

Italian Citizens and Europe: Explaining the Growth of Euroscepticism

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Abstract: The principal aim of this study is to search for an explanation of the growing sense of disaffection of Italian citizens towards Europe. Using Eurobarometer data and focusing on four possible explanations, labelled as instrumental/utilitarian, cognitive mobilisation, political cues and cultural and identity factors, this article shows that, rather than being alternatives, the four paradigms work together in fostering Euroscepticism among Italians. So, if Europe begins to be perceived as a threat to the cultural heritage and traditions, while also promising less in the way of economic assistance, then declining support for it is understandable.

Keywords: European identity, European support, Euroscepticism, Italian citizens

What is the nature of the relationship between Italians and Europe? Long regarded as the most pro-European of the continent's citizens, Italians seem to have changed their attitudes towards the supranational system of institutions and to be displaying growing signs of Euroscepticism. The hypotheses that could be advanced to account for this are numerous. They include the growing 'interference' of the supranational political system, and the enlargement of the EU towards the countries of Eastern Europe. The latter development has brought a change in the distribution of Community financial assistance and its probable reduction as well as a perceived threat to cultural identities. Another hypothesis is that growing stability in national politics (shown by, among other things, citizens' greater confidence in their own political system) has reduced the pressure of demands for the more modern and efficient political system that Europe was perceived to exemplify when it was compared with the Italian system. Finally, the growing detachment may reflect the emergence of Eurosceptical stances on the part of some of the parties that were until recently in government and therefore, indirectly, on the part of the governments themselves.

In this article, having reviewed the theoretical contributions concerning the possible sources of the attitudes of the public, both Italian and non-Italian, towards the project of European integration, we will advance a new interpretation on the basis of which we will develop our hypotheses and operationalise the relevant variables. Finally, we shall present and discuss the results of the empirical analysis.

What does Europeanism mean? The dependent variable

What do we mean by Europeanism and how can we measure it? The attitudes that are considered to be indicators of Europeanism are several: among them there is support for the project of European integration; a European identity; the sense of community. In this article we suggest using a European identity. This, definable as an attachment to the political community, the vertical tie that unites the individual and the group, is distinct from support which implies, rather, an evaluation of the desirability of constructing a new polity. It is also distinct from the sense of community – which is, rather, the horizontal tie uniting members of the group – and distinct too from favourable attitudes towards the transfer of policy making to the supranational level. Since it does not imply an evaluation, the sense of attachment is more neutral.

In the literature, European identity is measured in a variety of ways. One of the indicators that is most frequently-used – above all because there is continuous time-series data covering a lengthy period available – is the Moreno question, which has been included in the Eurobarometer surveys since 1992. The question, whose wording has changed slightly over time, asks respondents to express their sense of belonging to Europe as opposed to their sense of belonging to the nation. The classic and most frequently used formulation is: ‘Do you see yourself as: [nationality] only; [nationality] and European; European and [nationality]; European only?’ It is common in the literature to collapse the four response categories into two; one contains those who have an exclusively national identity, while the other, consisting of those who feel European to one degree or another, amalgamates the three remaining categories. This is the strategy we have chosen, using the Eurobarometer data to analyse change over time in the European identity of Italian citizens.

With reference then to Italy, the trend is a declining one: between 1992 (when 73 percent of respondents showed some form of European identity) and 2006 (65 percent), the decline is striking. And in 2009, it is apparent from the European Election Studies data, based on a very similarly worded question that there has been a further decline: to 60 percent. However measured, the trend is clearly declining. And the Europeanism of Italian citizens is growing weaker.

In the investigation used for this study, Eurobarometer 69.2 of 2008, as in the other Eurobarometers of 2008 and 2009, the question is worded in a significantly different way so that direct comparison is impossible. For this reason too we propose a more complex measure of European identity. This is captured by an index resulting from the combination of three items. In line with the theory of social identities, which has led to the development of novel instruments for the measurement of collective identities (see Luthanen and Crocker,1992), these items tap, on the one hand, the sense of being a part of Europe (belongingness), on the other how significant this sense is (salience). The description of the dependent variable is given in Table 1. The answers to the three questions have been summed and the resulting index standardised so as to construct a scale of European identity that runs from a minimum value of 0 (the lowest level of Europeanism) to a maximum of 10.

