International challenges and the appeal of European integration – Evidence from a survey experiment in Spain

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Abstract

This paper investigates whether international challenges affect citizens’ support for further European integration. European integration has often been both justified and explained by reference to Europeans’ desire to unite against external threats. We set out to test that common claim. Our main independent variable, international challenges, concerns phenomena which originate outside the European Union (EU), and which may reasonably be expected to affect Europeans, by making them more aware of the likely benefits of integration. We focus on economic cooperation agreements in other parts of the world, international military alliances, and global terrorist threats. Our dependent variables measure different aspects of support for European integration: support for the delegation of new powers to supranational institutions; support for more redistribution of wealth at the level of the EU; support for the creation of a genuine European police force; support for further integration in foreign policy; and support for the direct election of an EU president. Conducting a survey experiment with Spanish voting-age citizens, assigning different subgroups different treatments in the form of various inter, we look both at the impact of some individual level variables (such as age, education, political preferences, number of languages spoken) on support for European integration and at the effect yielded by reminding voters of different challenges. Contrarily to the initial
expectations, the results do not show a significant effect of international challenges on support for European integration, suggesting that the citizens’ preferences are more influenced by personal attitudes and political preferences.

1. INTRODUCTION

Does increased awareness of international problems make Europeans more, less, or equally favourable to European integration? To answer that question, we investigate the effect of increased exposure to information about different kinds of “foreign” problems on Europeans citizens’ attitude towards European integration. Our main independent variable, international challenges, concerns phenomena which originate outside the European Union (EU), and which may reasonably be expected to affect Europeans, but which have different emotional loads. We focus on economic cooperation agreements in other parts of the world (low emotional load), international military alliances (medium emotional load), and global terrorist threats (high emotional load). Our dependent variables all measure different aspects of support for European integration: support for the delegation of new powers to supranational institutions; support for more redistribution of wealth at the level of the EU; support for the creation of a genuine European police force; support for a more integrated EU foreign policy; and support for the direct election of an EU president.

In principle, we should expect to find a strong positive effect of the exposure to all of our international challenges on support for integrative institutions. International challenges of all sorts have always figured high in the discourse of pro-integration elites. As historian Alan Milward has documented, in the 1950s pro-Europeans made use of the geopolitical discourse to promote what may really have been mostly a state-centric economic enterprise (Milward 1992). In the 1960s, the British Conservative party seems to have converted to a pro-integration stance largely because of the American “betrayal” during the Suez crisis (Fontana and Parsons 2015: 92). Around 1980, at the peak of the Cold war, a West German diplomat posted in Brussels and interviewed by John Palmer in 1981 declared, “If this European Community was situated on the moon, it would fall apart in next to no time. It is just our mistrust of the outside world which holds everything together” (The Spectator 04/04/1981). For the 1980s and 1990s, Vivianne Schmidt has shown that Presidents Mitterrand and Chirac both projected European integration as “a
shield against globalization” (Schmidt 2007). And today, the European Commission often seeks to legitimize new proposals arguing that “common European responses are needed to common challenges” (European Commission 2014; see also Aznar 2013: chapter 1; Blair 2011: 502; Jospin 2002; Schröder 2006: 236). At the peak of the Syrian refugee crisis, and as a response to it, President Hollande and Chancellor Merkel tweeted “We need not less Europe, but more Europe, otherwise we will see the end of Europe.” (Deutsche Welle 2015)

Arguments about the need to integrate in order to better deal with international challenges are also used to persuade voters to support the EU. According to Sir Nigel Sheinwald, former British Permanent Representative to the EU, former Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the United States, and a leader of the “British Influence” campaign, speaking on Channel 4 News on May 13, 2013,

“If we [the UK] left the European Union, we would be negotiating trade deals by ourselves; we would not be part of a powerful 500-million economic block able to stand up to India, China, the United States and the rest. That is one of the strongest reasons for questioning whether there is a viable economic future for the UK outside the EU.”

