***	13.20***	3.46*
Social class	75.93***	121.15***	156.66***	112.55***	88.59***	80.90***	115.66***	59.56***
Sex	1.56	4.36*	9.13**	4.39**	8.03**	7.61**	5.20*	14.12***
<i>N</i>	6861	6827	6634	6790	6817	6739	6811	3428

Notes: Inter-subject effects from separate ANCOVA analyses for all the Eurobarometer issues between autumn 1990 and autumn 1994 for which measures of covariates and preferences concerning left vs. right are available.

Cells contain *F*-values from these analyses and indicate the level of significance: *** 0.001; ** 0.01; * 0.05.

Dependent variable: respondent's left-right self-placement.

Table 6 The effect of nationality on public preferences concerning the content of European policy-making (left vs. right dimension) 1990–4: Multiple comparisons between nations with ANCOVA, adjusted for the effects of control variables

	FR	BE	NL	DE	IT	DK	IE	GB	GR	ES	PT
FR		0.32***	0.32***	0.26***	-0.64***	0.55***	0.15*	0.47***	0.4***	-0.56***	0.17**
BE	-0.32***		0.00	-0.06	-0.96***	0.23***	-0.17**	0.14	0.08	-0.88***	-0.15*
NL	-0.33***	0.00		-0.06	-0.97***	0.23***	-0.18**	0.14	0.07	-0.89***	-0.15*
DE	-0.26***	0.06	0.06		-0.90***	0.29***	-0.11	0.21***	0.14**	-0.82***	-0.09
IT	0.64***	0.96***	0.97***	0.90***		1.19***	0.79***	1.11***	1.04***	0.08	0.81***
DK	-0.55***	-0.23***	-0.23***	-0.29***	-1.19***		-0.40***	-0.09	-0.16**	-1.12***	-0.38***
IE	-0.15*	0.17**	0.18**	0.11	-0.79***	0.40***		0.32***	0.25***	-0.71***	0.02
GB	-0.47***	-0.14	-0.14	-0.21***	-1.11***	0.09	-0.32***		-0.07	-1.03***	-0.30***
GR	-0.40***	-0.08	-0.07	-0.14**	-1.04***	0.16**	-0.25***	0.07		-0.96***	-0.23***
ES	0.56***	0.88***	0.89***	0.82***	-0.08	1.12***	0.71***	1.03***	0.96***		0.73***
PT	-0.17**	0.15*	0.15*	0.09	-0.81***	0.38***	-0.02	0.30***	0.23***	-0.73***	

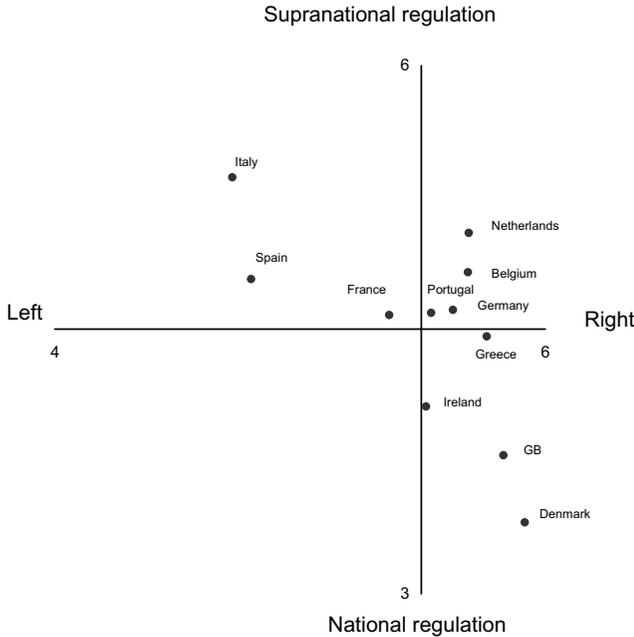
Notes: Table displays pairwise comparison of nations' mean differences on the dependent variable left–right placement with ANCOVA, adjusted for multiple comparisons with the Bonferroni procedure.

Table should be read from top to bottom; cells contain the mean difference for 'nation in column minus nation in row'.

Comparison is between the means adjusted for the effects of the included control variables.

The adjusted, or estimated, grand (i.e. European) mean, is 5.49 (SE = 0.009).

Significance levels: *** 0.001; ** 0.01, * 0.05.



