The Limits of Transnationalism

Collective Identities and EU Integration

Markus Thiel
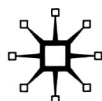
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Preface

This book's cover, showing a stele commemorating the Maastricht Treaty, could in many ways be interpreted as a gravestone as much as a celebratory marker; despite the treaty's wide-ranging political implications, the effects on transnational identity creation were limited and its three pillar structure has been laid to rest with the superseding Lisbon Treaty. Based on post-Maastricht integration, this book has been the result of a long-term interest in issues of identity, transnational politics, and, resulting from my German background, an ambiguous fascination with nationalism. Recognizing that there is more to politics than what is expressed at the polling stations, through governmental decision making or purely domestic considerations, this book is an attempt at deciphering the complex interrelationships between domestic societies, national political cultures, and EU integration policies. The chosen observation span covers the years 1993–2005, which experienced the completion of the single market, the implementation of the euro currency, the establishment of the Common Foreign & Security Policy, and a constitutional debate that ultimately fell with the its public rejection in France and the Netherlands in 2005. The repercussions of these measures on the larger European public are the central focus of this work. Collective political identities are a complex subject, so this work attempts to provide approximate determinants through the application of multiple methods in specific domestic contexts. Despite the somewhat sobering results, it is my hope that EU leaders and the wider public will utilize the unique transnational opportunities that evolve through policy integration, critical junctures, and structural shifts, rather than to regress into an isolated form of Eurocentrism.

through colleagues and coworkers at FIU's Department of Politics and International Relations. My gratitude goes also to the dedicated editors at Palgrave, Robyn Curtis and Farideh Koohi-Kamali, and the supplier for the cover image, Alberto Tobias.

Lastly, I'd like to dedicate this book to my father, who passed away too early.

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

The consolidation of the European Union (EU), a deliberate attempt to integrate European states—among them many former enemies—into an intricate network of common trade, social, cultural, and other policies, represents one of the most important geopolitical events of the twentieth century. Starting out as a predominantly economic organization resulting from the aftermath of the Second World War, over the years the Union's institutions received significant political powers from its member states and in turn created a supranational model of governance for Europeans. As a result, EU citizens today have many commonalities: a political economy in which state and market closely interact, a cultural tradition that acknowledges common historical determinants, border-crossing governance institutions, a broad humanist philosophy, and a tradition of generally accepted welfare politics.

Constructed upon these cooperative features, the emergence of transnational cohesiveness and solidarity in the form of some sort of a common European identity is often postulated in public spheres and academic circles (Delanty, 1996; Habermas, 2001; Hermann et al., 2004; Katzenstein and Checkel, 2009). However, despite ongoing deepening of joint policies, widening in membership, and convergence in institutions, a remarkable dichotomy has become visible between the acceleration of European integrative measures, most notably through the Maastricht Treaty provisions creating a political Union in 1993, and a contradictory resurgence of nationalist and outright Euro-skeptic attitudes. While the EU attempts to push ahead with economic and political integration, developments such as the derailing of the Union's

constitutionalization process, the heated discussion over the accession of Turkey, the disunity during the Iraq war, or the blame shifting resulting from the eurozone crisis are evidence of the volatile political standing of the Union in the member states. Thus, the question arises, what effects have European integration had on the collective identities of Europeans?

Much of the literature in the social sciences calls the object of this inquiry, for lack of a better term, "European identity." While research about the existence of some form of pan-European identity, based on historical, political, and other commonalities, exists in abundance, there is no consensus about its meaning or content, with some viewing it as a culturally based attachment and others allowing for an instrumental or civic component as well (see Chapter 2). I propose using the term "transnational" identity instead, as it is more exact in its description of an identity extension involving boundary-crossing relations and actors (Keohane and Nye, 1971) to a certain degree, rather than the suggestive completeness of European integration implied in the term "European identity." Supranationality, in contrast, implies the existence of hierarchical relationships among social actors. Transnational relations also involve various types of nonstate actors and discourses (Hurrelmann, 2009, Thiel, 2009, Risse, 1995), which are reflected here in the examination of the press discourse (see Chapter 6) as well as other nonstate agents (Chapter 3). Transnational agents are, according to most definitions, nongovernmental actors, which thus are distinct from the government-steered integration institutions in the EU. Yet, the EU created, by way of its policies, a transnational political space in the Union (Kaiser and Starie, 2005), and the acquisition of such a complementary identity can be traced to the realms of elite and mass publics, influenced by a variety of societal agents such as media outlets, nongovernmental organizations, and other civil society actors (Wessler et al., 2008). Transnationalism, then, can be distinguished according to its agent-based procedural character as well as its constituent characteristics, and thus the term provides us with a more succinct description of the research object in terms of process and shape. While this book concentrates on the social representations of transnationalism in identitive terms, it adds to the under-researched topic of the EU as a transnational polity as well.