There is no shortage of academics arguing along the same lines. Among economists, Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore argued that when “European integration started in the 1950s, [...] security considerations were an important factor” (2003: 203). According to Paul Welfens, “the peoples of European member states have clear expectations from the EU: it must help them to efficiently confront the challenges of globalization” (Welfens 2008: 9). And, for former European Central Bank chief economist Otmar Issing, two reasons why Europeans did well in creating the single currency are (a) their desire for protection against the foreign exchange market repercussions of exogenous shocks; and (b) the benefits that come from having an international reserve currency (Issing 2008: 78, 146, 237). Among political scientists, too, Roland Axtmann (1998), Andrew Moravcsik and Frank Schimmelfennig (2009: 73), John Newhouse (1997), Nicola Verola (2003) and numerous others have argued that the negative externalities produced by third countries’ actions lead (or should lead) to a greater delegation of powers to the EU. As Newhouse put it, “the nation-state is too big to run everyday life and too small to manage international affairs” (Newhouse 2007: 67, our emphasis).
But how does that work exactly? Are international challenges relevant because European citizens perceive them as such, or because (some) elites do so? And are some international challenges more relevant than others? To shed more light on the mechanisms which link the presumed cause to its effect, we conducted a survey experiment with Spanish voting-age respondents. At the pre-treatment phase, we randomly assigned respondents to four different treatment groups, and asked them about their preferences regarding different institutional and policy aspects of the EU, as well as several sociodemographic questions. At the treatment phase, we exposed respondents to three different questions about international challenges with different emotional charges – one economic, one military, and one security challenge (a fourth group served as a control group, receiving no question). Finally, at the post-treatment phase, we measured the dependent variables again, for all groups. Since, by design, the questions about world events were the only way the groups differed, any observed differences in the dependent variables can be attributed to them. On that basis, we calculated the difference between the pre-treatment and the post-treatment values, and ran ordered logistic regressions in order to identify the potential causes of that difference.

Our results do not show a clear impact of international challenges on support for European integration, while personal attitudes (namely what we define as “internationally-defined preferences”) and left-right positioning better explain variation in our dependent variables. The only notable effect related to the treatment we administer in the survey experiment is that of reinforcing the respondents’ support for some instances of integration.

Our findings are relevant for at least two bodies of literature. First, we make some progress towards elucidating the issue of whether students of EU politics should incorporate in their models of public opinion variables derived from the “second image reversed” theory (Gourevitch 1978). Like the literature on EU policy-making, that on EU public opinion usually focuses only on domestic, national, and individual-level explanations. The theoretical thrust in that literature usually comes from the dichotomy opposing “irrational” factors (i.e. identity) to more “rational” ones (economic interests) (e.g. Brinegar and Jolly 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Kuhn et al. 2014; Schoen 2008). In a recent volume, however, Oriol Costa and Knud-Erik Jørgensen argue that international factors exert an appreciable effect on the Brussels policy-making machinery (Costa and Jørgensen 2012; see also Costa 2008). Given that EU institutions are
constrained by public opinion (Bølstad 2015; Gabel 1998; Hooghe and Marks 2009), the question of whether international challenges affect integration as well becomes central (see also Renshon and Lerner 2012 on the role of emotions in foreign policy). Our negative answer lends overall support to the way the public opinion literature has developed.

Second, ours’ is an empirical application of the theoretical literature on the size of nations (Alesina and Spolaore 2003; Wittman 2000). We conceive of the choice between retaining national sovereignty and delegating more powers to the EU as a choice between different possible sizes of one’s state. International challenges can in principle affect that choice by augmenting the expected value of public goods, which can be more efficiently produced by larger units. What remains to be seen, of course, is if challenges truly affect that choice, and by how much. Again, we find that the emotional load of international challenges does not have any significant impact: the respondents’ attitudes depend on personal preferences, but not on external, exogenous events.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents our theoretical framework and our hypotheses. Section 3 describes our methodology. Section 4 presents the data and some descriptive statistics. Section 5 illustrates the results of our regression analyses. Section 6 discusses our findings and concludes.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

As mentioned above, we conceive of the choice between retaining national sovereignty and delegating more powers to the EU as, at heart, a choice between different possible sizes of one’s state. Accordingly, we take our hypotheses from the political economy literature on the size of nations (Alesina and Spolaore 2003; Spolaore 2006; Wittman 2000), adapted for public opinion.

A natural starting point is to assume that people should not want to delegate (or surrender) more sovereign powers to an international/supranational organization like the EU. Bigger states come with certain costs, which include administrative and congestion costs and

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1 There is, of course, a long-standing debate over whether the EU can be considered a state. Readers who are not comfortable with that notion can think of the dilemma we present as one between retaining exclusive sovereign powers and pooling sovereign powers.
above all the combination of greater heterogeneity of preferences and uniform (or outright assimilationist) policies. Larger populations are associated with higher heterogeneity of preferences among individuals, not only on the traditional left-right axis of income redistribution, but also on other important dimensions, such as ethno-linguistic issues, culturally determined views on human rights or gender equality, etc. Similarly, being part of the same state increases the likelihood of sharing jointly supplied public goods and policies. Voters experience common policies which cannot satisfy everybody’s preferences, and perceive them as either oppressive (in case a majority does endorse them) or under-supplied (in case such fears lead to non-policy – see Easterly and Levine 1997; Sorens 2012). That makes them prefer smaller states.