Table 1: Components of the dependent variable

		Question wording	Eb name
Sense of belonging	1)	To what extent do you personally feel you are European? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To a great extent • Somewhat • Not really • Not at all 	qb1_1
	2)	Some things people consider to be extremely important to them, other things less so. Thinking now about the fact that you are European, how important is being European to you personally? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being European matters a lot to me • Being European matters somewhat to me • Being European does not matter much to me • Being European does not matter at all to me 	qb4
Salience	3)	Thinking about the idea of being European, which of the following statements best describes your feelings? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can think of many good reasons why I would want to describe myself as being European • I can think of many good reasons why I would want to describe myself as being European, but also many good reasons why I would want to describe myself in other ways; • I can think of few or no reasons why I would want to describe myself as being European. 	qb5

The distribution of scores on the dependent variable between European countries indirectly supports the finding from the data deriving from the surveys mentioned above: the sense of attachment to Europe of Italian citizens is in decline and Italians cannot be counted as being among the most Euroenthusiastic; on the contrary, they are located towards the bottom of the classification, even though – with the exception of the UK, which is a genuine outlier – the differences between the countries are in truth not very marked (Table 2). Overall the data show that European identity is moderately felt among citizens of the EU member states and, as shown by the data in Table 3, that it is unaffected by the length of time the state in question has been an EU member. It is therefore interesting to examine how European identities are distributed among Italian citizens in a search for the causes of the growing disaffection towards the supranational political system.

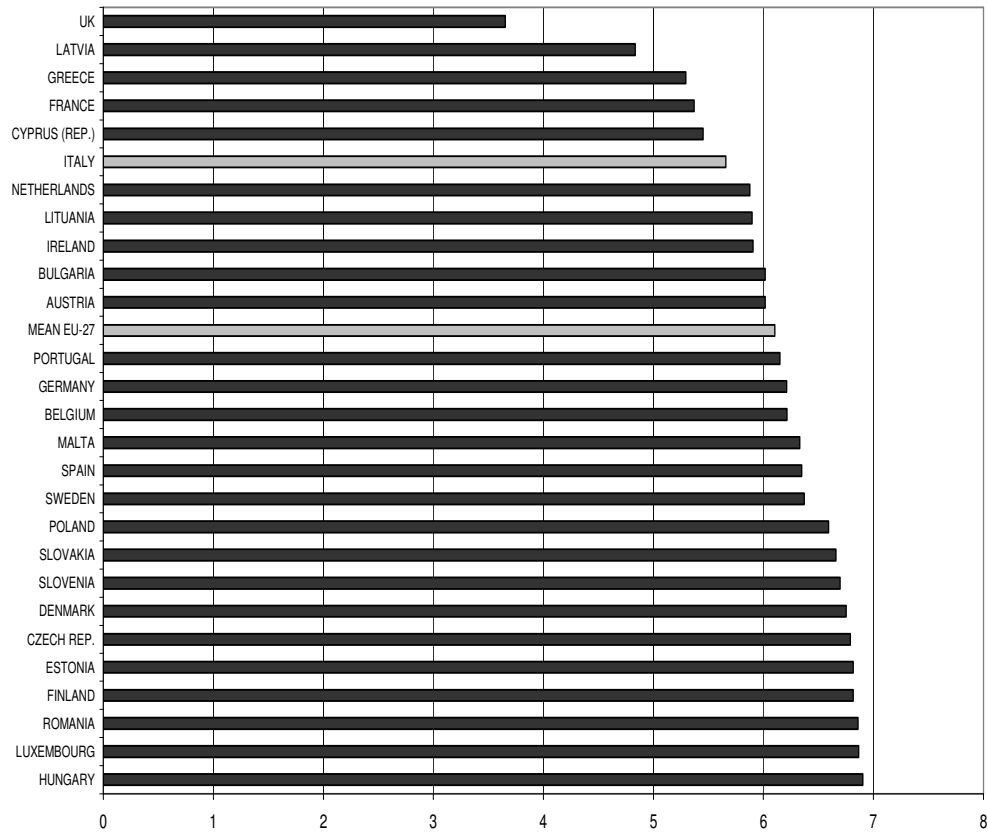
Table 2: European identities in EU member states

