

European Union Politics

<http://eup.sagepub.com/>

The Political Basis of Support for European Integration

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca

European Union Politics 2000 1: 147

DOI: 10.1177/1465116500001002001

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://eup.sagepub.com/content/1/2/147>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *European Union Politics* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://eup.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://eup.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://eup.sagepub.com/content/1/2/147.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Jun 1, 2000

[What is This?](#)



European Union Politics

[1465-1165(200006)1:2]

Volume 1 (2): 147-171: 012599

Copyright© 2000

SAGE Publications

London, Thousand Oaks CA,

New Delhi

The Political Basis of Support for European Integration

◆ **Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca**

Instituto Juan March, Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT

Much previous research on popular support for European integration assumes that support is a function of economic calculations. I propose a different model, in which support is the consequence of the interplay between supranational and national politics: the higher citizens' opinion of the functioning of supranational institutions and the lower that of national institutions, the greater their support for integration. This is so because the worse the opinion of the national political system, the lower the opportunity cost of transferring sovereignty to Europe. In order to illustrate this hypothesis, I show that levels of national support for integration are higher in those countries that suffer greater corruption and have less-developed welfare states. Through an ordered logit analysis of one *Eurobarometer* survey, I test this political model at the individual level. Finally, I draw some conclusions from the empirical analysis for current discussions on the possibility of a European democracy.

KEY WORDS

- corruption
- European integration
- public opinion
- supranational democracy

1 Introduction

Why might a citizen of a member state of the European Union (EU) support integration? There are two kinds of explanatory strategies. First, it can be argued that support for integration is a consequence of the fit between the meaning of integration and certain generic attitudes and values of the individual. According to one well-known hypothesis, people with post-materialist values are more strongly in favour of integration (Inglehart, 1977: Ch.12, but see Janssen, 1991; Anderson and Reichert, 1996; and Gabel, 1998a, b for evidence to the contrary). On the other hand, proponents of an instrumental approach would argue that support can be understood as the consequence of an evaluation of the costs and benefits (in the broadest sense of the terms) associated with integration. Support is explained in terms of the advantages and sacrifices implied by integration.

Here I adopt the instrumental approach. More specifically, I posit that political variables relating to the transformation of national political systems and the creation of a supranational polity play a crucial role in explaining variation in support for integration. I will therefore model support as a function of the interplay between supranational and national politics. Positive opinions of integration increase as citizens' opinions of European institutions improve and their opinions of the performance of their national political system worsen. When individuals perceive benefits at the European level, are satisfied with the way in which the European institutions function, but have a low opinion of their own national political institutions, they are likely to show a high degree of support for integration. The mechanism that accounts for this relationship is quite simple: the worse the political system works at home and the better at the supranational level, the smaller the risk involved in transferring national sovereignty to a supranational body. Citizens of a state plagued by all sorts of inefficiencies may come to the conclusion that they have little to lose by opting for 'more' Europe. This option becomes more attractive as opinions of European institutions improve. Thus, the greater the capacity of the supranational institutions as compared to the national ones to resolve the problems of the national polity, the greater the level of support for integration.

If citizens tend to think in these terms, an interesting implication for the prospects for European democracy follows. An influential approach in the theoretical debates on European democracy maintains that supranational democracy is only possible when citizens from the different member states share a sense of being involved in a common project and forming part of a single community. In this line of argument, it is the absence of a European people, a European *demos*, which prevents supranational democracy. As long as citizens do not think of themselves as Europeans, European democracy is

doomed. However, the analysis presented here seems to suggest that individuals value the integration enterprise when the supranational institutions work efficiently from the democratic point of view and their national ones fail by these same democratic standards. Consequently, allegiance to Europe can be generated by the functioning of the EU itself: the better the performance of the EU, the more likely it is that citizens will agree to pool sovereignty. The point is that the creation of a European *demos* largely depends on the EU itself, and is not a precondition for a supranational democracy. As I will attempt to demonstrate below, the empirical analysis presented here gives credence to the idea that the much-discussed question of the *demos* is endogenous, rather than exogenous, to the EU institutions.

The article has three sections. The first presents the hypotheses and compares them with previous research. In the second section, a statistical analysis of the hypotheses is carried out using data from a 1995 *Eurobarometer* survey. I show that variation in the national means of support for integration can be explained by the degree of corruption and by the development of the welfare state: the more corruption and the less social expenditure in a country, the higher the national mean of support for integration. This result reveals that the characteristics of the state have a powerful influence on citizens' attitudes towards the EU. Similar results are obtained when the hypotheses are applied to individual data. In general, (i) the greater the benefits associated with the EU, (ii) the worse the opinion of national institutions and (iii) the better the opinion of European ones, the greater the support for integration. Finally, in the last section I draw on the results of the statistical analysis to present some conclusions on the problems involved in developing a European democracy.

2 A Political Model of Support for Integration

There is already a body of research that explains support for integration in terms of an instrumental calculus of an economic kind. Since the EU has essentially consisted of an economic project, embodied in the development of monetary and economic union, it would be natural to assume that citizens evaluate the EU in economic terms. Eichenberg and Dalton (1993), for instance, tested the traditional economic voting hypothesis: support for integration is a function of national economic variables such as inflation, unemployment or GDP growth. Results, however, were rather poor. Gabel (1998b), using a more rigorous methodological design, has shown that, contrary to the economic voting hypothesis, declining unemployment and inflation, and rising GDP growth are associated with *less* support for integration. This finding, by the way, is

consistent with the kind of logic I defend in this article with regard to politics: the better the opinion of national political institutions, the less need for Europe and therefore the less support for integration.

A much more promising theory focuses on the distributional consequences of economic integration (Gabel and Palmer, 1995; Gabel, 1998a, b). The creation of a single market does not affect everyone equally. Winners and losers can be identified. Support for integration should be strongest among those who have most to gain from integration. This point can be illustrated by referring to two of Gabel's main hypotheses. First, labour market liberalization favours those with greater human capital, while hurting unskilled workers with a low capacity to adapt to the economic changes brought about by integration. Second, monetary union, driven by the fight against inflation, protects those who hold capital while putting pressure on the welfare state due to constraints imposed on public spending. Hence, people with low incomes will be less supportive of integration.

