



The Europe of Elites: A Study into the Europeanness of Europe's Political and Economic Elites

Heinrich Best, György Lengyel, and Luca Verzichelli

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Patterns of regional diversity in political elites' attitudes

Mladen Lazić

Miguel Jerez-Mir

Vladimir Vuletić

Rafael Vázquez-García

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines whether differences in attitudes toward the process of EU integration among members of political elites in various European countries are patterned and to what extent common regional, economic, political, and cultural characteristics of certain country groups influence these attitudes. Results show elites from Southern Europe to be the main proponents of further EU integration, while Eastern European elites are the most cautious. Variables with the strongest influence are economic development (measured by GDP per capita), the prevalent religious denomination (respondents from predominantly Protestant countries are less ready to support stronger EU integration than those from mostly Catholic countries), ethnic homogeneity (increasing level of homogeneity reduces elites' orientation towards stronger EU integration), and the existence of separatist experience (elites from countries with recent independence by secession are less oriented toward EU integration than those from countries without secession problems).

Keywords: regional diversity, Western Europe, Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, economic development, economic differentiation, post-Soviet countries, stability of democracy, separatist experience, religious denomination, ethnic composition

7.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to examine whether differences in attitudes among the political elites in member countries of the European Union (EU) towards the process of EU integration are patterned in some way so that common regional (i.e. supranational and sub-European), economic, political, or cultural characteristics of certain groups of countries significantly influence the attitudes of their political elites. Our first goal is, therefore, to identify variations among countries, and secondly, to see whether there are patterns in these variations. If such patterns exist, our aim is to find out how important they are, i.e. to determine how much they influence elites' perceptions of the EU. In other words, we will try to trace the current forms of coherence and/or deviancy of attitudes among the political elites within the EU, and to provide an explanation of any regional (geographical, economic, cultural, etc.) variations. In this chapter we will not be able to analyse all the possible patterns for the relevant groupings of countries. We will first focus on the geographical dimension and then try to ascertain whether certain economic, political, and cultural characteristics of groups of countries provide an internal social logic that induces a geographic coherence, and whether this coherence helps the homogenization or diversification of political elites' attitudes towards EU integration.

7.2 General Framework

Our analysis will not dwell on the significance of elite studies in general, or the importance of the role elites have played in the process of European **(p.148)** integration, since these topics make the principal content of the whole book (see also Slater 1994; Wessels 1999a; Holmberg 1999; Jenny, Pollak, and Slominski 2006). What is important for us to stress here is that there are good reasons, based both on previous theoretical considerations and concrete historical experiences, to claim that there are some important differences concerning the attitudes towards integration between the elites in certain European states,¹ and that these states orient their behaviour in many practical issues in different directions. Two examples help to illustrate the rich empirical evidence of these differences: the inauguration of the Lisbon Treaty--the symbol of the new stage in EU integration--was altered by amendments forced through by the Czech and Irish political elites (in addition to the non-acceptance of its first draft in France and the Netherlands); and the fact that the European currency has not been introduced in all member states. In addition to these two examples, of course, there are many day-to-day disagreements between officials of numerous European agencies coming from different countries and trying to advance the particular interests of their respective states. On the other hand, there are many theoretical considerations (including whole research fields, like political geography) pointing to the fact that, apart from the differences between the interests of particular countries, common structural elements in the positions of some groups of countries produce common interests at the 'mediate level', i.e. between the individual and the general. According to this view, if we want to

understand the EU integration process or obstacles thereto, it is necessary to include this mediate level in the analysis.

What, then, may be the basis of a common interests-forming entity at the country-group level that is able to produce some kind of internal homogeneity, and which can differentiate it from another entity (or entities) while retaining the differences between individual countries on one side, and the overall EU unity on the other? Fernand Braudel (1966) starts his monumental history of the Mediterranean by pointing to the geographical conditions that make some forms of human activities possible or impossible, thereby determining the whole process of social development. The relatively friendly sea and coast, which made the distant trade of larger quantities of merchandise possible, formed the precondition for the early development not only of ancient civilization, but also of the seeds of capitalism in the fifteenth century. However, those same surroundings, which together with some socio-historical processes nurtured the first capitalist centres of Europe (and the world) in Genoa and Venice, became an obstacle when trade moved to the Atlantic **(p.149)** ocean and transferred the centre of capitalist development to Antwerp, Amsterdam, and, finally, to London. The rise of capitalism in Western parts of Europe was immediately followed by an (interdependent) socio-historical change in Central and Eastern parts of the continent. Described as the 'second serfdom', this made these areas lag behind the rest of Europe both economically and socially ever since the sixteenth century (cf. Wallerstein 1974). These broad processes² have, to this day, left deep historical marks. In a nutshell: faster economic development of the Western parts of Europe, interconnected with permanent technological advancement, favoured a faster building of nation states, with stronger administrative, fiscal, and military capacities (cf. Tilly 1990). Mutually supportive economic and political developments of Europe's Western parts soon left behind not only the older Mediterranean centres, but also the early Atlantic powers (Spain and Portugal), not to mention the increasingly backward Eastern parts of the continent. Finally, but also significantly, this political-economic development was accompanied by a deep cultural change. As Max Weber showed, capitalism found fertile ground in the Protestant work ethic and asceticism (Weber 2002), which was also prone to individualism, rationalism, and even (in some interpretations) tolerance--in other words, all the necessary preconditions for fast technological, economic, and political change, which were largely absent in Catholic, and even more so, in Orthodox Christianity.