Of course, a preference for small states is not equal to a preference for isolation. Democratic nations are unlikely to have any predilection for commercial or political autarchy (Milner and Mukherjee 2009). Yet that does not mean their voters will be willing to sacrifice any of their formal sovereignty rights. The realization of the gains from trade and other cooperative ventures does not depend uniquely on the creation of bigger states or supranational organizations – i.e. the latter is not a necessary condition for the former. Based on the Coase theorem, Robert Keohane has argued that, if transaction costs are sufficiently low, decentralized bargaining will lead to a Pareto-efficient outcome, regardless of the initial allocation of property rights (Keohane 1984). Accordingly, individual voters will have to make a valuation of the transaction costs involved in international bargaining. Those with lower tolerance for such costs will differ from those with higher tolerance. These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

\( H_1: \) In comparing individuals, those with a higher probability to have internationally-defined preferences will tend to be more favourable towards greater European integration than will be those with a higher probability to have nationally-defined preferences.

Note that Hypothesis 1 is fully compatible with standard Heckscher-Ohlin and Stolper-Samuelson models of individual preferences for greater international integration (the
“economic calculation” thesis), but also with arguments about the weight of national/international identity (the “communal identity” thesis).²

On the other hand, larger national size does produce benefits other than just a reduction in international transaction costs. In our theoretical framework the main benefit comes in the form of more efficient production of costly public goods. Put differently, the crucial benefit of larger states is their ability to take advantage of economies of scale. Many public goods are characterized by high fixed costs and low (even zero) marginal costs. In such cases, the greater the number of taxpayers who contribute for these goods, the more efficiently the latter are provided. The usual example here is the provision of national security and/or diplomatic relations, where high fixed costs (research and development, transaction, administration, and implementation costs) and low marginal costs (it costs virtually zero to protect and/or represent one additional citizen) make its production more efficient for larger populations. Thus, according to Alesina and Spolaore, “Europe is a union of states that serves the purpose of taking advantage of economies of scale, and creating a level of government with limited prerogatives where benefits of scale are large and heterogeneity of preferences low” (Alesina and Spolaore 2003: 205).

That said, voters can have different preferences towards the provision of public goods, and also different understandings of what a public good is. In the context of European integration, political preferences have a strong influence on the citizens’ attitude towards the delegation of further powers to the EU. As Hooghe et al. (2002) have shown for the “supply side” (national parties), support for European integration takes the form of an “inverted U” on the left-right axis, with low support among extreme left and extreme right parties and high support among centre-left and centre-right parties. Hix and Hoyland (2011: 128) find that this relationship holds for the voters of the “old” 15 member states as well. For right-wing voters, the supposed efficiency of providing a public good at EU rather than at national level is outweighed by the need to protect national identity, while among left-wing voters the main concern towards integration lies in the alleged neo-liberal nature of the EU (Hooghe et al. 2002: 969). This leads us to formulate the following hypothesis:

² See Hobolt and de Vries (2016: 419–423) for an overview of the main causes of public support for European integration.
H2: *In comparing individuals, those located closer to the centre on a left-right axis will tend to be more favourable towards greater European integration than those with more extreme preferences.*

Finally, based on the rich evidence documented in the previous section, we also hypothesize that external threats may affect the voters’ perception of the benefits of European integration. Broadly speaking, the assumption that voters have any meaningful knowledge about the potential “heterogeneity costs” and “scale benefits” of different EU policies is heroic, to say the least. As Alesina and Spolaore point out, “the question of how to measure economies of scale, externalities, and heterogeneity of preferences is not easy. (…) In general, in specific policies, how to evaluate this trade-off is not undisputable.” What is true for economists and politicians is *a fortiori* true for laymen. Under these circumstances, political economists and scholars of political behavior have shown that whereas people may indeed express preferences on various political issues, these will generally be the result not of relatively stable attitudes or preferences, but of framing and cueing effects (e.g. Hiscox 2006; Hooghe and Marks 2005) or default heuristics such as party identification (Hellström 2008). A central question therefore concerns voters’ preferences in the absence of such cognitive effects. In other words, should we expect international challenge to influence voters’ views of the EU in the absence of framing, cuing, and similar effects? And if this is the case, which challenges have a more significant effect?

If international challenges have an impact on attitudes towards EU integration, this should be linked – we hypothesize – to the emotional load of the international challenge in question. According to affective intelligence theory (Marcus et al. 2000), two core emotions define our disposition to search for more information, or optimize existing information. On the one hand, enthusiasm leads to satisfaction, which crowds out our incentive to think or improve. On the other hand, anxiety leads to frustration, which induces more thinking. Such anxiety emerges when the environment becomes novel or dangerous – for example, in EU politics, when the EU is surrounded by new international challenges. In such cases, our “surveillance system” tells us that our usual habits or institutional arrangements may not produce satisfactory results. On that basis, we argue that coming to know international events that make respondents more anxious leads them to search and use more information, as well as to make better use of connective logic. In short, emotion induces greater political “intelligence”, or greater ability to read the
existing information, and that in turn leads to the activation of the kind of logic advanced by Alesina and Spolaore. Hence our third hypothesis is the following:

**H₃**: *In comparing individuals, those reminded of a more anxiety-generating international challenge will tend to be more favorable towards greater European integration.*

It follows from the argument above that we should observe no such effect among voters who already knew about a certain international challenge. An increase in support is supposed to be associated with a “realization effect” deriving from new knowledge. In voters who do not get new information, the simple re-statement of an already known international challenge should have no impact – in other words, the knowledge of a certain international challenge was already incorporated in the pre-treatment level of support. Hence the following hypothesis:

**H₃.₁**: *In comparing individuals, those who were less informed about a certain international challenge should experience a bigger leap in their support for European integration.*

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS

To test the hypotheses presented in the previous section, we use data from an anonymous on-line survey that was sent out in December 2015 to 1,200 randomly chosen Spanish voters. 745 surveys were completed, giving us a 62.5% response rate. The survey consisted of 18 questions relating to support for further EU integration (in general and in specific policies), personal and occupational information, as well as the treatment question.

Since proposals for further EU integration concern different policy fields, and given the plurality of practical and political motivations that may lead voters to support integration in certain policies and not in others, we did not ask respondents only about their support for further European integration in general, but also about support for integration in the following fields: *a)* security policy (creating a “European police”); *b)* fiscal policy (increasing the EU fiscal capacity to redistribute more); *c)* foreign policy; *d)* direct election of a “President of the European Union”.
To investigate the degree to which different international challenges trigger off processes of affective intelligence, respondents were randomly assigned to four different groups, corresponding to four different versions of a particular question (Question 15). All versions of Question 15 asked about the respondent’s level of information about an in-the-news international challenge which, according to the political-economy theory on the size of nations, should lead to greater support for European integration. No version of Question 15 introduced any value judgments, and we took extreme care to phrase those questions so as to avoid any framing effects. The treatments differed in the presumed emotional load of the international challenge presented, which we defined as low, medium, and high with the help of five different and mutually unaware experts (professors of political psychology). In one fourth of the questionnaires, that was a low-load challenge, namely the new Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement reached between twelve Pacific-Rim countries, including major EU trading partners such as the United States, Japan, Canada, and Mexico. In another fourth of the questionnaires, Question 15 concerned a medium-load challenge, namely the increasing military cooperation between Russia and China. In the third fourth it concerned a high-load challenge, namely the spreading activity of international terrorist groups. The fourth served as a control group (there was no Question 15). After the treatment, respondents were asked to sum up their level of support for integration in the fields identified above, so that we could measure if the treatment changed attitude towards further integration in any of them.

The survey methodology and the practical collection of responses were aimed at minimizing any bias in the data – though we do acknowledge that some solutions create their own problems. First, the survey was conducted in December 2015, i.e. only a few weeks after Islamic terrorist attacks in Paris (November 13, 2015), but more than two months after the announcement of the TPP (October 5), and certainly a lot after Russia’s much-advertised “pivot to Asia” (El País 2014, though see also Filippova and Velena 2015). We cannot exclude that purely environmental interferences affect the emotional load of the international challenges we presented. However, the treatment question itself allowed us to control for these interferences, as it allowed us to get information about the previous knowledge of the different issues.

The survey was anonymized, so that no personal information about the respondents was made available to us. Also, by distributing the survey online, we eliminated all contact
with pollsters. With this collection method we intended to minimize the probability both of sample self-selection, of inaccurate or insincere responses, and above all of subconscious framing or cuing effects. That said, the internet-based nature of the survey might be a potential source of bias, as internet penetration may be lower in some regions of Spain than in others. To deal with that, we introduced questions about respondents’ age and size of municipality.

4. DATA AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

We operationalized our first independent variable – internationally-defined preferences – in different complementary ways, by introducing questions pertaining to both the human capital of individual respondents (years in formal education, and number of languages spoken) and to identity-shaping family ties (presence of other Europeans, and presence of extra-Europeans, in the immediate family circle). To measure the second explanatory variable, we asked respondents to place themselves on a scale going from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponded to “left”, 2 to “centre-left”, 3 to “centre”, 4 to “centre-right”, 5 to “right”. Figure 1 summarizes the frequency distribution for the variables above.