There is a good deal of empirical evidence backing the distributional theory. Although it would be absurd to disregard this overwhelming body of evidence, here I suggest that the economic hypothesis cannot account for some dimensions of public opinion on integration. Gabel himself could accept this basic point, since he has found that in some cases other factors – such as the kind of political party the individual supports (worker versus bourgeoisie parties), or the avoidance of war among member states – are at least as powerful as occupational skill or income in explaining the level of support for integration.

The economic hypothesis overlooks the crucial fact that the economic consequences of integration are achieved through political means. Europe is not a natural force, it has a much more complex impact than, say, a mere reduction in the international price of raw materials. The EU affects the economies of member states through European law, through supranational and inter-governmental institutions, through domestic institutional reforms, etc. All these mechanisms are political, and imply fundamental changes to national democracies, as the integration process has inevitably required major transfers of national sovereignty to the European level.

Gabel's distributional theory ignores this political dimension of integration when explicitly modelling the impact of economic integration on domestic politics along the lines of the flow of goods and capital at the international level (Gabel, 1998b: 11). The distributional theory, therefore, is inspired by studies of international political economy, but I want to argue that this starting point is far too simple. The political dimension of integration must be incorporated if we are to be able to understand the full consequences of the European project.

Take, for example, the case of monetary union. The existence of a single currency is assumed to reduce inflation: once monetary decisions are put in the hands of an independent European Central Bank, the inflationary bias of certain countries will be overcome. In this sense, the EU provides some sort of commitment technology (De Grauwe, 1992; Kenen, 1995). Without tying their hands to the European Central Bank, some member states cannot avoid inflation. Thus, people accept the transfer of sovereignty out of distrust of national institutions.

Here the interaction between economics and politics on the one hand, and the supranational and national levels on the other, is certainly more complicated than the economic hypothesis suggests. If monetary union reduces inflation, the benefits of lower inflation may outweigh the cost of losing control over monetary policy. Obviously, the calculus will vary in different member states in accordance with their economic results and the performance of their institutions.

A more general conclusion can be drawn from this example. The EU produces some benefits that are not available at the domestic level. These benefits are manifold: peace after centuries of war, economic well-being thanks to the creation of a larger and more competitive European market, greater international influence, political stability, broader citizenship, etc. If everything else remains fixed, the *benefit hypothesis* simply states that the greater the benefits associated with the EU, the greater the support for the integration process.

However, these supranational benefits are not achieved without cost. Some important decisions can no longer be made at the national level alone, but can only be passed by European institutions. Sometimes, any given country's national interest will suffer. Moreover, political decision-making may be less transparent and more difficult to control in the EU than at the national level. Thus, citizens will have to assess whether it pays to support integration amid the uncertainty about the functioning of politics at the supranational level. Accordingly, the better the performance of the national political system, and the worse that of the supranational system, the greater the opportunity cost of supporting integration.

Support for integration, therefore, will be higher in those countries that have little to lose from transferring sovereignty to Europe. Countries suffering from severe problems such as corruption, poor performance of the state, low responsiveness of political parties, high structural unemployment, etc. may find the solution in the EU. On the other hand, countries with low corruption, an efficient democracy, a highly developed welfare state, etc. might be more reticent with respect to the integration project.

This general idea can be applied not only to differences among countries,

but also to variations at the individual level. According to what I will call the *institutional hypothesis*, all other things being constant, the better the opinion citizens have of the European institutions, the stronger their support for integration. And the better their opinion of their national institutions, the less support for integration. When the two statements are combined, we come up with the following prediction:

1. Maximum support for the EU will be found among those citizens that have a good opinion of European institutions and a poor one of their national political system.
2. Minimum support for the EU will be found among those citizens that have a poor opinion of European institutions and a good one of their national system.

When individuals have the same assessment of European and national institutions, there are two possibilities:

3. If citizens have a good opinion of both European and national institutions, they will support integration, but less than in case 1.
4. If citizens have a poor opinion both of European and national institutions, their support will be low, but nonetheless higher than in case 2.

The reason why support is higher in 1 than in 3 is clear: individuals will consider there is more to gain if their opinion of domestic institutions is low, while that of the European institutions is high (case 1), than if they have a good opinion of both kinds of institution (case 3). Therefore, the institutional hypothesis leads to predict greater support in 1 than in 3. Similarly, support is higher in 4 than in 2 because citizens will consider that integration might do more harm if their opinion of national institutions is high (case 2) than if they have a negative opinion of both European and national institutions (case 4). Finally, support will be higher in 3 than in 4 simply because generalized negative attitudes will give rise to rejection and perhaps even alienation from politics.¹

The institutional hypothesis presents at least two problems. First, it could be argued that views of the EU do not vary independently of views of the national political system. For example, we know that the vote in the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty was heavily influenced by support for the national government (Franklin et al., 1995), just as European elections usually involve parties competing on domestic rather than European issues (Franklin and Van der Eijk, 1996). This, however, may be a phenomenon which is only related to voting and not to opinions on Europe. In the case of opinions, the

argument would be that given that citizens have very little information about the EU and its institutions, they use information about domestic politics as proxies of European politics. This possibility has been examined by Anderson (1998). He tests precisely the reverse of the institutional hypothesis, namely that the stronger the support for the national government and the satisfaction with the national democracy, the greater the support for European integration.

It is true that without controlling for supranational variables, as Anderson does, domestic variables such as satisfaction with democracy have a positive impact on support. But, as I show in the next section, once supranational variables such as satisfaction with European institutions are controlled for, the sign of the domestic variables is inverted, so that a better opinion of the national government produces a decrease in support for integration. Moreover, we find people who are satisfied with their national political system, but unsatisfied with the European institutions, as well as the opposite combination, implying that domestic politics cannot be the only source of proxies. In short, I do not think that the public's lack of knowledge is a fatal flaw in the institutional hypothesis. As I show below, the distinct influence of national and supranational variables offers the best proof that citizens are capable of discriminating between these two kinds of institutions.

