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## Editorial Note

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While each issue of *IAPSS Politikon* presents unique original texts, this issue is special in two additional respects. Firstly, Vol. 40 contains a special section bringing together the contributions of the members of the IAPSS Academic Think Tank and Academic Committee (ATT & ACOM). Thereby it continues the tradition of the journal to encourage submissions from individuals and research groups that are active in the Association. These submissions undergo an equally rigorous peer review process and at the same time point to some areas of current research interests of junior scholars. On this occasion, we are grateful to Dr. Jamila Glover, the 2017/2018 ATT & ACOM Coordinator, who facilitated this initiative and who introduces us to the special section below:

The 2017-2018 ATT/ACOM research efforts focused on issues, debates and controversies related to the (un)intended consequences of globalization. Such topics included inequality, regional integration and the rise of nationalism.

Lora Hadzhidimova and Aaron Stacey analyse the relationship between populism and the national concerns expressed by citizens in the European Union's (EU) Eastern and Western member-states. The authors find that the predominant type of populism in the EU does not overlap with the type of concerns on a national level. The article concludes with outlining the implications of their findings.

In a single-authored piece, Lora Hadzhidimova presents a comprehensive overview of the emergence, evolution and current state of scholarly debate on the contentious issue of integration in the European Union. She argues that the debate has shifted from a paradigm perspective to a problem driven approach. The article further contends that this new approach is optimal because it is pragmatic in solving complex problems that occur within the EU.

Rigina Syssoyeva's research note addresses the growth of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). She conducts a rigorous qualitative research study that demonstrates that Schimmelfennig's theoretical concepts can explain the process of enlargement of the EAEU.

Subsequent but definitely not secondary to these contributions is the article by Joshua Schwartz who critically examines the argument Joseph Parent presented in his book *Uniting States*, and claims that it does not provide a satisfactory explanation for the emergence of voluntary mergers of states into one. Surveying the argument in detail, the article offers an in-depth analysis of the case of the United Arab Republic and concludes that there are other possible causes of voluntary unions than the one Parent identified.

The second speciality is the introduction of the *IAPSS Politikon Best Article Award*. This Award will be given out to the article published in each annual edition of *IAPSS Politikon* (comprising four issues of the journal each) that represents an outstanding contribution from the perspective of (1) the quality of the article's work with concepts and theories and/or empirical data, (2) the originality of the article's argument, and (3) the potential of the article to enhance academic discussion in Political Science and/or practice. The Award consists of a certificate of recognition, promotion of the winning article through the IAPSS channels, and a registration fee waiver for one of the upcoming IAPSS conferences within 12 months after the reception of the award. Honorable mentions may be given out in addition to the award accompanied with a certificate. Depending on available means, other prizes may be included into the award on a case-by-case basis. All research papers published in the journal are automatically eligible (there is no separate nomination process).

The inaugural edition of the Award will be based on the issues published in 2018; however, the articles of Vol. 40 will be subject to evaluation in 2020, and those who consider the submission to the journal still have a chance, depending on the outcome of the evaluation process and the date of publication, to be considered for the 2020 edition of the Award. The Editorial Board hopes that the Award will encourage even more high-quality contributions as well as stimulate the readership and reflections on the published articles.

As with other aspects of the journal's functioning, the *Politikon Best Article Award* is a collaborative enterprise between junior scholars with the help of senior scholars.<sup>1</sup> As such, the Award Committee consists of two senior scholars and one junior scholar, who may be joined by an Honorary Chairperson. The Honorary Chairperson is a senior scholar in the honour of whom the Award is given out for the respective year. Each of these scholars needs to demonstrate significant contributions to Political Science research and/or teaching but also to place special emphasis on support for students and junior scholars worldwide and/or in a particular region of the world where institutional support of this kind is lacking. We are pleased to announce that the inaugural Award Committee will be chaired by Professor İlder Turan, Past-President of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) and Emeritus Professor of Political Science at Istanbul Bilgi University, who is thereby recognized for his contributions to the fields of comparative and Turkish politics and foreign policy, but also for the significant support provided to students and junior scholars through

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that there is no legal claim for this award nor for reviewing the Award Committee's assessment, which also reserves the right not to hand out the Award in a particular year in case none of the articles exceed the quality standards determined for the Award.

various positions in university administration and in IPSA. The names of the other members of the Award Committee will be announced together with the results of its work.

Last but not least, the publication of this issue in advance of the publication date in order to increase the dissemination of new findings and discussions has been made possible by the continuous dedication of the Editorial Board as well as the Editorial Assistants. Also, welcome to the newest member of the Editorial Board, Dana Rice.

We look forward to continuing the dialogue with many of you and to the introduction of further good news about the development of the journal in the near future.

Max Steuer  
Editor-in-Chief

## Attending to the wrong issue in the political spectrum: Right-wing populism for left-wing concerns in the EU

Lora Hadzhidimova and Aaron Stacey<sup>2</sup>

<https://doi.org/10.22151/politikon.40.1>

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the relationship between populism and the national concerns expressed by citizens in the European Union (EU). In particular, we seek to determine if a certain type of populism in the countries (right or left) responds to the leading national concerns (cleavages). In order to do so, we examine the national concerns and the type of populism in the EU's Eastern and Western member-states, separately, and then compare them. Results show, first, that right-wing populism in the EU is much more common than left-wing populism, and, second, that the East and the West share to a large extent similar national concerns that are left-wing in nature. We conclude that the predominant type of populism in the EU does not overlap with the type of concerns on a national level. Implications for this tendency are provided.*

### Keywords

European Union; Left-Wing; National Concerns; Populism; Right-Wing

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<sup>2</sup> The authors would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and for their valuable recommendations that contributed to making this paper a scholarly contribution of higher quality.

## Introduction

In the past few years, there has been a rise in the support for parties that have come to be termed ‘populist’ or ‘anti-establishment’. The parties come from both left and right, can present different degrees of authoritarianism, of nationalism, and geographically span through the European continent. Based on these parties’ diversity, has arisen the question of the type of populist party that countries have. In some countries, the populist party has a left-wing hue while in other it leans to the right. Some theories suggest that the leftness or rightness of a populist party depends on what social cleavages and concerns are most salient in that society. When an economic cleavage is most salient, such as the gap between rich and poor, income inequality, job prospects and so forth, populists tend to lean to the left. In the case of a salient cultural cleavage, in terms of immigration, language, religion, and others, populist parties will tack to the right. In some places both cleavages may coexist, populists consequently having elements of both (Rodrik, 2017). In this case, the variety of populist parties across Europe as a whole may be explained by the concerns that are most pressing to the people of each country. Using responses from Eurobarometer surveys from the past 10 years, that ask people in each EU-member state what the most pressing concern facing their country is, this paper seeks to test the hypothesis that economic cleavages lead to left-wing populism and cultural cleavages to right-wing populism. If it is true, then we might expect to see that countries, where people have economic concerns would tend to have a populist party that leaned to the left while in countries where people reported cultural concerns the local populist party leaned to the right. We will also pay attention to variations over and across different regions of Europe such as in the East and the West.

## Literature Review

One of the striking features in the literature on populism is the difficulty that authors have had to define the concept as it has been used to describe a variety of movements, parties, and policies, across a variety of geographical locations and time periods, beginning with the Narodniks of Russia in the 1870s and the Farmers’ movement in the United States of the same period. One of the earliest attempts to analyze and define the concept of populism was the 1969 book *Populism* (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969) which derived from a conference held in London. It discussed the phenomena from a variety of angles and across a number of geographical areas but did not reach an all-encompassing definition beyond the underlying criteria that populism lionized “the people” (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969).

The lack of consistent ideological content lead populism to be described as a “thin ideology” (Mudde, 2004). The key feature of the ‘people versus the elite’ core idea is that the people are pure



whereas the elite are corrupt, or even that the people are superior to the elite (Mudde, 2004). Beyond that, populism does not present a set of ideas and policies of its own, offering a narrative about how society should be run. On its own, the people versus the elite dynamic can be meshed with either left-wing or right-wing ideologies (Taggart, 2000; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). A study of the voting patterns of left-wing and right-wing populist parties in the Dutch Parliament showed that they had little in common in terms of their voting positions, except their opposition to supranational institutions (Otjes and Louwerse, 2013).

From this perspective, there are no “pure” forms of populism and its study takes the form of case studies, mixing the concept in with specific contexts of time and place (Taggart, 2000). Culture and context are important in understanding populist movements as they reach across geographical location, historic period, and political ideology (Kaltwasser, 2014).

In Western Europe, resurgent populism has sought to exclude others, especially immigrants, through welfare chauvinism, while in Latin America the populist movements have sought to include previously marginalized groups in the political life (Madrid, 2008; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013; Koster et al., 2013). However, it should not be said that all European populist movements are based on exclusion, a counter case being the Greek leftist party Syriza (Stavrakakis and Katsembakis, 2014). These differences in the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of populism are also part of the debate about whether populism is good or bad for democracy (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012; Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013). Those who look at populism in its European context, such as Mudde, Kaltwasser (2012), and Bartolini (2011), view it as a negative development for democracy. This negativity stems from its main European manifestation in the form of rather xenophobic radical right-wing parties; some of the language surrounding the discussion about this strain of populism brings up imagery of disease and pathology (Bartolini, 2011; Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013).

Populism, analyzed as policy, is faced with the problem of the large array of the types of policies implemented by populists. At the same time, not all political groups that implement a particular policy are necessarily populists: on the one hand, Latin American populists pursued policies of economic redistribution and nationalization of natural resources (Madrid, 2008); on the other hand, although the Tea Party has been characterized as populist, it advocates for radical free market policies (Lowndes, 2012) and is strongly opposed to redistributive policies and nationalization. Hawkins et al. (2012) describe the rightist and pro-capitalist orientation of populism as typical across most wealthy countries. Fuest (2017) considers more broadly that populist economic policies are designed for people who feel “left behind” by globalization, international trade, and feel pressure from immigrants in the labor market and that the policies pursued by populists are short-

termist and careless of budget constraints. Other studies also noted this short-term characteristic (Guiso et al., 2017).

Simultaneously, existing economic difficulties are blamed on foreigners and international institutions that engage in or support unfair competition, harming the domestic population but benefiting the elite. Immigrants are presented as stealing jobs, enabling employers to hold down wages, and “bleeding” the welfare system dry. An elevated sensitivity to immigration as a political issue is also found to be a factor in generating support for populism by Bale (2013), alongside the party leader’s style, and whether or not a party is in opposition or in power. Hostility to immigration can fit into the broader category of “Heritage Populism” as described by Reynié (2016) in his study of the French Front National. Heritage populism centers itself around the protection of heritage in both tangible and intangible forms. Tangible heritage refers to living standards and intangible heritage to ‘way of life’. Both of these can be claimed by populists to be threatened by immigrants as well as by global economic changes (Reynié, 2016).

The populist economic policies’ short-termism is put into practice through expansionary economic policies, running deficits yielding quickly visible short-term benefits but can build up debts and other longer-term problems in the financial system. Economic openness can also be reduced, including the freedom of trade and increased regulation, as well as erosion of some laws (Rode and Revuelta, 2015). Immigration can be made harder and welfare chauvinist social policies make access to welfare payments more difficult for foreigners. Longer-term problems can be large enough to end up canceling out the short-term gains, sometimes to the extent that the overall economic interests of the intended beneficiaries are harmed (Acemoglu et al. 2013).

Fuest (2017) also echoes a point made elsewhere by Taggart (2000) that populists usually offer simplistic interpretations and solutions to complex problems. According to Madrid (2008), populist proponents of these types of policies in Latin America have used them as a way to signal to the electorate that they have not been captured by powerful elite economic interests. Rodrik (2017) distinguishes between populist orientations responding to cultural cleavages and those responding to economic cleavages. This is similar to Inglehart and Norris’ (2016) observation that the traditional left-right cleavage also has a cross-cutting cultural cleavage along the populist-cosmopolitan liberalist lines.

The populist movement’s policy emphasis and its leftness or rightness depend on which cleavage is the focus. In case of a cultural cleavage, populism emphasizes the identity of the people against outsiders who could jeopardize it. The type of identity may combine some or all of national, ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. It has been pointed out that in the U.S., the target of this cultural cleavage has been Mexicans, Chinese, and Muslims; in Europe, the targeted outsiders have

been Muslims, the EU, and other minorities such as Gypsies or Jews. In this case, populism takes a right-wing form and is epitomized in the U.S. by Trump, and in Europe by radical right parties such as the French Front National.

In the case of an economic cleavage, the emphasis tends to be on the gap between the haves and have-nots. Populists calling attention to this cleavage tend to be leftist, and include Bernie Sanders in the U.S., and parties such as Syriza in Europe. These two cleavages can overlap, and both are subject to the “supply and demand” rule with certain problems generating a demand and populist parties stepping in to supply a narrative. Mukand and Rodrik (2017) divide society into three groups: elite, majority, and minority. Depending on the cleavage, a different group will be cast as the problem. In the case of a cultural cleavage, the minority is portrayed as the ‘other’ on the base of identity. With an economic cleavage, the elite is singled out based on their wealth. Populists mobilize supporters based on these divisions, with the former being right-wing and the latter left-wing (Mukand and Rodrik, 2017).

Guiso et al. (2017) expand this idea of demand and supply, i.e. where there is an interaction between a ‘demand’ stemming from economic and distributional problems, creating an inchoate sense of dissatisfaction, and anxiety. Populists ‘supply’ a narrative that helps make sense of these problems and explains who is to blame (also in Rodrik, 2017) by saying that demand/supply for short-term protection is at the conjunction of the two. When faced with an economic cleavage this can take for instance the form of import restrictions; when responding to cultural cleavages short-term protection may take the form of immigration bans or border walls. Since the cultural and economic cleavages can overlap, some populist parties may combine the two, such as Ataka (Attack) in Bulgaria, which has a nationalist and anti-Muslim message combined with policies to improve welfare spending. Other populist parties that combine a xenophobic message with criticisms of the global capitalism’s dynamics include Jobbik in Hungary and Golden Dawn in Greece (Inglehart and Norris, 2016).

Either way, the response generally involves some radical institutional change or the removal of some institutional restraints that have unclear long-term effects. Populists try to obscure these effects or only talk about them vaguely. Detailed scrutiny of long-term effects coming from experts or various prominent institutions can be rebuffed as coming from the elites who caused the problem in the first place (Guiso et al. 2017).

Other lenses through which to consider something populist include seeing it as a type of discourse and as a type of political strategy and organization (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013). As a discourse, populism does not refer to its policy content alone but to a narrative that tends to be dualistic and moralistic; it juxtaposes a virtuous ‘people’ against a corrupt elite. The us-vs-them

dynamic is an “empty signifier” that is filled in according to a given context (Laclau, 2005). As a political strategy and organization, populism is described as being centralized around a charismatic leader who is able to interpret and channel the will of the people. (Gidron and Bonikowski, 2013).

Additional factors discussed as causes of support for populism include demographic and psychological characteristics of certain voters, who are considered to typically be of lower socioeconomic status, lower formal education, male, and of the majority ethnicity, while on psychological measures such supporters score low on Agreeableness and have a tendency towards conspiracy theorizing (Bakker et al., 2015; Taggart, 2000). However, in a more recent article, Rooduijn suggests that there is no ‘typical’ supporter of populist parties across Western Europe, with characteristics varying from country to country (Rooduijn, 2017).

Support for populists may also signal the health or lack thereof in a democracy whereas an increase in populism suggests that the regular democratic functioning is not as good as it could be (Taggart, 2000) and acts similarly to a “drunken dinner guest” that brings up important issues that “polite society” would rather ignore (Arditi, 2007). Support for populism arises from the gap between the ideal of democracy representing the will of the people and the practical reality of institutions that are run by professional and political elites (Meny and Surel, 2000), as well as the sometimes opaque functioning of these institutions (Canovan, 2002). Populists prioritize the implementation of the will of the people to the detriment of checks and balances (Urbainati, 1998).

