

Fear, Loathing, and the Optimal Size of Nations:  
Assessing Regional Party Views on European Integration

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**Abstract:** The relationship between European integration and regional parties is still a largely unexplored area of research. In other work, though, I find that European integration increases regional party success, at both the formation and national election stages. In this paper, I evaluate whether regional parties perform better as a result of deeper integration because they see the EU as an ally or an enemy. There are two plausible causal mechanisms to explain why regional parties perform better as the EU deepens. First, regional entities are more viable outside their traditional state structure due to the supranational structure of the EU, which allows them access to a larger market with less direct control than a traditional national government. On the other hand, regional movements may be threatened by the encroaching authority of Brussels. Regional political entrepreneurs may utilize these fears and anger towards European integration to mobilize support for their movements. Using expert surveys, I assess the views of regional parties on European integration and I find support for the viability hypothesis because regional political parties are consistently pro-European Union across time, space, and issue area. This research contributes directly to the multi-level governance literature, focusing on sub-national governance. Also, the findings on viability represent a direct test of and support for the optimal size of nations theory.

In a Europe characterized by multi-level governance, two causal mechanisms plausibly explain why deeper integration at the European Union level contributes to increased support for regional political parties at the sub-national level. In one argument, European integration decreases the necessity of traditional large states, thereby making smaller more homogeneous states more viable. Therefore, the EU is an unwitting ally of the sub-national groups against the central government. In the other line of reasoning, it is not decreased dependence on the central government but rather fear that drives the relationship between integration and regional political party support. Fear of yet another foreign authority encroaching on local sovereignty or loathing of immigrants could drive regional voters to leave mainstream parties and support alternative parties. In regions with distinct cultural or linguistic histories, regional political parties provide a focal point for these feelings. For both theories, then, deeper integration leads to more sub-national mobilization in the form of support for regional political parties.

In this paper, I turn away from the inference that deeper European integration increases sub-national mobilization and focus on the causal mechanism underlying this relationship. In previous papers (Jolly 2004; 2005), I demonstrated that deeper integration does in fact increase both the probability of a regional political party competing in national parliamentary elections and their vote shares once they enter competition. In this paper, I seek to understand whether regional parties perform better as a result of deeper integration because they frame the EU as an ally or as an enemy.

First, I outline the basic causal mechanisms which seek to explain this relationship between integration and sub-national mobilization. I also explain the use of political party positions on the EU as the research domain. Second, I review the literature

on party positions on the EU, thereby drawing secondary hypotheses. Next, I introduce the expert survey data and present the analysis of regional political party attitudes toward the European Union. Finally, I discuss the results as well as extensions of this paper which will allow further internal validity testing, including case studies and public opinion research. Using expert surveys, I assess the views of regional parties on European integration and find more evidence to support the optimal size of nations argument and show that regional political parties are generally supportive of the European project.

### **Viability or Fear? Two Paths to Greater Sub-National Mobilization**

Elsewhere, I demonstrate that European integration does encourage both the incidence of regional political parties as well as greater electoral success in national elections. Though European integration is rarely considered a factor when discussing domestic elections and regional parties, there are two plausible causal mechanisms that predict deeper European integration will in fact increase support for regional political parties. First, the European Union makes smaller states more viable by diminishing the advantages of larger state size (Bolton and Roland 1997; Alesina and Spolaore 2003). For regional political entrepreneurs, this increased viability increases the credibility of their party and demands for greater autonomy. Second, the European Union may provide a focal point for politicians to complain about globalization, immigration, and loss of sovereignty. Regional movements may utilize the threat of encroaching authority of Brussels to rally supporters to its cause. In addition to yet another distant government informing regions what to do, increased labor mobility from outside Western Europe

threatens the cultural homogeneity of regions. Significantly, the alternative explanations have the same observable implication: deeper integration leads to great support for regional political parties. After briefly discussing each mechanism, I introduce the research design to evaluate under which conditions each explanation holds true.

Following Alesina and Spolaore's optimal size of nations argument (1997; 2003), I argue that European integration has created conditions under which regional groups (e.g. the Scottish) may not need the status quo state (e.g. United Kingdom) to thrive internationally. The European Union decreases regional dependency on the nation-state in both economic (e.g. international trade and monetary policy) and political terms (e.g. defense, foreign policy, and minority rights). In other words, the European Union system of multi-level governance increases the viability of smaller states, thereby creating additional incentive for citizens to support regional political parties. For economists, the theoretical result is a smaller optimal size of states in Europe under the umbrella of the European Union and a system of free(er) trade (Alesina and Spolaore 1997; Alesina and Wacziarg 1998; Alesina, Spolaore, and Wacziarg 2000; Wittman 2000; Casella and Feinstein 2002; Alesina and Spolaore 2003). Thus far, though, the empirical implications of these theoretical models have largely remained untested, particularly in the most likely case of the European Union

In historical terms, several factors encouraged economically larger states (Alesina and Spolaore 2003). First, in a world of relatively large barriers to trade, the size of the state was also the size of the economic market. Thus, the larger the market, the more successful was the economy. But despite the continued prevalence of non-tariff barriers to trade, such as anti-dumping claims (Kramer 2004), barriers to trade have diminished in

recent years. This trend is nowhere more developed than in the European Union, which is a common market for goods, services, and labor. Thus, so long as a country belongs to the EU, market size is not simply the size of state and smaller countries may be prosperous (Alesina and Spolaore 2003, 82). By breaking the link between state size and market size, therefore, the European Union diminishes a significant advantage of larger states. Or as Hooghe and Marks note: “The single European market reduces the economic penalty imposed by regional political autonomy because regional firms continue to have access to the European market” (2001, 166).

Second, larger state size is advantageous because public goods benefit from economies of scale. Similarly, larger states are more capable of providing insurance for regional economic shocks, due to natural or economic disasters, such as earthquakes or deindustrialization (Alesina and Spolaore 1997, 2003). Though the EU has not replaced the need for large states in these two areas, it has diminished the advantage as the EU provides numerous public goods, such as monetary and trade policy, and subsidizes less developed regions with cohesion and structural funds.

Finally, security concerns often encourage larger state size. But with NATO and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fears of invasion by a foreign country are much diminished. Further, prior to 1945, the biggest external threats to European countries were their European neighbors. By diminishing the military rivalries that led to intermittent conflict in Europe for centuries, the European Union decreased the significance and relevance of large military defense. For Western European countries and regions, it is less likely that security concerns would drive decisions about state size.