The second problem has to do with the suspicion that satisfaction with national institutions comprises two, possibly not easily compatible effects (Díez Medrano, 1995: 81). On the one hand, the institutional hypothesis states that citizens who are unsatisfied with national institutions will support the EU for instrumental reasons. But, on the other hand, lack of satisfaction may produce a kind of distrust or alienation from politics that could lead to the rejection of any political goal, whether domestic or supranational. In this case, instrumental reasons would have no place in the explanation. The presence of an 'alienation' or 'enthusiasm' effect clearly does weaken the institutional hypothesis; nonetheless, if despite this the hypothesis is confirmed in statistical terms, it means that these sorts of political dispositions are outweighed by instrumental considerations.

I will now test the benefit and the institutional hypotheses. They provide a very simple explanation of support for European integration.

3 Results

To test the two hypotheses, I analyse a single survey, *Eurobarometer 44.1*, carried out at the end of 1995 in all 15 member states. The survey is based on a sample of around 1000 individuals in each member state, but special

samples were produced for Germany, Luxembourg and Northern Ireland. After weighting cases in order to obtain a final sample representative of the entire EU, the number of cases totals 15,800 individuals.² The choice of this survey is explained by the inclusion in the questionnaire of a number of political questions that help to operationalize the institutional hypothesis. These questions had not been asked before 1995, and have not been repeated all together since then. The selection of a single *Eurobarometer* may raise doubts about the validity of the results, but in this case no other option was available.

The Dependent Variable

In order to measure the dependent variable – support for integration – I deviate somewhat from the variables used by most researchers in this field, namely the unification and membership indicators. The unification question asks: ‘In general, are you for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?’ It has four possible answers. The membership question is: ‘Generally speaking, do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Community is a bad thing, neither good nor bad, or a good thing?’ Instead of using these questions, I have chosen the desired rhythm of integration, which forms part of the double question known as ‘The Euro-dynamometer’ in *Eurobarometer* jargon:

- Euro-dynamometer:* a) In your opinion, how is the European Union, European unification advancing nowadays?
b) And which corresponds best to what you would like?

I am interested in the second part of the question. In both cases, responses can be graduated from 1 (‘standstill’) to 7 (‘as fast as possible’), the value 4 being the median category.³ This question has a number of advantages. First, answers are measured on a 1–7 scale, allowing respondents to specify their views on unification in a more precise way than the membership or unification indicators. Second, the question asks directly about integration, unlike the membership indicator, which refers to the benefits of a country being in the EU which is a narrower issue. Finally, respondents have to state first their perceived rhythm of integration and then their desired rhythm, so that the factual and evaluative dimensions are clearly separated.

It could be argued that the basic problem with this indicator is that the preferred pace of integration does not measure the degree of support for integration. It is conceivable that someone could support the goal of a united Europe in many fields, but would prefer to advance slowly towards this end. This objection can be met as follows: first, the argument only affects the low

values of the variable – when people declare their preference for a rapid integration (above value 4), it is clear that they are declaring their support for integration. Only when they declare a preference for a slower rhythm (under value 4), does the objection fully apply. In this respect, it is worth noting that only 22.3 percent of respondents chose a value below 4. Second, the objection assumes a degree of sophistication on the part of respondents that is not warranted by what we know about most citizens’ limited knowledge of and interest in European affairs.

Moreover, an analysis of bivariate correlations between the preferred rhythm of integration and other variables reveals that this indicator does not behave very differently from the membership indicator.⁴ As can be seen in Table 1, the Pearson correlation between ‘rhythm of integration’ and ‘membership’ is .4. Both variables have similar correlations with more specific indicators of support for integration such as ‘support for the single currency’, ranging from 1 (‘very much against’) to 4 (‘very much for’), ‘agreement with the creation of a European government responsible to the European Parliament’ (with only two values, 1 ‘against’ and 2 ‘for’), and ‘national-European identity of the respondent’, ranging from 1 (nationality only) to 4 (European only).

Having said all this, it seems that the chosen indicator is no more imperfect than the membership indicator and that, unlike the latter, it contains a more direct question and allows more detailed answers. In any case, in order

Table 1 Pearson Correlation Coefficients for Different Indicators of Support for Integration

	<i>Desired rhythm of integration</i>	<i>Membership</i>	<i>Support for the single currency</i>	<i>Support for a European government</i>	<i>European identity</i>
Desired rhythm of integration	–	.40	.40	.24	.20
Membership	–	–	.43	.27	.26
Support for the single currency	–	–	–	.31	.31
Support for a European government	–	–	–	–	.18

Note: All correlations are significant at 1% level.

to reinforce the conclusions drawn from using the preferred rhythm of integration as the dependent variable, I have repeated all the statistical analysis at the individual level with another dependent variable, 'agreement with the creation of a European government'. Significantly, the results were the same.

Systemic Analysis

I have carried out a preliminary analysis at the systemic level (to use the terminology proposed by Przeworski and Teune, 1970). I want to examine whether variation in the national means of the preferred pace of integration can be explained by some systemic factors related to the functioning of politics in the member states.

The national means of the desired and perceived rhythm of integration are shown in Table 2. The three most pro-European member states are all Mediterranean countries – Greece, Italy and Spain – while the three least pro-European are all Scandinavian – Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

If the institutional hypothesis is correct, we should find that the countries

Table 2 National Data on Desired and Perceived Rhythm of Integration, Corruption and Social Expenditure

<i>Member states</i>	<i>Means of desired rhythm of integration</i>	<i>Means of perceived rhythm of integration</i>	<i>Corruption</i>	<i>Social expenditure (% of GDP)</i>
Sweden	3.8	3.2	0.9	35.6
Finland	3.8	3.7	0.9	32.8
Denmark	3.9	3.5	0.7	34.3
Germany	4.3	3.7	1.7	29.4
United Kingdom	4.4	3.4	1.6	27.3
Belgium	4.5	3.3	3.2	29.7
Austria	4.8	3.3	2.4	29.7
Holland	4.8	3.6	1.3	31.6
France	4.8	3.0	3.0	30.6
Luxembourg	4.9	3.4	–	25.3
Ireland	5.1	3.9	1.5	19.9
Portugal	5.2	3.7	3.5	20.7
Spain	5.4	3.4	5.7	21.8
Italy	5.7	3.5	6.6	24.6
Greece	5.7	3.5	5.0	21.2

Sources: Means of desired and perceived rhythm of integration: *Eurobarometer* 44.1, 1995. Corruption: *Transparency International*. Social Expenditure: *European Commission*.