## Methods

The research question that we aim to explore in the present study is the relationship between populism and the national concerns expressed by EU-voters. More precisely, we seek to uncover if a certain type of populism (right or left) actually responds to a particular national concern (cleavage) that belongs to the realm of the left- or the right-wing populist agenda. We explore national concerns in two time-frames: in a ten-year time frame (2008-2017); and in the most recent time frame for which information was available (2013-2017) so that we can observe how concerns evolve in time and if the countries’ type of populism reflects these concerns as they change. Two reasons presided to our choice to dividing the time-periods this way. First, we want to delineate the most predominant concerns in the EU for the entire period for which data was available whilst capturing the immigration crisis. Second, we aim to examine if, in the shorter 5-year period characterized by high tension engendered by immigration issues, these tensions will assign immigration a leading place among other concerns.

As a secondary inquiry, we endeavor to trace the extent of the overlapping of the kind populism in the European Union in its Eastern with the one predominant in the West, as divided into the following categories: right-wing, left-wing populism or both. We also seek to discover if the

concerns on a national level are the same in the East and in the West. The countries included in the category for Eastern Europe are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The ones in the group of Western Europe are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. We expect to observe, as Hawkins et al. (2012) note, that the far-right populism will be predominant in the more affluent Western countries, and left-wing in Eastern Europe, due to the economic cleavage existing inside these populations.

The present study uses data from the Standard Barometer conducted by the European Commission in the years from 2008 to 2017 in order to determine what the biggest concerns for the population of a certain EU-member state on a national level are. Since the Standard Barometer is a survey conducted twice a year, the results reveal slight differences. For the purposes of our research, from the two annual Barometers, we chose the national concern that is the most shared among the respondents. The answers of the surveyed sample fall into the following categories: security, economy, rising prices/inflation, taxation, unemployment, terrorism, defense/foreign affairs, housing, immigration, healthcare system, education system, pensions, environmental concerns, energy-related concerns, government debt, climate change. These groups correspond to different types of populism that will be discussed further in the context of the findings. The units of analysis are the 28 member-states of the EU (including the U.K). Despite the fact that Croatia has become a member only in 2013, it is part of the dataset as its development was not only monitored closely for reasons related to its potential membership but was also part of the official data gathering for the Eurobarometer.

The information about the type of populism present in a certain country is determined on the basis of the literature regarding this question, which is included in the Appendix. Concerns such as the economy, rising prices/inflation, unemployment, pensions and the healthcare system allude to a left-wing populist agenda, while security, terrorism, defense/foreign affairs, energy-related concerns and climate change refer to right-wing populism. That said, it is true also that many categories from the left-wing populist agenda could be an element in the right-wing one. For instance, economic concerns, if attributed to immigrants who are accused of “stealing” jobs from nationals would place this category in the right-wing political program. In case there is more than one nationalist party in some member-states we chose the one that had the highest score in the last national and European elections.

## Results and Findings

The first set of findings includes an overview of the populist types in the entire European Union, then in the Eastern part, and in the Western, respectively. By doing so, we aim to make the first step toward a comparison between the type of populism in the EU and the concerns that the citizens express, by country, and to respond to the question if they match or there are some deviations from what we expect to observe. In addition, the results and the findings in this study do not aim to provide support for the fact that only one single factor causes one or another type of populism but only to show some tendencies in how different types of populism reflect on popular concerns. As shown in Table 1, right-wing populism is not only prevalent in Western Europe, as the literature on the question suggests but is also predominant in Eastern Europe, contrary to our expectations. In a small number of cases, there are some amalgamations between left- and right-wing populism. Nonetheless, even if they are added to the percent of left-wing populism, the right-wing type still overwhelmingly outweighs the percentage of the left-wing populism. Interestingly, the right-wing populism's level in Eastern Europe is just as high as in Western Europe. In this regard, it could be concluded that the EU is very homogenous in terms of the predominant type of populism regardless of outlined cultural, economic, historical, and societal differences.

Table 1. Percentage of populism in the European Union by type (2008-2017).

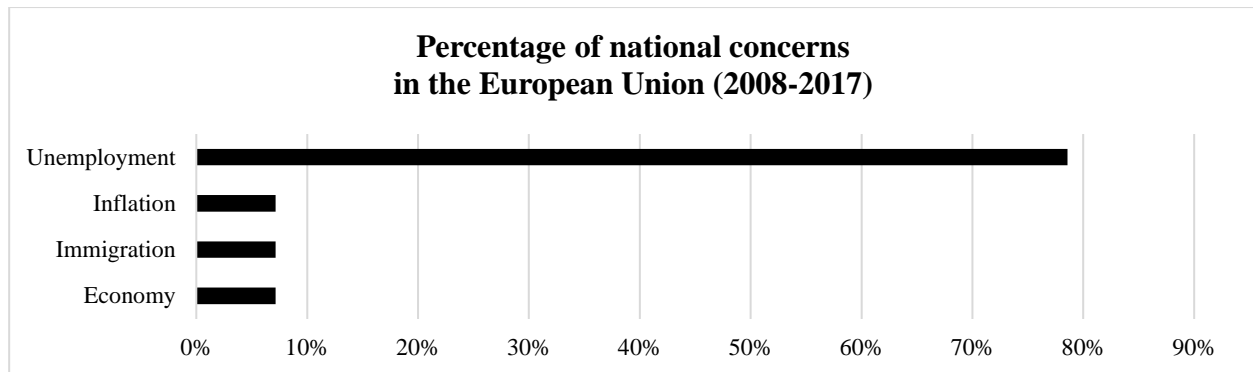
Type of populism	In the European Union	In Eastern Europe	In Western Europe
Right-wing populism	75%	71.43%	78.57%
Left-wing populism	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%
Both types	10.72%	14.29%	7.14%

Source: Authors.

The results from the second part of the study emphasize the biggest national concerns, as expressed by citizens of EU member-states. Figure 1 shows them for two periods: a ten-year one, and the most recent five-year period in an effort to capture how concerns have evolved on EU-level. For the first time-frame, unemployment leads, followed by inflation, immigration, and concerns about the economy. Unemployment has a notable advance in front of the other three major concerns with more than 75% of the EU-citizens stressing this as a main concern, followed by the other three with less than 10%. Even if the second most predominant concern is taken into consideration, it could be asserted that typical elements of the left-wing agenda are still among the most pressing concerns that the Europeans have – a fact that could reasonably provide a suitable environment for left-wing populism across the Union.



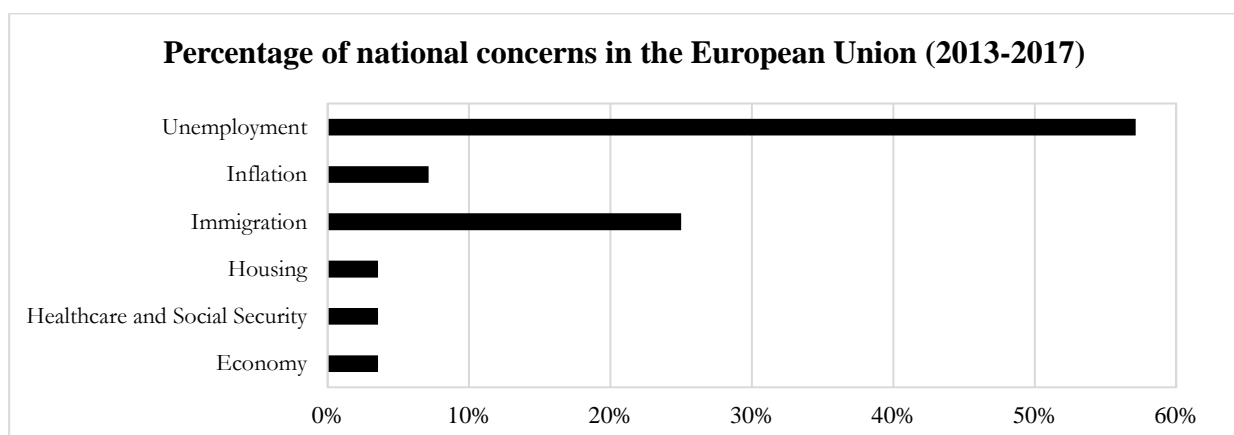
Figure 1. Percentage of national concerns in the European Union (2008-2017).



Source: Authors.

The second part of this stage of our study focuses on the results from the more recent and shorter 5-year period. While the findings in Figure 2 overlap with those from Figure 1 in terms of the leading concern, there are some very important differences and changes that have taken place in the EU. First, the view of unemployment as a major concern has decreased among the EU-citizens. With much less support than the unemployment but still with a sensible increase is the immigration as a concern from the right-wing domain. In the 2013-2017 period, concerns like housing, healthcare and social security and economy also appear, all of them belonging to the left-wing populist agenda. These dynamics captured in these two snapshots underline two factors. One of them has to do with the confirmation of left-wing concerns even when we focus on a shorter period of time, thus, it should logically lead to a more heightened presence of left-wing populist parties. The second finding relates to the increased importance of immigration as a concern on a multinational level and its potential to be used in narratives that could affect discussions about other non-right-wing issues (such as housing, the economy, and the healthcare and social security system).

Figure 2. Percentage of national concerns in the European Union (2013-2017).



Source: Authors.



Table 2 shows what particular countries shifted from left-wing concerns to right-wing concerns, by comparing the 10-year period to the 5-year one. Four Western states – Austria, Denmark, Sweden and the U.K. - transitioned from predominantly left-wing concerns (inflation and unemployment) to immigration as the most shared concern. As opposed to this, only one Eastern European country, the Czech Republic, shifted toward the immigration (right-wing) concern. In the case of three of the four western European states, Austria, Denmark, and Sweden, the shift of main concern to immigration may have been caused by the country's respective experience of the 2015 migration crisis. Austria and Denmark found themselves part of the overland transit route into neighboring countries that had initially adopted an open stance towards refugees and migrants. As a result, they experienced a sudden increase of transiting refugees and asylum seekers. Sweden took something over 134,000 refugees and migrants during the crisis equivalent to 1.6% of Sweden's population, and a total that exceeded the number of births in the country that year (The Swedish Institute, 2018a). The few years before the crisis had also seen historically high rates of immigration to Sweden too (The Swedish Institute, 2018b). In all three of these countries in the preceding 5-year period, there was a significant increase in the number of people from abroad. In the U.K., comparatively, few people were taken in during the migration crisis, although the crisis added further rhetorical fuel to the already burning debate over immigration that had its origins in issues such as freedom of movement (BBC, 2016). Also from around 2012-2013 period, the unemployment in the U.K. had begun to decline (Office for National Statistics 2018). In Sweden too, unemployment began to ease a little after 2010 (Statistics Sweden, 2005), while in Denmark it began to fall around 2012-2013 (Statistics Denmark, 2018). The Czech Republic took few refugees in during the crisis, and overall its immigrant population accounted for 6% of its population, the 24<sup>th</sup> highest rate in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018). However, efforts by the EU to redistribute the refugee population among member states has stoked resistance in the Czech Republic to being forced to take in refugees that it does not want (Frum, 2017).

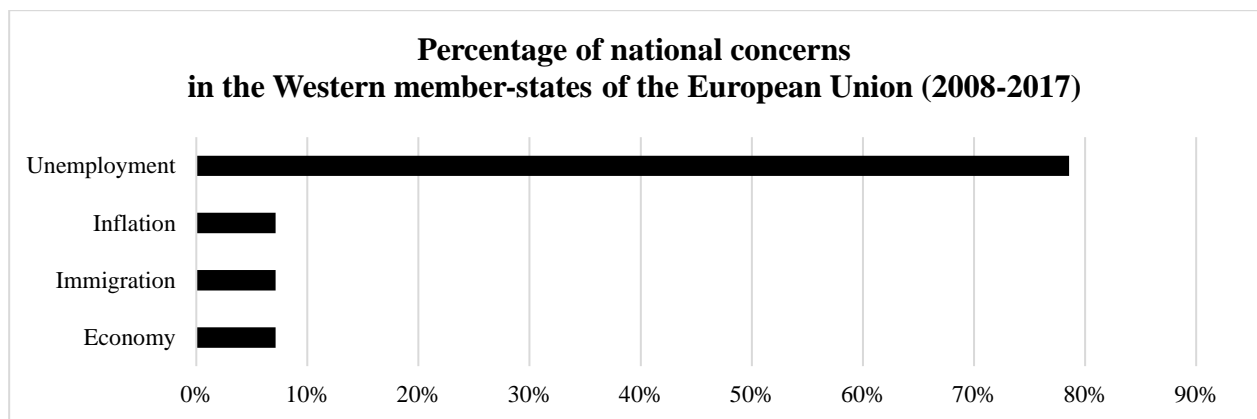
Table 2. Difference between the most frequent concern in a ten-year period (2008-2017) and the last five years of this period (2013-2017) in terms of the transition from left-wing to right-wing populism.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Transition in the type of concern:</b>
Austria	Inflation (2008-2017) => Immigration (2013-2017)
Denmark	Unemployment (2008-2017) => Immigration (2013-2017)
Sweden	Unemployment (2008-2017) => Immigration (2013-2017)
United Kingdom	Unemployment (2008-2017) => Immigration (2013-2017)
Czech Republic	Unemployment (2008-2017) => Immigration (2013-2017)

Source: Authors.

The second research question that we attempt to address is related to the differences between the national concerns in Eastern and Western Europe. In order to compare them properly, we divided them into two periods as we did with the results from the entire EU. Findings from our study in Western Europe do not provide support for what the literature suggests we would observe – right-wing concerns that will provide a suitable political climate for right-wing populism. While this type of populism is indeed the predominant type, empirical results do not show that the biggest concerns on a national level are the right-wing concerns. Unemployment, as belonging into the left-wing domain is overrepresented (more than 75%) in Western Europe, followed by inflation, immigration, and concerns about the economy, all with less than 10%, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Percentage of national concerns in the Western member-states of the European Union (2008-2017).

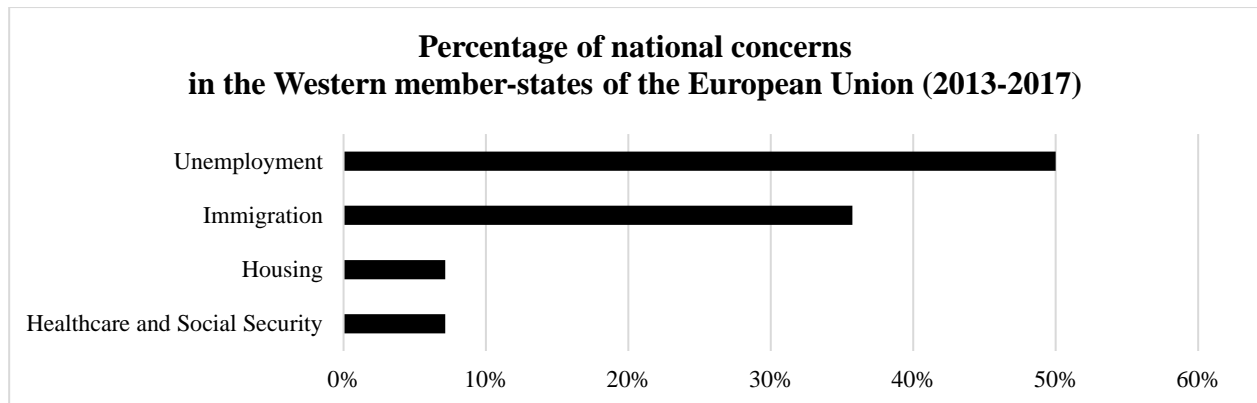


Source: Authors.

As opposed to the 10-year period, the 2013-2017 one shows notable discrepancies regarding immigration. Unemployment remains still the most prevalent concern, represented by 50%, but immigration had advanced to 36% which is a significant increase from the 10-year time-frame. One other change is also observable in Figure 4 – the housing, and the healthcare and social security concerns, customary for the left-wing domain.

