

Notes and Comments

Rejoinder to Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, 'A Postfunctional Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus'

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Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks outline a research programme 'that seeks to make sense of new developments in EU politics and the middle-range theories that account for them'.¹ They argue that the debate on Europe is grounded in domestic political conflict, and that this conflict is above all driven by questions of identity, and not by economic preferences of interest groups, as is assumed by both neofunctionalists and liberal intergovernmentalists. Functional interest groups are decisive only under conditions of a permissive public opinion, i.e. under conditions of a depoliticized public. Once European integration has started to become a key political issue, 'integration by stealth' has ceased to be a viable strategy,² and identity politics moves to centre stage. In a nutshell: 'to understand European integration we need ... to understand how, and when, identity is mobilized'.

As a general strategy to explain why 'the elite has to make room for a more Eurosceptical public', and why identity has become politically salient, the authors (more or less explicitly) propose a two-step procedure. First, they introduce a structural tension which provides a political potential that can be exploited by political entrepreneurs: they argue that the process of rapid jurisdictional change in Europe has not been accompanied by a parallel change of identities. It is the tension between the increasing scope and depth of European integration, on the one hand, and stable national identities, on the other, that has created the latent political potential. Secondly, they propose to use theories of strategic competition among political parties to explain under what conditions this potential is likely to be exploited by certain political parties. This two-step approach reminds us of the general approach taken by cleavage theories, which analogously argue that structurally grounded conflicts are becoming politically salient to the extent that they are consciously perceived by the groups involved and are organized into politics by some collective actors. Kitschelt,³ for example, has applied this general strategy to the analysis of both social-democratic

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¹ See Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, 'A Postfunctional Theory of European Integration: From Permissive Consensus to Constraining Dissensus', *British Journal of Political Science*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 2008, doi: 10.1017/S0007123408000409, pp. 1–2. See also Philippe Schmitter, 'On the Way to a Post-Functionalist Theory of European Integration', *British Journal of Political Science*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 2008, doi: 10.1017/S0007123408000483; and Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, 'Revisiting the Nature of the Beast – Politicization, European Identity, and Postfunctionalism: A Comment on Hooghe and Marks', *British Journal of Political Science*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 2008, doi: 10.1017/S000712340800046X; also all in *British Journal of Political Science*, 39 (2009).

² Giandomenico Majone, *Dilemmas of European Integration: The Ambiguities and Pitfalls of Integration by Stealth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³ Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony J. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995).

and radical-right populist parties. Van der Brug *et al.*⁴ have used such a two-step model to explain why some anti-immigrant parties fail and others succeed, and we have used the same kind of reasoning to explain the transformation of the West European party systems.⁵

Let us consider the first step – the creation of structural potentials. As the authors suggest, almost in an aside, the effects of the tension in question have been magnified ‘because they are part of a broader breakdown of national barriers giving rise to mass immigration and intensified economic competition’. I would like to insist on this point. The European integration process should not be viewed in isolation. It should be conceptualized as part and parcel of a larger structural conflict that provides the potential for a reconstruction of domestic political conflicts across Europe. European integration is one of a number of processes that currently open up and unbundle the boundaries of the nation-states. This set of processes is generally referred to by the term of ‘globalization’, but, following Zürn,⁶ we might refer to it more correctly by the term ‘denationalization’. Processes of political competition (the construction of new supranational centres of authority competing with nation-states), economic competition (liberalization and market integration, immigration, delocalization) and cultural competition (immigration and its multicultural consequences) put the national political community under strain. As we have argued,⁷ the likely winners of these competitive processes include people with high qualifications in sectors open to international competition as well as all cosmopolitan citizens. The losers include the patriots who identify with the national community, the economic sectors which have traditionally been protected by the nation-state and which find themselves increasingly exposed to foreign competition, as well as all those who lack the qualifications and the cultural competence to meet the economic and cultural challenge of a globalizing world. The winners are expected to support the opening up of the borders, including European integration, while the losers are likely to constitute the potential for mobilization not only against European integration, but also for mobilization against immigration and its consequences, for the backlash against the cultural liberalism of the new social movements, and for the defence of national traditions, national privileges and national sovereignty. In a Rokkanean perspective, we suggest that we should conceive of these contemporary processes as constituting a new ‘critical juncture’, which is likely to result in the formation of a new structural cleavage that we might call the conflict between integration and demarcation.