Country	Mean	Std. dev	Country	Mean	Std. dev
Hungary	6.90	2.55	Malta	6.33	2.78
Luxembourg	6.87	2.60	Belgium	6.21	2.45
Romania	6.86	2.22	Germany	6.21	2.52
Finland	6.82	2.31	Portugal	6.15	2.36
Estonia	6.82	2.54	<i>Mean EU-27</i>	6.10	2.68
Czech Republic	6.79	2.68	Austria	6.02	2.73
Denmark	6.75	2.12	Bulgaria	6.02	2.91
Slovenia	6.70	2.44	Ireland	5.91	2.66
Slovakia	6.66	2.45	Lithuania	5.90	2.57
Poland	6.59	2.41	Netherlands	5.88	2.38
Sweden	6.37	2.40	<i>Italy</i>	5.66	2.64
Spain	6.35	2.56	Cyprus (Republic)	5.45	2.78

Table 3: European identities in EU member states grouped according to period of accession

Accession waves	European identity (Mean 0-10 scale)
1970s accession	5.44
Southern (1980s)	5.93
Founders	6.03
<i>Mean EU-27</i>	6.10
Eastern	6.32
Northern (1990s)	6.40

Figure 1: European identity across EU member states (mean on 0-10 scale)



Note: Figure reproduces the data shown in Table2

Who are the Eurosceptics? The distribution of European identities across socio-demographic categories

Looking at socio-demographic characteristics we see that among Italian citizens, men support Europe more than women (though the differences are small); the young are more pro-European than the old and the impact of level of education is also in the expected direction – that is, positive: those with more education are more likely to develop positive attitudes towards Europe. Professional status, the kind of occupation undertaken, seems to have a positive influence on Europeanism (though it probably reflects the intervening effect of education level): we find the highest levels of attachment to Europe among managers and business people (as well as among students) – but also (not surprisingly) among farmers. Reflecting these findings, it emerges that those who are more satisfied with their circumstances develop pro-European sentiments, but this relationship too

could be due to the level of education. By contrast the impact of post-materialism on attitudes to Europe is less strong.

Those who are interested in politics and talk about politics frequently are, as a rule, more pro-European than those who are detached from politics; being located towards the centre of the left-right spectrum leads to heightened levels of attachment to Europe. Professing to be a centrist thus has a decisive impact on European identity, one that is much stronger than professing to be on the left: this finding is probably explicable in terms of the fact that centrists are de facto heirs of the Christian Democrats, a party that had a very strong European vocation. Among those positioned on the left in contrast there is a persisting degree of diffidence towards Europe deriving from the mildly sceptical tradition of the Communist Party mitigated by the new approach of the Ulivo under Romano Prodi, a firm pro-European. A similar explanation could be given for those positioning themselves on the right: these are respondents who have certainly been influenced by the Eurosceptical stances of some of the leaders of the Italian right.

The geographical distribution of European sentiments does not allow us to identify any specific pattern: high levels of identification with Europe emerge in some of the rich, highly developed regions of the north and centre-north such as Liguria, Tuscany and Piemonte, but also in one of the poorest of Italy's regions, Calabria. Given that the differences are minimal – with the exception of the outlier Trentino-Alto Adige – the reasons for the lack of uniformity in the geographical distribution of European sentiments are probably multiple: that is, economic factors play a role but in certain regions of the south so too does the effect of EU subsidies. Tables 4 and 5 present the findings concerning the distribution of European identities among Italian citizens.

To summarise, the data suggest that pro-European sentiments are the prerogative of the more active sectors of the population; those at the centre of social life; those who are interested in politics and hold moderate views; those who anticipate receiving benefits from Europe or who perceive their effects and potential advantages. Though providing important preliminary answers, bivariate analysis is unable to provide an exhaustive explanation of the European sentiments of Italian citizens because it does not take account of the possible interactions among the various causes. It is therefore necessary to proceed to a multivariate analysis.

The literature review that follows summarises the results of the studies which over the years have sought to throw light on the causes of the attitudes that citizens develop with respect to Europe. The explanations have been developed above all to guide analyses concerning Europe as a whole but there are a number of studies devoted to the Italian case.