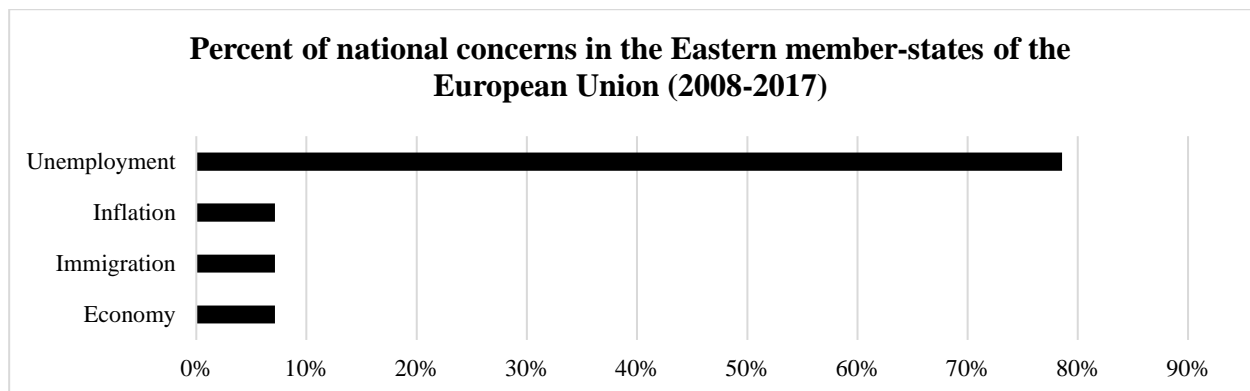
Interestingly, the picture of the 10-year period for the Eastern European concerns, captured in Figure 5, does not look much different from the one for Western Europe considering the same time-frame. Unemployment leads as the most shared concern with 79%, followed by inflation, immigration and economy concerns with 7%. These results point to the conclusion that there are literally no differences between the perceptions of the biggest concerns in both Eastern and Western Europe when a 10-year period is considered.

Figure 4. Percentage of national concerns in the Western member-states of the European Union (2013-2017).



Source: Authors.

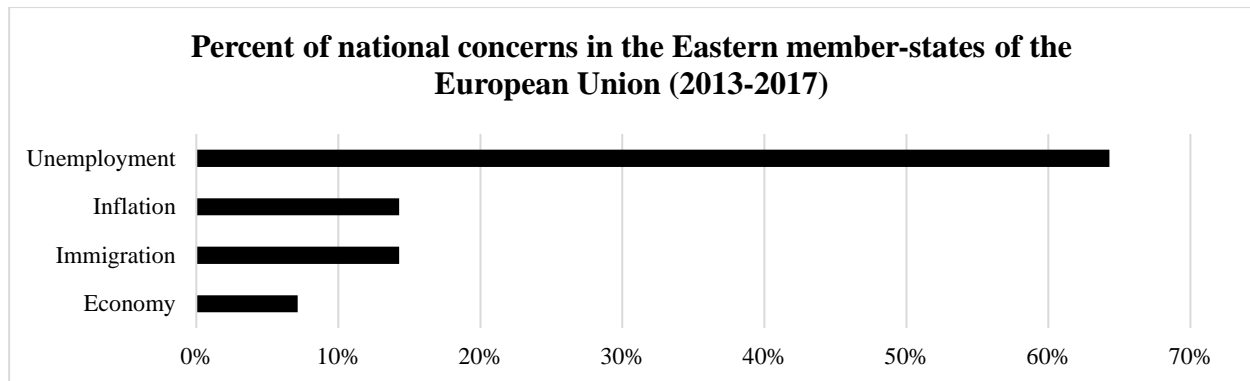
Figure 5. Percent of national concerns in the Eastern member-states of the European Union (2008-2017).



Source: Authors.

Figure 6 shows, similarly to the concerns of Western Europeans in the longer time-frame, the ones of Eastern Europeans for the shorter, 5-year time-frame, that almost fully replicate the ones discussed above. Unemployment is still the leading concern, followed by inflation and immigration that all have 14%, and concerns about the economy with 7%. Compared to the 10-year period, the shorter one (2013-2017) reveals the same characteristics as the former but with somewhat increased support for immigration and inflation, that are, still far behind the 64% support for unemployment as a major concern. The Eastern European citizens supporting immigration as the most pressing concern (14%) are significantly less than the ones in Western Europe (36%). A possible explaining factor lays in the series of terrorist attacks perpetrated by ISIS in Western and not Eastern Europe – a fact that was exploited by right-wing populist parties supporting narratives that inspire fear of issues typical for the right-wing populist agenda.

Figure 6. Percentage of national concerns in the Eastern member-states of the European Union (2013-2017).



Source: Authors.

## Discussion

The results presented in the section above suggest two major findings. First, the biggest issues that Europeans see on a national level are left-wing concerns but the predominant type of populism in the states is right-wing one. Second, Eastern and Western European states are not that different in terms of the predominant concerns, despite their historical, cultural and economic differences. These findings, in contrast to what the literature suggests, create some room for a further discussion. The lack of similar studies exploring the relationship between populism and national concerns is not allowing us to compare the results from this research with other inquiries. However, in this section, some context of the problem is provided and mainly to the question if there are economic rather than cultural and social concerns that are predominant in the EU, then to what we could attribute the lack of success of the left-wing populist and the growing popularity of right-wing parties.

Our findings point to an interesting paradox: the predominant concerns are left-wing in nature and yet the voters choose right-wing populist parties over left-wing populist parties. Politicians from the right-wing populist spectrum do not change their programs based on the concerns of the citizens but instead, they skillfully endeavor to adapt the conditions that different events create in order to bolster their right-wing agenda despite the overwhelming amount of left-wing concerns of the Europeans. Thus, they attempt to incorporate right-wing solutions to left-wing concerns, for instance to resolve an unemployment problem through blocking immigration. Moreover, the motive of vilifying a particular group of the population by attributing major concerns that they supposedly create has much more power due to its applicability to a very wide range of topics. In addition, it is much easier to control a narrative about an enemy than to face economic problems that deserve proper attention, concrete reforms and are generally much harder to be

managed. Campbell (1998) links this enemy creation to the state's identity that protects the citizens from threats, as a way to reaffirm its role as an authority distributing public goods, including security. Another reason why right-wing populism has been so widely successful is that it provides much more clarity of its political program to the voter than the traditional parties (Canovan 2002). Moreover, a left-wing populist party would also be hardly understood by the average voter mainly because of the specifics that the economist terminology poses. As opposed to this tendency, the right-wing populists have easily comprehensible manifestos that rely on emotions and symbols, rather than on stable socio-economic programs – a fact that makes them appealing to the masses that find themselves in a transition to a “postindustrial capitalism” (Betz 1993: 665). Yilmaz (2012: 377) explains the success of right-wing populism by a change from the economic division in society to a division between the different cultures, as the latter has become increasingly important for the ontological security of the Europeans. He continues by outlining why the left-wing parties suffered from the discourse that the right-wing populists created and maintain:

The populist right managed to frame media debates, via ongoing moral panics around immigrants' 'cultural' behaviors, in such a way that political parties of all persuasions are forced to respond continually to ever fresh scandals and intentional provocations. They thus tacitly accept the premises for these so-called debates (Yilmaz, 2011). Whatever the differences between political platforms, the basic antagonism produces its own culturally defined social divisions, making it impossible to articulate alternative visions under given conditions. This is what paralyzes social democrats.

Our study showed that Europeans across the two geographical regions keep sharing left-wing concerns about unemployment, the economy, and inflation, despite the growing tensions about immigration between 2013-2017. However, populist parties in the EU belong, to an overwhelming extent, to the far-right. The explanation for this lack of overlap between what is needed by the public opinion and what is delivered in the political spectrum adds arguments to the question whether right-wing populist parties respond to the most pressing public concerns or merely shift the focus toward an agenda that is easier to control. An example of this is the Greek left-wing populist party Syriza and the political difficulties it suffered by adhering to a left-wing rather than right-wing agenda (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014). It placed itself in an impossible situation from which it either had to suffer a defeat ideologically or a political defeat since the antagonistic relationship that it created with the lenders from the EU was the only one capable of alleviating the severe financial crisis in the country (Mavrozacharakis, Kotroyannos and Tzagkarakis, 2017). On a supranational level, a study by Ivarsflaten (2008: 3) examined the three mobilizational patterns of populist parties

– “economic changes, political elitism and corruption, and immigration” and in particular determined which one is responsible for the success of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. She found that the appeal to immigration issues is the factor without which the right-wing populist parties did not perform well on elections. That said, it could be derived that left-wing populist parties relying heavily on political manifestos that accentuate economic and class issues in society were not as successful as their right-wing counterparts.

## Conclusion

In the era of a new wave of populism in Europe, it is important to distinguish between the types of populism, the goals that they pursue, and to what extent these political parties are a response to actual concerns shared by voters. In this study, we explored the link between the two variations of populism – the right-wing and the left-wing and perceptions of problems in EU member-states. In addition, we compared the concerns in Eastern and Western Europe. Our results refuted the idea that, because of their economic, historical, cultural and societal characteristics, their needs and concerns were fundamentally different. We also found a lack of overlap between the concerns shared by EU-citizens, belonging to the left-wing domain – unemployment, inflation and economic concerns, and the right-wing populist parties that notably surpass the number of left-wing populist parties. Having established that the predominant type of populism in the EU, the far-right, does not seek to address public concerns in regard to the economic sector, we identified a few factors that could have engendered this tendency. Among them is the appeal of the narrative about the “enemy” that is in the core of the immigration debate. It shifted the attention of both the voters and the traditional parties from conversations about concrete political measures and reforms to improving the socio-economic indicators. At the same time, left-wing parties are at a significant disadvantage in comparison to the right-wing ones because of the dilemma that they inevitably face – how to improve the nation’s economy in a globalized, interconnected world, by economic self-sufficiency and by cutting ties with major organizations and institutions of international significance. In theory, in various EU-states with increased presence of left-wing populist parties (i.e. Greece, Ireland, Spain), the economic challenges were becoming so unmanageable to deal with domestic measures that the only choice left was to continue the dialogue with the EU and the other transnational partners despite the inherent antipathy of populist parties towards multilateral organizations and institutions.

Considering these factors, it would be logical if the literature further explores to what extent the public opinion is shaping the profile of populist parties. In addition to this, it would be beneficial to study the extent of the opposite phenomenon, i.e. populist parties that, dominating the political debate, divert the focus of left-wing concerns by offering right-wing solutions that are much more

easily created, applied, and supported through the presence of a common cultural enemy that could be also blamed for economic shortcomings.

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## Appendix: List of populist parties in the European Union

Country	Party name	Type of populism
Austria	FPO	Right
Belgium	Vlaams Belang	Right
Bulgaria <sup>3</sup>	United Patriots	Right
Croatia	Human Blockade	Both
Cyprus	Citizens Alliance	Right
Czech Republic	ANO 2011	Right
Denmark	People's Party	Right
Estonia	Centre Party	Both
Finland	The Finns	Right
France	Front National	Right
Germany	Alternative For Germany	Right
Greece	Syriza	Left
Hungary	Fidesz	Right
Ireland <sup>4</sup>	Sinn Fein	Left
Italy	Five Star Movement	Both
Latvia	National Alliance	Right
Lithuania	Order and Justice	Right
Luxembourg <sup>5</sup>	Alternative Democratic Reform	Right
Malta	Maltese Patriots Movement	Right
Netherlands	Party for Freedom	Right
Poland	Law and Justice	Right
Portugal	National Renovator Party	Right
Romania	Greater Romania Party	Right
Slovakia	Smer-SD	Left
Slovenia	Slovenian National Party	Right
Spain	Podemos	Left
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	Right
United Kingdom	UK Independence Party	Right

<sup>3</sup> The Bulgarian nationalist parties united for the last Parliamentary elections in 2017. However, they were still separate parties for the European Elections and did not get more than 3% each.

<sup>4</sup> Sinn Fein is not a populist party *per se* but is considered to have attracted most of the vote of people discontented with the status quo.

<sup>5</sup> Luxembourg has as a couple of soft populist features, railing against elitist public spending, and soft Euroscepticism, but not populist as such.

# More integration or more disintegration in the European Union?

## A sociological perspective

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### Abstract

*This paper analyzes the scholarly debate about integration in the European Union; its emergence, evolution and current state. It examines works employing theoretical and problem-driven approaches, dedicated to analyzing integration as their main object. The findings suggest that the debate has progressed significantly - a fact evident by the change of the initial question with which scholars engaged – whether international organizations and institutions have a future as independent entities. The way the EU integration was explored has also gradually shifted from paradigmatic debates, mostly between realists and liberalists, to diverse problem-driven contributions. This new, pragmatic approach is preferred as an effort to better explain the complex question of the EU integration in times of crises. An assessment of this debate is required to improve the quality of the future research agendas, methodological approaches, and policy recommendations of the field.*

### Keywords

Debate; Disintegration; EU; Integration; Sociology

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## Introduction

Generations of scholars have looked to evaluate the European Union. In the uncertain times after the world wars it was claimed as an impossible illusion to construct an international community. The initial branch of scholarly discussions were focused on the role of such an international community. As the states needed to abandon the old balance-of-power doctrine, they realized that anarchy is hard to temper, state interests are a persistent tendency even when a compromise must be reached for the sake of the common peace and wellbeing. Despite these tendencies, in 2016, the EU has been described as “a unique partnership in which member states have pooled sovereignty in certain policy areas and harmonized laws on a wide range of economic, social, and political issues” (Archick, 2016).

Scholars no longer argue if the idea of an international society could be implemented at all. Instead they started wondering if it will disintegrate, and eventually disappear, or further integrate to become a cohesive multinational community. While they differ in the ways in which they look to address the problem, they all contribute to the question of the future of the European Union and integration. Some examine what particular theory would be most useful in assessing current events and thus will be most appropriate for making predictions. Others use a problem-driven approach<sup>7</sup> to reflect on how particular crises could influence the development of the Union – leading to more or to less integration. As one of the most influential figures in bringing European states together, Jean Monnet, recognized early on that “Europe will be forged in crises and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for these crises” (Barber, 2010). Indeed, scholars see crises as the ultimate test for the foundations of the EU – the sense of common identity, shared interests and goals. The crises challenge these notions and pose the question if the Union will walk toward more or less integration in the future.

In this paper, I aim to explore how the scholarly debate about the integration of the European Union has evolved since the foundation of the Union, the current trends in how the topic is discussed, and the potential causes of these trends. Similar to other studies, such as the one by Höing and Kunstein (2018), this study is a scholarly effort to examine different conceptualizations of crises and questioning whether one framing is prevalent over others. Previous studies using scholarly articles to assess trends in popular debates, and to suggest areas for future research accentuate more on a quantitative approach (Kolk and Rivera-Santos, 2016). Therefore, this study will be a qualitative analysis. It is important to contribute to this question since the evolution of the debate on the future of the European Union still continues as global developments - from rising nationalism and the refugee crisis to economic inequality and deterring expansionistic Russia - keep

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<sup>7</sup> A distinction between problem-driven and theoretical approaches is made in the “Methodology” section.

challenging scholars. Researchers attempt to address these problems by providing a parsimonious approach that will both facilitate contextualizing political phenomena, and enhance decision-making. Moreover, in times of crises, these conditions of the international system require scholars to be even more careful in their predictions (Goudzwaard, Vander Vennen and Heemst, 2017). Building on these crises, the main task of this article is to assess whether theoretical or problem-driven approaches are preferred in the recent scholarship on the EU integration. To complement this task, I also present a brief overview of the history of the debate and the central questions in the field.