![Histograms of variables](image)
Regarding the measurement of international challenges, we obtained it – as explained above – with four different (randomly assigned) versions of the survey. To test the hypothesized positive relationship between anxiety-generating challenges and support for European integration, we created an ordinal variable with four values, in which 0 corresponds to the absence of treatment, 1 to the Trans-Pacific Partnership, 2 to military cooperation between Russia and China, 3 to international terrorism threats. The question in which we administered the treatment was posed as an inquiry on the level of knowledge of certain international challenges, in which the respondents could choose among three options: “I didn’t know”, “I have heard something about it”, “I am informed about it”. It is interesting to observe that, as was easy to expect, people have a very different knowledge of the three international threats that we proposed. As can be seen in Table 1, the international challenge that people knew the least about is the increased military cooperation between China and Russia, for which 56% of the respondents answered that they did not know what it was, and only 16% that they were informed about it. Our sample is more or less equally split on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, although a plurality of survey takers (38%) declared themselves unaware of it. The picture is completely reversed for international terrorism, with a strong majority (64%) informed about the threat and only 9% who answered that they did not know about it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of knowledge</th>
<th>Trans-Pacific Partnership</th>
<th>China-Russia partnership</th>
<th>Terrorism</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t know</td>
<td>80 (37.7%)</td>
<td>96 (56.1%)</td>
<td>17 (8.9%)</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard something about it</td>
<td>65 (30.6%)</td>
<td>48 (28.1%)</td>
<td>51 (26.8%)</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed about it</td>
<td>67 (31.6%)</td>
<td>27 (15.7%)</td>
<td>122 (64.2%)</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Respondents’ level of knowledge of international challenges
Regarding the response variables, we measured support for EU integration (in general and in specific policies) on a 5-point scale, going from 1 (preference for returning powers to member states) to 5 (preference for increasing the powers of the EU). Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses for the different questions. The two instances of further integration that receive more support are the election of a EU President and increased cooperation in foreign policy (average support of 4.05). The creation of a European police enjoys considerably less support (3.6), while increasing the fiscal capability of the EU is the policy receiving the lowest approval (3.3). Interestingly, also the generic support for further European integration scores quite low (3.5) compared to other questions.

![Graphs showing support for EU integration and for specific policies](image)

Figure 2: Support for EU integration and for specific policies

Finally, we measure the impact of the treatment by subtracting the support for EU integration and the specific policies declared at the beginning of the survey to that stated at the end, after the “treatment questions”. If there is an impact of the treatment, we should observe a significant difference in support between the initial and the final value. As Table 2 shows, the two sub-samples of the population do not significantly differ in the way they change (or do not change) their response regarding support for European integration at the beginning and at the end of the survey. An analysis of the number of people who
change their mind between the initial and the final questions also demonstrates that the communication of international challenges does not trigger any particular “instability” in the responses. There seems to be a general tendency to change response, but this does not follow a particular pattern, nor is it limited to respondents having received the treatment questions. This preliminary, descriptive statistics already casts doubt on the actual impact of international challenges on the attitude towards European integration. In the next section, we carry out a more detailed analysis to test the hypotheses formulated above.

### Table 2: Comparison between responses in the final and initial questions among respondents receiving treatment questions and respondents not receiving treatment questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EU integration</th>
<th>EU police</th>
<th>EU fiscal policy</th>
<th>EU foreign policy</th>
<th>EU President</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-test results</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Welch Two Sample t-tests)</td>
<td>$t = -0.67$, $df = 230.98$, p-value $= 0.50$</td>
<td>$t = 1.16$, $df = 270.86$, p-value $= 0.25$</td>
<td>$t = 0.99$, $df = 246.61$, p-value $= 0.32$</td>
<td>$t = -0.34$, $df = 259.16$, p-value $= 0.73$</td>
<td>$t = -0.78$, $df = 240.03$, p-value $= 0.43$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of respondents changing answer</td>
<td>54% (with treatment)</td>
<td>49% (with treatment)</td>
<td>46% (with treatment)</td>
<td>45% (with treatment)</td>
<td>37% (with treatment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57% (without treatment)</td>
<td>48% (without treatment)</td>
<td>58% (without treatment)</td>
<td>45% (without treatment)</td>
<td>35% (without treatment)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

In order to assess the impact of the different variables on support for European integration, we employ ordered logistic regression. Our dependent variables, indeed, are ordinal ones: this applies both to the measurement of support (going from 1 to 5) and to the changes between initial and final responses (which are can also take integer values only, between +4 and −4). An ordered logit model assumes that the distribution of responses across different categories is function of an unobserved variable which determines the probability, for each individual, of being in one of the categories. An ordered logit model estimates $M − 1$ intercepts (where $M$ is the number of categories of the response variable), and, for each explanatory variable $X$, a coefficient $\beta$ indicating how a one-unit
increase in the variable increases the log-odds of being in the higher category. The model can thus be written as:

\[
Pr(Y = 1 \mid X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_k) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \cdots + \beta_k X_k)}}
\]