with higher means of support for integration are those with the most deficient states, as people decide to support the EU because they know that their own state or domestic political institutions do not function properly. One revealing indicator of the defective nature of the state is corruption (bribery, fraud, extortion). A common definition of corruption, adopted by the World Bank, establishes that corruption consists of 'the abuse of public power for private benefits' (see Tanzi, 1998). According to the institutional hypothesis, countries with higher levels of corruption will show higher means of support for integration. The presence of corruption indicates that rules and procedures are not respected. Corrupt bureaucrats and politicians do not serve citizens, but rather act in their own interests, seeking personal benefit from their position in the power structure of the state. If politicians make policy based on personal, invisible rewards, citizens will not expect the government to take decisions in their interest and will not believe they can influence these decisions. They may consider that when the state and political parties are affected by corruption, it might be better to put important decisions in the hands of European institutions. In the case of countries with a high index of corruption the opportunity cost of transferring sovereignty to supranational institutions is quite low: European institutions are unlikely to be more clientelistic or corrupt than the national ones (although recent scandals in the Commission and the European Parliament could rapidly change this perception).

I have used the index of economic corruption for 1996 elaborated by *Transparency International* (see Table 2), reversing the scale, so that 0 signifies no corruption and 10 maximum corruption. There are no data for Luxembourg. The index is the result of a survey of several polls mainly conducted among employees in multinational firms and institutions.⁵

As can be seen in Figure 1, there is a strong linear relationship between the index of corruption and the national means of desired rhythm of integration. The Pearson correlation is strikingly high, $r = .85$. Countries such as Italy, Greece or Spain, with high levels of corruption, are the most pro-European, while countries which are almost corruption-free, such as Denmark or Sweden, have the lowest means. At first glance, someone could suspect that the real cause of the opposition among these groups of countries is of an economic and not of a political kind. However, this correlation does not only reflect the different countries' level of economic development.⁶ Controlling for differences in GDP per capita (measured as a percentage of the European average GDP per capita), the partial correlation coefficient between desired rhythm of integration and corruption is still .74, significant at 1 percent. Furthermore, Regression 1 in Table 3, estimated by OLS for the 14 member states for which data on corruption are available, shows that the GDP per capita coefficient has a much weaker effect than corruption, and is only significant at a 10

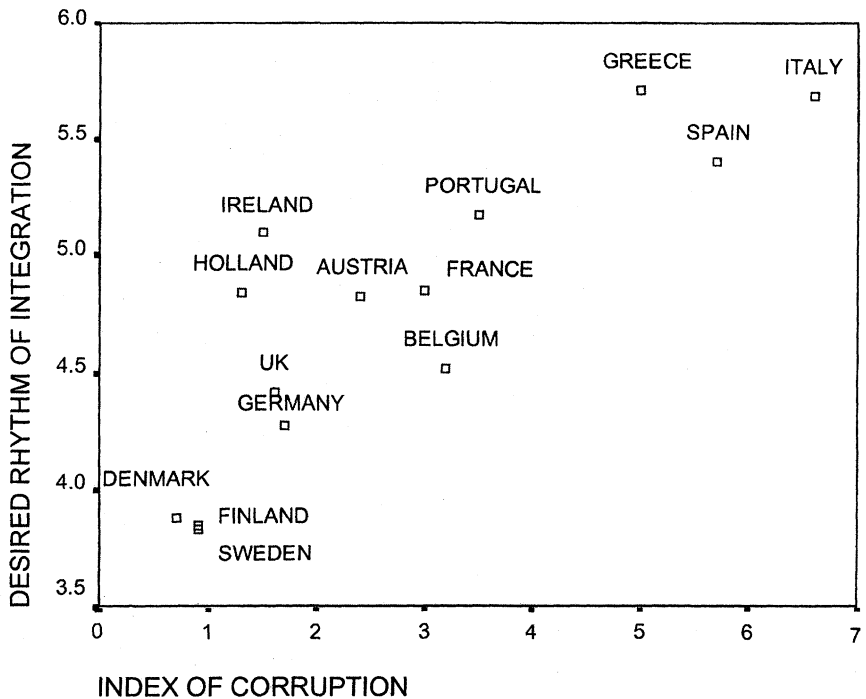


Figure 1 National Means of Desired Rhythm of Integration and Corruption: $r = .85$.

percent level. Obviously, GDP per capita is the most natural control, but many others are conceivable. I have tried other controls, such as the net transfer of European funds (divided by the population of each member state), unemployment, inflation, public deficit, etc. and in every case the relationship between support for integration and corruption is maintained.

Similar results are obtained if, instead of corruption, expenditure on social protection (measured as percentage of GDP) is considered. The values are shown in Table 2. Expenditure on social protection (health, family and children, unemployment, housing, etc.) is an obvious indicator of the level of development of the welfare state. Countries with higher social expenditure will risk more in the process of European integration. Economic unification could generate fiscal competition among member states, and it is often argued that the institutional design of the EU, and particularly the tight rules on monetary union, are biased against the welfare state (Scharpf, 1999; Streeck, 1996). If the citizens of countries with powerful welfare states are in favour of the state's role in social protection, integration will be perceived as a threat. In countries where the welfare state is underdeveloped, people do not risk much