According to Alesina and Spolaore, the optimal size of a state “emerges from a trade-off between the benefits of scale and the costs of heterogeneity in the population” (2003, 175). Via membership in the European Union, though, the advantages of large states vis-à-vis small states are diminished. But the key cost of a larger state, namely heterogeneity of preferences, remains. Political economists find that economic growth and public policies suffer with greater ethnic heterogeneity (Easterly and Levine 1997).<sup>1</sup> A government of a homogeneous population tends to be more successful at public policies because the day-to-day lives of the people are more similar (Tilly 1975, 79), while larger states are less efficient at public good provision (Bolton, Roland, and Spolaore 1996, 701). Due to this comparative advantage, European regions may see themselves as more capable of providing sustained economic growth than the traditional nation-states (Newhouse 1997, 69), yielding political separatism as an unintended consequence of economic integration (Alesina and Spolaore 1997, 1042).

Astute regional political entrepreneurs utilize these trends to argue more convincingly that the region is less dependent on the rest of the country by “fram[ing] their demands in European terms” (Keating 1995, 7). In Scotland in the 1970s, for instance, the Scottish National Party (SNP) could not convince factory workers that seceding from the United Kingdom would not result in even more unemployment if access to the British market was blocked (Esman 1977, 266-7). In the 1980s, though, former SNP MP Jim Sillars convinced the SNP to support a pro-European position as a

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<sup>1</sup> The argument put forth by the economics literature on ethnic heterogeneity and economic growth implies that the disadvantages associated with preference heterogeneity, measured by ethnic fractionalization, outweigh potential benefits from diversity, such as cross-cultural learning, innovation, or creativity. The point is debatable, from either (or both) a normative or empirical perspective. But dealing with that issue would be a separate research enterprise than the current one.

“mechanism to avoid economic dislocation in the event of secession from the UK” (Lynch 1996, 39). Scottish MP Gordon Wilson described the Scottish National Party’s support for the European Union as ““a first class way of pushing the advantages of political independence without any threat of economic dislocation. Within the common trading umbrella the move to independence can take place smoothly and easily”” (Lynch 1996, 38). Thus, activists use the EU to negate the arguments against autonomy based on fears of economic upheaval (Gallagher 1991).

Though this brief discussion does not address all the advantages and disadvantages of size, it should highlight that European integration devalues a critical role of the state. It also places traditional European states in an awkward position:

The logical implication of neoclassical theory is that national states are both too large and too small. Too large, because they encompass heterogeneous populations that are best served by local jurisdictions; too small, because they cannot encompass the territorial scope of market exchange or of policies that have international externalities (Marks and Hooghe 2000, 799).

By utilizing economies of scale to improve functionality in some issue areas, such as monetary and environmental policy, integration allows sub-national units to claim legitimate authority over other issues that could be better handled at that level. Since the European Union handles many of the functional tasks of the state and reduces a key advantage of large states, the balance between large and small states has shifted in favor of smaller less heterogeneous states. Based on these arguments, regional political parties will support the European Union as an ally against the national state.

*Hypothesis 1. Regional political parties will be strongly supportive of European integration.*

But the optimal size of nations argument is not the only theoretical possibility that predicts a positive relationship between European integration and sub-national movements in the form of regional political parties. An equally plausible alternative causal mechanism exists. It may not be that regional groups embrace the EU as a means of making smaller independent countries more viable. Rather, it could simply be that some regional groups are the focal point for opposition to globalization and European integration (van Houten 2003, 113-118). In other words, integration creates new representation demands, such as a fear of economic competition, which regional parties rise to meet. Similar to the political entrepreneurs of the radical right parties (Kitschelt 1995), regional political parties may use this opposition as a mechanism to draw support to their movement. Fear of cultural assimilation or economic competition and animosity towards immigrants each could factor into supporting regional parties. Thus, regional political parties could mobilize electoral support by framing the EU in negative terms of fear and loathing.

*Hypothesis 2. Regional political parties will be strongly Euroskeptical.*

While both theories seem feasible, there is qualitative evidence that the viability theory is correct. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the Scottish National Party adopted a policy of independence in Europe in the 1980s, precisely because the EU allowed for political autonomy without fear of economic dislocation (Lynch 1996, 38). Similarly, in 1989, the Plaid Cymru supported a policy of independence in the EU while encouraging the EU to evolve into a true Europe of the regions (Lynch 1996, 76). Across Europe, Kurzer found that regional politicians are generally enthusiastic about a federal Europe (1997, 43).

Yet it remains an open empirical question whether this is a universal or uniform trend among regional political parties. It is important to understand whether variation within the regionalist party family occurs and whether this variation is territorial, temporal, or issue-based. As the EU evolves from simply the 'negative integration' of opening markets to the potential 'positive integration' of social and welfare policy (Scharpf 1996, 15), party families may switch from being more or less supportive of the European project. For instance, social democratic parties have become more supportive of European integration as the agenda has turned from simply market integration to 'regulated capitalism' while right-wing parties have gone in the opposite direction (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004, 129). It could be that some regional groups supported a form of "independence in Europe" as long as the integration was mainly economic in nature, yielding economic benefits without threats to political sovereignty, but when economic integration completed and the attention turned to political matters, the groups perceived a greater threat.

Though not necessarily mutually exclusive, the variance among regional political parties could be territorial rather than temporal in nature. There may be attitudinal differences between types of peripheral minorities. Territorially concentrated minorities may support integration as a way to reduce the power from the state itself, while dispersed groups feel threatened by integration as yet another means of shifting power even further away (Marks and Wilson 2000, 438; Hooghe and Marks 2001, 166). Therefore, *Hypothesis 1* and *Hypothesis 2* may both be valid in different contexts.

Observationally, these two causal mechanisms, viability and fear, are equivalent in terms of predicting greater electoral support for regional political parties as European

integration deepens. Thus, after demonstrating the descriptive inference that there is in fact a relationship between depth of integration and sub-national mobilization using cross-section time-series analysis (Jolly 2004; 2005), I must now adjudicate between the two theories. Using expert surveys, I analyze whether regional political parties are more supportive of the European project than other party families, in terms of general integration and specific policy areas, and how this support changes over time and between regional political parties. With this analysis, I evaluate the conditions under which each mechanism works by disentangling whether temporal or territorial differences explain more variation within the regional party family. Before turning to this analysis, though, I introduce alternative explanations for party positioning on the EU, both to frame the discussion and to provide alternative theories to test.

