

DOMESTIC RESPONSES TO INTEGRATION:  
A Research Agenda

by

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## ABSTRACT

This paper represents an early exploration of a relatively unexplored topic: domestic responses to integration. Specifically, this essay explores several questions concerning the response of domestic interest groups and political parties to intentional attempts to integrate the economies and political systems in Western European countries. The exploration here is part of a larger project comparing domestic responses to integration in Europe and North America. The paper finds that in Western Europe (EC plus EFTA) support for integration centers in the "power elite," an alliance of political (most mainstream parties) and business leaders. Opposition to integration comes from the "red-green-brown alliance," a coalition of socialists, farmers, environmentalists, and right-wing nationalists. Several questions remain concerning the formation of alliances and their interaction with governmental institutions, the public, and each other. Explaining the composition and behavior of these alliances is also a challenge. Supranational theories of integration do not explain the persistence of popular resistance to integration. Intergovernmental theories focus attention on domestic politics, but must be supplemented by political theories of group formation and state-society relations.

This paper represents an early exploration of a relatively unexplored topic: domestic responses to integration. Specifically, this essay explores several questions concerning the response of domestic interest groups and political parties to intentional attempts to integrate the economies and political systems in Western European countries. The exploration here is part of a larger project comparing domestic responses to integration in Europe and North America.

The response of domestic groups to European integration was inconsequential to the study of the European Community (EC) while it remained an elite project.<sup>1</sup> The rise, however, of significant opposition movements to the Maastricht treaty and the debates on integration the treaty inspired all over Europe revealed an embarrassing gap between a Euro-enthusiastic and unified European political class and a confused and divided electorate. Furthermore, on the perimeter of the EC, the countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)<sup>2</sup> engaged in their own internal debates on integration. These debates began as the countries first moved closer to an European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement with the EC, and then intensified as most applied for EC membership. In contrast to many of their EC neighbors, the debates in these countries were substantial, energetic, and seldom one-sided.<sup>3</sup>

The integration debates currently raging across Europe draw our attention to the groups involved today and raise questions about opposition to and support for integration in the past. This paper (1) identifies the general pattern of domestic responses to integration in Europe,

(2) seeks to identify important questions concerning the formation of groups and coalitions and their interaction with the domestic political system, and (3) explores the integration literature for a useful explanatory framework.

## **DOMESTIC ALLIANCES AND THE INTEGRATION PROCESS**

How have interest groups and political parties responded to integration in Europe? Since the integration process in Europe has incorporated more countries than the twelve members of the EC,<sup>4</sup> a wide range of countries must be included in a study of domestic responses to European integration. This paper considers responses to integration in eighteen European countries: the EC twelve plus the EFTA countries (minus Liechtenstein).

I have not yet completed all the empirical work needed to make conclusive statements, but a clear pattern of alliances on the question of integration has emerged at this point. Two major opposing coalitions are revealed by an analysis of domestic responses to the Maastricht treaty (in EC countries) and the EEA agreement (in EFTA countries), and a rather unsystematic reading of historical debates in these countries over previous milestone agreements, such as the Rome Treaties or accession agreements. To summarize, on the pro-integration side stands the power elite; on the anti-integration side stands the red-green-brown alliance. We look at each in turn.

### **The Power Elite**

Interest and support for a greater degree of integration centers in the *power elite*.<sup>5</sup> The power elite here refers to the political and economic leadership of the country in question.

The political elements come from mainstream political parties that operate on the reasonable assumption that they will govern or share in governing the country periodically. The business elements are associated with large and medium-size corporations that stand to benefit from freer markets. This leadership alliance takes in a large portion of the center of the left-right political spectrum in most European countries. Christian Democratic, Liberal, and Socialist elites have all found common ground in their support for integration efforts.<sup>6</sup> They may not always agree on the specific social, economic, or political goals of an integrated Europe, but they do agree that integration in some form is essential to the political and economic success of "Europe."

Several sets of questions concerning the power elite face students of European integration. The first set deals with the unity of the coalition. Specifically, what unites the power elite? Support for a united Europe in many Western European countries became, in the years after 1945, an element of the postwar consensus. Europeanism, along with anti-communism, support for the welfare state, and advocacy of free trade, attracted the loyalty of liberal capitalists and social democrats, corporate executives and union leaders. What made support for integration so attractive to such a wide variety of elites? World War II, the Cold War, and the globalization of the world economy have played a role,<sup>7</sup> but we need a more systematic historical analysis before satisfactorily answering the question.

Beyond the unity of the elite, there lies the question of its relationship to the democratic electorate. Political elites in several countries (for instance, Norway, Denmark, and France) have been dismayed by their inability to convince supporters to follow their lead. While partisanship does play a role in support for integration,<sup>8</sup> in most EC or EFTA countries the

political elites have been nearly unanimous in their support for integration but have found the people far less united and enthusiastic. Norway's 1972 EC membership referendum and all three of Denmark's referenda (1972, 1992, 1993) on European integration are good examples of this phenomenon. Most of the time the political leaders can deliver the necessary support to carry on with integration, but it is still surprising that electorates can be so divided when their politicians are so united.