	FR	BE	NL	DE	IT	DK	IE	GB	GR	ES	PT	Europe
Left (1) to right (10)	5.36	5.69	5.69	5.62	4.72	5.92	5.51	5.83	5.76	4.80	5.53	5.49
National (0) to supranational (8)	4.59	4.83	5.05	4.61	5.37	3.40	4.06	3.79	4.46	4.79	4.60	4.50

Figure 1 Mean values for European nations’ public preferences concerning scope and content of European policy-making, 1990–4 (adjusted for effects of included control variables with ANCOVA).

Notes: The cutting point of both dimensions represents the two overall mean values of the European public. All means are adjusted for the effects of the included control variables with ANCOVA.

be found in domestic politics as well, whereas it proceeds more slowly for preferences concerning the role of the European Union itself – this, quite naturally, is a type of conflict that has no equivalent on the domestic level.

Explaining the causal mechanisms that mediate the effect of nationality on public preferences toward EU policy-making

Two ways to understand the effect of nationality

How and why different nations are located where they are within the ‘European political space’ has not yet been investigated: the question about

the sources of national variation still remains open. Because Italy, Germany and Great Britain are ideal-typical examples of the three existing combinations of positions on both dimensions, they were selected to illustrate a framework that can be used to explain the underpinnings of national differences more comprehensively.

The key for approaching this question is to understand that alternative causal mechanisms could be responsible for mediating the observed effects of nationality in different cases. Nationality and the factual way in which it is measured represent a conceptual umbrella for these mechanisms. An empirical investigation into the sources and underpinnings of the effects of nationality must therefore ascertain in which form and shape nationality exercises its influence at some given point in time in a particular nation. This requires outlining specific and theoretically anchored expectations that can be used to adjudicate which particular process it is that makes a given nation 'different'. I suggest that there are two conceptually distinct mechanisms that might mediate the observed effect of nationality on public preferences toward European policy-making in a particular nation: national identities or national constellations of political conflict.

In the first place, nationality can be conceived of as representing the concept of *national identity*, i.e. the constitution of an inclusive in-group perception along the lines of nation-state belonging. In this case, the observed effect of nationality would be rooted in a mechanism that translates certain features of some national identity directly into a corresponding formation and expression of preferences toward European policy-making.

A variety of recent contributions are concerned with the formation of identities and the potential implications of such in-group definitions for European integration. This line of scholarship deals both with the contemporary effects of historically grown national identities and the potential development toward European identities. Most of these contributions are based on a social-psychological underpinning or have an interest in the historical roots of identity formation.⁶ They are based on different theories about identity formation itself as well as the relation between cultural identity on the one hand and political agency and structures on the other. They also make different predictions about whether national identities are likely to persist or to be superseded by post- or pan-national identities.⁷ Despite these differences, they share the view that the relative salience of national identity vs. European identity is an important variable in determining preferences toward European policy-making.

This is particularly true, of course, with respect to the scope of European decision-making powers. Yet, the argument about the impact of national identity might very well be expanded to other domains of political

contestation, such as the left vs. right realm, which I have included as an important second dimension. Both these domains of European policy-making exhibit features of some in-group definition, but they do so at different levels of importance. Whereas a (national) group's particular aggregate position on the left–right continuum represents a relatively specific characteristic of the group, the group's aggregate preference about the desired scope of European policy-making reflects its fundamental self-perception about belonging and membership: whom do I perceive to be part of my group (the nation-state, Europe, my city, the world?), and which polity level should therefore regulate my group's affairs and policies?

However, not all significant national differences in policy preferences need to result from the impact of different national identities. Nationality can also be conceived of as representing an indicator for *nation- and time-specific constellations of political conflict*. Different nation-states at different points in time have different political discourses, based on varying national background conditions. As a consequence, there is variation across nations in how political debates are structured, which issues are salient and which preferences are majoritarian. This variation affects debates about European policy-making, among many other things, and it can explain why, at a particular point in time, public opinion toward European policy-making differs when comparing one nation with another.⁸

Explaining national deviations for Great Britain, Italy and Germany

In which circumstances, then, would we expect a particular national deviation in public preferences toward EU policy-making to be rooted in *national identity* and when would we expect *nation-state specific constellations of political conflict* to be in charge? The most important indicator for the applicability of national identity as the relevant causal mechanism is the stability of preferences over time. National identities do not change over night. They represent a somewhat constant (yet malleable) individual- and aggregate-level property; they are the result of long-standing historical developments and have established themselves as latent dispositions (Cederman, 2001). Preferences rooted in national constellations of political conflict depend on the features of this specific constellation, and are therefore more prone to change, simply because the political constellations themselves are subject to frequent changes.