## Methodology

In order to analyze the development of the debate over the years, I first conduct a sociological analysis on the existing research and how it approaches the issue of integration. The analysis follows a sociological logic as it “operates according to a methodological principle of linguistic consistency; that is, if a ‘sufficient proportion’ of participants’ accounts appear consistently to tell the same sort of story about a particular aspect of social action, then these accounts are treated as being literally descriptive” (Gilbert and Mulkey, 1984: 7). Furthermore, to begin the examination of the topic and to provide a framework that situates this article within a broader literature, I build on Douglas Webber’s work titled *“How likely is it that the European Union will disintegrate? A critical analysis of competing theoretical perspectives”*, that laid the foundations of the integration/disintegration metadepbate. However, while Webber (2014) focuses on theoretical perspectives on the topic, I further expand the analyzed materials to also include the more recent problem-driven approaches. Moreover, I add the element of the five EU-crises, following the framework Archick (2014) suggests (the sovereign debt crisis, the refugee flow, the Brexit, resurgent Russia, and the threat of terrorism), as they trigger controversial reactions in the scholarship in regard to the EU’s future as an expression of more or less integration. Nevertheless, I consider Webber’s research and his continued efforts as a focal point in measuring the effectiveness of scholarly contributions and their applicability in the complex environment of EU politics.

At this point, a few words need to be dedicated to the selection of the scholarly works included in this study. While the most seminal contributions on the question of EU integration have been written in the period of the two world wars and after the end of the Cold War, more recent works were selected for this study, through a Google Scholar search using keywords such as “EU integration”, “EU disintegration”, and “EU crises”. Therefore the time-period the works cover is from 2008 onwards as more recent articles were preferred over older ones from a large volume of works. In addition, since the integration debate benefits from a very broad scholarly attention, the works selected for the analysis emphasize mostly the literature from International Studies/Political Science fields as it was the scholars from these two academic traditions were the ones that initiated

the debate and are more engaged with it. Additionally, a proper analysis of the literature on the future of EU integration should include a few words about the inevitable definitional issues, since only a small number of scholars define “integration” or “disintegration” before utilizing the terms. Webber’s definition brings some clarity to the dimensions of the debate. He sees three aspects of the term integration: (1) “the range of common or joint policies adopted and implemented in the EU”, (2) “the number of EU member states”, and (3) “the formal (i.e. treaty-based) and actual capacity of the EU organs to make and implement decisions if necessary against the will of individual members” (Webber, 2010: 342), whereas “disintegration” implies a decreasing number/authority of these elements.

In the following parts of the article, first, I present the framework that accounts for the foundational theoretical approaches in literature and some more recent ones. Second, I incorporate the problem-driven scholarship on the subject, divided into four different crises that point to scholarly views on more integration or less integration in the Union. While a distinction between a theoretical lens and a problem-driven approach is subjective and a clear line for differentiation is difficult to achieve, I employ the following criteria. By a theoretical perspective, I identify a predominant, if not full, focus on a theory that is applied to a phenomenon. As opposed to this, a problem-driven approach is a tool that utilizes a specific case and empirically examining it in an effort to make a broader argument. Thus the theoretical approach relies more on deductive reasoning (applying a principle to a case) while the problem-driven one is rooted in inductive reasoning (using a case to build a conclusion). Third, I discuss the implications of this debate, its characteristics and directions of research. Fourth, I summarize the main findings and propose avenues for subsequent inquiries.

### **Theoretical approaches**

Webber describes some of the main theoretical approaches which differ in evaluating how the crises changes/changed the EU - either in the direction of increased optimism toward integration or pessimism. First, there are the realists represented by John Mearsheimer (1990: 5-6), who argue that after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the absence of a common threat for Western Europe would be followed by the disappearance of NATO and the withdrawal of the U.S. presence, engendering mistrust, suspicion, and fear between Western Europeans. Building on these, Mearsheimer anticipated the dissolution of the European Union by various crises that would most likely surface from power struggles between the main powers in Europe. Furthermore, he maintained that the cyclical nature of world events will continue to present itself in the time ahead, driven by the impossible task to temper forces of anarchy.

Another theoretical perspective is the one of classical intergovernmentalists that Webber (2010) classifies as “moderate”, as opposed to the utter “pessimists” in the case of the realist school. Here, Stanley Hoffman sees the vital role of the nation-states as “a factor of international non-integration” (1966: 863). In a similar perspective to Hoffman but a bit more nuance, Moravcsik puts the emphasis of EU integration on the degree of overlap between major actors’ interests in the context of intergovernmental negotiations and the dynamics of domestic politics (1991: 25-27).

Third perspective that Weber mentions is the institutionalist one. Within this category, Keohane and Nye for instance, accept the role of supranational actors not as completely independent entities but rather as tools through which a higher degree of collaboration between states could be achieved (1977: 20-28). Moreover, they argue that such institutions make the “collective” element in the EU realistic and expanding.

In general, neofunctionalists, transactionalists, and liberal intergovernmentalists share a more optimistic perspective. For instance, Karl Deutsch, one of the most notable scholars among the transactionalists, maintains that the increased transactions between the states in the European community will result in increased cooperation (1961). Here, Webber points out it is unlikely that “even profound economic crisis...could undermine European integration” (2010: 348), while underlining the arguments of contemporary neofunctionalist scholars like Sandholtz and Sweet (1999: 152-153). To this group of scholars could be attributed the work of Adler and Barnett (1998) who build on Deutsch’s concept. However, instead of measuring integration from the standpoint of transactions, they utilize a constructivist approach that implements the idea of socialization of the states sharing common goals and interests. While they do not deny that a very cohesive (“amalgamated”) security community could be achieved, they acknowledge that this concept could have different expressions – some “nascent”, others more “mature” (Adler and Barnett, 1998: 48).

Finally, evaluated from the perspective of the federalists, Kelemen, believes that a common sense of identity may empower integration in the Union (2007: 53-61). Furthermore, it is capable of overcoming the uncertain future of federations that domestic partisan politics in the EU could evoke.

In regard to parsimonious approaches to integration, Bulmer and Joseph on the other hand, point out that integration as a process is too complex to be examined simply through the lens of class, economic privilege or functionalism (2016: 744). They maintain that integration is a sum of hegemonic projects that could be easily disrupted by any issues experienced at the domestic level, later reflecting much higher on the EU-structure (2016: 725). Other scholars argue that the role of identity politics is severely undermined when addressing the process of integration through liberal intergovernmentalist and neofunctionalist approaches. For instance, drawing on the idea of “ideational liberalism” that Moravcsik (1997: 515) introduces, Börzel and Risse (2017: 102) claim that



social constructivism could best explain some crises, such as the sovereign debt crisis. However, where some of these crises result in more integration, and others result in more disintegration (the Schengen crisis, that later was incorporated into the narrative of the refugee crisis, and Brexit). These crises, among others, will be analyzed in the paragraphs below through the lens of some problem-driven, rather than theoretical, approaches.

### **Problem-driven approaches**

As opposed to these theoretical perspectives on the process of European integration, other scholars prefer to focus on the subject by utilizing a problem-driven approach. For instance, in the cases of the sovereign debt crisis, the refugee flow, the Brexit, resurgent Russia, and the threat of terrorism, Archick (2016: 17-18) envisions four possible scenarios for the future of the EU that imply either higher level of integration or disintegration. According to her, an initial outcome from these crises can be a steady situation in which the current status-quo persists – EU continues to adopt and apply common policies where possible. A second scenario would be a “Europe on two speeds”, that refers to a close tight cooperation and policy harmonization between some states and more independence in legislation for other member states. This scenario incorporates both integration and disintegration features. According to her, a third possible development would be more intergovernmental cooperation, instead of further integration strategies. In this scenario, she claims, there would be some amount of disintegration caused by far-right parties that traditionally express Euro-skepticism. The fourth scenario may involve closer integration between a lower number of member states than before the crisis occurred. Differently, authors such as Karolewski and Cross (2017: 151) accentuate on the “restraining or enabling” effects the crises have on EU integration. They claim that in some cases, the EU could produce a common policy and a united reaction against the external crisis. In other cases, the crisis could merely show that the limits of integration have been reached, and that the member states are, to a large extent, comfortable with maintaining their sovereignty intact and thus rejecting further integration (Karolewski and Cross, 2017: 141-142).

Based on these, the following sections describe problem-driven works focused on different crises, suggested by Archick (2016) that the EU faced throughout the years and faces presently: 1) economic crises (2007-2009); 2) security-related crises; 3) Brexit; 4) crises concerning EU-Russia relationship. Here, Brexit and the EU-Russia relationship are placed in separate categories, mostly because of they include multiple aspects (e.g. economic, social, and security elements). The implications of such scholarship show that integration or disintegration tendencies are best demonstrated in times of crises. Theoretical insights are not missing in these contributions, but instead they are oriented toward a problem (crisis)-driven perspective that seeks to hypothesize from a single or a number of cases. In theoretical contributions, the theory predominantly sets the

conceptualization of the events and suffers from its limitations because it aims to apply a set of principles (a theory), perceived as valid, to a case. In problem-driven contributions, the problem stays in the core of the analysis, and the chosen method of reasoning and framework revolve around the problem, and not on the contours of the employed theory. Authors who advocate for such approach find it capable to avoid the “often bitter, repetitive, and inherently inconclusive paradigmatic debates” (Katzenstein and Okawara, 2002: 183).

### **The EU’s financial crisis**

Becker and Jäger (2012: 183) argue that the Eurozone created room for uneven economic development of the member states as it stimulated growth based on substantial debt, thus provoking instability in the entire Union. This conclusion that more integration could ironically lead to more disintegration in the future was also supported by Polyakova and Fligstein (2016). Seeing that the financial crisis of 2007-2009 that pushed forward integration on the economic level, in terms of coordinating fiscal policy and bank supervision, at the same time made citizens anxious about their economic security. This eventually led to an increased support for right-wing parties that advocated for (more) domestic sovereignty, which can lead to a certain degree of disintegration in the Union (Polyakova and Fligstein, 2016: 68).

To further problematize the issue, Kuhn and Stoeckel (2014: 638) assert that strict economic policies adopted on a supranational level are perceived by developing member states as a difficult but much needed measure, while stronger economies in the Union tend to see it merely as an additional financial burden. In addition, Kuhn and Stoeckel (2014: 638) propose that European integration is conditional upon whether member states perceive it as a threat to the national identity. On the other hand, a much more hopeful view on the future of European integration, in the spirit of post-functionalism, is the one of by Frank Schimmelfennig (2014). Since he argues that in challenging times of a financial crisis in Europe, integration policies defeated disintegration, thanks to three essential factors:

isolating policy-making at the European level from the constraining dissensus through Euro-compatible government formation, avoiding or taming referendums, and supranational delegation (Schimmelfennig, 2014: 335).

### **The crises engendered by EU’s security concerns<sup>8</sup>**

The refugee crisis brought a tension escalation about the immigration policies in the European Union. One of the puzzles that scholars look to resolve, in this regard, relates to the

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<sup>8</sup> By security concerns, I identify the most debated topics in this field such as the refugee flow, border control and immigration policies, as well as their implications for integration. Terrorism is not listed as a separate category because

asylum law on a supranational level and its implementation or lack of implementation in the member states. Trauner (2016: 321) argues that imposing rules to deal with the refugee crisis would be an immense burden for the Southern states, while ignoring the problem and the legislations to solve the issue would burden the Northern states. Explained through a more theoretical point of view, this work seems to imply that nation-states have diverging interests and pose the inevitable dilemma of the Rubik's cube – a solution that is good for Northern Europe causes disruption in the Southern Europe, and so on. Thus, the refugee crisis and border control concerns could reintroduce the problem of disintegration that stems from the incompatible interests of different member states.

Contrary to this perception about the refugee crisis, Timothy Hatton (2015: 605) sees it as a case for deeper integration, which is “desirable and politically possible”. The focus of his analysis is on the success of harmonization policies and shared responsibilities in the process of developing a Common European Asylum System. Introducing the idea of a search for “social optimum”, Hatton (2015: 632) encourages further integration efforts in times of crises related to European security. To this end, Alexander Caviedes (2015: 563) subscribes as well. He emphasizes the great amount of work by EU institutions and agencies dedicated to issue of migration in the Union, thus demonstrating the increased level of integration between the member states and the empowerment that supranational bodies received as a consequence through the implementation of Directives in regard to asylum, for instance (Caviedes, 2015: 561-562).

## **Brexit**

Brexit not only posed difficult questions for the future of the EU integration process, but also gave scholars a variety of new topics to consider – What would be the future of the U.K. outside of the EU? How would the EU continue survive without one of the strongest actors in the Union? Could Brexit be seen as an opportunity for further integration, remaining as is, or would it have a spillover effect over other member states that are already skeptical about their membership? In terms of these general trends about Brexit, Giandomenico Majone (2017: 26) argues that concerns for sovereignty would make member states indecisive in terms of crises when it comes to further integration, thus “contemporary Europe can become, at best, a confederation”. He adds that the idea for a confederation, as an expression of the functionalist approach, might be a possibility in the negotiations between the EU member states, especially after Brexit and other events that entail disintegration.

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its components fall under one of the already included categories. There were no scholarly works found that examined the relationship between EU integration and “homegrown terrorism”, as this is the only element not examined in this work from the category pertaining to terrorism.

Thus, the future of the previously outlined integration-disintegration dyad could be understood, as a risk for disintegration for some while a chance for more integration for others – where some countries will form stronger bonds, as others become peripheral (Pisani-Ferry et al., 2016: 10). Richard Whitman (2016: 49) sees the degree to which the U.K. wants to remain a part of the EU's common foreign, security and defense policy, as a determining component of the extent of disintegration after Brexit. Sampson (2017: 181), on the other hand, questions if Brexit should be perceived as a negative response to the increased integration in the Union or merely as a result of the fact that globalization has certain boundaries, which were reached. Another important issue that also needs consideration is “understanding and responding to the motivations of voters who oppose the European Union” (Sampson, 2017: 182). For this, Nauro Campos expresses strongly positive opinions for the case of greater integration (2016: 41). He underlines that it is not questionable if more or less integration is needed, but a more efficient and enhanced type of integration should be the focus of policy-makers, scholars and the public.

### **The multispectral crisis of the EU-Russia relationship**

When it comes to the meaning of EU integration in terms of its relationship with Russia, Timothy Snyder (2015: 706) underlines Russia's role in stimulating disintegration processes in the context of support for nationalist and separatist parties across the Union. Focusing on the same question, Lukyanov (2008: 1118) views Russia's policy as a reaction to the EU's refusal to recognize it as a European state, even though it has participated in the politics of the region for centuries. While there was a certain degree of notable closeness in the positions of the EU and Russia in the past, the latter still gravitates towards East and South Asia while rejecting the EU-model with the claim of it being unsuccessful (Lukyanov, 2008: 1118).

Russia and the EU, according to Samuel Charap and Mikhail Troitskiy (2013: 51) have created intense competition for integrating new states into their political entities, which exacerbated their otherwise conflictual relationship. During the EU and Russia's attempts to integrate Eastern European states into their economic and social models, the states were weakened and destined to remain highly dependent on one of these respective regional hegemons (Bosse, 2014: 107). According to Richard Sakwa (2015: 554), another factor that contributed to the problematic relationship between the EU and Russia, ever since the end of the Cold War, was the exclusion of Moscow from the implementation of the idea of a “pan-continental” unity (Sakwa, 2015: 579). Based on these, Delcour and Kostanyan (2014: 10) conclude that no stable future for integration in the continent would be possible without a proper understanding of the geopolitics and historical

relationship that Kremlin has with some of the current EU member states as well as some potential member states.