As is well known, the early capitalist structuring of the European continent, which included, among others, the developed West, the less developed South and the very late to develop East of Europe, had many consequences, of which we will mention just two that are particularly connected with our argument. The communist revolution in Russia, which among other things represented an attempt to increase the speed of modernization (cf. Galbraith 1967; Inkeles 1968) was later forced upon other East European states. This produced not only

an ideological divide in Europe--'the Iron Curtain'--but also a physical one--the Berlin Wall; both of these had long-term consequences, even after being dismantled, in all these countries. On the other hand, the idea and first institutional arrangements of a united Europe came from exactly the opposite side of Europe, from the most developed Western parts of the continent.

Our argument has so far pointed to the fact that regional divisions in Europe have deep historical roots and were produced by specific historical processes that have been shaping its particular interests, such as securing long-term peaceful conditions for economic development and decreasing political obstacles for market relations through the establishment of the European **(p.150)** Community. It may be expected, therefore, that these same commonalities are still at work today on the basis of some particular interests, as for example in the case of founding members who have already overcome the phase of exhausting negotiations³ wanting to push integration still further. We have also seen, however, that geography played only the initial role in structuring historical developments, and was subsequently 'upgraded' by economic, political, and cultural factors that, on the one hand, may 'support' geography, so that neighbouring countries share similar historical routes. On the other hand, these factors may 'disturb' the foundations laid down by geography so that individual countries do not follow the regional route, as in the case of the Czech lands that were forced to join the Soviet block despite being an early modernized region according to all criteria. This is why we have to move a step forward from regional divisions and try to find out if the factors that make the 'contents' of historical development--economic, political, and cultural characteristics of different countries--play an independent role, whether mutually connected or not, in determining the interests of these countries and the attitudes of their elites to the EU.

As already explained, for this analysis we intend to use the most common regional division of European countries into those of the West, South, and East, since this reflects their geographical situation and the long-term historical development connected with European integration, which is at the centre of our research. We therefore classify the countries in our survey as follows (see also Malefakis 1995; Bruneau et al. 2001):

- *Western Europe*: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.
- *Southern Europe*: Spain, Greece, Italy, and Portugal.
- *Eastern Europe*: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Serbia.

After the initial analysis of possible regional patterns in the distribution of elites' attitudes towards EU integration, we will proceed by 'deconstructing' geography into its economic make-up. For this, we will use the simplest indicators of

economic development--GDP and GDP per capita--assuming that different levels of development might independently influence relations towards integration. For example, countries with stronger economies may prefer less political impediments to free market principles, as opposed to national economies that need more help from the 'visible hand' of state protectionism. Further, we suppose that level of development not only **(p.151)** influences politics directly but also indirectly, via the voting behaviour of citizens. We start with the presupposition that an increase in GDP has not always been followed by decreasing economic inequalities among the population, that rising inequality may again produce a tendency towards a more interventionist national state and away from political integration into distant EU institutions. In order to check this hypothesis, we use the Gini coefficient as an indicator of economic inequalities.

Moving with our procedure of 'deconstructing' geography into its social components, i.e. taking it from the previously described political-economic indicator into a narrower (stricter) political field, we hypothesize that political history and political culture may also play an important role in determining the elites' attitudes towards European integration. It is obvious that the recent historical divide between the 'free world' and 'Soviet' spheres comes first to mind as a possible explanatory factor in our analysis, so that belonging to the post-socialist block of countries has to be included among our indicators. As already mentioned, we hypothesize that fifty years of Eastern European countries' complete political dependence on the Soviet Union makes the political elites (and population) of these countries hesitant to surrender full state sovereignty to yet another 'higher' level of authority. On the other hand, the political cultures of different countries have not been shaped by medium-term conditions only, but also by their long-term historical development. Looking at Western countries alone, it is clear that only some have a long, uninterrupted democratic tradition and that in others, populist, dictatorial, and other forms of undemocratic regimes played an important historical role. Therefore, we will try here to take the duration of democratic regimes in countries under observation as an indicator, assuming that the longer the democratic experience of a country, the more its elites will be prone to accept the transfer of some decision making from the national to supranational level (assuming this change is the result of democratic procedures). Also, as we have already demonstrated in previous research (see Lazic and Vuletic 2009), internal political tensions stemming from a recent history of secession, including current threats of secession, and state formation following secession, influenced elites' attitudes towards European integration. Even if this influence is not unequivocal, whereby the threat of secession may lead to positive attitudes towards greater EU integration, while having obtained state sovereignty by secession may work against more supranational integration, we will again check the role of this factor in forming elites' attitudes towards deeper EU integration.

Finally, as previously mentioned, common or interconnected historical developments have shaped and been shaped by certain cultural characteristics. There is not enough space in this chapter to investigate the whole of this elusive field, so we decided to use just one, long-established indicator--the **(p.152)** majority's religious denomination in any given country. We will not follow Huntington's extreme presuppositions about the civilization-wide consequences of different religious systems for political organizations and so on (cf. Huntington 1996) for the very simple reason that a *mixture* of denominations represents one of our classification units. We instead assume (following Max Weber) that a country's type of religious ethics is not only important for its economic culture, but also that a relatively long coexistence of different denominations will increase the level of tolerance, making a culture more ready to accept political integration into wider political communities.