In its attempt to qualify such developments among the European citizenry, this work draws heavily on responses toward EU policy implementation of the 1990s. Based on the coinciding realization of the single market in 1992, further common policies agreed upon in the Maastricht Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) include, among others, the European Monetary Union with the euro as currency, the introduction of a common foreign and security policy, and the creation of a political

union, which eventually led to the development of a draft constitution (Duff, 1994). Formally known as the Treaty on European Union, the Maastricht Treaty was designed as a realization of an "ever closer Union among the peoples of Europe" (TEU 2006, Preamble) and replaced the European Economic Community with the three-pillar structure separating economic, foreign, and home affairs in the EU. Thus, the treaty not only fundamentally changed the configuration of political cooperation of the member states, but also added significant integration goals for years to come, thereby in effect establishing a critical juncture in the development of European integration from a customs union toward a political one (Ross, 1995). Newer research has picked up on such junctures as particularly pronounced challenges to existing identities (Risse, 2010). The completion of the single market, the implementation of the economic and monetary union, and the addition of a common defense identity stood beside other goals such as the strengthening of a largely nominal European citizenship; voluntary collaboration in the newly created homeland security sector, "Justice and Home Affairs"; and additional objectives intended to forge a more strongly integrated political Europe.

Reminiscent of the recent constitutional period, a treaty with so many wide-reaching implications evoked a substantial level of discussion across Europe and, in some cases, considerable protest in the early 1990s. Not only traditionally Euro-skeptic countries worried about their national autonomy, as the difficult treaty ratification process, including the close French referendum and the Danish rejection in 1992, has shown. Politicians and academics alike noted the increasingly popular discontent and the drop in support for European integration, aptly titled "post-Maastricht blues" (Eichenberg, 2003). Previously, policy making in the EU had limited impact on the daily lives of the citizens, therefore no real debate about Brussels politics in public spheres and media discourses occurred. But through the politicization of EU policies and treaties in the past decade and a half, this permissive consensus has given way to a "constraining dissensus" (Hooghe and Marks, 2006), indicating a more contentious form of national as well as transnational engagement by multiple actors in the Union.

The debacle surrounding the Maastricht Treaty's implications and ratifications led to a rapid decline in public trust immediately thereafter, and was viewed by some theorists as a sign of continuously augmented disenchantment with the EU more generally, however without noticing that in a long-term perspective, public opinion values in the late 1990s recovered again. Aggregate data, then, supply us with a range of attitudinal values, which in this work will be further discerned through qualitative explorations of individual views and surrounding media discourses so as to be

differentiated according to the compatibility of national political cultures with the goals of overall EU integration.

While some scholars explain populist and nationalist reactions as resulting from the perceived loss of sovereignty (Smith, 1992), others contest this view, pointing to globalization and specifically, Europeanization, of the EU member states and its citizens' identities (Risse, 2010; Cowles et al., 2001). Such transformations, in turn, produced an increasing demand for legitimacy of European integration policies (DeBardeleben and Hurrelmann, 2007). Following this paradoxical logic, several questions arise: Has the at times conflicting integration process advanced transnational identification with the EU, in addition to existing national, regional, and local identities, or has it led to increased protective nationalism? Can a transnational political identity be located in the realms of public opinion and mass media of EU member states? Is there an "identity spillover" evolving that can be attributed to a combination of neofunctionalist processes of integration, based on cultural commonalities and informed by path-dependent consensus of citizens to EU policies? Finally, is the future of the Union dependent on a certain degree of cohesiveness to retain common reference points as well as popular support?