On the other hand, the annexation of Crimea brought new aspects of consideration into EU-Russia relationship. Åslund (2014: 64) argues that European integration would now, to a large extent, depend on how Ukraine manages to overcome its most serious problem – corruption. He believes in that the EU, the IMF and the U.S. will have a very important role to play in helping Ukraine become a well-functioning state, replacing corruption practices with order, justice and legal means of economic development (Åslund, 2014: 73). Further examining Ukraine as a component in the EU-Russian political environment, Samokhvalov (2015: 1372) puts an emphasis on the choices and preferences of “three significant social actors: government, society and business elites”. Namely, these components would contribute to answering the question whether Ukraine will come closer to the EU, thus contributing to the integration process, or lean toward Russia, closing the door for further cooperation with a united Europe.

## Discussion

### *History of the debate*

While the debate about the future of international society (Carr, 1946) emerged in the field of international studies many decades ago, it did not have the form it has today. The reason for such development is that the challenges the international society faced, in a sense that Bull (1977) implies, changed significantly over the years. Therefore, the focus of the discussion, transitioned slowly from questioning the existence of elements of an international society to the question of its capabilities, and future, as it was accepted to exist. Even those scholars who believe in the scenario in which the European Union will soon disintegrate and lose its power as an independent international body, admit that an international community currently exists and is (except for the case of Brexit) expanding. On one hand, this view differs greatly from the perspective expressed in the years after the world wars, when most of the scholars were disillusioned by the destructive balance-of-power politics (Fox, 1944) and the shortcomings of the League of Nations that made them skeptical about the prospects of an international community. On the other hand, others like E.H. Carr have, to some extent, kept their ambitions and hopes that while the present times were not promising in terms of international cooperation, “idealism” was something to strive for, thus still possible to be achieved if the issue of power and interests is taken seriously (Carr, 1946). While Carr to some extent shares the concerns of other scholars who were very skeptical of the idea for international community, he believes that is still possible if the unequal power distribution between units in the system is taken seriously. Mainly this perspective became in the center of future efforts to support the existence and

the development of an international community despite the predominant, at the time, scholarly view that such idea would be impossible.

### ***Substantial contributions in the field***

Ever since the beginning of the EU-integration debate, scholars have made significant contributions that resulted in even deeper and broader discussions. Initially, they argued about general questions pertaining to the future of Europe – either as a united entity or as a continent that will be repeatedly torn apart by power struggles. Every work in the field that has given strong evaluations about the future of the EU has moved the debate further – it pushed other scholars to counter the arguments that others presented. During this time, as the question of whether European states have a future together emerged, it was viewed and analyzed mainly by realist and liberalist (idealist) approaches. While the realist approach remained negative, the liberal approach revealed different nuances that demonstrated a large variety of prognoses, not as skeptical as the one held by realist. Neofunctionalists, transactionalists, institutionalists, classical and liberal intergovernmentalists share more optimistic perspectives than realists. But their standpoints are quite different in terms of how far integration would go, and what specific conditions should be included in the theoretical framework for making predictions about it. It was also the question of European integration that gave birth to the emergence of the main schools of thought's different divisions in terms how likely they think EU integration is. Considering this issue, realists were perceived as too uncompromising in terms of a skeptical scenario for integration, and liberalists (idealists) were seen as too extreme in their optimistic prognoses.

After the first stage when the debate relied mostly on theoretical approaches passed by, the new generation of scholars began looking at integration from a more practical, problem-driven perspective. They added a conditionality in their analyses and were no longer questioning whether integration is possible anymore, but asking under what conditions it could occur. As opposed to this, others looked at conditions that might presuppose disintegration. Some of these works were entirely detached from affiliations to a particular school of thought. Instead, they adopted an eclectic approach that drew on both scholarly and foreign policy theories<sup>9</sup>. The complexity of the problems at hand called for much more diverse approaches than the application of monochromic realism or liberalism. It became clear that the best might be found somewhere in between. What started to

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<sup>9</sup> The difference between IR-theories and foreign policy theories is that the first group seeks to explain phenomena and their effects at a global level, considering the whole system of IR, while foreign policies take as a starting point the national perspective and how different elements within the nation can provoke changes in the system, and how the system can affect these elements.

matter more were the particular nuances of the approach, how they addressed the issue and not so much the approach itself.

### *State of the debate*

In an effort to make an evaluation of the lifecycle of the scholarly debate about the future of the European Union, one of the most important conclusions in this regard is that it made a significant progress. From a simple “illusion” of having a collective security system, it evolved into a discussion seeking to improve the imperfect, though still well-functioning, union of states. In more recent times, the question whether the EU is developing into a more integrated or more disintegrated community, is mostly viewed through an evaluation of the crises it experiences. In this form, the debate reached a steady phase where it is neither getting resolved, nor it has disappeared from the literature. Some scholars see crises as a potential for a more integrated community, and others see them as just another event leading to disintegration. Until the official dissolution of the European Union or until an event leading to its utter amalgamation, scholars will most likely keep the debate alive without uniting around a common position since signs of total disintegration or achieving a superior form of integrated community are not currently evident.

Nevertheless, this, in no way undermines the contributions in the field. While there are conflicting opinions offering nuanced assessments on the question, scholars could still contribute in conceptualizing problems, developing effective policies, and identifying potential issues. In fact, by doing so, they could determine the future of the Union itself. Scholars closely observe every problem that threatens to become or has already escalated into a crisis, and its implications for integration, to inquire about the future of the EU. The vast majority of them are united around the centrality of the problem in the study of international relations – a fact that is best reflected on the creation of a scholarly journal, called the Journal of European Integration<sup>10</sup> that addresses different components of the topic. When it comes to identifying these focal points (crises) that shape predictions of more/less integration, researchers are relatively unanimous about what constitutes them: the media, at least partly. Ringo Ma writes that:

News media, in the process of reporting, inevitably ‘select, emphasize, and arrange’ events (Singer & Endreny, 1993: 21). Although mass media rarely initiate or change an event, they can influence perceptions of disasters and risks. In other words, the manner in which a crisis is developed can be largely related to the agenda setting role (selecting issues to report) and framing process (selecting specific aspects of issues to report) of mass media. This is why many scholars postulate that media construct reality (2005: 242).

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<sup>10</sup> The first issue dates back to 1977.

Many of the challenges that the EU is facing could rapidly be reported as a “crisis” in the mainstream media through a so-called “discursive struggle”, a motivation to label events in a particular way (Raboy, 1992: 133). Media focuses predominantly on the events that could potentially lead to disintegration and to some extent leave the achievements of the Union outside public attention. This could be attributed to the populist nature of the media coverage, as some scholars argue (Roodujin, 2014: 741). Hence, the public opinion about future integration could quickly become polarized and the integrity of the Union could be gradually jeopardized, as in the case of Brexit.

So far, in the literature, it seems that the negative and the positive assessments of the work of the EU have been balanced, perhaps with a slight prevalence on the side that anticipates disintegration. This could be attributed to the critical thinking the scholars apply to problems rather than to achievements. It is also possible that works that are skeptical towards integration are a reflection of the rise of the populism in the EU, that has achieved a continuous presence in the member states’ and benefitted from voters’ fear of integration, provoked to a large extent by alarming newspaper headlines (Brack and Startin, 2015; Caiani and Guerra, 2017; Usherwood and Startin, 2012). Headlines are frequently exaggerated for marketing purposes and it is also recognized that: “newspapers are more typical points of reference and sources of information for lay people than are academic journals” (Thurlow, 2006: 689). Thus, it should be acknowledged that mainstream media has a much more significant influence on public opinion than academics. However, even though scholars might not have the power to set the tone for portraying a problem and its seriousness, this does not mean they could not be part of its solution.

As noted above, the debate about the future of the European Union attracts a lot of media attention. This makes it inevitable that scholars, public opinion, and journalism are intertwined and mutually influence each other. An example in this regard is a recent study by the Chatham House, published in *POLITICO* (Paravicini<sup>2017</sup>). It seeks to identify public moods about integration, disintegration and their implications. It is most likely to leave a door open for an even more intensified discussion on the topic, since the main result of the survey showed that the largest group of the EU population falls into the category of “hesitant Europeans”. The latter supports the Union and their nation-states’ membership in it, but expresses concerns about a variety of topics, such as immigration, sovereignty, decision-making, etc. They are not only the largest group in the study, but also the one that is likely to be convinced either in favor of the idea that more integration has its merits or that more disintegration will result in more benefits for the respective nation-states.



*Central questions in the scholarship about EU integration*

The most critical questions to be asked in this debate depends highly on one precondition – does a researcher believe that the European Union, as a modern expression of the idea of an international society, has a chance of survival.

One group of scholars in the literature, mostly represented by realist thinkers, believe that integration processes will fail and ultimately the union will either dissolve or become an example of a victory of domestic interests, over collective ones. For this group of scholars, the most essential issue in this debate is (if they are indeed right) that further integration or at least maintaining this level of integration are both impossible. Furthermore, if the EU disappears or ceases to function as a collective body, it should be considered what other mechanisms would replace the power politics and the inevitable conflicts that may follow in future. Traditionally, realists do not focus much on the question of how to enhance the international environment, but rather only give a prediction that stresses the cyclical nature of struggles for power. As outlined in the “Theoretical Perspectives” section, some scholars from this school frame crises into a theoretical approach that could best explain them. While this could be useful in terms of methodological parsimony, such an approach has many limitations as it fails to seek solutions for two factors. First, how the immediate negative consequences from a crisis could be limited, and second, how future crises could be prevented while, at the same time, accounting for the complex nature of the international environment. Additional important questions such as how to fix the direct damage on the EU’s overall credibility and its self-identity narrative that is harmed by a current crisis remain also unanswered.

A much more pragmatic and larger group appears to be the one of researchers implementing the problem-driven approach that seeks to avoid shortcomings of the purely theoretical framing of crises. This group of researchers invests efforts in changing the status-quo. The main question to be asked by this group is how to overcome the sovereignty concerns of states in an effort to build collective security and a shared identity. In all of the works examined in this essay, it was evident that the clash between domestic and collective interests was at the foundation of every major EU crisis in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Thus, the core of the problem with integration could be depicted in more simple terms: What mechanisms should be developed to increase the number of areas where domestic and collective interests match? While this goal seems difficult to achieve at first glance, it has had remarkable results in the past as the EU have walked towards more and more integration until it obtained the dimensions it currently has. The crises have challenged them to a large extent but instead of general solutions that are impossible to implement in this state of the EU affairs, scholars should concentrate

on more practical issues that may act as a prevention to crises, such as how to increase the level of attraction to the Union in the eyes of the member states.

## Conclusion

A few words about the limitations of this study are also in order. Due to the large volume of literature dedicated to the questions of integration and disintegration, the works that I was able to examine are far from exhaustive. Therefore, I focused on works in the IR/Political Science fields, thus leaving studies in other fields unexplored. Future efforts that aim to contribute to the topic, similar to this one, should select works from other academic disciplines. This would provide academia with an opportunity to compare the evolution of the debate across different scientific fields, and to eventually combine these discussions in an effort to better cope with the interdisciplinary challenges that crises present to the integration of the European Union.

The findings of this study could be summarized in four major points. First, there has been a significant progress in terms of how the topic of European integration was examined over the years. In the very first works where the idea of an international society appeared, the predominant part of the postwar literature was very skeptical about such a perspective. Nowadays, the focus of the debate has shifted toward a discussion on the levels of integration and ceased to be limited to the question whether a common future for European countries is possible. As the scholarship subtly accepted this change in the assessment of the issue, scholarly works evolved in a following direction and achieved notable progress on the problems of EU integration.

Second, an important element of the evolution of the EU integration debate is the tripod of scholarship-media-public opinion that should be understood as an interactive process, rather than a sum of independent static elements that are in a vacuum. They all influence each other, and it will be unwise to analyze the matter of EU integration independently, as it exists in today's highly interconnected world.

Third, there are two main groups of scholars, based on the perspectives they use. The first one uses a theoretical approach and the second one a problem-driven approach. Another characteristic that distinguishes scholars is whether they think that deeper integration is possible. On one hand, realists outline assumptions about the cyclical nature of events, the inevitable conflicts and challenges that international societies face. At the same time, they lack a vision of how a brighter future of European affairs could be achieved. On the other hand, another cluster of scholars address the challenges that threaten the integration processes, investigate the reasons for the crises, and thus suggest solutions on how to avoid crises in the long run. Within the same group, some authors formulate idealistic solutions that could serve as an end goal for the far future of the Union. But, nevertheless, they are not compatible with the concerns about state sovereignty. These suggestions

do not correspond with how these plans should be implemented in an atmosphere of growing mistrust about the idea of collective interests, provoked by various crises that the EU has encountered since its foundation. Thus, it is crucial that scholars of all schools of thoughts, using either theory-driven or problem-driven analyses become receptive to the ideas of other authors, especially such of those that they do not share a standpoint. If achieved, the debate about the future of the EU has the potential to provide a balanced approach that could ensure a much more efficient lens for viewing and analyzing crises.

Fourth, the scholarship on EU integration will surely benefit if researchers dedicate more time and efforts to further evaluate the quality of the debate they have initiated. Therefore, an occasional assessment of the functionality of the existing research would make future contributions more applicable to the multifaceted world of EU politics.

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# Understanding the enlargement of the Eurasian Economic Union: The case of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan

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## Abstract

*The research note addresses the enlargement of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), which Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined shortly after its establishment in 2015. In theoretical terms, it aims to test Frank Schimmelfennig’s concepts on enlargement of integration communities. In practical terms, it seeks to answer why and how new members enter the EAEU. Qualitative research methods, such as historical, deductive and comparative analysis, to demonstrate that Schimmelfennig’s theoretical concepts can explain the process of enlargement of the EAEU.*

## Keywords

Enlargement; Eurasian Economic Union; Integration Theories; Post-Soviet Integration; Regional Integration

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<sup>11</sup> The research note is based on findings and conclusions of the PhD thesis “Eurasian integration as a way to respond to global challenges” defended by the author at the University of the Basque Country, Spain (Syssoyeva, 2015).



## Introduction

This research note studies the enlargement process of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), whose treaty came into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015. It aims to answer the question: why and how its new members, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, were admitted into this organization?

The EAEU is an organization of regional integration, whose origins date back to 2000s. It is based on the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), established on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000 as a free trade zone consisting of five former Soviet countries: Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In 2007, due to a similar level of economic development, common political views and close industrial ties, three EurAsEC members, Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, agreed on the creation of a Customs Union, which came into force on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Two years later, the same countries formed the Eurasian Economic Space, a common market of goods that removed non-tariff trade barriers and prepared the basis for the establishment of the EAEU. Building on their close economic, military, social and political interdependence, the founding members of the EAEU, inspired by the EU integration model, launched this regional integration project with the goal to form a single market of goods, services, labor and capital. Armenia joined the Union on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 and Kyrgyzstan entered on August 12<sup>th</sup> of the same year. Single markets of goods (including pharmaceuticals) and labor between these five countries were since created, and a common electricity market is planned for mid-2019, while common markets of oil and oil products are expected to be put into operation by 2025. The Union has a supranational executive body (Eurasian Economic Commission) and judiciary powers (Court of the EAEU), and its highest supranational body is the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, composed of the head of states of its members; by 2025, the establishment of a financial regulation institution is also planned (EAEU web-portal).

The study of the enlargement of the EAEU is relevant because it changes the geopolitical balance of power in the post-Soviet area and indicates the zones of influence of its regional players. It is also of high policy relevance as its members have a long-term priority to change the international order, currently led by the USA: they promote a multi-polar world to be based on five or more regional pillars (or centers of power) in the post-Soviet area, Asia, Europe, Latin America and other regions (the number of pillars still not being clearly defined). Implementation of this concept will have an influence on the global security and economy architecture. As such, the geopolitical importance of this organization goes far beyond regional concern and has global-level consequences (Bogaturov, 2009: 26). In social terms, and similarly to the EU, the EAEU may affect the formation of social values and identity of its members' peoples (this is, however, a long-term prospect as the current development of the Union is limited to economic issues).