7.3 Findings

7.3.1 Regional Patterns

We start our analysis of elites' attitudes towards strengthening EU integration by looking into the data on individual countries (Table 7.1).⁴

When we look at our data, what first comes to mind is that elites in most countries support the advancement of EU integration, but that they also show a variety of attitudes towards this issue: the range of attitudes stretches from strong support for further integration (Spain) to opposition to the already achieved level of integration (Great Britain and Estonia; the Czech Republic being just over the theoretical mid-point of the scale). It is also interesting to note the existence of a pattern of regional grouping, with the countries of Southern Europe showing strong support and the majority of Eastern European countries showing opposition.⁵ At this point, however, we find a more complex situation. First, if data on the elites and the rest of the population are compared, we see that in six of the countries in our sample, the general population does not support increasing integration, and that even where there is support (in ten countries) it is weaker than in the case of the elites, so that variations between countries are smaller and internal variations are bigger. Also, the order of countries is partially changed in the case of the general population, so that only the most supportive countries (Southern Europe) and the most oppositional (UK and Estonia) remain the same, while **(p.153)**

Table 7.1. European Union should be strengthened^a

Political elite				Public			
Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Spain	8.13	94	1.60	Portugal	6.75	844	2.95
Italy	7.72	82	2.45	Italy	6.70	974	3.04
Greece	7.57	90	2.37	Greece	6.62	963	3.11
Germany	7.41	70	1.72	Poland	6.46	880	2.45
Belgium	7.27	79	2.61	Spain	6.46	980	2.64
Denmark	6.78	58	2.93	Slovenia	5.74	954	3.01
Portugal	6.74	77	2.42	Denmark	5.73	958	2.70
Bulgaria	6.67	79	2.42	Germany	5.70	983	2.68
France	6.48	44	2.24	Serbia	5.64	776	2.78
Hungary	6.43	79	2.32	Slovakia	5.51	981	2.22
Austria	6.38	79	2.69	Belgium	5.41	985	2.89
Lithuania	6.34	80	1.85	Bulgaria	5.36	683	2.52
Serbia	6.33	72	2.71	Hungary	5.22	764	2.32
Slovakia	6.21	78	2.16	France	5.20	989	2.95
Poland	6.03	78	2.32	Estonia	4.79	815	2.62
Czech Republic	5.53	80	2.75	Great Britain	4.51	963	2.72

Patterns of regional diversity in political elites' attitudes

Political elite				Public			
Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Country	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Estonia	4.87	71	2.19	Austria	–	–	–
Great Britain	4.65	48	2.85	Czech Republic	–	–	–
Slovenia	–	–	–	Lithuania	–	–	–
<i>Europe</i>	<i>6.6</i>	<i>1338</i>	<i>2.52</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>5.75</i>	<i>14492</i>	<i>2.82</i>

Source: IntUne Project.

Notes: ^a Question: Some say European unification should be strengthened. Others say it has already gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point-scale. On this scale, '0' means unification 'has already gone too far' and '10' means it 'should be strengthened'. What number on this scale best describes your position? Responses: 0-10, DK (S), Refusal (S).

the elements of regularity at the medium level disappear. This means that continuing with EU integration represents the orientation of the elites more than that of the general public and that the public on the whole might be ready to follow the elites in this respect, but not without hesitation.

Since it is clear from Table 7.1 that country-by-country data indicate some elements of regional grouping, but that there are obvious exceptions, we take our analysis a step further and try to measure the possible existence of regional associations more precisely. In order to do this, we reclassify the relationship towards the strengthening of the EU into three categories: elites from countries believing that integration already went too far (answers 1–4 on the scale), those who would keep the present relations (answer 5, which is the middle of the scale), and those who support further increase in EU integration (answers 6–10);⁶ the countries concerned are also grouped by region as already indicated. This procedure resulted in the distribution in Table 7.2.

(p.154)

Table 7.2. Attitudes towards EU integration and regional division of countries (in %)

EU integration	European regions		
	Southern	Western	Eastern
Went too far	8.6	13.3	18.5
Should stay as it is	8.1	15.1	20.5
Should be strengthened	83.3	71.6	61.0

Spearman: -0.192; Sig. 0.000

Grouped in this way, our data show that regions do matter in determining the attitudes of political elites towards European integration; although, despite the relationship being statistically significant, the relationship is weak. As Table 7.2 indicates, elites from Southern Europe have been the main proponents of further integration, while Eastern European elites have been the most cautious. In order to explain this difference, we turn first to some already considered historical-political factors. It was, for example, suggested that in the case of Southern European countries, democratic transition and consolidation were facilitated by the moderation shown by both their general public and elites, which included a clearly pro-European stance (Bruneau et al. 2001: 81). In addition, democratization processes in these countries (with the exception of Italy, where democratic political order was introduced before the establishment of the EU) were favoured by the support they received from other Western European countries and international organizations. In this respect, the advantages of joining the EU clearly outnumbered the effects of conditionality for Greece, Portugal, and Spain. While joining the EU secured Eastern European countries economic prosperity, political stability, and the integrity of state sovereignty, it is likely that their former dependence on the Soviet Union continued to restrain the elites and the population from surrendering basic elements of their sovereignty to any

supranational entity. In this way, despite the fact that national elites in Eastern Europe were strongly committed to the 'return to Europe' (Grabbe and Hughes 1998; Higley et al. 2000), the process of accession also fuelled uncertainty, lack of enthusiasm, and growing scepticism among the public (and sometimes of the political elite) about the consequences of EU membership. This created a mismatch between the behaviour and attitudes of the 'pro-European' national elites and the rising levels of Euroscepticism among the public in some countries (Hughes et al. 2002: 328; Taggart and Szczerbiak, 2001). In any event, both the public and the elites strongly supported the idea of integration with the West and the EU in general, although they were sceptical about specific instruments of integration (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2006: 142).