Table 4: Italian citizens and Europe: European identities by socio-demographic characteristics

	European identity (mean)	Standard deviation	Eta
Italy	5.66	2.64	
<i>Sex</i>			.10**
Woman	5.35	2.68	
Man	5.88	2.58	
<i>Age</i>			.12**
15-24	6.04	2.62	
25-39	5.74	2.51	
40-54	5.82	2.48	
55+	5.19	2.90	
<i>Education</i>			.30***
1 No education	2.33	2.03	
2	4.81	2.68	
3	5.95	2.45	
4	6.62	2.57	
5 Still studying	6.35	2.24	
<i>Occupation</i>			.22***
Homemakers	5.21	2.86	
Students	6.35	2.24	
Unemployed or temporarily not working/retired	5.08	2.82	
Farmers	6.11	2.19	
Fishermen	5.56	2.00	
Independent professionals (lawyers, doctors etc)	5.75	2.48	
Shopkeepers, craftsmen, other self-employed	5.81	2.53	
Business proprietors/owners	6.81	2.48	
Employed professionals (employed doctors, lawyers etc)	5.90	3.44	
Senior managers (company directors etc)	7.30	2.55	
Middle managers	6.36	2.50	
Other white-collar employees	5.79	2.50	
Supervisors	4.81	1.70	
Skilled manual workers	5.39	2.64	
Other (unskilled) manual workers, servant	4.56	2.26	
<i>Life satisfaction</i>			.27***
Not at all/not very satisfied	4.4	2.6	
Fairly/very satisfied	6.1	2.7	

Table 5: Italian citizens and Europe: European identities according to region of residence

Region of residence	European identity (mean)	Standard deviation	Eta
<i>North</i>	5.50		.22***
Liguria	6.23	2.18	
Lombardia	5.54	2.60	
Piemonte/Valle d'Aosta	6.16	2.78	
Emilia Romagna	6.18	2.84	
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	5.89	1.96	
Trentino-Alto Adige	2.89	1.50	
Veneto	5.67	2.46	
<i>Centre</i>	5.46		
Lazio	5.99	2.20	
Marche	5.70	2.50	
Toscana	6.35	2.21	
Umbria	3.29	2.52	
Abruzzo/Molise	5.73	2.83	
<i>South</i>	5.51		
Calabria	6.17	2.54	
Campania	5.76	2.65	
Puglia/Basilicata	5.23	2.71	
Sardegna	4.75	2.54	
Sicilia	5.45	2.94	

Table 6: Italian citizens and Europe: European identities according to political and value orientations

	European identity (mean)	Standard deviation	Eta
<i>Left-right self-placement</i>			.21***
Left	5.88	2.75	
Centre	6.24	2.47	
Right	5.92	2.56	
<i>Postmaterialist values</i>			.06
Materialist	5.54	2.81	
Mixed	5.33	2.74	
Post-materialist	5.77	2.64	
<i>Interest in Politics (how frequently discuss)</i>			.24***
Never	4.74	2.80	
Occasionally	5.86	2.47	
Frequently	6.51	2.61	

Citizens and Europe, from the permissive consensus to Euroscepticism: when the economy, politics, and issues of identity mould orientations

In seeking to explain individuals' attitudes towards Europe, the literature for a long time followed the model of the permissive consensus: support for European integration on the part of citizens of the member states tended to be high in the initial period of existence of the Community and it remained essentially stable in subsequent years thanks to low levels of familiarity with European issues, associated with a process of their substantial delegation to the political elites. Lindberg and Scheingold (1971) call this precisely the period of 'permissive consensus', one in which citizens confined themselves to delegating questions concerning Europe to their governing representatives.

Pro-European sentiments began to grow weaker with the Single European Act of 1987 and the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which broadened the sphere of action and the range of competences of the Union and brought about its transformation into a stable system of governance. Rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France and Holland in June 2005, even though for different reasons, and the bumpy road taken by the Lisbon Treaty before it came into force in December 2009, again bring strongly to the forefront the question of the current ties between citizens and Europe.

Therefore, before analysing the Italian case in more detail – one that is especially interesting from a number of points of view – it is worth examining the path taken in over thirty years of studies of the relationship between citizens and Europe: after the period of the permissive consensus numerous authors investigated the issue from a range of theoretical perspectives, applying various data-analysis techniques and thereby establishing a very valuable research tradition.

Chronologically, the first theoretical perspective used to explain attitudes to Europe was the cognitive mobilisation theory advanced by Inglehart (1970). This was followed by a series of studies in which motivations of a utilitarian nature had a predominant role (Gabel, 1998). Subsequently, a number of authors studied Europeanism guided by the conviction that political explanations offered the key to its understanding (Anderson, 1998; Sanchez-Cuenca, 2000). More recently, the identity paradigm has been established, where national (and local) identities are seen as the variables that explain most of the variation of the orientations of public opinion towards Europe (Carey, 2002; McLaren, 2002; Hooghe and Marks, 2005).