As the EAEU is a new integration community, no integration (or re-integration) theory has so far been developed specifically for its explanation. Theorization of the EAEU is a new topic in international relations studies, and it provides wide opportunities for both recently graduated and experienced scholars to design novel approaches. The purpose of this paper is to test Frank Schimmelfennig's concepts on Armenia and Kyrgyzstan's accession to the Union. It analyses the issue from *one direction* only – it aims to explain the reasons why the founding members are interested in enlargement of the Union and the processes which make it possible. As such, this research note does not analyze the reasons why Armenia and Kyrgyzstan are interested in joining it.

## Literature review

In theoretical terms, the article is based on concepts related to the expansion of integration communities as described by Frank Schimmelfennig (2001). The author provided an analysis of and formulated theoretical claims relating to enlargement, which were originally developed to explain the expansion of the European Union.

In order to test these theoretical statements, the author mostly studied the works of post-Soviet scholars, who developed their research driven by the national interest of Russia and Kazakhstan and who are loyal to the policies of their governments.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding publications of scholars loyal to Russian governmental policy, the most significant works on post-Soviet space are those by Marina Lebedeva, Anatoly Torkunov, Alexei Bogaturov, Sergei Glaziyev and Andrei Kazantzev. They are academic employees of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO, 2018), members of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS, 2018) or public officials (Kremlin, 2018). These authors analyze the issue from their considerable experience within relevant organizations and consider Eurasian integration as a promising opportunity for industrial and economic development of integrating countries and as a process that changes the existing balance of power in the international arena in geopolitical terms, which is consistent with the idea of a multi-polar world order mentioned above.

As for scholars loyal to Kazakhstani governmental policy, the author finds that publications by Murat Laumulin (2008) and Bolat Ahmetgaliyev (2010) are the most valuable. They share nation-centric political views, which coincide with the multilateral political course of the Republic (officially called as “a multi-vector policy”), focused on balancing power amongst world powers competing in the region, and consider the issue of integration through the prism of its opportunities for the internal development of Kazakhstan.

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<sup>12</sup> As it is difficult to affiliate these authors with certain theoretical schools, the author classifies scholars into those who are loyal to the governmental policy of Kazakhstan, and those who are loyal to the governmental policy of Russia. The distinction between Russian and Kazakhstani, therefore, follows a purely geographical principle.

Herewith, the author uses Schimmelfennig's theoretical concepts as a theoretical basis for this article and considers the contributions of Russian and Kazakhstani scholars as additional tools to help with the analysis and evaluation of the case study.

## Theoretical framework

Frank Schimmelfennig considers enlargement of integration communities as being an "efficiency-driven" response of their member-states to increased interdependence with newly integrating members (Schimmelfennig, 2010: 221). His concepts are related to a) interests of member-states which intend to involve new members into this community; and to b) interstate negotiation of the process of enlargement. He distinguishes those member-states, which favor the process – the "drivers of integration" – from those which oppose it – the "brakemen of integration" (Schimmelfennig, 2009: 416).

Concerning the interests of its new members, they are likely to be influenced by *geographical proximity*, *threats* and the opportunity for *influence*. Proceeding from *geographical proximity*, three arguments are worth noting. First, member-states that are geographically closer to candidate-countries are more interdependent and thus more vulnerable to crises, conflicts and other political changes occurring in their neighbor-states than in the more distant members. Second, economic benefits increase with geographical proximity because of low transportation and communication costs. And third, and taking into account these political and economic dynamics, it is reasonable to note that those countries that have a common border with candidate member-states, or are at least situated close to them, are likely to be drivers of their involvement (Schimmelfennig, 2001: 50-51). In relation to *threats*, the experience of already existing integrated communities demonstrates that potential disputes can take place among those members and candidates that specialize in the same industrial fields or claim equal financial aid from supranational bodies and community funds. As far as potential *influence* opportunities, again proceeding from world integration experience, it may be stated that under conditions of asymmetrical interdependence, those states that are geographically closer to candidates gain more influence over them (Schimmelfennig, 2001: 52). This explains why Germany is considered the major beneficiary of Eastern enlargement of the EU and France is known as its traditional brakeman (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 53; Schimmelfennig, 2001: 62).

Concerning interstate negotiation of the process of enlargement, Frank Schimmelfennig's theoretical contribution relates to the conditions of successful bargaining and "rhetorical entrapment", which takes place in a situation when new members find themselves caught up or "entrapped" into an integration community (Schimmelfennig and Thomas, 2009: 501). In the sphere of "rhetorical entrapment", Schimmelfennig proposes two theoretical concepts – "rhetorical action" and "political conditionality" (Schimmelfennig, 2003: 495).

*Rhetorical action* relates to the *strategy* of drivers of enlargement, which could be summarized as “strategic use of norm-based arguments” (Schimmelfennig, 2001: 62). The main instrument of this strategy is *legitimacy*, with norms determining standards of behavior, affiliation, rights and obligations of those who can become members of integrated community; it states the rules on how governance should be exercised, decisions to be implemented, the initiatives to be proposed, etc. Theoretically, rhetorical action could be used by all actors: allowing less powerful actors to influence more powerful ones, as those states which behave in accordance to institutional legitimacy increase their bargaining power on common issues (Schimmelfennig, 2010: 230).

*Political conditionality* also relates to the process of interstate bargaining under the enlargement process, but it concerns the external relations of integrated community, not the internal ones. It is a top-down mechanism for determining rules, principles, norms and standards of behavior that should be followed by those candidate countries which claim the community’s financial support, association status and – ultimately – membership, in order to obtain all these gains (Schimmelfennig and Choltz, 2010: 445).

Schimmelfennig finds that political conditionality frequently takes the form of “reinforcement by reward” and is a widely used strategy by integrated communities in shaping the relations with their neighbors and candidate countries. This strategy implies the practice of extending benefits to those “target” states which have fulfilled prescribed norms – from technical assistance and financial aid to access to internal markets and membership, and differs from “reinforcement by punishment” (charging penalties if norms have not been complied) and “reinforcement by support” (giving absolute support), the other two strategies of political conditionality, as it gives the integrated community a wide scope for maneuver – for example, it allows the integrated group to control target countries’ behavior without coming into long-term agreements with them. The most efficient means of this form of coercion are intergovernmental, taken the institutional form of treaties on cooperation, trade, association and – ultimately – admission agreements (Schimmelfennig, Engert and Knobel, 2003: 496-497).

All these theoretical observations of Frank Schimmelfennig can be applied to the example of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the EAEU described at the “Analysis and findings” part of this paper, where the following concepts will be used:

- Rhetorical action,
- Rhetorical entrapment,
- Political conditionality,
- Reinforcement by reward,
- Reinforcement by support,

- Driver of integration,
- Brakeman of integration.

## Methodology

This article prioritizes explanation of the enlargement process of the EAEU, and it is based on qualitative methods of rationalization and testing of theoretical concepts. More precisely, the author uses historical research, deductive and comparative analysis (Berg, 2012).

Historical research explains how and where events happened and allows understanding the past as “a source of experience”; the observer is separated from his/her object of cognition by time and space and he/she uses a heuristic technique in order to discover and to interpret what happened in the past (Špiláčková, 2012: 22-23). In the present paper, historical research is used for explaining the context of the case-study, i.e. the establishment of the EAEU and the circumstances under which Armenia and Kyrgyzstan entered the Union.

Deductive analysis is used to test theories; according to Bruce Berg, it is widely applied by scholars, who use a theory as a conceptual framework for developing their reasoning and explanation of the topics they study (Berg, 2001: 246). In this paper, the concepts by Schimmelfennig create a framework for explaining the issue of enlargement of the EAEU.

For comparative analysis, both qualitative and quantitative data can be used. The method is based on comparing an issue “A” and an issue “B” in a bid to establish similarities and contradictions in these cases (Mills et al., 2006: 621). Within the present paper, comparison is made between Armenia's and Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EAEU.

## Data

Data used by the author can be divided into two groups: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources relate to qualitative data from original articles by Prof. Schimmelfennig, from which the concepts that explain enlargement of integration communities were captured. Secondary sources are articles, agreements, internet-resources, and statistical data offered by UNCTAD, IMF and other statistical agencies, which were used for explaining the case-study, and to back up the primary sources.

## Analysis and findings

### *Entrapment through political conditionality: the case of the Republic of Armenia*

In the case of the accession of the Republic of Armenia (RA) to the EAEU, the Russian Federation (RF) is the main driver of integration. RF-RA are asymmetrically interdependent. Armenia is largely dependent on Russia in economic terms (the RF is Armenia's second trade partner

after the EU), in energy (Yerevan is dependent on RF fuels supply), investments (Russia is the main investor in RA) and migration issues (migrants' remittances accounts for more than 22% of RA's GDP) (EURASEC ANTI-CRISIS FUND). Yerevan is also dependent in security issues: Armenia considers Russia a reliable military partner because the country is isolated by its neighbors, with whom it does not maintain diplomatic relations and whose borders are closed (the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan is closed due to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, and the Armenian-Turkish border is closed due to the Armenian genocide, as well as Turkey-Azerbaijan close relations) (Kazanzev, 2014). In this situation, military support by Russia and assurance of its non-alliance with Azerbaijan in Nagorno Karabakh's case is vital for securing Armenian interests in this conflict and for its national security.

Russia is dependent on Armenia primarily in security issues: Russian decision to drive Armenia to join the Union is rationalized by Armenia's geographical proximity to the Russian Caucasus, an important region in the RF's security system, and especially to Chechnya, the region of relative internal instability. Herewith, for both countries, cooperation is a matter of security reasoned by considerations of geographical proximity and military threats (Glaziev, 2014: 29).

Concerning negotiation of the enlargement, Armenian entrapment into the Union is an example of the use of the political conditionality strategy by Russia. Yerevan actively participated in the Eastern Partnership program by the EU and negotiated Association Agreements with it. In spite of that, in 2013 when negotiations were almost finished, Armenia stated that it would access the EAEU instead of the integration projects proposed by the EU (Fayos, 2014: 8). In addition to the economic consideration for that change in direction, there are also military questions related to the Nagorno Karabakh, an issue always influencing Armenian's foreign policy decision-making. In this situation, Armenia's preference to maintain the conflict frozen makes it prioritize partnership with the RF over any other potential benefits proposed by the EU (Mirzayan, 2014). Considering these dynamics, Fernando Garcés de Los Fayos observed that Yerevan's "U-turn in policy" was forced by the RF's agreement with Baku to supply Azerbaijan with new weapons one month before the Armenian declaration of commitment to join the EAEU (Fayos, 2014: 8). This case of entrapment can be seen as an example of "reinforcement by punishment" tactics used by Russia, forcing Armenia to decide in favor of the Eurasian organization.

However, and similarly to the EU, Russia prefers to use more sparing tactics such as "reinforcement by reward". The country is the main investor in Armenia: total Russian FDI in this Caucasus republic is around 2,5 billion USD, representing more than 50% of all FDI funds accumulated in the country) (UNCTAD). Moscow also pursues a loyal energy policy toward

Armenia, for whom the price of natural gas is kept at the level of 150 USD per 1000 m<sup>3</sup>, the most “friendly” price for Russian gas in the world (Neftegaz, 2018).

The brakemen of Yerevan’s accession to the Union was Kazakhstan, which demanded (and achieved) that Armenia enters the Union with its borders recognized by the international community and the UN, i.e. without Nogorno Kazabakh (Muminov, 2014).

In spite of the limited economic contribution of Armenia to the EAEU economy (the Republic accounts for 0.5% of the RF GDP) (IMF), its entrapment represents an important achievement of Moscow.

### ***“Reinforcement by reward” and “reinforcement by support”: the entrapment of the Kyrgyz Republic***

Similar to Armenia, the current economic development of the Kyrgyz Republic (KR) cannot largely contribute to the material prosperity of the Union – KR’s GDP is much lower than its partners and accounts for only 0.4% of Russian GDP (UNCTAD). KR is one of the poorest republics in the region and its industrial capacity has largely decreased since the collapse of the USSR. Even though the country has one of the most liberal regimes in the region in terms of openness to foreign investments, its industrial base, inherited from Soviet times, was largely destroyed, especially concerning machinery, agriculture and manufacturing of consumer goods (Glaziev, 2014: 28).

Kyrgyzstan’s accession can be explained in terms of security. After 9/11 and proclamation the war against international terrorism by the USA, Kyrgyzstan has been involved in Washington’s sphere of potential geopolitical interests. This was against Russian interests, as it traditionally considered this Central Asian republic as its zone of influence. The competition between the RF and the USA for influence over KR is seen in the example of military bases deployed by both powers in that country: as of 2001, Washington used Manas airport (situated close to KR’s capital) as its base, assuring herewith its military presence in Kyrgyzstan (Wilkinson, 2014: 146), while Russian military presence has, in turn, been legitimized by KR’s membership in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which Moscow used in order to establish Kant military base in 2003, following the USA agreement with Bishkek regarding Manas. Kant became the first new military base opened within the CSTO (Russia inherited all other bases in the region from Soviet times) (Klimenko, 2011: 12). In 2009, Bishkek announced the closure of the Manas base, following a Russian offer of 2 billion USD credit, to which Washington responded by offering a 180 million USD payment, thus keeping the base at American disposition (Wilkinson, 2014: 146), with a change of name: from “Manas Air Base” to “Transit Center Manas”. In 2013, Bishkek did not prolong the agreement with Washington and American troops left Manas in 2014 (Russia Today, 2014), which can be considered as Russia’s political victory. In such a manner, Eurasian entrapment of Kyrgyzstan

coincided with a Russian victory in the struggle with the USA for influence over that country. For Kyrgyzstan, in turn, accession to the EAEU is a way of preserving its political stability and nationhood development, widely disturbed by conflicts endured by the country (Glaziev, 2014: 29).

In its entrapment policy toward Bishkek, Moscow uses not only political and military leverages but also the “reinforcement by *reward*” and “reinforcement by support” tactics, seen in the support of KR’s economy through an 8.513 billion USD EurAsEC Anti-crisis fund largely financed by Moscow (7.5 USD billion) and Astana (1 USD billion) (Dodonov, 2012: 65) and in a 1 billion USD Russian-Kyrgyz fund to support the agriculture, services and industrial base of the country, established after KR declared its commitment to Eurasian integration (The Moscow Times, 2015), among other financial support.

It should be added that 31% of Kyrgyz GDP depends on remittances of its workers abroad (primarily in Russia) (Schenkkan, 2014). By joining the EAEU, Kyrgyzstan will largely improve the situation of its workers in Kazakhstan and Russia, as the common labor market agreement will ensure similar working conditions to its citizens, close to those of the citizens of its neighboring countries.

## Conclusions

The present article sought to explain the process of accession of new members to the EAEU by using Frank Schimmelfennig’s theoretical contributions. This analysis demonstrates that Russia is the main driver of the entrapment of both new members – Armenia and Kyrgyzstan – to the EAEU. In the first case, entrapment is determined by Yerevan’s need for Russian military support, significant Russian FDI into the Armenian economy and low prices on natural gas. The brakemen of Armenia’s accession was Kazakhstan, which insisted (and achieved) that Armenia enters the Union without Nagorno Karabakh. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, entrapment was done through Bishkek’s military considerations, Russian “reinforcement by reward” and “reinforcement by support” tactics (also used in the case of Armenia), via financial support to the country, and giving equal rights to workers from Kyrgyzstan, on whose remittances the country’s economy is largely dependent on.

Application of theoretical concepts proposed by Frank Schimmelfennig demonstrates their usefulness goes far beyond explanations of EU integration, for which they were originally designed. Analysis confirms that his concepts, such as driver and brakeman of integration, rhetorical entrapment and its strategies (i.e. political conditionality, reinforcement by reward, and reinforcement by support) can be used for explanation the enlargement process of the EAEU.