### **Prior Attempts to Explain Party Positions on the European Union**

Explanations for political party support for the EU center on three main categories: ideology, party family, and contextual factors. Generally, ideological arguments focus on the difference between supportive mainstream parties, on the center left and right, and oppositional extreme parties from the left and right, creating the famous inverted U-curve (Taggart 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001; Aspinwall 2002; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004). Theoretically, scholars also use cleavage theory to explain why party families across countries hold similar attitudes toward the EU (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks, Wilson, and Ray 2002). Finally, contextual variables may explain why all parties in some countries may be more or less supportive of the European

project than parties in another country. In summarizing these arguments, I derive additional hypotheses to explain regional political party attitudes toward the EU.

In a recent edited volume, Marks and Steenbergen discuss four ways to conceptualize the relationship between left/right ideology and position on the European Union. The first two models simply assume that the two dimensions are unrelated or orthogonal to each other, or at least that left/right ideology is irrelevant for placing the positions on EU of party or citizens. The third model suggests that the two dimensions are fused along a single dimension. And finally, the Hooghe/Marks model of regulated capitalism vs. market liberalism hypothesizes that the dimensions are related in two-dimensional space, but are neither completely orthogonal nor fused (Steenbergen and Marks 2004, 4-5). In the remainder of that volume, scholars test these models against data at the country, party and citizen level. According to Marks, the most powerful finding at the aggregate level is the inverted U-curve, which places extreme left and right-wing parties in the opposition to EU while centrist parties support it (2004, 238).

There have been attempts to explain the inverted U-curve theoretically. Mark Aspinwall argues that centrist parties support the EU as a 'fait accompli' and perceive it as a positive development in European history (Aspinwall 2002). Empirically, mainstream parties, or parties in the government, are relatively absent from lists of 'soft' or 'hard' Euroskeptic parties in Western Europe (Taggart 1998; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001). And as one might expect, the reasons for opposition on the left and right are much different. Extreme left-wing parties oppose the EU either on the basis of 'old politics' anti-market socialism or 'new politics' anti-centralist activism while right-wing parties oppose any attempts to diminish the state's autonomy, in cultural or economic terms

(Aspinwall 2002, 86-7). Taking a more strategic view, others contend that mainstream parties have little incentive to 'rock the boat' on European integration while extreme parties desire to restructure the dimensions of contestation to try to gain electoral votes (Taggart 1998, 382; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004, 123). Yet the two explanations yield the same empirical prediction about an inverted U-curve. And in their empirical work using different domains, both find that more centrist parties do support integration more than their more extreme colleagues (Aspinwall 2002; Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004). Thus, ideology matters but it is mainly the extremism of ideology that determines the position of the party on European integration.

While traditional left/right ideology structures contestation on the European Union with an inverted U-curve, the 'new politics' dimension is more straightforward, both theoretically and empirically. Whether called green/alternative/libertarian versus traditional/authoritarian/nationalist (GAL/TAN) or left-libertarian/right-authoritarianism, this second dimension has a significant effect on party positions on European integration.<sup>2</sup> TAN parties, both extreme right and mainstream conservative parties, are much less supportive of European integration (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2004, 133). TAN parties oppose European integration because it weakens the traditional authority of the state. In terms of regional political parties, the hypotheses for ideology can be simply summarized.

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<sup>2</sup> For political parties in Western Europe, left/right ideology and GAL/TAN are correlated at the 0.77 level; thus, the distinction between the two dimensions may not be quite as clear-cut as outlined. But the findings for ideology, extremism, and GAL/TAN are robust if both variables are included (Marks et al. n.d.).

*Hypothesis 3. More centrist regional political parties, in left/right ideology, will be more supportive of European integration than more ideologically extreme regional political parties.*

*Hypothesis 4. Regional political parties with TAN inclinations will be more Euroskeptical than regional political parties near the center or GAL pole.*

Along similar lines, Gary Marks and co-authors derive hypotheses about party positions on European integration from the cleavage literature (Marks and Wilson 2000; Marks, Wilson, and Ray 2002). Analyzing the classic class, religious, and center-periphery cleavages yields predictions about how parties perceive European integration. For example, parties that traditionally compete on the class cleavage perceive potential costs on their primary issue that partially determines their position on integration. Market integration threatens social democratic parties but that threat is mediated by political integration, which presents an opportunity to regulate capitalism at the supranational level. On the other end of the spectrum, right-wing parties favor market integration but fear the regulated capitalism of social democratic parties (Marks and Wilson 2000, 437).

The center-periphery cleavage, on which regional political parties contest, yields two predictions. First, regional political parties should be more supportive of European integration precisely because the EU threatens national sovereignty. Similar to the size of nations hypothesis discussed above, Marks and Wilson argue that market integration eliminates the potential economic penalty that might be imposed if a region sought independence from the state. Thus, the EU allows for political autonomy without the penalty of market exclusion. Furthermore, the EU may be a friendlier environment for sub-national groups because they become one of many minorities in Europe rather than a

permanent minority in their home country (Marks and Wilson 2000, 438-439). These considerations lead regional political parties to be more pro-EU, *ceteris paribus*. Marks, Wilson and Ray also contend that regional political parties will be strongly in favor of economic integration but only moderately supportive of political integration (2002, 587). On the other side of the center-periphery cleavage, nationalist parties are skeptical of the EU because it threatens national sovereignty by increasing multi-level governance. Thus, nationalist parties tend to be Euroskeptical for the same reasons regional political parties support the EU. Hence, the extension of party cleavage theories to explain attitudes toward European integration bolster *Hypothesis 1* that predicts pro-EU regional political parties as well as *Hypothesis 4* that predicts TAN parties will be Euroskeptical.

Thus far, the scholars who study party positions on the European Union have dealt more with party ideology and family than with country-specific factors. But in the public opinion literature, contextual factors play a significant role, both by themselves and interacted with individual-level variables (Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt 2004; Ray 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2005). Hence, it is relevant to review potential mediating contextual factors.

For public opinion pooled across EU member countries, simply regressing support for European integration on left/right ideology is insufficient. The citizen's national political economic context matters. As Ray (2004) and Brinegar and Jolly (2005) show, left-leaning citizens support European integration in countries with low levels of social spending (i.e. residual welfare states) while right-leaning citizens are more supportive of European integration in countries with high levels of social spending (i.e. social democratic welfare states). This research questions the generalizability of the "U-

curve” finding because while there is an inverted U-curve in public opinion at the aggregate EU level, the relationship (between ideology and support for integration) is positive in some countries and the slope is negative in others.