If the nationality effect represents an impact of national identities on preference formation and expression, we would need to observe only a low degree of aggregate fluctuation in policy preferences. If such a degree of stability of

aggregate preferences over time does not exist, we can conclude that the effect of nationality works through a mechanism that links nation-specific constellations of political conflict to the formation and expression of preferences toward European policy-making.

The stability of preferences or, conversely, the extent to which they fluctuate can be captured through the following 'total fluctuation' measure. From the mean values for each nation at each point in time under investigation and the corresponding total European averages, different degrees of deviation from the European average result for each nation at each point in time. Accordingly, for every nation, there exists one typical (average) deviation from the European mean in both domains (both dependent variables) for the entire period. Moreover, for each year and each nation, a specific value exists for the distance of a nation from its typical deviation from the European mean. Adding up all these distances provides us with a 'total fluctuation' measure. Its values for each nation in a particular domain indicate the degree to which that nation's aggregate preferences fluctuate over time around its typical position in the European political space.⁹

First, with respect to preferences toward the *scope* of European policy-making, the three cases of Great Britain (pro national regulation), Germany (around the European average) and Italy (pro supranational regulation) are located in different positions on the 'supranational vs. national regulation' dimension (Figure 1). At the same time, a computation of 'total fluctuation' values for these cases shows that they feature comparatively low levels of preference fluctuation, all of them lower than the European average (Germany 1.46, Italy 1.37, Great Britain 0.96, European average 1.54; most unstable: Greece 2.16).

One might therefore come to the conclusion that, in all these cases, national deviations result from the impact of national identities. The nature of these identities, however, is different across cases, as indicated by different positions on the 'supranational vs. national regulation' dimension. In the Italian case, national identity is characterized by European openness; in Great Britain by a more inclusive national in-group definition; and in Germany by ambiguousness about the in-group definition. This finding is plausible in that it conforms to an eyeball test regarding the characteristics of the political development of these countries, but, of course, the accumulation of further evidence is required.

In contrast to these three cases, the effects of national constellations of political conflict, indicated by a greater instability of preferences, can be observed for Portugal (total fluctuation 2.09) and Greece (2.16; European average 1.54; most stable: Great Britain 0.96). Both these cases are also located around the European average on the 'supranational vs. national regulation'

dimension (Figure 1). This shows that the existing national constellations of conflict cannot be characterized by a clearly dominating tendency of public opinion toward the scope of EU decision-making.

Secondly, the same logic of analysis can be applied to public preferences toward the *content* of EU policies. Here, degrees of fluctuation are particularly low for Great Britain (total fluctuation 0.61; most unstable: Spain, 1.99; most stable: Ireland, 0.52) and slightly above the European average of 0.84 for Germany (0.92) and Italy (0.94). Accordingly, British citizens' overall tendency to reject economic regulation (see Figure 1) would be the result of more deeply rooted identities rather than the effect of a temporary constellation of political conflict. On the other hand, the position of Italians on the far left end and Germany's comparatively central location would be the result of the specific features of a temporary constellation of political conflict.

Although this might hold true for the observed period of time, it is possible, of course, that unique and potentially short-lived interactions of national constellations of political conflict with public opinion evolve into states of latent dispositions in the long run. In such a case, a prior 'competition for hegemony' that characterizes fluctuating and contested constellations of conflict is transformed into a situation where a majority of the public subscribes to one particular opinion about an issue that used to be more contested before. As a consequence, a previously volatile and fluctuating preference distribution solidifies, becomes more stable and approaches the status of an identity. Applied to the present cases for the time period from 1990 to 1994, the rejection of state intervention in the economy and the embrace of pro-market preferences has already become part and parcel of aggregate or typical British political identities, whereas it is still subject to intense and comparatively volatile political debates in Germany and Italy.

Conclusion

The findings presented here contribute to extending and qualifying the expectations of the 'European political space' approach regarding the relative autonomy from the national level of public preferences toward EU policy-making. It was to be expected that nation-states contribute in a decisive way to the 'official' intra-state bargaining processes at the European level and, in doing so, attempt to retain some of their decision-making powers. In addition, this paper demonstrates that, even within the realm of mass public opinion, nationality and the impact of the nation-state impede the establishment of a truly 'Europeanized' arena of political contestation. Different national identities as well as variation in national constellations of political conflict are

important sources of national deviations from the locus of hypothetically constructed average European preferences.