## Future research

This research note analysed Schimmelfennig's concepts from one direction only, i.e. from the perspective of the founding members of the EAEU. The next step to fully understand this issue would be to analyze these dynamics from the perspective of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

New concepts by Schimmelfennig can also be considered in explaining the development of the EAEU, such as “widening” of integration or “horizontal institutionalization”, which refers to the process of increasing the area of influence of integrated communities (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2002: 503). Application of these concepts might explain the process of establishment of free trade zones between the Union and not-EAEU allies, such as Vietnam, Serbia, Egypt and Iran.

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## Domestic Politics as an Explanation for Voluntary Union: The Missing Case of the United Arab Republic

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### Abstract

*What are the causes of voluntary union in world politics? In other words, why would two states decide to freely surrender their individual autonomy and merge into one state? In a sweeping new study that emanates from the realist tradition, Joseph Parent claims to have examined all the relevant historical cases and found that the unmistakable cause of voluntary union between two states is “optimally intense, indefinite, and symmetrically shared” external security threats. However, this paper will demonstrate that Parent has mistakenly omitted valid historical cases of voluntary unions from his sample and, in the process, biased his findings. By examining one of these wrongly excluded cases in-depth, that of the United Arab Republic between Egypt and Syria, this paper will demonstrate that internal security threats and personal political incentives can also be causes of voluntary union.*

### Keywords

Arab Nationalism; Nasser; Political Integration; Realism; United Arab Republic; Voluntary Union

## Introduction

In his book, *Uniting States*, Joseph Parent attempts to explain what causes *voluntary* political union in world politics. In other words, why would two states decide to freely surrender their individual autonomy and merge into one? His central argument, emanating from the realist tradition, is that two states unify if they face “optimally intense, indefinite, and symmetrically shared” *external* security threats from third-party states (Parent, 2011: 8). While Parent’s argument may fully explain why some voluntary unions occur, this paper will challenge it in two principal ways by examining a single case in-depth – that of the United Arab Republic, a short-lived union between Egypt and Syria that lasted from 1958 to 1961.

Though the results from a single case study are not as generalizable as those from a large-N analysis and cannot disprove a probabilistic argument, one case can disprove a deterministic argument simply by showing a single situation where the argument does not hold (Rogowski, 2010: 89-97). Parent makes two deterministic arguments that I will argue the case of the UAR disproves. The first one is definitional. In defining voluntary union, he asserts that “the first [factor that makes a union less voluntary] is the power disparity between unifying states. When a large state annexes a small state, the outcome *cannot* be called voluntary” because coercion undoubtedly must have been at play (Parent, 2011: 5; emphasis added). As a result of this assumption, Parent dismisses several potential cases from his analysis, which he claims include the entire “universe of cases”.<sup>13</sup> However, whether coercion is at play in a union is an empirical question that cannot be determined *a priori* (Coggins, 2013: 352). Though Parent dismisses the UAR as a union “between unequals” (Parent, 2011: 5), it was actually the weaker state, Syria, that aggressively sought union with the stronger state, Egypt. Therefore, even though it is only one case, an analysis of the UAR will demonstrate that Parent’s restrictive definition of voluntary union is incorrect.

The second deterministic argument that Parent makes is that “...*only* security deficiencies causes states to unify. Unification is extreme balancing behavior *against other states*” (Parent, 2011: 23; emphasis added). Nevertheless, the case of the UAR will demonstrate that, in addition to external security threats, *internal* security threats to Syria, along with the personal political incentives of certain Egyptian and Syrian elites, were also critical to the formation of the UAR. Accordingly, Parent’s argument that only external security threats can spur voluntary political union is also incorrect.

To support these claims, the paper will be organized as follows. First, it will consider Parent’s arguments in more detail and foreshadow how the case of the UAR supports and contradicts his framework. Second, it will examine in-depth the conditions leading to the formation of the UAR. Third, it will conclude by explaining the implications of the UAR for Parent’s arguments.

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<sup>13</sup> Parent examines the unions of the United States, Switzerland, Sweden and Norway, and Gran Colombia in his book.

## Parent's Argument

### *Summary*

Parent argues that there are at least three necessary conditions that must be present for two states to unify: (i) they must face optimally intense *external* security threats that are indefinite and symmetrically shared; (ii) there must be some crisis that highlights the need for union in order to address security concerns; and (iii) elites must use the tools at their disposal to persuade the necessary audiences that union is necessary.

Optimally intense external security threats are those that are severe enough to warrant the extreme step of union, but not so overwhelming that union fails to alleviate the security threat in any meaningful sense (Parent, 2011: 9-10). Egypt and Syria did face significant external security threats in the form of Israel, Iraq, the US, the USSR, the UK, France, etc., and forming the UAR did help deter these threats to some extent. Parent also argues that threats must be of long duration to spur union, as only threats that extend indefinitely will be powerful enough to motivate states to forsake their autonomy (Parent, 2011: 10-11). Since the US, USSR, UK, and France were not going anywhere, the threats that Egypt and Syria faced did seem to be long-term. Finally, Parent contends that states will not merge unless they are symmetrically (i.e., about equally) vulnerable to these security threats, as asymmetric vulnerability might make the less vulnerable state unenthusiastic about union (Parent, 2011: 11). However, this argument does not hold for the UAR. Even though Syria had its own unique internal threats and was more vulnerable to external threats than Egypt, union still occurred. Parent's mistake is a function of how he defines voluntary union, as by excluding any cases "between unequals," he biases his sample towards finding unions between states that are equally vulnerable to external threats. Nevertheless, the fact that Egypt was less vulnerable than Syria did make Egypt more tepid towards union and allowed Egypt to drive a harder bargain when it came to the terms of forming the UAR.

Parent's second necessary condition for union is that there must be some sort of crisis that highlights the need for union to address security deficiencies (Parent, 2011: 8, 12). Without this, citizens will not be convinced that a measure as extreme as union is necessary. This argument fits the case of the UAR since the Syrian Crisis of 1957 was the spark that precipitated its creation.

Parent's last condition for union is that elites must use the tools at their disposal to persuade critical audiences that union is necessary (Parent, 2011: 13-14). One important tool is the media, and it is true that the Egyptians used propaganda to convince the masses that union was necessary and desirable. A second tool is the military, and specific Syrian elites effectively utilized the military to pressure Egypt into accepting union. Finally, political procedures can be an important factor, and

certain Syrian elites undoubtedly manipulated who sat at the bargaining table in order to make union more likely. Therefore, this aspect of Parent's argument fits well with the case of the UAR.

Finally, Parent argues that realism explains voluntary union better than other major international relations paradigms. While Parent's realist theory argues that it is security threats that drive union, liberals have argued in favor of economics (Haas, 1964; 1968; Rodrik, 2000), and constructivists in favor of ideas (Adler and Barnett, 1998). Although this paper disagrees with Parent about what kinds of security threats can lead to union, it agrees with him that realism, broadly defined, does a better job than the alternative theories of explaining the formation of the UAR. Liberalism does not explain the formation of the UAR, as economics played little to no role in the merging of Egypt and Syria. On the other hand, constructivism does help explain the creation of the UAR, as ideas about Arab unity and nationalism certainly played a role in motivating political leaders to seek union and the public to accept it. Nevertheless, what drove the creation of the UAR was security threats and the personal political incentives of Egyptian and Syrian politicians. Though ideas about Arab unity were enough to convince Egypt and Syria to consider union on several occasions, union was explicitly rejected until security threats became particularly salient (Palmer, 1966: 50). Thus, it was realist-related variables like material threats and power that were the most important factors precipitating union.

### *Theoretical Criticisms*

This paper makes two central criticisms of Parent's argument. The first is that Parent defines voluntary union too narrowly. Just because there is a power disparity between states does not automatically make a union involuntary. The union between Egypt and Syria was voluntary given that it was the weaker state (Syria) that pushed for union and the publics of both states overwhelmingly approved of it. The second main criticism this paper makes of Parent's argument is that he inconsistently applies (Coggins, 2013: 352) the fundamental neorealist assumption that states are unitary actors, which essentially means that domestic politics is unimportant (Waltz, 1979). For example, Parent allows for domestic politics as an explanation for when unions form (after a crisis), how they form (by elite persuasion), and why they collapse (if internal threats eclipse external threats) (Parent, 2011: 10-12, 15, 27). However, when theorizing about why states unify, he appears to assume that states are unitary actors that only face external security threats. Therefore, while Parent allows for domestic politics to creep into his analysis, he does not consider it as an explanation for his central question of why states would agree to voluntarily unify. This paper argues that Parent did not go far enough in relaxing neorealist assumptions and considering the importance of factors at the state level of analysis. Domestic politics was critically important in motivating union between Egypt and Syria, as two of the major reasons for the formation of the UAR were (1) to protect Syria from



internal security threats, namely communism; and (2) to further the political power of key Syrian and Egyptian elites. Consequently, this paper will demonstrate the limitations of strictly adhering to neorealist assumptions.

## **The UAR: A Story of External Threats, Internal Threats, & Elite Incentives**

### ***Methodology***

It is precisely because Parent makes such unconditional arguments that a single case study can disprove his claims and significantly contribute to our understanding of voluntary union. Parent argues that unions between unequal states “cannot be considered voluntary” and that “only” external threats cause states to unify (Parent, 2011: 5, 23). Neither argument holds in the case of the UAR, which establishes that unions between unequal states can indeed be considered voluntary, and that there are other causes of voluntary union besides external security threats.

### ***Background on Egypt: The Rise of Nasser***

Before discussing the years immediately preceding the formation of the UAR, it is important to note some background information that will help structure the following sections. Egypt became a British Protectorate in 1882 and only received formal independence in 1922. The UK nevertheless continued to maintain significant influence over Egypt afterwards. It is in this context that Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power in 1954, after helping overthrow the British-backed Egyptian King Farouk (Yapp, 1991: 211-212). Nasser was first and foremost an Egyptian nationalist that aspired to free Egypt from British oppression and establish Egypt as a hegemon in the Arab world (Podeh, 1999: 28). Later, Nasser also became an aggressive supporter of Arab nationalism: the idea that Arabs in different states are linked and should unite based on their common language, culture, and (in most cases) religion in order to fend off foreign threats, especially Western imperialism and Israel (Hopwood, 1988: 79). Nasser, of course, favored Arab unity under his leadership. To this end, his two major doctrines were: (i) non-alignment with the superpowers is the best guarantee of independence; and (ii) Arab states should rely on other Arab states for their defense (Seale, 1965: 199). Given that Egypt was the strongest Middle Eastern Arab state, these doctrines were somewhat self-serving and led to conflict with other Arab states that did not want to depend on Egypt (Hopwood, 1988: 49). Foremost among them was Iraq.

### ***Background on Syria: Domestic Instability & The Ba'ath Party***

Two key points are important regarding Syria. First, besides external threats, Syria also faced significant internal threats in the form of domestic instability: the country had three military coups in 1949 and one in 1954 (Yapp, 1991: 99-101).

Second, a critically important political group within Syria for the formation of the UAR was the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, formally founded in 1946 and a minority member of the governing coalition in 1956 (Hopwood, 1988: 38). The goals of the Ba'ath Party were to achieve socialism, a unified Arab state, and independence from imperial influence, (Seale, 1965: 153). Therefore, both the Ba'ath and Nasser shared a passion for Arab nationalism, which demonstrates the importance of ideas in fostering union.

### *The Baghdad Pact: A Battle Between Egypt & Iraq with Syria in the Middle*

On February 24, 1955, Iraq joined the Baghdad Pact or Central Treaty Organization, a military alliance between Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and the UK. This signaled Iraq's alignment with the West and pledged the UK to defend Iraq if it were attacked and to provide them with military aid (Khadduri, 1960: 348-349). Iraq's signing of the Pact illustrates the contrasting visions for the Middle East held by Nasser and Iraq's Prime Minister, Nuri al-Sa'id. Sa'id was more supportive of relations with the West because he believed that the Soviet expansionist threat was substantial and that Arab armies were too weak to deter it (Seale, 1965: 199). Furthermore, Sa'id believed that forsaking Western aid would empower Egypt as the hegemon of the Middle East, thereby disadvantaging Iraq (Seale, 1965: 200). Alternatively, Nasser bitterly opposed the Baghdad Pact because he was against significant Western influence in the Middle East on principle and believed the Pact threatened Egypt's regional position by isolating it and enabling Iraq (Jankowski, 2002: 59).

The result of Egypt and Iraq's specific feud over the Baghdad Pact and general struggle for influence in the Middle East was attempts by both sides to destabilize and depose the other. Egypt waged a scathing propaganda campaign on their Voice of the Arabs radio station that criticized Sa'id for his "betrayal of Arabism" (Hopwood, 1991: 43) and his acceptance of "...an alliance that will destroy Iraq's aspirations of freedom, Palestine's hope of independence, and the Arabs' hopes of unity" (Jankowski, 2002: 72). Iraq also utilized its own propaganda radio station, the Voice of Free Iraq, to call for rebellion in Egypt (Jankowski, 2002: 73). Moreover, both parties provided financial support to opposition groups with the hope of overthrowing the other (Jankowski, 2002: 73). Consequently, Iraq was a serious external threat to Egypt.

The fight over the Baghdad Pact between Egypt and Iraq also extended to Syria, as Iraq wanted them to join as well, while Egypt strongly opposed such a move (Izzeddin, 1981: 303). Iraq had previously aspired to annex Syria in the so-called "Fertile Crescent Plan," which would have

strengthened Iraq's regional position at the expense of Egypt's (Pearson, 2007: 46). To this end, Iraq had a hand in the Syrian coups of 1949 and 1954, as well as plans for additional coups that never materialized and military invasion plans that were never approved (Seale, 1965: 266-280). None of these schemes ever led to union, and Syria ultimately decided not to join the Baghdad Pact because it was very unpopular with the Arab masses (Jaber, 1966: 37-39). Nonetheless, given Iraqi designs on Syria, which were also shared by Jordan, Syria faced significant external security threats during this time (Anderson: 1995: 23-24).

### *The Suez Crisis & Nasser's Skyrocketing Popularity*

Standing up to perceived Western imperialism with the Baghdad Pact improved Nasser's standing in the Arab world, and two additional events in 1955 furthered this trend. The first was the Bandung Conference in Indonesia in April, which was attended by 29 Asian and African states, many of which were newly independent. At the conference, Nasser advocated for the end of colonialism, including the right of Algeria to gain its independence from France, championed the Palestinian cause, and became a leader in the non-aligned movement (Izzeddin, 1981: 200-202). Although Nasser's support for the non-aligned movement angered the West, and his support for Algerian independence infuriated the French, it increased his prestige among Arabs (Hopwood, 1991: 46). A second event occurred in September, when Nasser bought arms from the USSR through Czechoslovakia, bypassing the West.

Western anger towards Nasser only increased in early 1956. In March, Jordan, which had a treaty linking it to the UK, ordered General John Glubb and other British officers to leave the country (Jaber, 1966: 42). Since the UK mistakenly thought that the Egyptians had a direct hand in removing Glubb, their frustration with Nasser expanded even further (Lucas, 1991: 94-95). In May, Egypt formally recognized communist China, which was yet another black mark on Nasser's record (Izzeddin, 1981: 156). Britain and France only needed one more antagonistic act by Nasser to push them over the edge.

The Suez Canal, occupied by the UK since 1882, was a clear symbol of external political domination and economic exploitation. Principally for this reason, Nasser announced on July 26, 1956, that Egypt would be nationalizing the Canal. This was immensely popular with the Arab masses in general, and after this announcement there was a rally in Syria with over 100,000 people celebrating Nasser's decision (Podeh, 1999: 33). Even Iraq had to *publicly* support and congratulate Nasser because his actions were so popular that opposing them risked revolution (Jankowski, 2002: 83). In private, however, Iraqi leaders condemned Nasser's actions and urged the UK to overthrow him (Jankowski, 2002: 84). For example, Sa'id told UK Prime Minister Anthony Eden that "you have only one course of action open and that is to hit, hit now, and hit hard" (Lucas, 1991: 41).