The case studies of the United Kingdom (UK), Ireland, and Germany show how integrative politics, their communication, and reception have not only produced popular counterreactions in some member states, but more important, have also contributed significantly to a debate about European integration, thereby changing the sociopolitical identitive positioning of citizens toward their nation and extending it toward the EU. This process, in turn, necessitates a reflection on the extent to which the EU polity can branch out without being torn apart by conflicting interests and identities.

The research conducted for this book bears evidence that significant parts of the population of some states have indeed developed a form of protective nationalism, as in the case of the UK, while others have strengthened their transnational identification—however, only to the extent that national political cultures are compatible with EU integration and fellow citizens are considered "European"—as occurred in Germany and Ireland. To clarify, in addition to instrumental support aiming predominantly at the material benefits of membership, a transnational identification with the EU based on a pan-European cultural identity reflects the tension with preexisting national identities, as applied in the theoretical framework of this book (see Chapter 2). The remaining sections of this chapter present four research statements addressing the complex relationship between collective identities and EU integration, then conceptualize the measured variables and qualify the case studies. Lastly, the political and academic

relevance of this endeavor is highlighted and the following chapters are previewed.

Four Hypotheses Regarding Europe's Transnationalism

Early studies of the impact of European integration on its citizens followed initially a neofunctional or intergovernmental line of investigation favoring either a projected incremental gain in supranational power of the EU or a static, government-steered rejection of such repercussions. More recently these assumptions matured to constructivist explorations recognizing the social structure and role of ideas, interests, and identities. Such constructivist research developed into a continuously expanding field over the past decade, consisting of three major avenues: counting identities, exploring the impact of identity politics, and analyzing the EU's "selling" of identities (Trenz, 2009). The hypotheses spelled out below touch on all three of these implications and thus produce more robust knowledge advancing the research on transnational European identities beyond simply attesting or contesting its existence. While the first three locate the current status quo of transnational identities in the case countries through empirical methods, the last hypothesis spells out important ramifications for the future configuration of EU policies:

H1: For the majority of EU citizens, EU integration is not perceived as a threat to national identity.

Public disaffection with the EU often leads to a viewpoint claiming national identities under threat from European integration—a suggestion coming mainly from opponents of the project. The first hypothesis thus postulates that EU integration is not perceived as a threat to the majority of EU citizens. While there may be parts of the population in various member states who feel that the augmented interference in domestic politics is detrimental to national culture and identity, in particular where fundamental policies such as currency or the military are concerned, the majority of EU citizens do not suspect that Brussels endangers the existence of their national identity.

In the following analyses, I therefore assume that in the EU's survey instrument, Eurobarometer, which reports on the meaning of the EU for its citizens, the "fear of losing national identity" will not be an important issue, nor will there be a significant increase in people perceiving their national identity as under threat. Furthermore, in the interview chapter,

no indication is given that national identity is perceived as under siege by European integration. This should also be reflected in the media discourse of the case countries, with the likely exception of the UK, included as an outlier case in this study. Citizens in the EU naturally relate more closely to their national identity than to their supranational European one. However, this fact should not be conflated with an emerging reactive nationalism sweeping through Europe.

H2: Post-Maastricht measures, however, did not contribute significantly to a transnational identity in the EU, as EU policy implementation interacts varyingly with and is conditioned upon national political cultures and domestic discourses, resulting in either bounded transnationalism or protective nationalism.

This research statement holds that recent European integration, while having had an identity-altering effect on the collective identities of most EU citizens, did not produce a significantly increased degree of transnational identification with the EU. The Union's augmented political and regulatory activity, depending on the domestic reception in each case, resulted either in extended transnationalism or protective nationalism. The research design, based on time series observation, interviews, and print media analyses, enables one to explore how integrative measures in the Union changed the way people feel about their civic-political identity and how they connect it with the wider European cultural one. Few researchers have actually analyzed this process in a comprehensive manner, combining mixed analysis methods (Díez-Medrano, 2003).