In other words, if individuals or political parties are placed within their national contexts, the individual predictors behave differently. Voters perceive their current national political economic status quo and compare it to what may occur in a deeper EU. Thus, leftists in residual welfare states can hope for at least an increase in welfare spending to match the average conservative welfare state and therefore support European integration. Conservatives in social democratic countries prefer less redistribution and support integration in part as a way to reduce social spending (Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt 2004, 73).<sup>3</sup> So, political winners and losers are not distributed uniformly throughout EU countries, thereby making the relationship between ideology and support for European integration highly contingent on the context.

In addition to the interaction effects, the contextual variables themselves are quite powerful predictors. Even in the classic individual-level human capital model set forth by Matt Gabel (1998), the country dummies are powerful, both statistically and substantively. Though the recent referendum in the Netherlands shows this fact may no longer be accurate, Dutch citizens were historically nearly 50% more supportive of European integration than British citizens (Gabel 1998, Table 12). More importantly, the

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<sup>3</sup> Some scholars, most prominently Fritz Scharpf (1999), disagree with the hypothesis that integration will eventually lead to a convergence to the mean or conservative welfare state, but rather hypothesize that deeper integration will inevitably lead to a race to the bottom, or convergence to the minimum or residual welfare state. For Brinegar, Jolly and Kitschelt (2004), it is less important whether convergence actually occurs, and more important what voters think is happening. The statistical results thus far support the conjecture that rightists (leftists) in social democratic countries (residual welfare states) are more supportive of integration (Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt 2004; Ray 2004; Brinegar and Jolly 2005), lending support to their argument.

contextual effects can be parsed out, which makes them much more theoretically and substantively interesting than dummy variables. For instance, Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) demonstrate that poor economic conditions hurt domestic leaders, as expected, but they also dampen support for European integration, a fact which should sound familiar to French President Chirac.

Admittedly, though, citizens vary in their attitudes toward the EU more than their political parties do, which explains why the EU issue is something of a ‘sleeping giant’ (van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). This empirical finding may explain why variation between party families is greater than variation between countries or even a null finding for contextual variables altogether. Also, since Maastricht, the cross-national differences in support for integration have diminished, in large part because countries have converged in terms of the main explanatory variables (Eichenberg and Dalton 2003). Nevertheless, the demonstrated significance at the individual level suggests contextual variables should be considered. When studying regional political parties only, though, the small N reduces the opportunity to disentangle country effects from fixed party effects.

### **Why Expert Surveys?**

To evaluate these hypotheses, I utilize expert evaluations of party positions on the European Union. Collected by scholars at UNC Chapel Hill, the surveys request country experts to evaluate each party on several key questions. Significantly for this analysis, the survey consistently asks respondents to consider each party’s position on European integration. Leonard Ray completed the original survey in 1996 which included the following years: 1984, 1988, 1992, and 1996 (1999). The UNC Chapel Hill Center for

European Studies replicated the surveys in 1999 and 2002 (Marks et al. n.d.).<sup>4</sup>

Several factors contribute to the decision to use this particular data. First, the surveys cover a wide range of years and political parties, including 23 regional political parties across five West European countries. Table 1 lists these parties and their vote shares in the national election prior to the survey.

Country	Party	National Vote Share					
		1984	1988	1992	1996	1999	2002
Belgium	Francophone Democratic Front (FDF)	4.2	1.2	1.5	2.9	2.6	-
	ID21 (ID21)	-	-	-	-	0	-
	Vlaams Blok (VB)	1.1	1.9	6.6	7.8	9.9	9.9
	People's Union (VU)	9.9	8	5.9	4.7	5.6	5.6
Finland	Swedish People's Party (SFP)	4.6	5.3	5.8	5.5	5.1	5.1
Ireland	Sinn Fein (SF)	3.3	1.9	1.6	1.6	2.5	6.5
Italy	Northern League (LN)	0	1.8	8.7	10.1	10.1	3.9
	Sardinian Action Party (PsDA)	-	-	-	-	0.7	-
	South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP)	-	-	-	-	1.7	-
Spain	Galician Nationalist Bloc (BNG)	0.2	0.3	0	0.9	0.88	1.3
	Canarian Coalition (CC)	-	-	-	-	0.88	1.1
	Convergence and Union (CiU)	3.9	5	5	4.6	4.6	4.2
	Basque Solidarity (EA)	-	0	0	0	0.46	0.4
	Catalan Republican Left (ERC)	0.7	0.5	0	0.7	0.67	-
	Herri Batasuna (HB)	1	1.2	1.1	0.7	0.73	-
	Initiative for Cataonia (IC)	-	-	-	-	0	-
	Andalusian Party (PA)	0.4	0.5	1	0	-	0.9
	Aragonese Regionalist Party (PAR)	0	0.4	0	0	0.2	-
	Basque Nationalist Party (PNV)	1.9	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.27	1.5
	Valencian Union (UV)	0	0.3	0	0.4	0.37	-
United Kingdom	Plaid Cymru (Cymru)	0.4	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7
	Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP)	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	-	-
	Scottish National Party (SNP)	1.1	1.3	1.9	1.9	2	1.8

<sup>4</sup> For more technical information on the dataset as well as access to the data, codebooks, and questionnaire, see <http://www.unc.edu/~gwmks>.

<sup>5</sup> There are a few discrepancies between my coding and the Chapel Hill coding of regional political parties. The Chapel Hill data codes the VB as a new radical right party, but consistent with earlier work, I recoded them as a regionalist party. In Northern Ireland, the SDLP is coded socialist in the dataset, but I include them as a regionalist party. Finally, Sinn Fein in Ireland is coded as a regionalist party. In earlier work, I include Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland as a regionalist party but not Sinn Fein in Ireland. Since I am doing descriptive data analysis, I do not consider the coding problematic, but I will reconsider the inclusion (exclusion) of these parties in the future. For discussion of the coding of regional political parties, see Jolly (2004; 2005).

The table demonstrates that the majority of regional political parties are merely fringe parties at the national level; however, in their respective regions, they earn a larger share of the national parliamentary vote. By not competing in the entire country, even larger regional political parties have relatively small vote shares. Second, the experts placed the parties on position on the European Union, but also on the relative salience of the issue and the level internal dissent. Third, compared to other available datasets for the years collected, the expert surveys provide reliable and valid data for political party support for European integration (Ray 1999).