These deviations, moreover, are not just minor contributing factors to public preferences toward EU policy-making. Nationality has a strong and significant impact – even more so for attitudes toward the scope than the content of European policies. Nevertheless, the importance of national differences did decline between 1990 and 1994. This might have been only a temporary phenomenon, potentially followed by another increase afterwards; but it might also be an indicator of a longer-lasting trend toward the establishment of a comparatively autonomous European political space. Regardless of developments occurring after 1994, the observable decline in national differences shows that at least the potential for a ‘Europeanized’ arena of political conflict exists and that the observable facts for the time period under investigation approximated this constellation.

Notes

I am most indebted to Christa van Wijnbergen for her advice throughout the development of this project. Moreover, I am grateful for comments on earlier versions of this article from four anonymous reviewers as well as from Dodi Ambardi, Russell Davidson, Sam DeCanio, Richard Herrmann, Kerry Hodak, Ryan Kennedy, Kathleen McGraw, Dag Mossige, Eric Russell and Jakub Zielinski.

- 1 Special Issue of *Comparative Political Studies* 35(8), 2002; Marks and Steenbergen (2002); Imig (2002); Gabel and Hix (2002); Gabel and Anderson (2002); Hooghe et al. (2002). For the first systematic outline of this approach, see Hooghe and Marks (1999); see also Imig and Tarrow (2002).
- 2 The data were obtained from the Eurobarometer trend file 1970–99, compiled by the MZES, Mannheim.
- 3 Some countries were excluded from the following analyses: Norway and Switzerland, because they are not EU members; Finland, Sweden and Austria, because they were not part of the Eurobarometer before 1995; Luxembourg and Northern Ireland to enhance the parsimony of the suggested arguments and estimations, at the expense of excluding only two comparatively small groups of people. Since respondents from East Germany were surveyed by Eurobarometer only from autumn 1990 onward, we selected this date as the starting point for our analysis.
- 4 The scholarship on the sources of political preferences has made a variety of theoretical suggestions about the sociodemographic factors that affect preference formation and expression: simple class-voting studies such as Lipset (1960); more sophisticated analyses of the effect of socioeconomic factors on party support (Kitschelt, 1994); the effects of economic security and education on values and value change (Inglehart, 1977); the effects of age on issue preferences (Gergen and Back, 1965); the effects of religion on voting behavior (Lijphart, 1979); or gender variation in policy preferences (Shapiro and Mahajan, 1986).

- 5 A combination of the included control variables is available only for the Eurobarometer issues autumn 1990 to autumn 1994. The lack of continuous availability precludes the temporal extension of the analysis.
- 6 Cederman (2001); Cowles et al. (2001); Eder and Giesen (2001); Klausen and Tilly (1997); Hansen and Waever (2002); Breakwell and Lyons (1996); Mummendey et al. (2001) with an experimental and most explicitly social-psychological study; Goddard et al. (1994); Green (2000) conducts an analysis of Eurobarometer data, investigating the correlates of European and other identities as well as some policy implications. Luedtke (2005) finds a strong effect of national identity on public opinion about immigration policy. Hooghe and Marks (in this issue) investigate the interaction of national institutions and economic calculations with 'communal identities' in shaping public opinion toward European integration.
- 7 An excellent review of different theories and predictions derived from this approach is provided by Cederman (2001).
- 8 Invoking 'national constellations of political conflict' speaks to recent works that investigate the role of different welfare regimes, economic background conditions and institutions ('national context') in support for European integration (Hooghe and Marks, in this issue; Brinegar and Jolly, 2005). From this perspective, static configurations of 'national contexts' contribute to shaping individuals' responses to supranational regulation. This is an interesting starting point for the analysis of 'national contexts'; my reference to 'national constellations of political conflict' recognizes the importance of these factors, but adds a dynamic element to the analysis: 'national contexts' might depend to some significant extent on existing institutional and economic conditions, but, based on this background, different 'constellations of conflict' can evolve over time.
- 9 Let d_{Eur} represent a nation's deviation from the European mean in a particular year and \bar{d}_{Eur} the average deviation for the entire time period under investigation. Then the 'total fluctuation' measure is computed as

$$Total\ fluctuation = \sum |(\bar{d}_{Eur} - d_{Eur})|$$

Note that the values used in the following are based on unadjusted mean values. In the preceding section, adjusted values were used in order to control for the intervening effects of sociodemographic characteristics. In this section, I do not wish to adjust for these effects, simply because they can be a defining feature in both national identities and national constellations of political conflict. Moreover, it needs to be mentioned that the instability of preferences here refers to aggregate fluctuations. Fluctuation of individual preferences cannot be computed because Eurobarometer is a repeated cross-sectional survey and not a true longitudinal analysis.