In scrutinising the various explanatory models, instead of proceeding chronologically I will in this review place the possible predictors of pro-Europeanism in two categories: economic-utilitarian (or instrumental) and non-economic, as suggested by Hooghe and Marks (2005).

The economic-utilitarian models

The economic-utilitarian theory, developed with reference to Europe especially by Gabel (1998), interprets the pro-European sentiments of public opinion as the product of rational thinking and therefore of a calculation: membership of Europe is in other words evaluated on the basis of criteria of expedience and the utility of the choice involved.

This literature presupposes that citizens are capable of rational evaluation, and therefore of calculating the economic consequences of European integration both for themselves and for the social groups to which they belong including the nation. Attitudes towards the EU are thus the product of this calculation. The results of Gabel's investigations show that citizens that benefit directly from Community assistance (such as farmers) show a high level of support for Europe: this is a reflection of so-called 'egocentric utilitarianism'. The logic is perfectly understandable: if Europe has been above all about European integration and if cohesion policy and economic policies generally have been the ones with most impact, especially in agriculture, then the suggestion that support is based on an instrumental motivation is certainly not without foundation.

The utilitarian approach also takes into account economic factors of an aggregate kind, taking its point of departure from research influenced by the theories of economic voting (Lewis-Beck, 1988). From this perspective, support for European integration is influenced by the performance of the national economic system. In particular, support for integration is strong when the state of the national economy (in terms of inflation, unemployment and growth) is good (Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993): this is so-called 'sociotropic utilitarianism', whose logic resides in the assumption that membership of Europe can, through various mechanisms, have a positive effect on the national economy. In sum, the central assumption of the economic or instrumental theory is that individuals' orientations towards the EU are mediated by a calculation of costs and benefits.

Citizens and Europe. The non-instrumental orientations: cognitive mobilisation and national identity

The use of variables of a non-instrumental kind in explaining citizens' attitudes towards the EU is not something recent because Inglehart had already had recourse to them in 1970. Indeed the first perspective to be adopted to explain the relationship between public opinion and Europe, immediately after the period of the permissive consensus, was based precisely on non-economic factors. Among these, cognitive mobilisation (based on growth in levels of education among citizens, exposure to a wider range of information sources and consequently greater awareness of Europe and of the way it works) was said to favour pro-European sentiments. In recent years, especially following expansion in the range of

competences of the EU and its various enlargements, the identity explanation has taken hold: in this perspective, national identity becomes a key predictor of the orientations of public opinion with respect to the EU.

Carey (2002) posits the existence of a simple thought process: the danger of a loss of powers on the part of the citizen's own member state, deriving from the growing interference of the supranational institutions, produces a negative reaction in those citizens who do not see the EU as a legitimised (or legitimate) entity, and who in any case do not see or clearly recognise the outline of a European identity. So for Carey strong national identities, in some cases reinforced by sentiments of belonging to a sub-national territory, constitute a formidable obstacle in the way of European integration.

McLaren (2002) in contrast uses the concept of a perception of threat to one's own identity: the perceived threat posed by integration with other populations and other cultures could be economic, deriving from possible conflicts over economic benefits enjoyed by minority groups; or it could derive from considerations of a purely cultural nature. The conclusion reached by McLaren is in line with that of Carey: strong national identities obstruct the process of European integration.

The relationship between national identity and attitudes towards Europe seems to be more complex however: for Duchesne and Frogner (1995) but also for Bruter (2005) and Citrin and Sides (2004) in contrast to the interpretations of Carey and McLaren, the relationship between a sense of national belonging and pro-European sentiments is, rather, positive, and a strong national identity is fully compatible with positive attitudes towards Europe. Similar conclusions are reached by the authors of studies carried out in the field of social psychology (Cinnirella, 1997; Huici et al., 1997; Catellani and Milesi, 1998).

It is very difficult, then, to establish in a straightforward way the role of national identity in the formation of citizens' attitudes to Europe. Recently, Hooge and Marks (2005) have considered the matter in depth suggesting that the national context has a mediating role: national identity works in opposite directions, in favour of or against European integration, according to the context concerned, and especially as a consequence of specific political events (in the case in point the holding of a referendum on Europe) with the power to trigger nationalistic sentiments in citizens.