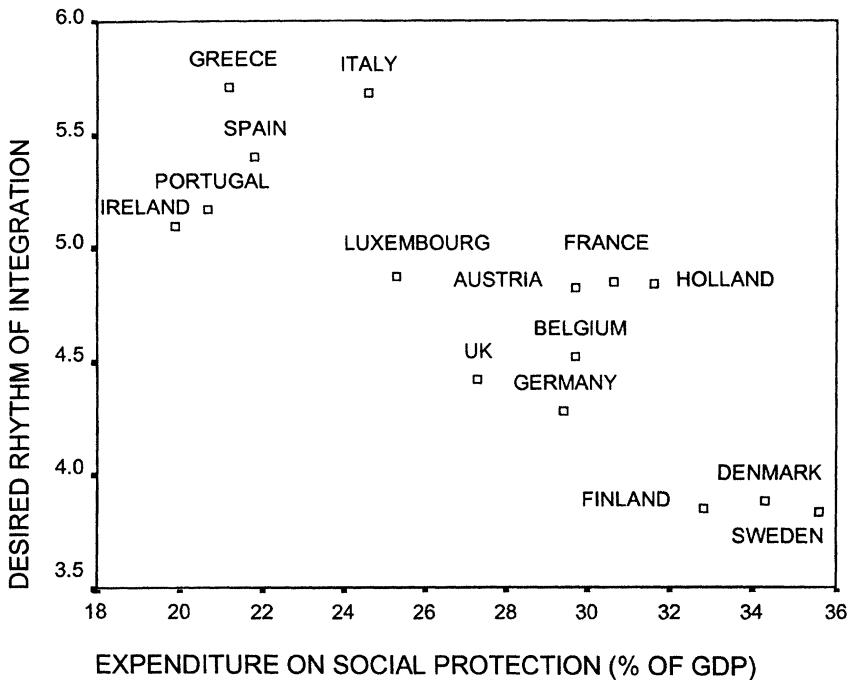


Figure 2 National Means of Desired Rhythm of Integration and Expenditure on Social Protection (% of GDP): $r = -.83$.

by supporting more integration. Figure 2 shows that, again, there is a fairly strong linear relationship between the two variables. The more developed the welfare state, the less support for the process of integration ($r = -.83$).

Corruption and the development of the welfare state reflect two different dimensions of the performance of the state. The two are related ($r = -.64$) but the effect of each can be distinguished. I have run an OLS regression with the two variables, adding as a control the GDP per capita variable. Results are reproduced in Table 3, under Regression 2. Even with only 14 cases (there are no data on corruption for Luxembourg), both corruption and social expenditure are significant. GDP per capita, however, is not at all significant: its influence is negligible once we introduce corruption and social expenditure. These two variables account for 82 percent of the total variance in the national means of the preferred rhythm of integration.

The results included in Table 3 tend to bear out the idea that national differences in attitudes towards Europe fundamentally depend on a variety of features of the state and the domestic political system. The different perceptions of the possibilities and advantages associated with the EU are a function of how efficient the state is. However, these findings are only provisional

Table 3 OLS Regression Analysis for the National Means of Desired Rhythm of Integration

	<i>Regression 1</i>	<i>Regression 2</i>
Corruption	.219*** (.059)	.184*** (.052)
Social expenditure	–	–.070** (.029)
GDP per capita	–.006* (.003)	.002 (.005)
Constant	4.78*** (.479)	5.96*** (.632)
R ² adj.	.74	.82
N	14	14

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.
 *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5%, * significant at 10%.
Sources: Desired rhythm of integration: *Eurobarometer 44.1*.
 Corruption: *Transparency International*.
 Social expenditure and GDP per capita: *European Commission*.

as long as the hypotheses are not tested at the individual level, in the full sample of European citizens.

Individual Analysis

The dependent variable is still the desired rhythm of integration, ranging from 1 ('standstill') to 7 ('as fast as possible'). Since there is a median category, value 4, the 'Don't knows' (12.4 percent of total answers, almost 2000 cases) have been excluded from the analysis. As for the benefit hypothesis, I have taken the following question:

Benefit: Taking everything into consideration, would you say that [our country] has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Union?

The variable takes value 0 for those who answer 'Not benefited' and value 1 for those who respond 'Benefited'. The responses 'Don't know' have been coded as 0.5.⁷

The institutional hypothesis requires more complex treatment. I have not included any question on satisfaction with national or European democracy. On the one hand, this question is too general and may easily reflect the kind of generic pessimism or optimism about politics that I wish to avoid. On the other hand, the hypothesis is formulated in institutional terms, but

satisfaction with democracy does not refer explicitly to the performance of institutions.

Rather than satisfaction with democracy, I use two dimensions of democracies closely related to institutional factors, the extent to which politicians act in the interest of the people and individuals influence the decisions taken by politicians. First, I have chosen a question about the trust citizens have in a series of institutions making decisions in the interest of people like themselves:

Trust in institutions: Many important decisions are made by the European Union. They might be in the interest of people like yourself, or they might not. To what extent do you feel you can rely on each of the following institutions to make sure that the decisions taken by this institution are in the interest of people like yourself?

Respondents were asked the same question about several institutions: the Commission, the national government, the European Parliament, the national parliament and the Council of Ministers. I only analyse their evaluations of the Commission and the national government, since these two bodies constitute the executive at the national and supranational level. If respondents do not trust the Commission/national government, the variable has value 0; if they do, it has value 1. The 'Don't knows' have been coded as 0.5.

The second dimension refers to the influence exerted by citizens both on the national government and on the European institutions. The wording of the question is:

Influence on institutions: a) How much influence, if any, do you think the opinions of people like yourself have on the decisions taken by the [national] government/the institutions of the European Union?

Possible answers are: 'No influence at all' (value 0), 'Not very much influence' (value 1), 'Some influence' (value 2), and 'A great deal of influence' (value 3), with 'Don't know' coded as 1.5.

In terms of the estimation technique employed, it is important to note that the dependent variable is not suitable for OLS regression. It is not an interval variable, and hence we cannot assume that the distance between the discrete values is constant across values. Thus, I have made an ordered logit analysis.⁸ After detecting serious problems of heteroscedasticity in the data, standard errors were estimated using the White matrix.

Results are given in Table 4. All models, as shown by the Wald χ^2 test (equivalent to the *F*-test in linear regression), are significant, though the first is only significant at 5 percent. In Model 1, only the variables concerning the national side of the institutional hypothesis are included: trust in, and

influence on, the national government. As said above, without controlling for other variables, a good opinion of national institutions has a positive, albeit extremely weak effect on the desired rhythm of integration. Trust in national government is significant at 5 percent, but influence on national government is not significant even at 10 percent. This model reveals precisely the kind of effect that Anderson (1998) detected using different variables (the membership indicator as dependent variable and satisfaction with democracy as one of the independent variables): positive coefficients for the national variables.