References

- Breakwell, Glynis M. and Evanthia Lyons (eds) (1996) *Changing European Identities: Social-psychological Analyses of Social Change*. Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann.

- Brinegar, Adam and Seth Jolly (2005) 'Location, Location, Location: National Contextual Factors and Public Support for European Integration', *European Union Politics* 6(2): 155–80.
- Cederman, Lars-Erik (ed.) (2001) *Constructing Europe's Identity: The External Dimension*. London: Lynne Rienner.
- Christin, Thomas (2005) 'Economic and Political Basis of Attitudes towards the EU in Central and East European Countries in the 1990s', *European Union Politics* 6(1): 29–57.
- Cowles, Maria Green, James Caporaso and Thomas Risse (eds) (2001) *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Eder, Klaus and Bernhard Giesen (eds) (2001) *European Citizenship between National Legacies and Postnational Projects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. Mackuen and James A. Stimson (2002) *The Macro Polity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fuchs, Dieter and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (2002) 'Eastward Enlargement of the European Union and the Identity of Europe', *Western European Politics* 25: 19–53.
- Gabel, Matthew J. and Christopher Anderson (2002) 'The Structure of Citizen Attitudes and the European Political Space', *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 893–913.
- Gabel, Matthew and Simon Hix (2002) 'Defining the EU Political Space: An Empirical Study of the European Election Manifestos, 1979–1999', *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 934–64.
- Gergen, Kenneth J. and Kurt W. Back (1965) 'Aging, Time Perspective, and Preferred Solutions to International Conflicts', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 9: 177–86.
- Goddard, Victoria A., Josep R. Llobera and Chris Shore (eds) (1994) *The Anthropology of Europe: Boundaries and Identities in Question*. Providence, RI: Berg.
- Green, David Michael (2000) 'On Being European: The Character and Consequences of European Identity', in Maria Green Cowles and Michael Smith (eds) *The State of the European Union: Risks, Reform, Resistance and Revival – Volume 5*, pp. 292–324. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hansen, Lene and Ole Waever (eds) (2002) *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*. London: Routledge.
- Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks (1999) 'The Making of a Polity: The Struggle over European Integration', in Herbert Kitschelt, Peter Lange, Gary Marks and John D. Stephens (eds) *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism*, pp. 70–100. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hooghe, Liesbet, Gary Marks and Carole J. Wilson (2002) 'Does Left/ Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?', *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 965–89.
- Imig, Doug (2002) 'Contestation in the Streets: European Protest and the Emerging Euro-Polity', *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 914–33.
- Imig, Doug and Sidney Tarrow (eds) (2002) *Contentious Europeans: Protest and Politics in an Emerging Polity*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Inglehart, Ronald (1977) *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Kitschelt, Herbert (1994) *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Klausen, Jytte and Louise A. Tilly (eds) (1997) *European Integration in Social and Historical Perspective: 1850 to the Present*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Lijphart, Arend (1979) 'Religious vs. Linguistic vs. Class Voting: The "Crucial Experiment" of Comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa and Switzerland', *American Political Science Review* 73: 442–58.
- Lipset, Seymour M. (1960) *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Luedtke, Adam (2005) 'European Integration, Public Opinion and Immigration Policy: Testing the Impact of National Identity', *European Union Politics* 6(1): 83–112.
- Marks, Gary and Marco Steenbergen (2002) 'Understanding Political Contestation in the European Union', *Comparative Political Studies* 35: 879–92.
- Mummendey, Amelie, Andreas Klink and Rupert Brown (2001) 'Nationalism and Patriotism: National Identification and Outgroup Rejection', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 40: 159–72.
- Rohrschneider, Robert (2002) 'The Democracy Deficit and Mass Support for an EU-wide Government', *American Journal of Political Science* 46: 463–75.
- Shapiro, Robert Y. and Harpreet Mahajan (1986) 'Gender Differences in Policy Preferences: A Summary of Trends from the 1960s to the 1980s', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50: 42–61.

About the author

Konstantin Vössing is a doctoral candidate and graduate teaching associate in the Department of Political Science, The Ohio State University, 154 North Oval Mall, 2140 Derby Hall, Columbus, Ohio 43201, USA.

Fax: +1 614 292 1146

E-mail: vossing.1@osu.edu