The empirics employed here intend to show that functional integration, which is deemed to be as important for influencing collective transnational identification as endogenous cultural and/or external structural factors, has not produced a cohesive, unifying identity. The following chapters present evidence of the existence of varying degrees of transnational identification, colored by national sociocultural lenses. The variance in the results, then, does not allow for a conclusive statement about the congruent evolution of a pan-European identity based on integration policies. With regard to this hypothesis, I therefore expect dissimilar results in the three case countries displaying divergent support levels for policies as well as for European transnationalism. The former represent the independent policy variables, while the latter stands for the dependent, evolving one. The assumption put forth is that in countries such as Germany or Ireland, the data will show a limited degree of transnational attitudes as expressed in Eurobarometer data, the interviews, or the print coverage (what I term "bounded transnationalism"), while the British sample will not contain such favorable results ("protective nationalism").

More specifically, I propose that the support values and the extent of feeling European do not necessarily converge in all three case countries; rather, each individual state reacts to the introduction of integration policies primarily in line with its "sticky" national identity as well as its publicly deliberated expectations, norms, and attitudes—the domestic political culture—and only partially overlaps with other EU member states to the extent that the goals of integration are compatible with said culture and identity. Research has shown that questions of identity and legitimacy are essential in assessing political cultures of political systems (Majone, 2009), that a public culture discursively resonates with shared inclinations and sensibilities (Wessler, 2008), and that identification with Europe is in large part dependent on the national context as an extension of its historically and domestically assumed role, and thus not one European, but many national European identities exist in EU member states (Diez-Medrano, 2003; Caporaso, Cowles, and Risse, 2001). The covariational relationship is changing, however, in that the EU as a policy actor gained importance in relation to the citizens over the past years. As a result, domestic discourse in national public spheres, most visibly in the mass media, increasingly becomes Europeanized and thus, depending on the context in which the EU is perceived, either becomes less colored by previously existing viewpoints or, as a counterreaction, intensifies its projection of protective nationalist ambitions.

A further examination will focus on the question of how much identification with the EU is dependent on the constituent national characteristics expressed by history, elites, and nonstate actors, etc. Chapter 3 details the national experiences of the sample countries as they play out in the historical processes of national-identity formation and European integration. Less rigid than national culture, domestic media discourse across EU member states tends to converge slowly as a result of EU structural activity and other leveling factors, such as interdependence or common threat assessments in the international system. Evidence of this change in media portrayal can be found in the print analysis chapter, which observes the changing discourse of the press over the observation period 1993 to 2005.

H3: (Print) media influences public opinion and thus reflects as well as constructs people's identification with the EU—to the extent that national culture and discourse allow it.

Of all the instruments of nation building available, such as education, military conscription, or the use of different media, print media traditionally had the most significant impact upon the domestic development of public opinion (Anderson, 1991), along with television and radio programs joining in at a later time. The latter catalysts are conspicuously absent in European

integration affairs, thus leaving EU portrayal largely to the member-state governments and the publishing houses. Public opinion is constituted by and manipulated through the information that is conveyed to the public. The way in which major newspapers frame and instrumentalize the EU shapes the attitudes of opinion makers and ordinary citizens alike, and thus contributes to a positive or rather negative stance toward belonging to the EU. In view of the extensive publishing markets in Europe, scholars have stated that "we find our information, and form our opinions, by consulting, using and interacting with one of the most sophisticated systems of communications in the world" (Anderson and Weymouth, 1999: 2). Those information channels represented through the mass media not only reflect public thought, but also set new agendas and may change the thematic frame from nationally restricted identities to expansive transnational perceptions (Bruter, 2005).

Tied to the communication model described above and expanded in the print analysis in Chapter 6 is the argument that a rudimentary European public sphere is emerging, whose salience in EU matters increases on a domestic level while simultaneously establishing a common frame of reference on a transnational level (Risse, 2010). Systems theory, a useful tool in the field of communication research, calls the process of action and reaction, of sending and receiving the "feedback loop," referring to the reactions of the mass public to framed political events, which then influence the orientations of the acting elites and, if passed on, of the general public. Therefore, the inclusion of print media content analysis is deemed sensible and feasible for the research of identity-formation processes, particularly as market-dominating newspapers that are widely read and discussed in the case countries are chosen.