(p.155) 7.3.2 Economic Factors

Although the explanations just given may seem plausible, it is obvious that they are not sufficient to account for either the commonalities or diversities in the regional groupings of elite attitudes towards EU integration. We therefore need to check if there are any other factors at play 'behind' these groupings. We start by looking at the economic factors and analysing the level of economic development. For this analysis we use GDP per capita as the indicator and divide the countries into three groups accordingly: countries with more than 40,000 euros per capita (highly developed), countries with 20,000–40,000 euros per capita (middle developed), and countries with less than 20,000 euros per capita (less developed); attitudes towards integration will be classified as in Table 7.2. The results of this analysis are given in Table 7.3.⁷

Generally speaking, the relationship between the level of economic development and the elites' attitudes towards the increase in EU integration is statistically significant but is even weaker than in the case of the regional division of countries. Of course, the overall tendency in the present case follows the preceding one (regional grouping) because Eastern European countries have, on the whole, been economically less developed so that less enthusiasm for advancing EU integration among the elites in countries with the lowest GDP levels may be expected. What seems interesting, however, is that the level of economic development plays almost no role in this respect with regard to elites from countries with high and middle levels of per capita GDP. When this is taken together with our assumption about Eastern European countries being grouped into the less developed category, it leaves us with the conclusion that we need to find another factor that might influence these attitudes more strongly; we therefore turn to politics.

Of course, it could be argued immediately that there is no clear-cut separation between political and economic considerations, particularly from the

Table 7.3. Attitudes towards EU integration and level of economic development (GDP per capita) of countries (in %)

EU integration	GDP per capita (in Euros)		
	40,000 and more	20–40.000	Less than 20,000
Went too far	13.3	13.5	16.3
Should stay as it is	15.1	9.7	21.2
Should be strengthened	71.6	76.8	62.4

Spearman: -0.093 ; Sig. 0.000

(p.156)

Table 7.4. Attitudes towards EU integration and level of economic differentiation (Gini coefficient) (in %)

EU integration	Countries according to level of economic differentiation (Gini coefficient)		
	Lower	Medium	Higher
Went too far	16.1	12.0	15.8
Should stay as it is	17.2	12.0	19.3
Should be strengthened	66.8	76.1	65.0

Spearman: 0.006; Sig. 0.808

elites' perspective. For this reason we decided to first interconnect these considerations using an economic indicator that is directly related to politics: the Gini coefficient. Our aim in using this coefficient is that, as a measure of economic differentiation in a country, it can show the potential for increasing political instability and uncertainty in countries where economic inequality is pronounced (following the 'classical' political science argument--cf. Lipset 1960; Huntington 1984). Where such potential for instability and insecurity exists, we expect a stronger elite orientation towards the nation state as a means to ensure stability. On the other hand, it could be argued that, where we see a relatively modest economic differentiation in a country, the resulting political stability makes elites more ready to 'soften' their need for strong nation-state apparatuses in order to guarantee internal stability and thereby makes them more likely to transfer part of their national regulation to the EU as a supranational entity. In Table 7.4 we again divide the countries into three groups according to attitudes to EU integration and correlate them with the level of their economic differentiation.⁸

The data clearly show that our hypothesis about the influence of possible political instability--due to the high economic differentiation in the country--on the attitudes of its elite towards EU integration should be dropped. It is interesting to note, however, that the elites in countries with a medium level of economic differentiation display the highest inclination towards increasing integration, which might also mean that a low level of differentiation, thereby decreasing the potential for social conflict, also reduces elites' need for

supranational integration. However, since grouping the countries according to the level of economic differentiation did not follow the regional grouping, and as the correlation between this indicator and attitudes towards EU integration (**p. 157**) was significantly lower than in the case of the regional grouping, we have to move on and try to check the validity of our next hypothesis concerning the possible influence of several political characteristics of the countries on their elites' attitudes to EU integration.

7.3.3 Political Factors

As already mentioned, when speaking about differences in the attitudes of political elites towards the EU, what most often comes to mind is the position of countries that recently joined the EU after having been a part of the Soviet block for almost half a century. Bearing in mind that, for these countries, the fall of the Berlin Wall not only signified a systemic change, namely the introduction of the capitalist system and democratic polity, but also the end of enforced state integration into the Soviet block. Entry into the EU had politically ambivalent consequences: safety from a possible Russian threat, but also a limitation to their long-awaited full state sovereignty.

Our previous regional groupings mostly followed the division between the post-socialist 'Eastern' and the traditional capitalist 'Western' and 'Southern' countries. However, since we noticed in Table 7.1 that in many cases individual countries do not follow the group pattern, we want to check whether putting the two groups together (and reclassifying attitudes towards integration) changes the relation between the elites' attitudes and the recent political past (Table 7.5).