The data set contained a portion (3.3%) of missing values. Since this would have led us to exclude several observations from our models, we opted for using multiple imputation for our regression analysis.\(^3\) We imputed 100 data sets from the original one, and combined the results from regression analyses using Rubin’s (1987) procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>EU integration</th>
<th>EU police</th>
<th>EU fiscal policy</th>
<th>EU fiscal policy (2)</th>
<th>EU foreign policy</th>
<th>EU President</th>
<th>EU President (2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>-0.125 (0.144)</td>
<td>0.133 (0.138)</td>
<td>-0.104 (0.137)</td>
<td>-0.116 (0.137)</td>
<td>0.085 (0.154)</td>
<td>0.463*** (0.147)</td>
<td>0.474*** (0.146)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages spoken</td>
<td>0.195** (0.084)</td>
<td>0.123 (0.083)</td>
<td>0.212*** (0.081)</td>
<td>0.211*** (0.081)</td>
<td>0.132 (0.090)</td>
<td>0.005 (0.086)</td>
<td>0.003 (0.086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other EU national in family</td>
<td>-0.225 (0.205)</td>
<td>-0.142 (0.204)</td>
<td>-0.113 (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.096 (0.201)</td>
<td>-0.328 (0.230)</td>
<td>-0.619*** (0.210)</td>
<td>-0.634*** (0.209)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-EU national in family</td>
<td>-0.060 (0.254)</td>
<td>-0.059 (0.260)</td>
<td>0.139 (0.249)</td>
<td>0.139 (0.249)</td>
<td>0.103 (0.270)</td>
<td>-0.256 (0.254)</td>
<td>-0.257 (0.254)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right</td>
<td>0.956*** (0.276)</td>
<td>0.748*** (0.270)</td>
<td>0.140 (0.273)</td>
<td>-0.235*** (0.061)</td>
<td>1.123*** (0.296)</td>
<td>-0.560** (0.282)</td>
<td>-0.155** (0.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right (squared)</td>
<td>-0.144*** (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.096** (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.066 (0.048)</td>
<td>-0.170*** (0.051)</td>
<td>0.072 (0.049)</td>
<td>0.083 (0.064)</td>
<td>0.083 (0.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City population</td>
<td>0.129** (0.064)</td>
<td>0.096 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.087 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.087 (0.062)</td>
<td>0.039 (0.067)</td>
<td>0.083 (0.064)</td>
<td>0.083 (0.064)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.254*** (0.076)</td>
<td>0.265*** (0.074)</td>
<td>0.083 (0.073)</td>
<td>0.093 (0.073)</td>
<td>0.226*** (0.077)</td>
<td>0.050 (0.077)</td>
<td>0.041 (0.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>0.029 (0.051)</td>
<td>0.142*** (0.049)</td>
<td>0.022 (0.051)</td>
<td>0.024 (0.051)</td>
<td>-0.001 (0.055)</td>
<td>0.017 (0.052)</td>
<td>0.015 (0.052)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Observations | 745 | 745 | 745 | 745 | 745 | 745 | 745 |
| BIC          | 2261.38 | 2240.06 | 2299.17 | 2295.04 | 1949.67 | 2006.66 | 2002.71 |

Note: Pooled estimates and standard errors calculated from 10 multiply imputed datasets with Rubin’s (1987) formula. Coefficients’ significance: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01.

Table 3: Ordered regression analysis models

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\(^3\) We imputed missing values using Amelia (Honacker et al. 2011) in R (R Core Team).
To test the first two hypotheses, we use as dependent variables the responses given at the beginning of the survey regarding support for European integration. The regression models are illustrated in Table 3. Internationally-defined preferences, in the form of the number of foreign languages spoken, prove to be positively associated with support for EU integration in general and for a stronger EU fiscal policy. We find instead no confirmation of H₁ when support for a EU police, for an enhanced EU fiscal policy or for the direct election of a EU President is concerned. For the first two, no indicator has a statistically significant coefficient; as for the third, two of the indicators have significant estimates, but with opposite sign. The evidence in support of H₂ is more robust: left-right positioning of respondents has a significant impact on all the response variables we chose. For EU integration in general, EU police and EU foreign policy (see Figure 3), the relationship is horseshoe-shaped as we have hypothesized: respondents locating themselves closer to the centre tend to show higher support than those at the extremes. In the case of fiscal policy and of the direct election of a EU President, instead, higher support is not found among voters at the centre, but among voters on the left. In other words, support for these two instances of integration is not shaped by a “moderate vs. extreme” cleavage, but by a traditional left-right one (see Figure 4).
Figure 3: Predicted probabilities of high (5) support for integration in general and in foreign policy.
To test $H_3$ and $H_{3.1}$, we measure the difference between the support declared by the respondents after the treatment and before it, combined with the previous knowledge of the international challenge named in the question. We employ all the regressors used in the previous analysis as control variables. The results are displayed in Table 4. As we can see, the intensity of the challenge does not stimulate any particular change in the support for integration declared after the treatment. This, combined with the results of the $t$-tests illustrated in the previous section, leads us to conclude that awareness of international threats does not influence the citizens’ support for European integration. Interestingly, the respondents’ knowledge of the different threats is instead a significant predictor of change in declared support for integration and for fiscal policy in particular. This, again, runs contrary to $H_{3.1}$. We expected a higher impact of the treatment among those who knew less about a specific international threat, exactly because − had the theory been right − it would be the realization, the newly acquired awareness of a threat to induce respondents to think about the benefits of integration. We find instead that the impact of