Results change dramatically when the variables of European institutions and the benefit of membership are included in the analysis. In Model 2 in Table 4, the sign of the national coefficients is inverted: now, a better opinion of the national government implies a *decrease* in support for integration, as predicted by the institutional hypothesis. Likewise, the sign of the European institution

Table 4 Ordered Logit Analysis for the Desired Rhythm of Integration with White Standard Errors

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>
Trust in the national government	.095* (.048)	-.167** (.051)	-.038 (.052)
Influence on the national government	.042 (.027)	-.189** (.037)	-.086* (.038)
Trust in the Commission	-	.929** (.056)	.773** (.057)
Influence on European institutions	-	.255** (.038)	.203** (.039)
Benefit	-	.805** (.052)	.777** (.053)
Corruption	-	-	.247** (.012)
τ_1	-2.32	-1.66	-.95
τ_2	-1.77	-1.07	-.35
τ_3	-1.16	-.408	.34
τ_4	-.45	.361	1.14
τ_5	.49	1.382	2.21
τ_6	1.44	2.370	3.25
Wald χ^2 test	8.36* (d.f. = 2)	703.19** (d.f. = 5)	1066.21** (d.f. = 6)
N	13,794	13,643	13,626

Notes: White standard errors in parentheses.

** significant at 1%, * significant at 5%.

To identify the models, it is assumed that the constant is 0.

variables is, as expected, positive. Finally, the benefit variable has a clear positive impact on the dependent variable. Admittedly, the national variables are less important than the European ones or than the benefit variable.

In Model 3, a systemic variable, corruption, has been added. Corruption is a feature of the nation state, so that its existence should affect national variables above all. This is, indeed, what we find: when corruption is introduced, 'trust in national government' stops being significant and 'influence on national government' loses much of its explanatory power (the coefficient is reduced by half). These changes in the coefficients of the national variables reinforce the interpretation I offered for the strong correlation at the systemic level between support for integration and corruption. People who live in corrupt countries tend to distrust their government, making the European project more attractive: Europe appears to be the solution for domestic problems that cannot be resolved within the nation state.

The interpretation of coefficients in ordered logit is not easy. To make some sense of the results of Model 2 in Table 4, I have prepared a table of predicted probabilities for the prediction presented in Section 2. If we confine our attention to the extreme values of the independent variables, ignoring all the intermediate values, the prediction derived from the institutional hypothesis can be reformulated as follows:

1. Support for integration will be highest when the national variables are at their minimum values and European variables at their maximum values.
2. Support will be second highest when the national and the European variables are at their maximum values.
3. Support will be second lowest when the national and the European variables are at their minimum values.
4. Support will be lowest when the national variables are at their maximum levels and European variables at their minimum ones.

It should be noted that the benefit hypothesis does not intervene in this prediction. Therefore, we should break down each case into two: for each of the four cases, support for integration should be greater when the benefit variable takes its maximum value than when it takes its minimum one.

Table 5 shows the predicted probabilities for each value of the dependent variable according to the covariance patterns defined in the four cases of the prediction.⁹ Table 5 is divided into two parts: in the upper part probabilities are calculated assuming that the benefit variable adopts value 0 (the country has not benefited from being in the EU), and in the lower part it is assumed that the value of the benefit variable is 1 (the country has benefited).

The first row of predicted probabilities corresponds to case 1 when respondents say that their country has not benefited from being in the EU. Hence, 'trust in the Commission' and 'influence on European institutions' take maximum values, whereas 'trust in the government' and 'influence on the government' take minimum values. Given this combination of the values of the independent variables, the probability of choosing value 7 ('as fast as possible') in the dependent variable is 34 percent. In contrast, the probability of choosing value 1 ('standstill') is only 3 percent. All the probabilities of the row add up to 1. If the instrumental hypothesis is correct, then, for each value over 4 in the dependent variable, we should observe that the probability is greatest in the first row and decreases as we move down in the four cases examined here. For values under 4, we should find the opposite: the probability of choosing low levels of support increases as we move from case 1 to

Table 5 Predicted Probabilities When Variables Adopt Extreme Values According to the Institutional and the Benefit Hypothesis

<i>Benefit = 0</i>	1 (<i>'Stand- still'</i>)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (<i>'As fast as possible'</i>)
National variables: min.							
European variables: max.	.03	.03	.05	.10	.21	.24	.34
National variables: max.							
European variables: max.	.07	.05	.09	.15	.25	.20	.20
National variables: min.							
European variables: min.	.16	.10	.14	.19	.21	.12	.08
National variables: max.							
European variables: min.	.28	.13	.16	.17	.14	.06	.04
<i>Benefit = 1</i>	1 (<i>'Stand- still'</i>)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (<i>'As fast as possible'</i>)
National variables: min.							
European variables: max.	.02	.01	.02	.05	.14	.22	.53
National variables: max.							
European variables: max.	.03	.02	.05	.09	.21	.24	.35
National variables: min.							
European variables: min.	.08	.05	.10	.16	.25	.19	.17
National variables: max.							
European variables: min.	.15	.09	.14	.19	.22	.12	.09

case 4. As value 4 is the intermediate category, there is no reason to expect a clear pattern for this value.

Consider, for example, the 'As fast as possible' value (value 7) when benefit = 0. The probability of someone saying 'As fast as possible' when the independent variables are those of case 1 is 34 percent. In case 2, this probability drops to 20 percent. In case 3 the probability is only 8 percent. Finally, the probability in case 4 is just 4 percent. The prediction is thus clearly confirmed for this value of the dependent variable. We find the same ranking, albeit with higher probabilities for each case, when benefit = 1.

A glance at Table 5 shows that for all values of the dependent variable under 4 the prediction is confirmed in every case. For values over 4, there are some problems with value 5, particularly when benefit = 1, but in general the prediction is again confirmed. And, as expected, the prediction does not work for value 4, the intermediate category of the preferred rhythm of integration. The information presented in Table 5 can be summarized as follows: if we take the probability of choosing a value greater than 4 in the dependent variable, this probability, when benefit = 0, is 79 percent for case 1, 65 percent for case 2, 41 percent for case 3 and 24 percent for case 4. Likewise, when benefit = 1, the probability in each case is 89 percent for case 1, 80 percent for case 2, 61 percent for case 3 and 43 percent for case 4. The fact that the probabilities decrease as we move from case 1 to case 4 validates the prediction derived from the institutional hypothesis.