A sense of attachment to the nation can in fact have a civic or a cultural origin: this dichotomy, suggested by Anthony Smith (1991), is very similar to the distinction made by Renan (1998 [1882]), between ethnic nationalism – typical of more backward, traditional, societies – and civic nationalism, characteristic of the more advanced societies, the product of a shared national culture and of common laws, norms and political structures. Social psychologists on the other hand prefer to use the terms 'achieved' and 'ascribed' identity to refer to the civic and the ethno-cultural

components respectively (Huddy, 2001). For some scholars (e.g. Smith, 1992) the European identity can have a civic or cultural root just like national identity: a distinction that is by no means trivial especially bearing in mind that according to proponents of the primordialist theory, of which Smith is one, the formation of a fully-fledged European identity, especially if understood in a cultural sense, is in fact impossible. According to scholars who support these theories then a European identity can only be civic in nature, that is, one that takes shape thanks especially to the existence of the institutions and the citizenship rights of the EU. A recent study of the Italian case shows the contrasting impact of the two varieties of national identity on European identity: positive in the case of civic, negative in the case of cultural identities (Serricchio, 2010).

Citizens and Europe. The other non-utilitarian orientations/2: the political drivers

In the area of what can be called political explanations are to be found theoretical perspectives whose wide range is reflected in a corresponding heterogeneity of empirical findings. One perspective emphasises the way in which individuals use certain political cues – which come to them from their own ideological orientations and the messages put in circulation by the political élites – to form their ideas about Europe. Underlying this approach is the conviction that individuals are not able to obtain complete information; that their capacity for rational thinking is limited; that they have only partial awareness of the relevant issues and therefore have necessarily to make use of institutional and other forms of delegation. The studies that have been carried out therefore give special emphasis to the role of political parties as the suppliers of cognitive shortcuts (Gabel, 1998).

A second perspective focuses on citizens' confidence in national institutions and in the national political system more generally. Anderson (1998) shows that the attitudes of citizens towards the EU – which is now a polity for all practical purposes, a polity *sui generis* though it may be – are to a degree filtered by the national political and institutional system. In other words, confidence in institutions has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes to Europe because the national institutions are used as cognitive shortcuts: those who have confidence in their own political system are likely to develop attitudes of closeness to if not of confidence in the institutions of Europe. However, the impact can also be negative as Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) shows: those mistrustful of the national political system may develop strongly pro-European attitudes because they see in Europe a kind of path to salvation, as Ferrera and Gualmini (1998) had already suggested. So on the one hand Anderson (*ibid.*) establishes a mechanism of institutional proxy – in the context of which the national institutions are shortcuts to feelings of confidence in Europe. On the other hand, Sanchez-Cuenca (*ibid.*) provides confirmation of the hypothesis of a substitution mechanism whereby a lack of confidence in the national

political system leads to the prediction of strong pro-European sentiments. A recent study by Bellucci, Sanders and Serricchio (2012) shows, through multi-level modelling, that the relationship between confidence in the national institutions, and identity, is in fact mediated by a third variable, namely, the quality of governance. In countries where this is high, the relationship is negative.

The Italian case: the end of 'blind' Euroenthusiasm

The Italian case is especially interesting for a number of reasons. The permissive consensus model, first of all, was ill-adapted to the Italian case. As Isernia and Ammendola (2005) emphasise, Italian citizens viewed Europe, from the first years of the existence of the European Economic Community, from a perspective made problematic by the post-war international setting (where European membership was seen as a choice that reinforced Italy's pro-Atlantic, anti-Soviet position) and by the interplay between the party, governing and economic élites on the one hand, and public opinion on the other. The stereotype of Italians as Euroenthusiasts regardless is one that was therefore established in this specific context.