Finally, for the study of regional political parties, in particular, there are simply not many alternatives. The comparative manifesto project provides an invaluable resource for the study of party manifestos over time. But as Ray discusses (1999), several problems with this data persist. Leaving aside inter-coder reliability, two crucial problems prevent the use of that data for this analysis. First, parties have incentive to strategically neglect an issue in their manifesto either due to low salience or internal dissent. In other words, parties can adopt a ‘dismissive strategy’ for a variety of reasons (Meguid 2002, 7). But while this strategy affects the manifestos and therefore the coding, it does not accurately express the party position on the issue.

Second, and more logistically significant for this analysis, the manifesto project only includes electorally significant parties. While regional political parties are often significant electoral contenders at the regional level, even for national offices, their aggregate national vote totals are generally too low to warrant inclusion. Thus, not even relatively significant regional political parties, such as the Scottish National Party or the Plaid Cymru in the United Kingdom, are included (Budge et al. 2001).

Unfortunately, using public opinion data to infer party positions has similar problems. First, based on the research thus far, a significant disconnect exists between party positions on the EU and their partisans' attitudes (Taggart 1998; van der Eijk and Franklin 2004). Not only do voters have actual opinions about the European Union, but there appears to be genuine variance or dispersion in their attitudes (van der Eijk and Franklin 2004, 37+). Parties, on the other hand, offer little in the way of choice on this issue. This fact is particularly true if one includes only mainstream or electorally significant parties. This disconnect, while raising interesting research questions about cueing (Carrubba 2001), suggests that using partisan attitudes to infer party positions on the European Union would be a highly skeptical proposition. Further, the Eurobarometer and other multi-national surveys do not yield sufficient survey respondents in each region to allow for a study of regional political parties. Thus, as with manifestos, the logistical problem complicates any analysis of regional political parties.

### **Analyzing the Data**

In this section, I analyze the expert survey data to test the hypotheses. The small number of regional political parties makes traditional regression analysis less reliable for explaining differences between regional political parties. Instead, I analyze the data and present descriptive statistics and graphs.<sup>6</sup> With this analysis, I draw conclusions about the validity of each hypothesis.

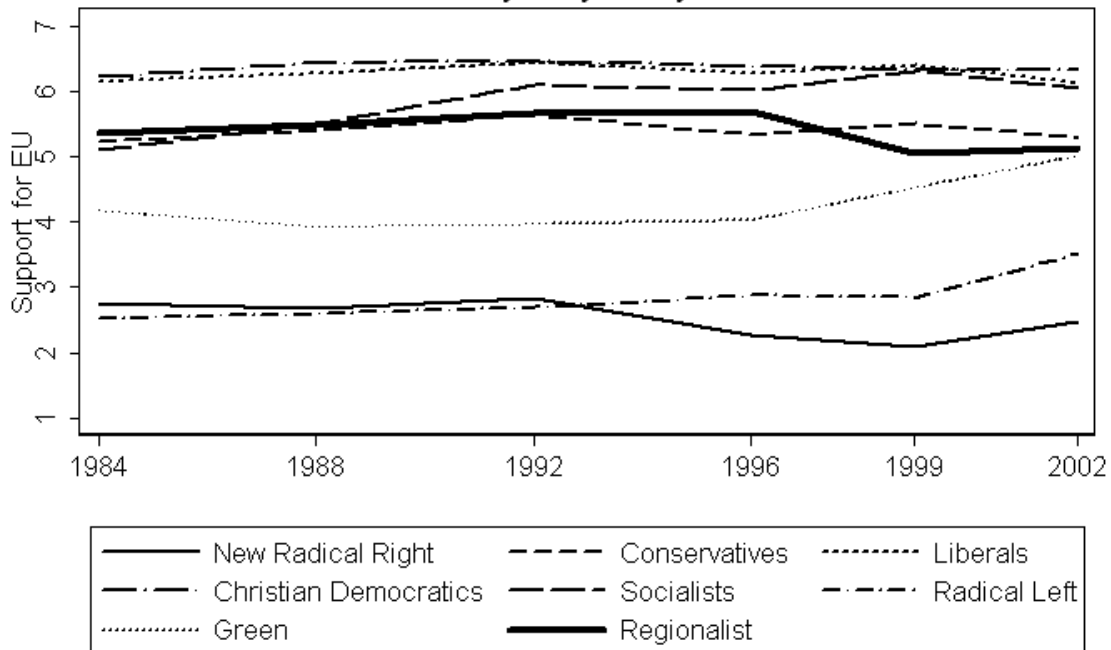
To evaluate the first two hypotheses, or whether regional political parties are Europhiles or Euroskeptics, I initially compare the regionalist party family to other party

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<sup>6</sup> All data for the analysis is from the UNC Chapel Hill expert survey on EU party positions and can be obtained from <http://www.unc.edu/~gwmaks>.

families in Western Europe. Using all political parties in Western Europe, the regionalist party family dummy variable is found to be a significantly positive predictor in a multivariate regression model (Marks et al. n.d.). Figure 1 demonstrates that regional political parties are consistently more pro-European Union than most other party families. The exceptions are the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and the Socialists. This figure also suggests that a convergence in opinion may be occurring. Other than the mainstream parties, the Euroskeptical party families seem to be increasing in support while the Conservatives and Regionalists have experienced a slight decrease.