Although all the results support the political model, doubts about the robustness of the findings may remain due to the particular dependent variable used to measure support for integration. To dispel these doubts, I have carried out the analysis with another dependent variable and obtained exactly the same results. Taking as the dependent variable a dichotomous variable that measures whether the respondent is for or against the creation of a European government responsible to the European Parliament, I have run a logistic regression estimating White standard errors with the same independent variables as those employed for the models shown in Table 5. In every case, the results were identical to those in Table 5. This finding provides further strong backing for the conclusions drawn from the previous analysis. However, I have also carried out the analysis taking the membership indicator as the dependent variable, and in this case the two national variables (trust in, and influence on the national government) were not significant.¹⁰

4 Discussion: Some Consequences for the Idea of Supranational Democracy

The instrumental explanation of the political basis of support for integration has some consequences for current debates about the creation of a supranational democracy at the European level. In particular, the empirical results obtained here are relevant for the much-discussed question of whether a common European identity is required for the creation of a true supranational democracy.

It is often argued that a true democracy cannot exist at the European level because of the absence of a European *demos*. For democracy to work, there must be a people, a *demos*, that is, a set of individuals who agree to make collectively binding decisions under some democratic rules. Precisely because they all agree to govern themselves in accordance with these rules, they can announce their decisions with the formula 'We, the people of ...' If these binding decisions are applied to individuals who do not recognize themselves as members of the society taking collective decisions, then democratic rule appears to become an imposition, a non-consented procedure for those who do not consider themselves part of the collectivity.

In this way, the constitution of a *demos* is a precondition for the development of a democracy. Without a *demos* there is no democracy. Conflicts about the composition of the *demos*, about who is a member and who is not, cannot be solved using democratic procedures, since the functioning of democracy requires that the issue of the *demos* has previously been resolved.

In the case of Europe, we find that individuals still feel attached to their nation states and are not prepared to accept decisions by majority rule at the supranational level in crucially important political areas. They are not willing to comply with decisions they reject simply because these decisions have been approved by a majority of citizens of other member states. The Danes will not accept a decision they consider unfavourable just because it has been voted for by a majority formed by, say, the French, Italians, Spaniards and Greeks. The Danes, in this example, do not feel bound by decisions made by other people belonging to different *demoi*.

According to this argument, supranational democracy is possible to the extent that individuals from very different *demoi* begin to feel that in addition to, or apart from, their current *demoi*, they belong to a wider, supranational *demos*. But until this happens, the introduction of majority rule at the supranational level can only aggravate Europe's legitimacy problems.

The power of the attachment to a national *demos* is illustrated by some authors through a hypothetical example (Dahl, 1989; Weiler, 1996, 1997): suppose that a big country (the United States for Dahl, Germany for Weiler)

invades a small country (Costa Rica for Dahl, Denmark for Weiler) and suppose further that the political rights of the citizens of the small country are respected, for instance the former Danish citizens are given the right to vote for German parties or to create new parties. If their democratic rights are respected, why would they feel outraged by the invasion? Why would they oppose becoming part of Germany? These authors consider that the answer to these questions is clear: because Danish citizens do not belong to the German *demos*.

However, this way of posing the problem seems to suggest that being part of a *demos* depends mainly on feelings, feelings moulded by the history and culture of each member state. Hence, it is suggested, the Danes do not want to be Germans because they feel Danish. Apart from its rather circular character, this argument suffers from a number of other flaws.

First, in the hypothetical example cited above, it cannot automatically be assumed that the Danes would oppose the invasion. There are counter-examples: when the Napoleonic troops invaded Spain and forcibly imposed some liberalizing measures against the *Ancien Regime*, some Spaniards, known as the *afrancesados*, actively supported the invasion. They considered that the French presence offered a good opportunity to modernize the country (just as for Italians, the European Central Bank represents a good opportunity to tame inflation).

Second, even if it is supposed that the Danes in the example are unhappy with their fate, this resistance could be due to reasons unrelated to the *demos* problem. On the one hand, they might oppose annexation simply because they were better off as citizens of Denmark than as citizens of Germany. We can imagine a variety of reasons: in Denmark they enjoyed greater freedom of speech, more generous social benefits, they prefer Danish television to the German version, being German entails weaker ties with other Scandinavian countries, etc. On the other hand, they could reject the coercive nature of the German invasion, as they had not been consulted on the matter.

The question here is not whether they are Danish or German, but rather whether they are better off as Danes or as Germans. Of course, whether they are better off as Danish or German will depend, among other things, on how individuals value Danish culture, Danish language, being a small country and so on. However, these considerations are not questions that 'transcend democratic theory' (Dahl, 1989: 3). They can be easily endogenized in an instrumental form (Przeworski et al., 1995: 31). It is at this point that the empirical results discussed in the previous section acquire their relevance.

If we suppose that more integration means closer union among the member states and therefore a greater number of decisions taken in common, that is, if we suppose that more integration implies more supranational

democracy, then the data show first of all that European citizens are divided on this issue. Some individuals are more willing to advance towards supranational democracy than others. And these differences among Europeans do not seem to be related to the problem of the *demos*. In aggregate terms, that is, in terms of the member states, why is it that Mediterranean countries are clearly more pro-European than the Scandinavian ones? Surely it is not because citizens of the Mediterranean countries have a stronger sense of European identity, but rather because their states, as the institutional hypothesis assumes, do not work as they would like. Moreover, if at the end of the day they develop such a European identity, it will be because of what they have to gain at the European level and not the other way around. Identities, so to speak, do not fall from heaven: they are a consequence of complex economic and political calculations.

Individuals are eager to make decisions at the European level when they perceive benefits at that level and when the difference between the performance of European and national institutions is unfavourable for the nation-state. This finding implies that it is the functioning of the European and national institutions that determines whether the citizens of the member states will accept the basic elements of a supranational democracy. The *demos* of the supranational democracy will come into existence if and when enough people become convinced that the benefits at the supranational level are greater than the costs derived from the loss of sovereignty.

The conditions for this kind of conviction are different from the Danes to the Spaniards. Due to their domestic problems, Spaniards are easier to convince: the opportunity cost of becoming citizens of a supranational polity is small. The Danes, with their highly developed welfare state and a political system with a high degree of accountability, will be more sceptical and stubborn: the European institutions have to show themselves to be truly efficient, and the benefits to be drawn at the European level have to be substantial, if the Danes are to be convinced of the advantages of integration.

To put it in another way, the worse the performance of the national institutions, the less important the absence of the supranational *demos*. To say that supranational integration, or deeper integration, is impossible because there is no European *demos* is essentially to say that the gains of such a transformation are not attractive enough for a majority of citizens when compared to the status quo.