This conflict has both an economic and a cultural dimension and it is not evident *a priori* why the aspect of identity should be more important than the economic one. This can be illustrated by the European integration process. European integration has above all been a process of making a market. In Scharpf’s terminology,⁸ it has been a process of ‘negative integration’, removing the boundaries and other obstacles to free and undistorted international economic competition. To a more limited extent, it has also been a process of reconstructing a system of regulation at the supranational level – a process that Scharpf calls positive integration. Both negative and positive economic integration impinge on the problem-solving capacity of the nation-states, on the autonomy of

⁴ Wouter van der Brug, Meindert Fennema and Jean Tillie, ‘Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed: A Two-Step Model of Aggregate Electoral Support’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 38 (2005), 537–73.

⁵ Hanspeter Kriesi, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschier and Tim Frey, ‘Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six European Countries Compared’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 45 (2006), 921–57; Hanspeter Kriesi, Edgar Grande, Romain Lachat, Martin Dolezal, Simon Bornschier and Timotheos Frey, eds, *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁶ Michael Zürn, ‘Schwarz-Rot-Grün-Braun: Reaktionsweisen auf Denationalisierung’, in Ulrich Beck, ed., *Politik der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 297–330.

⁷ Kriesi *et al.*, ‘Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space’ (2006); Kriesi *et al.*, eds, *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*.

⁸ Fritz W. Scharpf, *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 45.

the national political communities and on the solidarity within these communities. In other words, as an unanticipated consequence of the broadening and deepening of European economic integration, it has become more difficult to imagine the national communities with corresponding consequences for those who are attached to them.

While not *a priori* evident, the results of our project on the transformation of the national political space in six West European countries (Austria, Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland) support the hunch held by Hooghe and Marks that identity has become more salient for the political mobilization of the integration–demarcation cleavage than the economic considerations. In our analysis of the country-specific national election campaigns in the 1970s and 1990s, we have found that economic issues have lost in salience for partisan mobilization in all the countries except Germany. In the 1970s, they were more important than cultural issues in Austria, Britain and France, while they were of roughly equal importance in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. By the year 2000, France remains the only case where economic issues still are clearly dominant. Furthermore, among the cultural issues, those linked to the process of denationalization, i.e. immigration and European integration, have become more salient in national election campaigns. Following these developments, electoral competition can no longer be reduced to a single line of conflict. As a consequence, voting choices are no longer primarily determined by attitudes about economic or social policies as in the 1970s, but by preferences with regard to cultural issues.⁹ The only exception to this pattern is Britain, where economic issues are still the most important ones for the determination of the vote. But even in this case, we observe a reinforcement of the impact of the European integration issue in the course of the 1990s. By the 1990s, the opposition between integration and demarcation is clearly reflected in the determinants of voting choices.

But why has identity become more important than economic interests? The answer to this question is expected from the second step of the model – the strategic mobilization by political parties. In line with Hooghe and Marks, I would argue that the opposition to the opening up of the borders has mainly come from the radical left and from the populist right. While the radical left mainly mobilizes in terms of economic interests, it is the right-wing populists who mobilize in cultural terms. The radical left is mainly opposed to economic liberalization and to the threat it poses to the left's social achievement at the domestic level. By contrast, the populist right's opposition to the opening up of the borders is first of all an opposition to the political and cultural forms of competition and the threat they pose to national identities. Both the radical left and the right-wing populists appeal to the interests and fears of the losers of denationalization, but the evidence suggests that the right-wing populists did so with far greater success. They have become the driving force of the transformation of West European party systems, while the radical left has led a more marginal political life. The relative success of the right-wing populists can be attributed to their specific appeal to identity. In an analysis of voting choices across the six countries, we were able to show that cultural preferences linked to the integration–demarcation cleavage are central to explaining votes for right-wing populist parties (and their functional equivalents among national- or liberal-conservative parties).¹⁰ In France, where this pattern appeared with particular clarity, class does matter for economic preference formation – even among voters for the Front National (FN), but class no longer is the key identity for the electoral choice of FN voters. As Bornschier's detailed analysis of these voters suggests,¹¹ they primarily vote for the FN because of its defence of the national community. In other words, the identities linked to the traditional class cleavage have suffered a decline relative to those based on national community

⁹ Romain Lachat, 'The Electoral Consequences of the Integration vs. Demarcation Cleavage', in Kriesi *et al.*, eds, *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*.