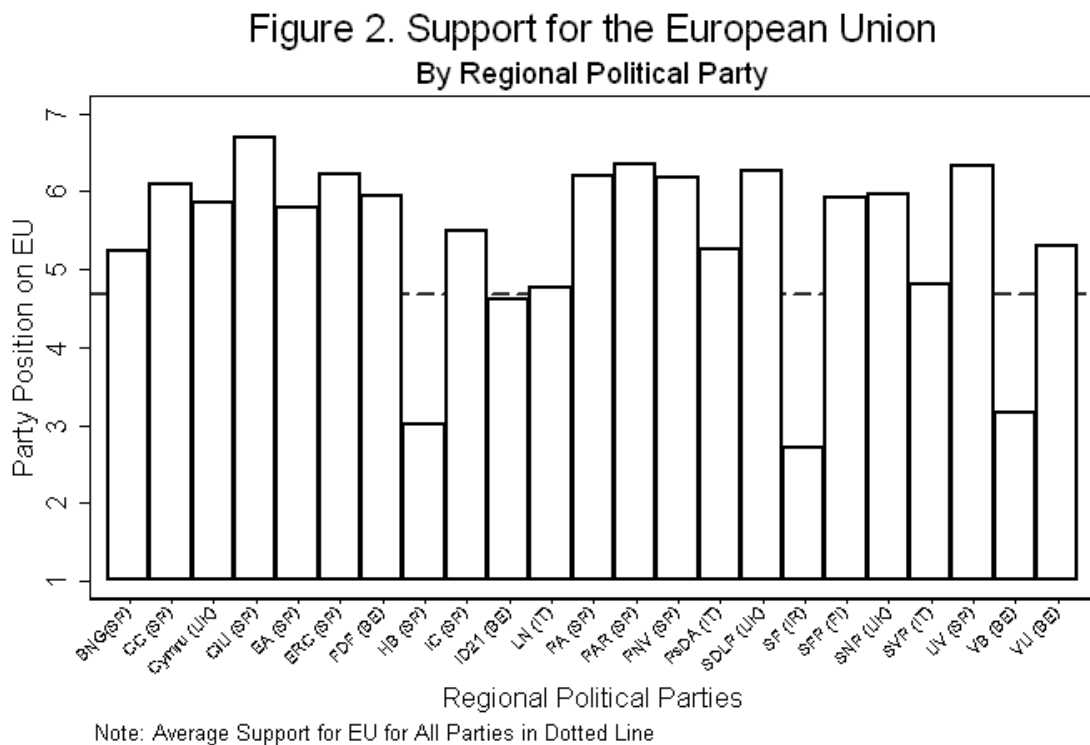
Figure 1. Support for European Union  
By Party Family



Nevertheless, Figure 1 supports *Hypothesis 1*, which predicts that regional political parties will be strongly supportive of European integration. On average, regional political parties are highly supportive of the European Union and hold similar attitudes as the mainstream parties. While this figure and the regression results suggest that *Hypothesis 2*

is not generally accurate, this aggregation at the party family level may be hiding significant variation within the regional party family.

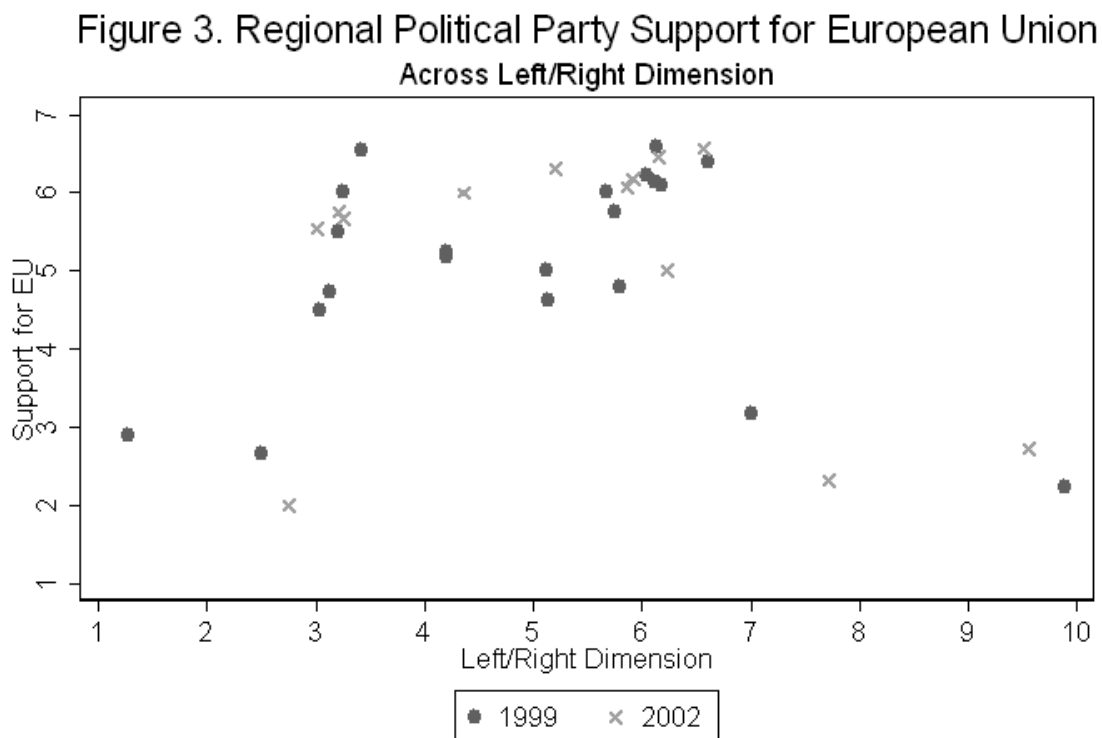
Figure 2 presents each regional political party's position on the European Union, with the average for all parties, regional and others, included as the dotted line. The figure shows that nearly all regional political parties are more supportive of the European Union than the average party in the EU.



Only a few exceptions exist: Herri Batasuna in the Pais Vasco, Sinn Fein in Ireland, and the Vlaams Blok in Belgium. The exceptions can be explained in ideological terms because each of these parties is extreme. Herri Batasuna and Sinn Fein are the two most extreme left-wing regional political parties and Herri Batasuna is actually the most left-wing party in Spain. On the other end of the spectrum, the Vlaams Blok is the most right-wing regional political party and is in fact only slightly less extreme than the National

Front in France. Thus, the exceptions may be explained by another possible predictor of party position: ideology.