The question of national identity and its role in explaining attitudes to Europe poses other questions. If the studies carried out by social psychologists (Cinnirella, 1997; Catellani and Milesi, 1998) suggest that attachment to the nation and to Europe are not contradictory, it remains true that Italians have long identified little with their own nation and therefore constitute a case of weak national consciousness. For some this is the persisting legacy of the social, as well as political and military, disaggregation that was experienced after 8 September 1943 (see, for example, Galli Della Loggia, 1998; Rusconi, 1993). This would explain why in Italy, a weak national identity is compatible with a European identity. In fact opinion-poll data, especially the most recent, at least partially disconfirm this view: in the Eurobarometer survey 69.2 of 2008 the percentage of Italian citizens declaring a positive attachment to their nation exceeds 88. In the preceding years, in relation to the indicator of national pride contained in the Eurobarometer surveys, the figure for Italy is in line with the average for the fifteen countries which until the 2004 enlargement made up the EU: it is 88.70 percent for Italy, while the European average for 1994-2006 is 88.59. These very high percentages might naturally reflect the banality of national identity in the sense that to be and to express attachment to one's country might be something that respondents take for granted (Billig, 1997).

Some solutions to the puzzle have been offered by the recent investigations carried out under the auspices of the Intune project (Bellucci, Sanders and Serricchio, 2012; Serricchio, 2010) which consider the

differential impact on European identity of the components of national attachments, though Segatti (2000) and Battistelli and Bellucci (2002) had already suggested looking not only at the intensity of national attachments but also at their meaning/content.

The Italian case is interesting in another respect and that is the fact that domestic politics are more stable now than in the past. By this is meant that there has been a political transition which, if not complete, has at least reached a rather advanced stage as suggested by Cotta and Verzichelli (2008). This development is at least partially reflected in public perceptions: according to the Eurobarometer surveys, the proportion of Italian citizens satisfied with the functioning of democracy in their country goes from 16 percent in 1992 (the proportion being even lower, at 12 percent, in 1993, a watershed year in the history of the Republic) to the 56 percent recorded in 2006.

The independent variables and the formulation of the hypotheses

Our survey of the literature has shown that studies of public attitudes to Europe have drawn in the first place on the notion of cognitive mobilisation, then on instrumental components, more recently on variables of a cultural (identity or affective) nature, and finally on political variables. The model to be empirically tested thus draws on the principal analytic perspectives we have examined.

Cognitive mobilisation is operationalised by means of a number of variables including level of education, political efficacy and lastly, level of awareness of Europe, a variable that measures effective knowledge of it. The political cues perspective is operationalised by employing variables that tap confidence in the national political system (an index composed of two questions, one concerning trust in Parliament, the other trust in the national government); left-right self-placement, and the degree to which citizens would want to delegate to Europe policy-making powers in various areas. The instrumental theory is operationalised by using as indicators the perceived benefit of Europe for one's own nation (sociotropic utilitarianism) and expectations concerning one's own work situation (egotropic utilitarianism). The identity theory, lastly, is operationalised by combining local (or sub-national) and national identities in a single index and by a question designed to reveal perceptions that European integration poses a threat to cultural identity.

The hypotheses concerning the determinants of Italian citizens' European identities can therefore be set out as follows:

- The values of the instrumental variables suggest that Europe is perceived above all as a source of economic benefits.
- Stabilisation of the national political system may have reduced the urgency of the desire for exchange between the national and the European

political systems. This development, which is reflected in a heightened level of confidence in the domestic political system, could, in other words, have modified and reduced the impact of the desire to substitute the national with the European political system. The expectation is thus that there will be a positive relationship between trust in the national institutions and European identity and that the desire to transfer policy making to the supranational level will have a weak impact;

- National identity is compatible with a European identity and the expected sign is therefore positive but the perception of a possible threat works against an attachment to Europe.

The analysis: what are the factors that promote a European identity among Italian citizens?

Analysis of the competing regression models, presented in Table 7, allows us to set out a kind of map of the Europeanism of Italian citizens: the various theories have essentially the same predictive power, the economic model occupying first place. According to the values for R-square, the theory of cognitive mobilisation explains 15 percent of the variance; the political paradigm explains 14 percent, while the identity model accounts for a further 15 percent of the variance. The explanatory power of the economic paradigm is appreciably greater in that it accounts for 19 percent of the variance in the European identities of Italian citizens.

With regard to the impact of the individual variables, among the cognitive mobilisation group, the level of objective awareness of Europe obviously has an important role. The more one knows about Europe, the more ready one is to support it. The impact of level of education and political interest runs in the expected direction, confirming that pro-European stances are to be found especially among certain sectors of the population, namely, those that are better educated and those that are interested in political issues.