¹⁰ Lachat, 'The Electoral Consequences of the Integration vs. Demarcation Cleavage'.

¹¹ Simon Bornschier, 'The Transformation of Historical Cleavages and the Rise of Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe' (doctoral dissertation, Department of Political Science, University of Zurich, 2007).

in determining political alignments in France. Contrary to Kitschelt's 'winning formula',¹² many voters support the FN not because of its pro-market stance, but in spite of it.

As a large body of literature documents, the success of the right-wing populists depends on a number of contextual circumstances. But the basis of their success lies in their appeal to identity and their exploitation of anxieties about losing one's identity in a denationalizing world. These parties are so successful, because they successfully prime, frame or cue national identities. But why does the framing of these parties resonate so well with the losers of denationalization processes? Why does identity, and in particular national identity, resonate more with them than economic, and in particular class, interest? My hunch is that this has to do with the particular quality of national identities. The opening up and unbundling of national boundaries puts into question the national community. This is particularly serious for people who, like the losers of the denationalization process, have identified with this community, and who have not much else to be proud of. As Greenfeld has observed, the remarkable quality of national identity, a quality that distinguishes it from all other identities, is that it guarantees a certain amount of dignity to all members of a political system.¹³ Similarly, Tamir suggests that the power of national identities can be attributed to their capacity to endow human action with a meaning that endures over time, thus carrying a promise of immortality.¹⁴

Much of what Hooghe and Marks suggest and what my remarks tend to support is still very speculative, and awaits confirmation by further empirical research. Hooghe and Marks propose that we focus on the strategic interaction between political parties in order to understand how issues are politicized. I fully agree with the general thrust of their proposal. All I would like to add are three suggestions for its specification. First, such a programme should extend to political mobilization in national and European elections, as well as in non-electoral forms of contention, including referendums which have become increasingly prominent in the context of European integration. With regard to European elections, the proposed programme should clarify to what extent they still constitute 'secondary elections' that are not really about representation at the European level.¹⁵ At the same time, such a programme should clarify whether national electoral contests still avoid the content or direction of EU policy.¹⁶ In other words, it should analyse whether, as Follesdal and Hix argue, there is still no electoral contest about the leadership at the European level or the basic direction of the EU policy agenda.¹⁷ Secondly, such a programme should study what kind of actors politicizes which aspects of the purported new cleavage in which arena. It should not only study political parties, but also social movement organizations and interest groups who articulate issues related to the new cleavage in their particular arenas. Thirdly, such a programme should attempt to clarify the respective role of cultural (identity) and economic (class) issues in the articulation of the new cleavage. In particular, it should attempt to explain why national identity has become such a powerful identity once again, and how it relates not only to other kinds of identity, but also to economic interests.

¹² Kitschelt and McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*.

¹³ Liah Greenfeld, 'Is Nation Unavoidable? Is Nation Unavoidable Today?' in Hanspeter Kriesi, Klaus Armingeon, Hannes Siegrist and Andreas Wimmer, eds, *Nation and National Identity: The European Experience in Perspective* (Chur: Rüegger, 1999), pp. 37–54, at p. 52.

¹⁴ Yael Tamir, 'The Enigma of Nationalism', *World Politics*, 47 (1995), 418–40, p. 432.

¹⁵ Cees van der Eijk and Mark Franklin, 'Potential for Contestation on European Matters at National Elections in Europe', in Gary Marks and Marco R. Steenbergen, eds, *European Integration and Political Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 32–50.

¹⁶ Peter Mair, 'The Limited Impact of Europe on National Party Systems', in Klaus H. Goetz and Simon Hix, eds, *European Integration and National Political Systems* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 27–51.

¹⁷ Andreas Follesdal and Simon Hix, 'Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU: A Response to Majone and Moravcsik', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44, (2006), 533–62.