As can be seen in Table 7.5, there is almost no change if we group countries as being with or without a Soviet past rather than by regional belonging; the relationship with elites' attitudes towards EU integration remains statistically significant, but pretty weak. In other words, elites in many post-Soviet countries are very cautious about the strengthening of supranational integration. Going back to the list of individual countries, we see that only the Bulgarian elites are slightly above the European average in positively evaluating the possibility of strengthening EU integration. This might be connected with the fact that Bulgaria entered the Union just before the survey, so that

Table 7.5. Attitudes towards EU integration and previous membership in the Soviet block (in %)

EU integration	Membership in the Soviet block	
	Yes	No
Went too far	18.5	11.0
Should stay as it is	20.5	11.7

EU integration	Membership in the Soviet block	
	Yes	No
Should be strengthened	61.0	77.3

Spearman: 0.173; Sig. 0.000

(p.158) pro-European attitudes in the country were still fairly high. In this case, the strength of the Union may still be seen as a necessary protection against a possible threat from the East rather than as a factor limiting the country's independence. Among post-Soviet countries that entered the EU earlier, however, the feeling of threat may have already disappeared. The position of the UK, which is traditionally cautious about deeper European integration, at the bottom of the scale obviously lowers the correlation.

Even though our hypothesis that recently acquired sovereignty following the collapse of the Soviet empire decreases a country's orientation towards deeper European integration found some modest confirmation, it could still be argued that another factor is involved in this relationship: namely, that what the East European countries have in common is not only their post-Soviet experience, but also a long history of undemocratic political regimes. So, assuming that deeper (voluntary) European integration also means further consolidation in the constitution of broader democratic polity, we need to check whether the duration/stability of democratic regimes in these countries is connected with the desirability of EU integration. In other words, we can hypothesize that the presence of an undemocratic tradition may influence some of the political elite not to support the transfer of additional decision-making authorities to a supranational entity, since such a transfer would reduce the potential for internal non-democratic rule; or vice versa, whereby part of the elite would support the transfer of certain powers to a supranational entity precisely because it would reduce such potential (Table 7.6).

Even if it is immediately clear that the correlation between the attitudes towards increased EU integration and the duration of a democratic regime in a country is statistically insignificant, it is interesting to see that the positive evaluation of strengthening EU integration comes mostly from countries that have had democratic regimes for most but not all of the time. In a way, this somewhat supports both our presuppositions: that a historically stable democratic tradition makes the elites in such countries *less in need* of opting for a

Table 7.6. Duration/stability of democratic regime and attitudes towards the EU (in %)

EU integration	Countries according to duration of democratic regime in the twentieth century ^a		
	Continuously democratic	Mostly democratic	Mostly undemocratic
Went too far	15.8	9.7	16.0
Should stay as it is	18.3	9.5	17.6
Should be strengthened	65.9	80.8	66.3

Spearman: -0.056; Sig. 0.016

Notes: ^a Among the countries with continuous democratic regimes (disregarding the period of foreign occupation) we include: Belgium, Denmark, France, and the UK; mostly democratic (over 50 years of democratic regime) are: Austria, Germany, Greece, and Italy; mostly undemocratic (less than 50 years of democratic regime) are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain.

(p.159)

Table 7.7. Historical experience of separatism and attitudes towards the EU (in %)

EU integration	Countries ^a		
	Without separatist experience	Formed recently by separation	With present separatist threat
Went too far	12.5	21.7	12.5
Should stay as it is	14.6	21.7	13.8
Should be strengthened	72.9	56.6	73.7

Spearman: -0.032; Sig. 0.172

Notes: ^a The surveyed countries are grouped in the following way: 'without separatist experience'--Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal; 'formed recently by separation'--Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia; 'with present separatist threat'--Belgium, Serbia, Spain, UK.

wider and possibly safer democratic polity; and that a lack of historical democratic tradition decreases *the wish* of the elite to integrate more fully into such a polity. On

the other hand, as the data in Table 7.6 clearly demonstrates, the problem we investigate is highly complex. While the UK might be used as an example of a country with a long democratic tradition not wishing to opt for a wider and possibly safer democratic polity, France is an example of the contrary, just as Spain falsifies our second presupposition. In other words, the long list of factors, whose possible role in the explanation of elites' orientations towards EU integration is tested here, shows precisely that numerous influences necessarily turn many countries into 'individual cases' departing from one or another with regularity. Naturally, this is no reason to dismiss the whole argument, but it is grounds for continuing to search for other explanations, which is why we now turn to see whether another historical-political experience--that of separatism--influences the attitudes of elites' towards EU integration.