A comparison of the themes mentioned as EU priorities in the in-depth interviews with the ones articulated in the press and the Eurobarometer data makes the reciprocity and congruence of this discourse apparent, as asserted by Díez-Medrano: "The existence of a permanent dialogue between journalists and the rest of the population with respect to European integration is reflected in the strong similarity between their images of European integration and European institutions" (Díez-Medrano, 2003: 110). Specific national perceptions will be taken into account, but instead of examining how an individual's characteristics correspond to a view on European integration—this aspect has been researched sufficiently in the field—I will concentrate on the importance that collectives and discourses in different domestic cultures attribute to post-Maastricht policies. Exploring how societies frame European integration and how "Europe" is represented through social agents, such as politicians or the media, provides researchers with a new understanding for international differences,

e.g., why relatively similar countries like Germany and the UK, with respect to size and socioeconomic structure, show significantly different levels of support (Díez-Medrano, 2003). In the print media analysis, the treatment of EU issues as represented in the four integration variables in national press organs is examined, and then similarities and differences in timing and content of these affairs are noted. If the hypothesis is true that a convergence of views about the EU plays out differently in the member states based upon national culture and media discourse, I expect different degrees of transnational identity reflected in the treatment of the EU. Conclusively, qualitatively improved or deteriorated coverage of the EU parallel to the development of public opinion in the individual member states should be detectable, as well as a possible synchronicity of topic treatments across countries.

H4: In the post-Maastricht era, many EU citizens support a particularistic and possibly exclusionary conception of European transnationalism as compared to a universalistic, inclusive one.

In parts of the academic literature and in actual EU policy implementation, a rather particularistic notion of being European is advanced based on common policies, joint legal instruments, and particular socioeconomic as well as historical circumstances. At the same time, as described in the next chapter, many social theorists call for a more inclusive and universalistic, cosmopolitan conception of Europeanness to avoid a hypernationalistic "Fortress Europe." This hypothesis supports the view that a potentially exclusionary form of transnational identity is evolving in line with sociopsychological explanations and an EU identity construction of a particularistic European kind based on common political and cultural references.

The results of the analyses contain evidence that, in fact, the concept of a European identity evolves from the EU's cultural references to Europe and the homogenizing effects of EU integration policies. Thus, I anticipate respondents in the interviews to express particularistic ethnocentric statements when asked about the relationship among Europeans and between Europeans and non-Europeans that point to common (cultural) characteristics rather than to a belonging based upon attainment of civic values or adherence to common policies. In addition, a validation of this hypothesis should be reflected in the press coverage of the case countries, ranging from topics such as immigration to the discussion of enlargement candidates and, more generally, the treatment of EU affairs in a unitary manner. Depending on the extent of civic identity existing in the three countries, the treatment of these issues will indicate an exclusionary conception of European identity. The concluding chapter, then, notes the repercussions

stemming from these results and cautions against idealistic expectations for European transnational identification.

How to Measure Identities? The Main Variables Operationalized

The Dependent Variable

As the overall aim of this work is to explore the emergence of various forms of transnational collective identification, this referent object will be the dependent variable. Studies on the existence of a common sociohistorical heritage and a corresponding cultural pan-European identity have been conducted exhaustively, often with an interdisciplinary and static focus. The next chapter makes evident the need for further research into the relatively novel procedural aspects of transnational identification as initiated by EU integration policies. Until now only few researchers, such as Richard Herrmann, Thomas Risse, and Michael Bruter (Herrmann et al., 2005; Bruter, 2003), have advanced research on the civic component of such an identity. Considering the complex characteristics of identitive constructs and the ambiguous part that the EU as transmitter of this collective identity plays—in creating a pan-European one as well as fostering national (counter)narratives—the relatively short existence of the Union compared to the long history of European nation states makes this research topic challenging but timely.

As defined more specifically in the following theoretical chapter, civic aspects as part of a transnational European identification are based upon the citizen's allegiance to democratic institutions and a system of rights and rules provided through EU as well as national governance. It should be distinguished from a cultural pan-European identity, which is largely based on historical-cultural commonalities and a shared heritage of common experiences and contacts. For the purpose of this project, then, a European transnational identity as a dependent variable needs to be purposefully operationalized in the research design. In the Eurobarometer analyses, it will be measured quantitatively as the percentage of people claiming to feel European to some extent (in the so-called Moreno scale question juxtaposing it to national allegiance), hence reflecting diffuse support and identification with the EU. Coming from a secondary data source, the chosen indicator is investigated by the EU's Eurobarometer survey, thereby establishing a fundamental cognitive link between the Union and the citizen's