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4 In the case of left-right positioning, we use the functional form that best fit the response variable in the previous models (linear for EU fiscal policy and EU President, parabolic for the others).
the treatment is stronger among those who declare themselves to be already aware of these issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EU integration</th>
<th>EU police</th>
<th>EU fiscal policy</th>
<th>EU foreign policy</th>
<th>EU President</th>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>-0.052</td>
<td>0.165</td>
<td>-0.118</td>
<td>-0.071</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.107)</td>
<td>(0.112)</td>
<td>(0.111)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treatment question’s previous knowledge</td>
<td><strong>0.189</strong>*</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td><strong>0.224</strong>*</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.166</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.102)</td>
<td>(0.103)</td>
<td>(0.105)</td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.111)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>-0.276</td>
<td>-0.037</td>
<td>-0.296</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.183)</td>
<td>(0.181)</td>
<td>(0.181)</td>
<td>(0.194)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td><strong>0.182</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>0.191</strong>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.099)</td>
<td>(0.096)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.101)</td>
<td>(0.106)</td>
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<td>Other EU national in family</td>
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<td>-0.012</td>
<td>-0.183</td>
<td>0.460*</td>
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<td>(0.253)</td>
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<td>(0.245)</td>
<td>(0.289)</td>
<td>(0.269)</td>
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<td>(0.335)</td>
<td>(0.337)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
<td>(0.355)</td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left-right (squared)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(0.058)</td>
<td>(0.058)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>City population</td>
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<td>(0.064)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>573</td>
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<td>573</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1572.70</td>
<td>1512.62</td>
<td>1541.38</td>
<td>1326.41</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Pooled estimates and standard errors calculated from 10 multiply imputed datasets with Rubin’s (1987) formula. Coefficients’ significance: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01.

Table 3: Ordered regression analysis models

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to determine if awareness of international problems leads to an increase in European citizens’ support for regional integration. It is often argued, both
in public discourse and in scholarly work, that the desire to seek protection against external threats is one of the main drivers of integration. To seek confirmation for this claim, we conducted a survey experiment and analysed if respondents reacted differently when particular external threats were brought to their attention. Other determinants of support for EU integration that we have included in our theoretical framework are internationally-defined preferences and political orientation.

Our results show that external threats do not have a significant impact on support for EU integration. This can be due to the current nature of the EU, which resembles less and less an international organization to which citizens of the member states are asked to delegate powers: the EU is increasingly perceived and acting as a “political system” (Hix and Hoyland 2011) in which preferences for integration of policies are shaped by personal and political attitudes. Probably, this was not the case in the past, in the post-WWII decades in which the foundations of European integration were laid.

On the other hand, the data do lend support to the hypothesis that attitudes towards integration depend on internationally-defined preferences and political orientation, though these relationships does not hold for all the policies that we have considered in our test. More specifically, people who speak more languages tend to show higher support for EU integration in general and for the establishment of a genuine EU fiscal policy. The link between the number of languages spoken and support for integration is consistent with accounts which link support to the ability to take advantage of integration (see Gabel 1998; Hix and Hoyland 2011: 116) and therefore with mainstream theories in international political economy. People who speak more languages are more likely to have benefited, and to expect to benefit, from EU integration. This relationship does not hold for the level of education, for which the mechanism leading to support for European integration is less straightforward (see also Brinegar and Jolly 2005). Of the four specific policies on which we measure support for integration, only fiscal policy is affected by the number of languages spoken. Since people who speak several languages tend to have travelled more, they probably tend to be more sympathetic to the needs of other countries and less afraid of losing national money to carry out EU-level redistribution.

The impact of left right that we detect is particularly significant. Although it is different across policies, it is always present. In predicting support for more integration in fiscal policy and for the election of a EU President, we find a traditional left-right divide: respondents on the left are more in favour than respondents on the right. Regarding fiscal
policy, it is clear why: what it is proposed is “traditional” redistribution from rich to poor (be they people or countries). As for the direct election of a EU President, we probably have more scepticism on the right because of concerns on the national loss of sovereignty. Regarding police cooperation, foreign policy and integration in general, we instead observe higher support towards the centre of the political spectrum.

In conclusion, the main finding of our survey experiment is that citizens are hardly likely to show more support for EU integration because of external threats. Support for integration cannot rely (any longer?) on emotional reactions to external events. At the same time, the significance of political preferences in explaining support for integration confirms that the era of permissive consensus is definitely over and European integration is now completely “politicized”, for the good or the bad.
Appendix 1

Text of the online survey experiment

Survey on European Integration in the 21st Century

Welcome to the survey on European integration in the 21st century.