As mentioned earlier, in other research we were able to show that an influence of separatism did exist, but it was not linear: elites in countries formed by secession tended to place above-average stress on the priority of nation states over the EU, while elites in countries under the threat of secession prioritized stronger supranational ties (cf. Lazic and Vuletic 2009). Having in mind the two-directional consequence of this factor, we now look at how it works when the question of strengthening the EU is at stake (Table 7.7).⁹

As in the previous case, in which the relation between democratic stability and elites' attitudes towards EU integration was checked, we see that the connection between the two variables is weak and insignificant, especially because there is no difference between the attitudes of the elites from two types of country--those that have not experienced (internal) demands for the **(p.160)** separation of a part of their territories, and those facing such demands (by political parties, movements, or even terrorist groups). However, it is quite clear that the elites in countries having recently acquired sovereignty through separation from another country are more cautious towards the strengthening of the EU, which is consistent with our finding that newborn state independence increases the pro nation-state orientation of the political elite (see Table 7.5). This finding also leads to the conclusion that in time, when the elite's legitimization basis moves from obtaining state independence to securing its successful functioning, its attitude towards strengthening the supranational entity might become more favourable.¹⁰

7.3.4 Cultural Factors

Finally, we look at whether the relatively weak regional regularities in forming the elites' attitudes towards the strength of supranational ties in Europe have a common cultural background. Due to space considerations, we have had to limit ourselves to a few indicators, and have therefore selected one that has for a long time been considered very important by social scientists: religion. As already mentioned, Weber claimed that Protestantism stood behind the early rise of capitalism in England, and that this fundamentally contributed to the present socio-economic and political regionalization of Europe. Following this standpoint, it has also been argued that certain characteristics of religious

denominations are directly connected with certain types of political system, whereby some are more or less prone to support democratic regimes, some are 'neutral' in this respect, and others favour undemocratic regimes (see Huntington 1984). In the same vein, some have suggested that denominations differ among themselves depending on the tolerance of their 'spiritual competitors' and that this tolerance also has important socio-economic and political consequences (Bellah 1957). Following these ideas, we may suppose that the elites in countries with a long-standing mixture of religious denominations would find it easiest to accept the enlargement of their political community, which by itself brings increased cultural diversification. It could also be argued that predominantly Protestant countries, wherein capitalism developed early, would be more ready to weaken state borders and thus enable greater freedom of capital circulation and accumulation. Conversely, however, it may be logical for countries with a prevalent Orthodox tradition to be more cautious towards the strengthening of EU integration, since its churches have usually been closely **(p.161)**

Table 7.8. Dominant denominations in a country and elites' attitudes towards the EU (in %)

EU integration	Dominant denomination ^a			
	Catholic	Orthodox	Protestant	Mixed
Went too far	10.2	13.4	22.9	19.1
Should stay as it is	13.0	17.1	26.4	15.5
Should be strengthened	76.8	69.5	50.7	65.4

Spearman: -0.142; Sig. 0.000

Notes: ^a Countries in which at least 67 per cent of the population declares to belong to one religious denomination are grouped into (dominantly) Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant, while others are put into the Mixed group. According to this criteria, Catholic countries are: Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Italia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Spain; Orthodox countries are: Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia; Protestant countries are: Denmark, UK, Estonia; and Mixed countries are: Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia (source: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos)).

tied to their nation states, so that a weakening of the nation state would also reduce the influence of the national church. Let us now look at our data to see if these considerations can be empirically verified (Table 7.8).

Interestingly enough, in the present case, the relation between the elites' attitudes and our independent variable is statistically significant (even if relatively weak). However, the direction of the relation does not follow expectations: elites in predominantly Catholic countries support EU integration most energetically, while support is the weakest among elites in Protestant countries, with Orthodox and religiously mixed countries being closer to Catholic countries than to Protestant ones. The first explanation that comes to mind is that most Catholic countries also belong to the Southern region of Europe, where support for EU integration is strongest, while the attitude of UK elites again determines the position of the whole Protestant camp. On the other hand, the position of Orthodox countries may best illustrate the problems with which our explanations of variation of support for deeper EU integration are faced. Namely, if we want to understand why the elites in Catholic, Orthodox, and mixed religious countries give stronger support to increasing EU integration than the elites in Protestant countries, we have to take into account the fact that the Orthodox countries in our sample include Greece (a Southern and mostly democratic country), Bulgaria (a fresh EU entrant), and Serbia (an aspiring EU entrant). These are also the countries with an above-average presence of factors already established as those contributing to the strengthening of pro-EU integration.

7.4 Conclusions: Towards a Synthetic Analysis

The repeated demonstration in our analyses of the effect of different influences on the attitudes of political elites towards EU integration forces us to abandon the search for additional individual factors and to look at the effect of **(p.162)**

Table 7.9. Regression model for attitudes towards EU integration

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.541	4.117		1.588	0.112
	Orthodox	0.212	0.573	0.034	0.369	0.712
	Protestant	-1.667	0.237	-0.232	-7.047	0.000
	Religiously mixed	-0.494	0.497	-0.091	-0.996	0.320
	Ethnic composition	-0.022	0.010	-0.091	-2.166	0.030
	GDP	5.042E-5	0.000	0.024	0.549	0.583
	GDP per capita	7.647E-5	0.000	0.514	1.999	0.046
	Gini coefficient	-0.008	0.073	-0.015	-0.114	0.909
	Southern	1.052	0.374	0.192	2.810	0.005
	Continuously democratic	-0.851	0.560	-0.135	-1.521	0.128
	Mostly democratic	-0.341	0.490	-0.059	-0.695	0.487
	Founded by separation	-0.655	0.224	-0.117	-2.919	0.004

Patterns of regional diversity in political elites' attitudes

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	Problem with separatism	-0.352	0.219	-0.066	-1.610	0.107
	Membership in Soviet block	1.408	0.791	0.297	1.781	0.075