Among the political variables, left-right self-placement has an impact that is of no statistical significance. The relationship between confidence in the national political institutions and European identity is positive if not especially strong: this result suggests that the mechanisms of institutional proxy have a relatively small part to play in explaining the European identities of Italian citizens. The hypothesis of compatibility between confidence in the national political system, and pro-Europeanism is, besides, partially disconfirmed by the decidedly important role of the variable measuring the desire to transfer policy making to the European level, even if only in certain selected areas of policy. Once again the role of the political mechanisms in explaining pro-Europeanism in the Italian case calls for further reflection and research, and the suggestion that the stabilisation of national politics may have weakened the desire for

exchange between the decision-making arenas is not confirmed empirically.

Table 7: Predictors of European identities: Rival models and the overall model

	1 Cognitive mobilization model	2 Political cues model	3 Utilitarian model	4 Identity model	5 Overall (1+2+3+4) Model
Education	.17***				.10**
Political knowledge	.25***				.18***
Interest in politics (discussion)	.10**				.04(ns)
Left-right scale (1 left-10 right)		.07 (ns)			.03(ns)
Left-right squared		-.06 (ns)			-.03(ns)
Confidence in national institutions		.09*			.04*
Future policy making to EU		.33***			.19***
Benefit to nation from EU (Sociotropic utilitarianism)			.40***		.26***
Personal job expectations (Egotropic utilitarianism)			.08**		-.001(ns)
National identity				.34***	.20***
EU means loss of cultural identity				-.10***	-.06*
N	947	919	1022	1013	850
<i>R-square</i>	.15	.14	.19	.15	.35
Adj-R-square	.14	.13	.18	.14	.34
Root mean square error	2.44	2.43	2.38	2.45	2.11
*** p<.001; ** p<.01; * p<.05 Entries are standardised beta coefficients Control variables (not shown): sex, age, occupation (self-employed/not; unemployed/not); urban residence					

The impact of the group of instrumental variables suggests that Italian citizens view Europe above all as a source of material benefits for their own nation but also as a vehicle for achieving personal objectives, even though the impact of egotropic utilitarianism is weak and the variable is not statistically significant in the overall model.

The last group is made up of the variables associated with the identity paradigm: the intensity of national attachments is positively correlated with European identity, in line with expectations. But the hypothesis concerning the perception that Europe threatens cultural identities – already confirmed in a previous study using other data (Serricchio, 2010) – looks as though it is beginning to have validity. To be sure, the number of Italian citizens who see in European integration a threat to their own culture was relatively low in 2008. But the finding is not insignificant, one to be monitored over time.

Conclusion: if Italian citizens become Eurosceptics

The principal aim of this study has been to search for an explanation of the growing sense of disaffection that Italian citizens show towards Europe. With regard to the factors that support pro-European attitudes, or vice versa, the literature boasts a research tradition that has become decidedly well grounded over time and in terms of its results, suggesting explanations centred upon four major theoretical perspectives, which can be classed as economic, in the case of the instrumental/utilitarian theory, and non-economic, in the cases of the theories of cognitive mobilisation, of the effects of politics and of the impact of cultural and identity factors.

The literature on the Italian case is – though only quantitatively speaking – more limited. But recent studies have emphasised certain elements that contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon: external factors (such as enlargement of the EU to include the countries of Eastern Europe) and internal factors (such as the stabilisation of national politics and the Euroscepticism articulated by influential governing parties) have played a decisive role in the progressive detachment of Italian citizens from that supranational entity to which they had always looked with great enthusiasm.

And it emerges from this study too that Italians still see Europe as a source of benefits, for themselves and for their country. In the Italian case, pro-Europeanism is influenced by level of education and of attachment to the nation even if there is a growing perception of threat to cultural identities from European integration. One is (with all due caution) led to believe that this will have been influenced by the recent enlargement to include the countries of the East. On the one hand, Italians consider the citizens of these countries as non-European, that is, as being part of the out-group, therefore as foreigners; on the other hand, the policy of enlargement

towards the East has reduced the share of Community subsidies coming to Italy and all the signs are that this will be still further reduced in the future.

So, if Europe begins to threaten the cultural heritage and traditions Italians are very proud of, while also promising less in the way of economic assistance, why continue to support it? To be sure, the political explanations remain to be explored in depth, so that the findings of this study must be considered partial and in need of further investigation. But certain answers have been obtained and they are certainly not encouraging for supporters of the European project.

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