We would be extremely grateful if you could answer the questions below. Doing so should not take more than about 10 minutes of your valuable time.

Please note that this survey is part of an academic research conducted by students of ESADE Law School under the supervision of Prof. Yannis Karagiannis (yannis.karagiannis@esade.edu). Your answers will only be treated with statistical procedures, and shall remain strictly confidential.

QUESTION 1

Please indicate whether you are in favour of further European integration. That is, would you like to see the European Union acquiring new, additional powers?

1. Absolutely not. I want to see more powers returned to the national or local level.
2. Probably not. I think the European Union already has too many powers.
3. I am in favor of the European Union retaining the exact powers it currently has.
4. Probably yes. I think the European Union should be strengthened in certain areas.
5. Absolutely yes. I think the European Union should be strengthened urgently and in many policy areas.
6. I do not know.

QUESTION 2

Please indicate whether you are in favor of collecting more taxes at the European level, so that the European Union can better help its poorer citizens and countries.

1. Absolutely not.
2. Probably not.
3. I am in favor of the existing resources of the European Union.
4. Probably yes.
5. Absolutely yes.
6. I do not know.
QUESTION 3
Please indicate whether you are in favor of creating a European force in charge of police and security operations in Europe.

1. Absolutely not.
2. Probably not.
3. I am in favor of the existing arrangements.
4. Probably yes.
5. Absolutely yes.
6. I do not know.

QUESTION 4
Please indicate whether you are in favor of allowing European citizens to directly elect a President of the European Union, like French citizens do in France.

1. Absolutely not.
2. Probably not.
3. Probably yes.
4. Absolutely yes.
5. I do not know.

QUESTION 5
Please indicate your age.

1. Less than 18 years old.
2. Between 18 and 25 years old.
3. Between 25 and 40 years old.
4. Between 40 and 65 years old.
5. More than 65 years old.

QUESTION 6
How big is the village, town, or city you live in?

1. It has less than 2,500 inhabitants.
2. It has between 2,500 and 15,000 inhabitants.
3. It has between 15,000 and 50,000 inhabitants.
4. It has between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants.
5. It has more than 250,000 inhabitants.
6. I do not know.
QUESTION 7
Starting from the age of 6, for how many years have you been to school or university?

1. I have never been to school or university.
2. I went to school for less than 6 years.
3. I went to school for less than 9 years.
4. I went to school for less than 12 years.
5. I went to school and university for less than 15 years.
6. I went to school and university for more than 15 years.
7. I do not know.

QUESTION 8
Have you or any member of your family (parents, husband/wife, siblings, or children) been recently unemployed?

1. None.
2. One person.
3. Two persons.
4. More than two persons.
5. I do not know.

QUESTION 9
Is any member of your family (parents, husband/wife, siblings, or children) a citizen of another member state of the European Union?

1. No.
2. Yes.
3. I do not know.

QUESTION 10
Do you feel comfortable with communicating in European languages other than the languages of Spain? [multiple answers are possible]

1. No.
2. I also speak English.
3. I also speak French.
4. I also speak German.
5. I also speak Italian.
6. I also speak more than one other European language.
7. I am not sure.
QUESTION 11
In which sector of the economy do you work?

1. I am a student.
2. Administrative services (private).
3. Administrative services (public).
4. Agriculture.
5. Architecture / building / real estate.
7. Design.
8. Education (private).
11. Health (public).
12. Hospitality services.
14. Legal services.
15. Transportation (private).
16. Transportation (public).
17. Telecommunications / media / internet services.
18. I am currently unemployed.
19. Wholesale commerce.
20. Other.

QUESTION 12
Please indicate where you would place yourself politically.

1. On the left.
2. On the center-left.
3. On the center.
4. On the center-right.
5. On the right.
6. I do not know.

QUESTION 13
Would you describe yourself as a religious person?

1. Not at all.
2. Probably not.
3. Probably yes.
4. Certainly.
5. I do not know.
QUESTION 14

[Version 1] Are you aware of the fact that China and Russia recently signed an agreement in view of increasing their cooperation military affairs?

[Version 2] Are you aware that the United States of America and several Asian countries recently signed an agreement in order to create a common economic area around the Pacific Ocean?

[Version 3] Are you aware of the fact that most security services believe Europe will face a heightened terrorist threat in the foreseeable future?

1. No.
2. Yes.
3. I do not know.

[Version 4] [no question]

QUESTION 15

Could you please indicate your level of support for the following proposals? [on a scale from 1 to 5]

- The EU should have more competences in foreign policy
- The EU should have more competences in the area of security
- The EU should have a president directly elected by its citizens
- The EU should expand its budget to help its poorest member states
- The EU should have more competences in general
REFERENCES