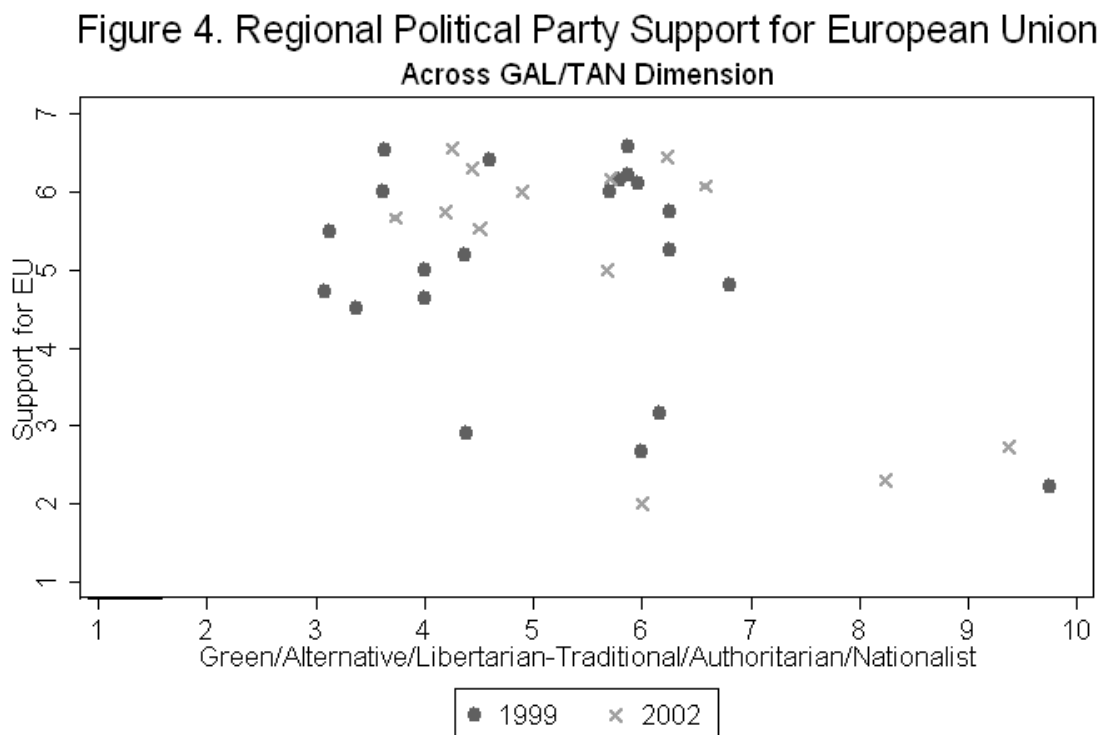
The literature on party position provides a clear expectation for the effect of ideology on party support for the European Union: an inverted U-curve. Figure 3 simply shows a scatterplot of the regional political parties with ideology on the X-axis and support for European integration on the Y-axis.



Let me reiterate that the small number of regional political parties prevents any firm conclusions or reliance on regression analysis. With a small number of parties, outliers have an even larger probability of skewing conclusions. With this qualification in mind, the graph indicates that the inverted U-curve holds for regional political parties, at least at the aggregate level. The most extreme left-wing parties, Herri Batasuna and Sinn Fein, and the most right-wing parties, Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord, are relatively Euroskeptical

while the centrist parties have higher levels of support for European integration. This finding supports *Hypothesis 3*.

In more recent work, scholars find that a second dimension, GAL/TAN or Right-Authoritarian/Left-Libertarian, explains support for European integration in a linear rather than curvilinear manner (Marks et al. n.d.). Figure 4 presents a scatterplot with GAL/TAN as the X-axis.

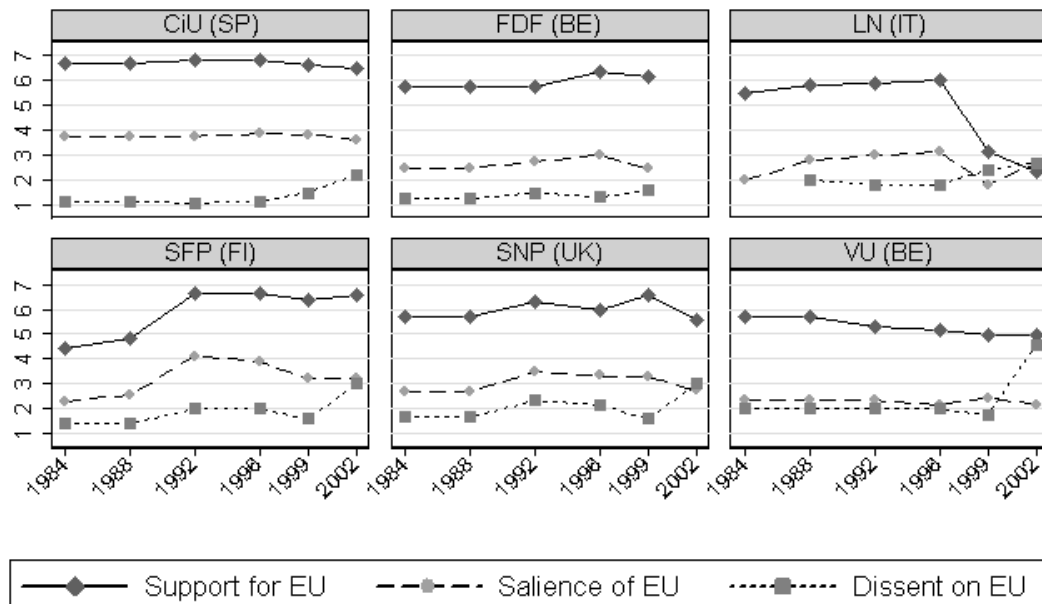


As expected in *Hypothesis 4*, there is a negative linear relationship between GAL/TAN and support for European integration. The correlation is -0.47 and, similar to the results for the entire European national party system, the relationship is largely driven by the extreme right. Similar to left/right ideology, the Vlaams Blok and Lega Nord are the extreme TAN parties and more Euroskeptical. Unfortunately, with the small number of parties, it would be difficult to discriminate between the effects of left/right ideology and

the effects of GAL/TAN, especially since the correlation between left/right and GAL/TAN for regional political parties is 0.76. But unlike with left/right ideology, there is no inverted U for GAL/TAN. Extreme GAL parties are highly pro-European Union while extreme left parties are not. Thus, the evidence suggests that *Hypothesis 4* is valid for regional political parties and the GAL/TAN dimension explains variation within the regionalist party family.

Because Figure 1 relies on aggregated data at the party family level, the descriptive statistics and figures do not conclusively answer whether variation among regional political party positions occurs across issue areas or across time. In addition to potential variance across issue areas, variance in party position may occur over time. In Figure 6, I show trends for six of the electorally larger regional political parties.