Notes: ^a Dependent variable: scale from 'Unification has already gone too far' to 'Unification should be strengthened'.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.314 ^a	0.098	0.092	2.25730

Notes: ^a Predictors: (Constant), post-socialist countries, ethnic composition, Orthodox, Protestant, Gini, separatist problem, partly democratic, GDP, founded by separation, democratic, religiously mixed, southern, GDP per capita.

these factors taken together. In order to do this, we use a regression analysis in which elites' attitudes towards the strength of EU integration are taken as the dependent variable, while the factors we have analysed so far--together with two additional factors, namely, ethnic composition of country and total GDP--are incorporated as independent variables (Table 7.9).¹¹

(p.163) The results of the regression analysis show that all variables explain less than 10 per cent (9.8 per cent) of the total variance. This suggests that, if all independent variables taken together have so small a predictive value, many cannot be significantly connected with our dependent variable. In brief, elites' attitudes towards the strength of EU integration are not influenced by the previous existence of a socialist order in the country; by the history of democratic order; by the country's aggregate level of economic development (GDP); or by the level of economic differentiation in a country. Some variables that we explored, however, are found to be significantly connected with elites' attitudes towards EU integration:

- The more specific measure of economic development--GDP per capita--represents the factor with the strongest influence on the elites' attitudes: an additional dollar per capita increases the score at the scale of support for deeper unification for 0.514 standard deviations.
- The prevalent religious denomination represents another factor which significantly influences the researched attitudes, to the effect that respondents from predominantly Protestant countries are less willing to support stronger EU integration than those coming from mostly Catholic countries (resulting in the scale of unification dropping by 0.232 standard deviations; however, there is no significant difference between respondents from predominantly Catholic and those from mostly Orthodox countries).
- Our starting hypothetical dimension concerning the effect of geographical region comes third in level of influence on elites' attitudes towards the strength of EU integration, in so far as elites' from Southern European countries prefer stronger EU integration in comparison to respondents from Eastern Europe (0.192 standard deviations). On the other hand, the difference between Western and Eastern European elites is not statistically significant in this respect.
- An historical experience of separatism is also significant, so that elite members from countries having recently obtained state independence by secession are less oriented towards strong EU integration than the elites from countries without secession problems. Nevertheless, there is no significant difference in this respect between the elites coming from countries currently facing secession problems and those which are not.
- Finally, the weakest but still significant influence is that of a country's ethnic homogeneity, so that an increasing level of

homogeneity reduces elites' orientation towards deeper EU integration (each per cent of increased ethnic homogeneity results in a decrease in the integration scale of 0.091 standard deviations).

(p.164) The most general conclusion of the regression analysis would probably be that our findings are ambivalent. We did establish that some independent variables influenced the attitudes of political elites towards the further integration of their countries into the EU, but these influences were neither strong nor numerous. Taken individually, only four of these variables were statistically significantly in relation to the dependent variable, but in all cases the relation was weak. Taken together, our independent variables explained a small percentage of variations in the total elite sample. What is the meaning of these findings? Was the whole problem incorrectly formulated, so that the hypothesis about the existence of any kind of commonalities in elites' attitudes to deeper EU integration could not be confirmed? Or were the independent variables not suitable, or was the dependent variable unreliably measured?

We will answer these questions in the inverse order. With regard to the dependent variable, we collapsed the original scale concerning elites' attitudes towards the strength of EU integration into three categories, as already mentioned (see page 153), but we did this only after we had explored the original 11-point scale to check that the results we obtained by using this simpler indicator did not change significantly. We did also try to build a more complex dependent variable, using several indicators to construct an index of the elites' relation towards the strengthening of the EU. However, as the outcome of this attempt had no significant effect on the results, we decided to use the simpler construction to make the chapter easier to read.¹² In the case of the independent variables, it is obvious that those used in our analyses could not be a finite list of possible influences. However, if we look at the variables that demonstrated a statistically significant relation with the dependent variable, we do have a very interesting finding: *all fields* of social relations wherein we looked for an influence on the elites' attitudes--economy (GDP per capita), politics (experience of separatism, ethnic composition), culture (dominant religion), and finally, our starting indicator (regional position)--proved to be important.

We can, therefore, say that our search generally took the right, multi-linear, direction. At the same time, the very complexity of potential influences suggests that such an investigation may not proceed too far. In other words, each country represents an individual mixture of a multitude of general factors that, combined with individual characteristics of the countries' elites, makes any strong connection between an attitude and a particular factor highly improbable. Does this mean that our attempt to find such connections was futile from the beginning? We do not think so. First, demonstrating the **(p.165)** extreme complexity of the relations we studied represents a valuable result, especially when the importance of all dimensions of social relations--economic, political,

and cultural--in this field was positively confirmed. We also believe that some general practical consequences (to which we will turn in the following, concluding pages of our chapter) can be deduced from our findings, in spite of our overall conclusion about the strength of individuality (particularity), where elites' attitudes towards the further integration of the EU are concerned.