Eden thus decided that Nasser needed to go (Jankowski, 2002: 84). France also saw this as an opportunity to remove Nasser as punishment for his support of Algerian nationalists, as did Israel, who was concerned about Egypt's arms buildup with the Czechoslovakia deal (Hopwood, 1991: 46, 52). Consequently, the UK, France, and Israel colluded to invade Egypt, overthrow Nasser, and re-occupy the Suez Canal. This plan was known as the Protocol of Sèvres.

On October 29, Israel invaded Egypt and the UK and France followed on November 5 (Hopwood, 1991: 53). Egypt was outmatched militarily and only saved when the US, USSR, and United Nations demanded that the three aggressors end their invasion and subjected them to intense pressure (Hopwood, 1991: 55). Nasser consequently suffered a relatively small military defeat, but a massive political victory, as he had stood up to Western imperial aggression and survived an attack on three fronts (Mansfield, 2010: 290). Thus, by the end of the Suez Crisis, Nasser was by far the most revered Arab leader (Hopwood, 1988: 39). Nasser's popularity will thus be critically important to the formation of the UAR, and the Suez Crisis clearly illustrates some of the significant external threats faced by Egypt.

### ***The Syrian Crisis of 1957: Satisfying Parent's Crisis Condition***

The Syrian Crisis of 1957 was a result of perceptions that Syria was falling to communism and on the verge of becoming a Soviet satellite state. This notion began when King Hussein of Jordan, a UK ally, blamed Syrian Arab nationalists for directing a pro-communist subversion in Jordan, which almost led to the fall of the monarchy in April 1957 (Anderson, 1995: 24). Then, in late July, Syrian Defense Minister Khalid al-Azm, a known Soviet sympathizer who was allied with the one member of the Syrian Communist Party in Parliament, signed a significant economic agreement with the USSR (Podeh, 1999: 37). The drama accelerated in August, when 3 US "diplomats" were expelled from Syria for allegedly being involved in a plot to overthrow the Syrian regime (Anderson, 1995: 25). In reality, this was a CIA plot (one of many) to overthrow the Syrian government, codenamed "Operation Wappen" (Little, 1990: 55-58). Four days after the expulsion, Afif al-Bizri, another communist sympathizer, was appointed the Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army (Little, 1990: 55-58).

Even though there was just one member of the Communist Party in the Syrian Parliament, by this time the US, UK, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey were convinced that Syria was on the verge of becoming a client state of the Soviet Union (Anderson, 1995: 25-28). Many states were eager to intervene in Syria before this occurred, especially the US, Israel, Iraq, and Turkey (Anderson, 1995: 25-28). However, the US could not intervene alone because unilateral Western intervention in the Arab world would have been immensely unpopular among the Arab masses; the Israelis were held back by the Americans because the optics of an Israeli intervention would have been even worse

than a Western-led one; and Sa'id was restrained by his government (Anderson, 1995: 29). Nevertheless, the Turks were intent on taking military action, and at the height of the crisis, in September 1957, they massed 50,000 troops on the Syrian border with the acquiescence of the US (Pearson, 2007: 49). In a show of strength, the US also moved its powerful 6<sup>th</sup> Fleet to the Syrian coast and sent aircraft from Western Europe to their base at Adana in Turkey, which is close to the Syrian border (Pearson: 2007: 49).

Ultimately, however, the crisis abated without any violence, as the US did not want Turkey to intervene unilaterally and be isolated in the Arab world (Anderson, 1995: 37). When it had become clear that no military action was forthcoming, Nasser sent 2,000 troops into Syria as a sign of solidarity, boosting his support among the Syrian public and some circles of the Syrian government (Jankowski, 2002: 96). Still, this crisis highlights that Syria faced significant external security threats, and it was the trigger that would spur the creation of the UAR.

### ***The Birth of the UAR: Confirming the Importance of Elite Maneuvering***

By the end of the 1957 Crisis, the Syrian Ba'ath were worried about the growing communist influence, especially since their prestige within Syria had increased after the economic deal with the USSR and the fact that the Soviets supported Syria during the Crisis (Jankowski, 2002: 96). As a result, the Ba'ath and some other Syrian political parties boycotted municipal elections in November 1957 for fear of significant communist gains or even a victory, and the Syrian Prime Minister eventually postponed them indefinitely (Jaber, 1966: 44-45). The refusal to participate in elections demonstrates the electoral weakness of the Ba'ath and the urgency of their concern regarding the ascendancy of the communists (Podeh, 1999: 37). The Ba'ath were also anxious that an attempt by the communists to take power would be used by the Syrian right-wing to justify forceful counter-measures that would move Syria closer to the West and pro-Western Iraq and Jordan (Seale, 1965: 316-317). Given that the Ba'ath were at the height of their political power yet controlled just 20 of the 142 seats in the Syrian Parliament, they concluded that they had to take a new approach in order to rise to power (Seale, 1965: 310).

Over the past few years, the Syrian Parliament had passed resolutions calling for union with Egypt and created committees to negotiate a federal union between the two countries (Palmer, 1966: 50). However, Nasser's position had consistently been that conditions were not favorable for union and likely would not be for many years (Podeh, 1999: 102). Furthermore, Nasser had never even visited Syria before (Podeh, 1999: 49)! This demonstrates that while ideas about Arab nationalism caused Egypt and Syria to consider union, they were not sufficient to convince them to unify. However, the Ba'ath calculated that aggressively pushing for union with Egypt now was their best move for four reasons: (i) it would help them achieve their goal of Arab unity; (ii) it could help

stabilize Syria and mitigate the *internal* threats that the Ba'ath believed Syria faced, namely communists and right-wingers; (iii) it would allow them to more effectively deter external threats given that Egypt was more powerful than Syria; and (iv) they hoped it would increase their domestic power, given that union with Egypt was popular with the Syrian public and Nasser and the Ba'ath would be natural allies if Syria and Egypt merged (Hopwood, 1988: 39). Hence, internal threats and personal political incentives are a critical part of the Ba'ath's motivation for union.

To try and make this a reality, the Ba'ath turned to the Syrian military, whose most powerful faction consisted of pro-Ba'ath officers who believed that Nasser could strengthen Syria's weak institutions and prevent it from falling into civil war (Hopwood, 1988: 39). This shows that critical members of the Syrian military were also motivated to seek union with Egypt due to internal threats. In any case, the Ba'ath believed that if the military demanded that Nasser agree to union in order to save Syria, he would have to accept given his public image as a strong advocate of Arab nationalism (Jankowski, 2002: 105). In addition, Nasser had signaled in the past that he would not accept union unless it had the support of the Syrian military, as he did not want the military to overturn it and embarrass Egypt (Seale, 1965: 319-320). This fits with Parent's argument that elites often must utilize the military to make union a reality. To this end, Ba'ath Foreign Minister Salah al-Din al-Bitar suggested to the Syrian Military Command Council that they open direct negotiations with Nasser (Jankowski, 2002: 105). While Chief of Staff Bizri (a communist sympathizer) at first tried to resist Bitar's proposal, he eventually had to accept it for fear of popular backlash if it ever became public that he opposed union with Egypt (Jankowski, 2002: 105). It was only after the military decided to leave for Egypt and press for union that they informed the rest of their political superiors. Although Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli considered this essentially another military coup, he was powerless to stop it for the same reasons as Bizri (Jankowski, 2002: 106).

In their initial meeting, Nasser worried that he did not know much about Syria, that he would be taking responsibility for a fragile state that could collapse, and that the Military Command Council did not represent the legitimately elected government of Syria (Monte, 1966: 52). To address the last point, Bitar flew to Egypt to negotiate some sort of federal union between the two states (Jankowski, 2002: 107). Ultimately, Nasser decided that he would accept union with Syria.

One of the main reasons for this is that the Ba'ath had ensnared Nasser in a trap. If he rejected the offer, then his image as a courageous champion of Arab nationalism would be tarnished, diminishing his personal power (Podeh, 1999: 46). The second reason involved the external security threats faced by both Egypt and Syria. By agreeing to union, Nasser gained an advantage in the fight for regional influence with Iraq (e.g., by gaining control of Syria's military, economic resources, and strategic location), as well as in the continued conflict with Israel (Podeh, 1999: 47). Additionally,

Nasser would be able to better secure his ally, Syria, from foreign threats. This was important to Nasser because Syria provided a geographic buffer from his Middle East enemies, and if Syria fell, Egypt would have a new enemy near its border (Podeh, 1999: 28). A third major reason Nasser decided to accept union was to combat Syria's *internal* threats. He legitimately feared a communist takeover of Syria (Jaber, 1966: 48) and worried that Syria's collapse could destabilize the Middle East and ultimately threaten Egypt's security (Jankowski, 2002: 98). So, like his Syrian counterparts, Nasser was motivated to accept union largely due to internal threats to Syria and personal political incentives.

At this point, the terms of the union were still up for negotiation. In this debate, however, it was Nasser that had caught the Syrians in a "trap of their own making" (Jankowski, 2002: 112). Nasser demanded that the union be total, that all parties be eliminated except his National Union Party, and that the Syrian army cease political participation (Hopwood, 1988: 40). Even though many Syrian politicians and parties (e.g., the Ba'ath) had no desire to "commit party political suicide" (Seale, 1965: 322) and tried to renegotiate Nasser's demands, he refused to yield and the Syrian military supported him because they believed that only he could solve Syria's problems (Palmer, 1966: 52). The Ba'ath and other Syrian politicians were trapped in a Catch-22: if they capitulated to Nasser's demands, they would lose power, but if they refused his conditions and rejected union, they would enrage the Syrian public and risk being overthrown (Palmer, 1966: 53). In Bizri's words,

"Since they're all saying unity, unity, unity, nobody would dare say no, we don't want it. The masses would rise against them. I mean we followed the masses. The crowds were drunk...Who at that hour could say that we don't want unity? The people would tear their heads off" (Jankowski, 2002: 106).

Therefore, Syria agreed to Nasser's demands, and on February 21, 1958, a referendum was held in Egypt and Syria, which approved the union and Nasser's election as its president by a resounding majority of 99.9% (Hopwood, 1988: 40). The UAR was officially established.

## **Putting it All Together: Evaluating Parent's Argument**

### ***What Did Parent Get Right?***

Parent's framework fits many aspects of the UAR. First, he was correct that external threats played an important role in explaining why Egypt and Syria were motivated to merge. Both countries faced significant external security threats, and they had reasons to believe that union would help alleviate these threats. Second, Parent was correct that a "security crisis" usually precedes union and helps explain the timing of when unions occur, as the Syrian Crisis of 1957 shows (Parent, 2011: 12, 27). Third, Parent was right that elite persuasion/maneuvering was a critically important factor in explaining union. Nasser utilized the media with his Voice of the Arabs radio station to increase public support for union by aggressively promoting Arab nationalism. Additionally, the Syrians

employed their military to put pressure on Nasser, and they manipulated political procedures so that it was pro-union Syrians (i.e., the Military Command Council and Bitar) that sat at the bargaining table. The latter point is critical, as once union had been agreed to, pro-union Syrians knew that public pressure would make it difficult for anti-union Syrian politicians to reject it. Lastly, Parent was right that realist-related variables do a better job of explaining union than constructivist-related variables. Though ideas about Arab unity certainly played an important role in the formation of the UAR, what explains why union was agreed to in February 1958, as opposed to earlier, was a change in the threat environment faced by Egypt, Syria, and their political elites. As Parent argued, “states unify...not because their identities change but because their environment does” (Parent, 2011: 19).

### *What Did Parent Get Wrong?*

The case of the UAR suggests two of Parent’s central arguments are incorrect. First, his definitional argument that voluntary unions cannot take place between two states with a significant power disparity is contradicted by the formation of the UAR. In that case, it was the weaker state, Syria, that aggressively sought union with the stronger state, Egypt. In fact, before the Syrian Military Command Council flew to Egypt, Nasser had suggested that union would not happen for many years. Furthermore, the union was put to a referendum and was overwhelmingly endorsed by the people from both countries.<sup>14</sup>

Now, Parent might respond by arguing that significant coercion was involved, given the pressure the Military Command Council put on Nasser to accept union and the pressure Nasser put on Syria to accept union on his terms. However, neither side was prepared to use their military and economic resources to force union. Therefore, either side could have walked away freely, though they may have faced significant political costs. In addition, Parent allows for a certain amount of coercion with his arguments about elite persuasion/maneuvering. Finally, it is possible Parent would argue that the UAR was not a voluntary union because its terms essentially meant Egypt was annexing Syria. However, if the smaller state voluntarily agrees to be annexed, which was the case with Syria, then there appears no logical reason why Parent’s claim must hold.

The second argument that Parent gets wrong is his assertion that voluntary unions *only* form in response to external security threats from third-party states. However, the case of the UAR demonstrates there are at least two additional explanations that Parent does not consider. The first is that voluntary unions may form at least partially in response to internal/domestic rather than external/foreign threats. One of the principal motivations in forming the UAR for all actors was to

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<sup>14</sup> I have not found any references to significant voter fraud or intimidation in the cited literature, but it stands to reason that the 99.9% majority is at least a bit inflated.



combat the internal threats facing Syria. A reasonable response by Parent would be to point out that Syria's internal threats were an external threat to Egypt. Nevertheless, this would not explain why Syria sought union to address their internal difficulties, and it contradicts Parent's claim that voluntary union is a response to threats from third parties. It is because Parent fails to consider internal threats as a motivation for union and assumes that unions between unequals are inherently involuntary that he mistakenly claims that voluntary unions cannot occur unless states are symmetrically vulnerable to security threats. Given that Egypt did not face the serious internal threats that Syria did and was stronger militarily, they were asymmetrically vulnerable. The fact that Syria was more vulnerable did not mean that voluntary union could not occur, as Parent asserts, but that the union that did form was more unequal since Egypt did not need union as badly as Syria and consequently had more bargaining power.

The second motivation for voluntary union that Parent misses is personal political incentives, which played a strong role in convincing the Ba'ath to push for union, Nasser to accept it, and Syrian politicians to bow to Nasser's terms. If domestic politics played no role in motivating union, per neorealist assumptions, then it is possible that the UAR would have never been formed. For example, the Ba'ath may never have pushed for union for fear that Syria's relative vulnerability would lead to strong demands by Egypt; Nasser may never have accepted union to avoid assuming the responsibility of fixing Syria and risking the Arab unity failing in practice; and Syria's politicians may never have acquiesced to Nasser's terms and surrendered a large portion of Syria's autonomy. Therefore, by strictly adhering to neorealist assumptions and neglecting domestic politics, Parent may underestimate the chances of voluntary union in some cases (e.g., the UAR) and overestimate it in others (e.g., where elites have political incentives to reject union).

### **Conclusion: The Limitations of this Study**

There are at least three big questions that this paper leaves unanswered. The first is: what is the most important factor motivating states to form voluntary unions? Since external threats, internal threats, and personal political incentives are all present in the case of the UAR, it is difficult to know which factor played the largest role. Parent may yet be right that external threats are the most powerful; we will need to examine more cases to be sure. A second outstanding question is: what conditions are sufficient to cause voluntary union? Because this paper only examined a case where voluntary union occurred, we cannot definitively know what causes voluntary unions since external threats, internal threats, political incentives for union, etc. are also present in many cases where union does not materialize. We must avoid selecting on the dependent variable and analyze cases where union does not occur. Finally, the third question this paper leaves open is: why do some voluntary unions break down? Considering that this was not Parent's main research question, this paper did

not analyze the collapse of the UAR. Doing so could be an avenue for future research on voluntary unions.

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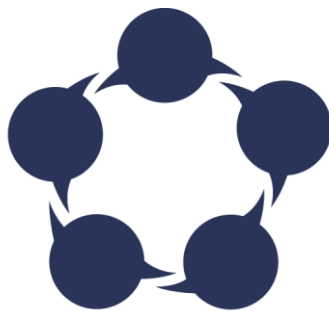
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