Figure 5. Trends in Regional Political Parties  
Position on EU, Salience and Dissent



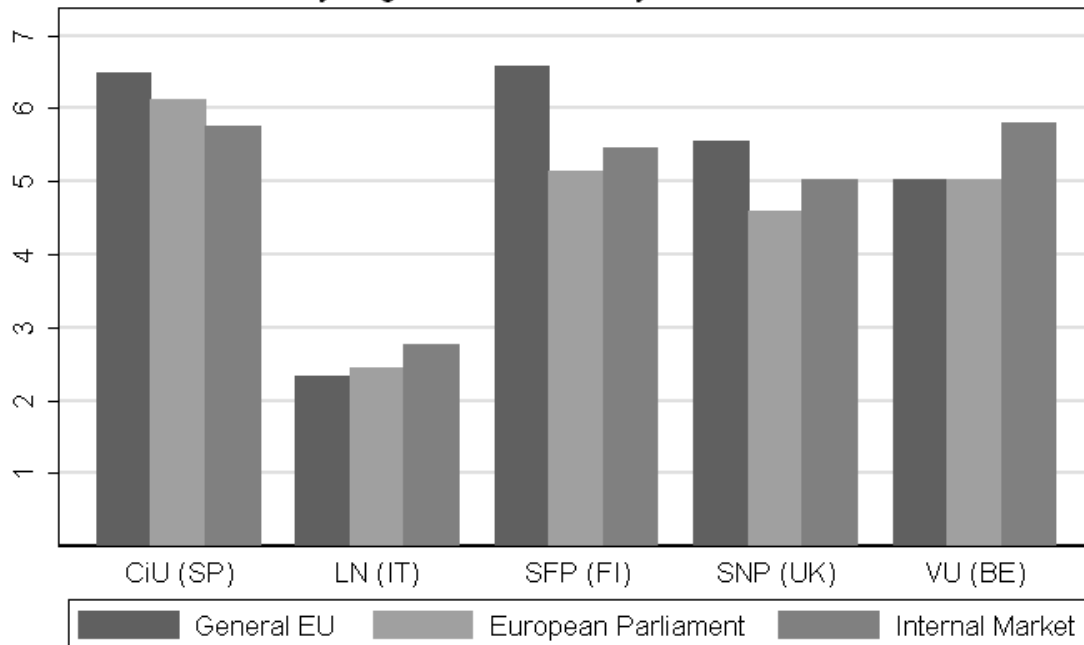
For the Convergence and Union, Francophone Democratic Front, Scottish National party, and Flemish People's Party, little variation in party position, salience, or dissent occurs across time. The Swedish Peoples' Party (SFP) became more supportive of European integration between 1988 and 1992. Since Finland was not yet a member of the European Union in that time, it is not surprising the party's position was in flux.

But Lega Nord did experience a significant decrease in support between 1996 and 1999. Surprisingly, this fairly significant positional change occurred without significant internal party dissent over European integration. In more detailed case studies, I will investigate the causes of the decline in support within the Lega Nord, but European integration is simply not as salient for Lega Nord as for other regional political parties, particularly in the period when their support for European integration decreased significantly. In other words, Lega Nord is more Euroskeptical in later years, but it is also less concerned with the integration process. This finding is consistent with research that shows that parties with extreme positions on integration tend to downplay, or lower the salience, of the issue because their position is not consistent with their voters (Steenbergen and Scott 2004). Barring this exception, the attitudes toward European integration among regional political parties seem remarkably consistent over time.

In addition to time, it may be that variation in position for regional political parties occurs across issue areas. Regional political parties may be more supportive of market integration, for the optimal size of nations reasons, but skeptical of political integration. In Figure 5, I present the party positions on a general EU question, European

Parliament, and the internal market for the parties from Figure 5 that competed in 2002.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 6. Support for European Union  
By Regional Political Party and Issue Area



As expected from the optimal size of nations hypothesis, regional political parties are generally more supportive of market integration than political integration. Among major regional political parties, only the Catalan Convergence and Union supports political

<sup>7</sup> The wording of the questions are as follows:

- General EU: “First, how would you describe the **general position on European integration** that the party’s leadership has taken over the **course of 2002?**”
- European Parliament: “First, take the position of the party leadership on the **powers of the European Parliament**. Some parties want more powers for the European Parliament. Other parties are opposed to expanding further the powers of the European Parliament. Where does the leadership of the following parties stand?”
- Internal Market: “Next consider the **internal market**. Some parties wish to strengthen EU powers to eliminate market barriers (i.e. free movement of goods, services, capital, and labor). Other parties oppose strengthening EU powers in this area. Where does the leadership of the following parties stand?”

In the survey, experts evaluate party positions on several EU issues, including European Parliament, internal market and several policies, including employment, agricultural, cohesion, environmental, asylum, and foreign. None of the questions directly corresponds to either economic or political integration per se, but the internal market question seems closest to ‘negative integration’ and the EP question may serve as a proxy for extending political integration.

integration more than market integration. The differences (and the sample size) are relatively small, though, so it would be imprudent to conclude regional political parties are more supportive of market integration than political integration. Thus, regional political parties are generally consistent in their support for European integration across issue area as they are across time and space.

This descriptive data analysis yields several conclusions. First, I find further support for the optimal size of nations argument in *Hypothesis 1*. I do not find evidence to support the main alternative hypothesis that regional political parties seek to increase electoral support by mobilizing anti-integration sentiments. Second, I find further support for the GAL/TAN and U-curve hypotheses found in the literature and show that it appears to fit the regional political parties. Finally, I find little evidence to show that support for integration among regional political parties significantly varies across time, space or issue area, with exceptions noted. In the final section of the paper, I describe future steps to supplement this study and extend the analysis.

## **Discussion and Extensions**

Using cross-section time-series analysis, I previously demonstrated that deeper European integration increased electoral support for regional political parties (Jolly 2004; 2005); unfortunately, in that analysis, I could not discriminate between the two causal mechanisms: fear or viability. In this paper, I disentangle whether this effect can be attributed to Euroskepticism or Europhilia. I find that regional political parties support European integration more than most party families. This finding is consistent with the qualitative work on regional political parties (Lynch 1996; Kurzer 1997). More

significantly, the finding suggests that the relationship between deeper European integration and increased electoral success of regional political parties can be attributed to the logic laid out in the optimal size of nations theory.

In future work, I intend to conduct case studies of the Scottish National Party, the Lega Nord, and the Convergence and Union party in Catalonia. By investigating the rhetoric used by each party in their manifestos about European integration, I seek to bolster the results from the expert survey data. In addition to this analysis, I will study the 1979 and 1997 devolution campaigns in Scotland. If the optimal size of nations argument has internal validity, then the arguments used by the “no” and “yes” campaigns in the late 1970s will be much different than in the 1990s. In the late 1970s, the “no” campaign could credibly argue that devolution or independence would lead to economic ruin as a result of less interaction with the market of the United Kingdom. But in the 1990s, the “yes” campaign could easily counteract this argument with the internal market of the European Union (Gallagher 1991). I will analyze both the campaign rhetoric and the public opinion surrounding these campaigns to evaluate this proposition. Alongside the current analysis of party positions, these extensions will test whether it is indeed the optimal size of nations logic which drives the relationship between European integration and increased electoral support for regional political parties.

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