Returning to our initial finding, we saw that political elites in a large majority of countries support an increase in EU integration. Also, since we found that the level of economic development was the best predictor of a positive attitude towards greater integration, we might be able to predict some options in future alterations of this attitude. Here, we may say that the present period of economic crisis, marked by a drop of the GDP in the majority of European countries, does not provide the most favourable conditions for institutional change oriented towards increased EU integration, since the political elites in (at least some of) these countries would not be ready to support that change. On the other hand, economic growth might improve the political elites' readiness to look positively towards increased integration. This is particularly important for the former socialist countries, although we found that their overall socialist prehistory did not play a significant role in determining their elites' attitudes towards EU integration. What may explain the cautious attitude in some of these countries towards the transfer of additional authority to a supranational entity such as the EU is their recent political past: the creation of an independent state (in case of Estonia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Lithuania, in our sample) or the achievement of full state sovereignty (Poland). It could be expected, therefore, that the crucial element of political legitimization in these countries--full state sovereignty--will gradually lose importance over time and, together with the expected economic growth, might orient their political elites towards deeper EU (supranational) integration. Finally, it is certainly interesting to note that the increasing (ethnic) heterogeneity positively influences the attitudes towards supranational integrations. Since the increase in different forms of heterogeneity (cultural, ethnic, racial, etc.) is a corollary of the globalization process, it might also facilitate the acceptance of advancement in European integration.

Of course, we have to repeat that, since the individual factors investigated in this chapter did not demonstrate a strong influence on elites' attitudes towards EU integration, and that even when taken together they only explained a limited part of the variation in these attitudes, the predictive value of our findings is not very high. It is also necessary to add that the predictive value in our case is very limited if we look at individual countries. The complexity of numerous individual factors is, in many countries, removed (**p.166**) by such factors being forged into a single hard entity called tradition, which may endure notwithstanding a major change in actual circumstances. This is partly why the UK's political elite, for example, continually ranks last in positive attitudes towards deeper EU integration in spite of the fact that it is a Western country, it is economically

highly developed, with a long-lasting sovereignty, and is culturally diverse. However, explaining individual variations between countries must be the subject of future research.

Notes:

(¹) Notwithstanding a common rationale (grounded on well-interpreted interests) that leads the elites of practically all European countries to push for a continent-wide economic, political, and cultural integration.

(²) In the second case also co-determined by 'geography', since mass production of grain and timber, and opportunity to ship these products by sea, represented the preconditions for that type of social development.

(³) Often over trivial things, which impede efficient decision making; or, in the case of new East European members, diluted somewhat so as to enjoy political protection and economic benefits while keeping the recently acquired state sovereignty.

(⁴) Since what we examine here are the general (geographic, economic, etc.) factors influencing the attitudes towards EU integration, rather than the specific factors that concern the elites' orientations, we, at this point, provide the data on these countries populations' attitudes towards integration as a wider context of the elites' orientations. It is obvious, however, that we do not have the space to proceed with a comparative analysis of these two sub-samples in this chapter.

(⁵) These results are corroborated by those of other sources and scholars. Thus, higher levels of Euroscepticism have been found in CEEPC countries (Hughes, Sasse, and Gordon 2002; Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2006, 2007), while Southern Europe has been traditionally more supportive of the EU (Brinegar, Jolly, and Kitschelt 2004; Llamazares and Gramacho 2007).

(⁶) The regrouping of data from the original scale into three categories is made in order to make them easier to follow for the reader. In all cases, differences in the statistical significance of the relations among variables were negligible.

(⁷) We also examined the total GDP of a country as an indicator but--as it will be demonstrated later on in the chapter--the present one has a better predictive value.

(⁸) Countries in our research are distributed according to the size of the Gini coefficient in the following way: lower level of differentiation (Gini below 0.30): Denmark, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Austria, Bulgaria; medium level of differentiation (Gini between 0.30 and 0.35): Serbia, France, Belgium, Greece, Poland, Spain; higher level of differentiation (Gini above 0.35): Estonia, UK, Italy, Lithuania, and Portugal. It is important to notice that this

division does not follow either of the previous two divisions, namely regional and developmental.

(⁹) Two differences exist here in comparison with previous connections: we do not confront directly the EU and a nation state; and we use only one indicator of the attitude towards the EU.

(¹⁰) We also tried using the existence and size of ethnic minorities in a country (operationalized by the percentage of dominant ethnic community in the country) as an indicator of possible political instability and therefore as a source of influence on the elites' attitudes towards EU integration. We will later on demonstrate that this variable is also significantly connected with our dependent variable but less strongly than historical experience with separatism.

(¹¹) Independent variables in the regression model are defined in the following way: 'Orthodox', 'Protestant', and 'religiously mixed' are dummy variables (with 'Catholic' as referent category). The scale of 'ethnic composition' was made on the basis of the percentage of the dominant ethnic group. 'Continuously democratic' and 'mostly democratic' are dummy variables (with 'mostly undemocratic' as referent category). 'Founded by separation' and 'problem with separatism' are dummy variables ('without separatist experience' is the referent category). 'Membership in the Soviet block' is a dummy variable (with 'not members' as referent category). 'Southern' is a dummy variable (with 'Eastern' as referent category). 'Western' corresponds to 'not member in Soviet block' and could not be included in the model; when 'members in the Soviet block' are excluded, the dummy variable representing 'Western' countries compared to 'Eastern' countries as the referent category is not a statistically significant predictor of the dependent variable.

(¹²) We used a complex index of the elites' attitudes towards the EU as the dependent variable relatively successfully in our previous research, but our conclusions in that case also were not linear and unequivocal (cf. Lazic and Vuletic 2009).