Therefore, rather than assuming that the creation of a supranational *demos* is exogenous to the integration process, that is, a precondition for the development of a supranational democracy, the results of the statistical analysis show that the very possibility of constituting such a *demos* depends on the interplay between supranational and national politics and, hence, it is endogenous to European politics.

This interplay, to recapitulate, is based on the effect of popular perceptions about national and supranational institutions: the *worse* citizens' opinion of national institutions and the *better* their opinion of supranational ones, the stronger their support for European integration.

Notes

I am grateful for the comments of Robert Fishman, Enric Martinez, Klaus-Jürgen Nagel, Viçens Navarro and several anonymous referees. An earlier version of this article was presented at the V National Conference of Sociology in La Coruña, Spain, September 1998. Justin Byrne helped me with the English version of this text.

- 1 These four predictions quite closely match the typology of orientations towards the EU and national political systems developed by Martinotti and Stefanizzi (1995). However, these authors take this typology as the dependent variable, rather than using it to try to explain why some individuals favour integration more than others.
- 2 The original sample comprises 16,346 individuals. It is necessary to weight cases in order to avoid the over-representation of small member states and the under-representation of the large ones. All the analysis at the individual level has been carried out with the weight variable that *Eurobarometer* provides in order to obtain results representative of the entire EU. I have repeated all the statistical analysis without weighting, obtaining very similar results in every case.
- 3 Respondents chose the answer from a card showing seven people: the first one is standing while the seventh is running faster than all the others. Given this graphical presentation, it is quite easy to distinguish the intermediate point, value 4.
- 4 Unfortunately, *Eurobarometer* 44.1 does not include the unification indicator.
- 5 I have chosen the 1996 data instead of the 1995 data simply because the reliability of the index improves each year. Given that the year-to-year variation is small, and that the *Eurobarometer* survey was carried out at the end of 1995, this procedure does not introduce any distortion. Technical information about how the information is collected, normalized and weighted can be found at the following web site: <http://www.gwdg.de/~uwvw>
- 6 Nor is this the result of a North/South divide. Even if we exclude the four Mediterranean countries and Ireland (which in this way becomes an extremely influential outlier), the correlation between corruption and desired rhythm of integration for the eight remaining member states is .72, significant at 5 percent.
- 7 I have repeated all the statistical analysis without coding the 'Don't know' answers of all the independent variables, and there was no notable change.
- 8 In the parametrization of the models, the constant has been omitted and all the cutpoints for the values of the dependent variable are estimated. Cutpoints establish the distances between the categories of the dependent variable. Cutpoints, obviously, are necessary to calculate the predicted

- probabilities of the model. Concretely, $\Pr(y_i = m \mid x_i) = \Lambda(\tau_m - x_i\beta) - \Lambda(\tau_m - 1 - x_i\beta)$ where x is the matrix of the independent variables, β is the vector of coefficients, τ_m the cutpoint for category m , and Λ the logistic cumulative density function. For further details, see Long (1997: Ch. 5).
- 9 See note 8 for details on the calculation of predicted probabilities.
 - 10 All these auxiliary analyses are available from the author on request.

References

- Anderson, Christopher J. (1998) 'When in Doubt, Use Proxies: Attitudes toward Domestic Politics and Support for European Integration', *Comparative Political Studies* 31: 569–601.
- Anderson, Christopher J. and M. Shawn Reichert (1996) 'Economic Benefits and Support for Membership in the EU: A Cross-National Analysis', *Journal of Public Policy* 15: 231–49.
- Dahl, Robert A. (1989) *Democracy and its Critics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- De Grauwe, Paul (1992) *The Economics of Monetary Integration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Diez Medrano, Juan (1995) *La Opinión Pública Española y la Integración Europea: 1994*. Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas.
- Eichenberg, Richard C. and Russell J. Dalton (1993) 'Europeans and the European Community: The Dynamics of Public Support for European Integration', *International Organization* 47: 507–34.
- Franklin, Mark N. and Cees Van der Eijk (eds) (1996) *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Franklin, Mark N., Cees Van Der Eijk and Michael Marsh (1995) 'Referendum Outcomes and Trust in Government: Public Support for Europe in the Wake of Maastricht', *West European Politics* 18: 101–17.
- Gabel, Matthew J. (1998a) 'Public Support for European Integration: An Empirical Test of Five Theories', *The Journal of Politics* 60: 333–54.
- Gabel, Matthew J. (1998b) *Interests and Integration. Market Liberalization, Public Opinion, and European Union*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gabel, Matthew and Harvey D. Palmer (1995) 'Understanding Variation in Public Support for European Integration', *European Journal of Political Research* 27: 3–19.
- Inglehart, Ronald (1977) *The Silent Revolution. Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Janssen, Joseph I.H. (1991) 'Postmaterialism, Cognitive Mobilization and Public Support for European Integration', *British Journal of Political Science* 21: 443–68.
- Kenen, Peter B. (1995) *Economic and Monetary Union in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Long, J. Scott (1997) *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Martinotti, Guido and Sonia Stefanizzi (1995) 'Europeans and the Nation State', in Oskar Niedermeyer and Richard Sinnott (eds) *Public Opinion and Internationalized Governance*, pp. 163–89. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Przeworski, Adam and Henry Teune (1970) *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry*. New York: Wiley.
- Przeworski, Adam et al. (1995) *Sustainable Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. (1999) *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Streeck, Wolfgang (1996) 'Neo-Voluntarism: A New Social Policy Regime?', in Gary Marks, Fritz W. Scharpf, Phillippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck (eds) *Governance in the European Union*, pp. 64–94. London: Sage.
- Tanzi, Vito (1998) 'Corruption around the World: Causes, Consequences, Scope, and Cures', *IMF Staff Papers* 45: 559–94.
- Weiler, Joseph H.H. (1996) 'European Democracy and its Critique', *West European Politics* 18: 4–39.
- Weiler, Joseph H.H. (1997) 'The Reformation of European Constitutionalism', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 35: 97–131.

About the author

Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca teaches political science at the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, Instituto Juan March, Castelló 77, 28006 Madrid, Spain.

Fax: (34) 91 576 34 20

E-mail: pacho@ceacs.march.es