A second set of questions equally important to an understanding of the power elite's role in the integration process concerns alliance formation. Who leads the formation process? Do groups bargain before joining the alliance? Are alliances formal or informal? Are they national or multinational? The power elite may be united on the general principle of integration, but major cleavages open up when attempts are made to translate the principle into policy. Thus, building and maintaining the coalition is important if integration is to proceed. While the question of alliance formation is addressed in the literature,<sup>9</sup> a systematic, cross-national study is needed before we fully understand the formation of these domestic pro-integration coalitions.

A final set of questions involving the power elite concern national differences. Why did a pro-integration alliance develop early in the postwar period in some countries but not until much later in others (e.g., France versus Switzerland)? What accounts for the success of the pro-integration power elite in some countries and its failure in others (e.g., Germany versus Norway)? While each of these questions can be answered in a two-country comparison by looking for unique circumstances, a larger cross-national study may allow us to make some useful generalizations.

### **The Red-Green-Brown Alliance**

If the power elite is united in favor of integration, then opposition to integration must come from the fringes of political, economic, and social life in European countries.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, that opposition to integration, in its fullest manifestation, comes from a *red-green-brown alliance*.

The reds in this alliance come from the left wing of the nation's political spectrum. They may be communists of some stripe, left socialists outside the traditional labor or socialist party, or left-wingers inside the traditional party of the left. Whatever their particular brand of leftism, they oppose integration efforts for ideological reasons. Most would agree that European integration is a capitalist project designed to ensure the survival of capitalism as a system and the bourgeoisie as the dominant class.<sup>11</sup>

The greens in this alliance come in two separate groups: farmers and environmentalists. The farmers often comprise the strongest element of this anti-integration alliance because they perceive integration as a threat to their livelihoods. Farmers can, and have been bought off by the European Community through the Common Agricultural Policy, but their natural position is to oppose integration. Thus, when the hush money begins to disappear, the farmers raise their voices in opposition to the whole enterprise.

Environmentalists, on the other hand, are not usually as strongly opposed to integration as farmers, nor as unified in their stand. While some environmentalists argue that increased policy coordination will improve the quality of the environment in Europe (e.g., some French environmentalists), others stand opposed to European integration (e.g., the German Greens) because the process is dominated by economic interests that put the environment low

on the list of European priorities. Both types of environmentalists can be found in Europe, but often the louder voices are against integration.

Finally, the browns in this unholy alliance represent the nationalist right in European countries. They reject the notion of a Europeanized continent where national differences are minimized, but instead seek to preserve and strengthen national identity. Many anti-integration nationalists come from the right wings of traditional parties of the right (as in Britain and France), but many stand outside mainstream domestic politics (as in France, Germany, Norway, etc.) because their vocal opposition to immigration appears racist to many.

The alliance opposed to integration in Europe is an odd assortment of political movements from the far left, far right, and nonclassified fringes. These movements unite at only one point, their disdain for the integration process and the political, economic, and social establishment that supports it. Thus, the unity of the red-green-brown alliance differs from the unity of the power elite. The red-green-brown alliance is a blocking coalition; its members do not have to agree on a course of action beyond opposing integration proposals. A negative coalition is far easier to sustain than a positive one.

As with the power elite, the existence of the red-green-brown coalition raises several questions concerning alliance formation and persistence. First, *why* does an opposition to integration emerge? In some countries, such as Belgium, Spain, and Italy, little opposition exists to the EC. Why, then, has a strong opposition to the EC existed in Britain, Denmark, and Norway since the late 1950s? Second, *how* does an opposition to integration emerge? Do disparate opposition groups emerge simultaneously and later merge their efforts? Does



one group tend to emerge first and serve as a catalyst for opposition from other groups? If so, is it the same group in all the countries, or are there national differences? Furthermore, when do red-green-brown forces create a formal alliance and when do they remain informally aligned? Third, what accounts for cross-national differences in the strength of coalition partners? For example, why is the environmental movement so anti-EC in Norway, but weakly pro-EC in France? Does this make a difference to the success of the opposition movement? Finally, what cleavages in the alliance threaten its success? Can members be bought off, coopted, or discredited by the power elite? What keeps the coalition from splintering into a thousand pieces?

This leads to the final set of questions. Why are some red-green-brown alliances more successful than others? For example, why did Denmark's anti-EC coalition fail to defeat the referendum on EC membership in 1972, while Norway's coalition succeeded? We can always think of unique circumstances to explain such outcomes, but can we discover a more general pattern?

Questions concerning the activities and success of the two coalitions leads us to investigate the interaction of these alliances with governmental institutions, the public, and each other. Do similar coalitions use similar methods, or are there cross-national differences? Who do groups try to influence? What works under what circumstances? Answers to these questions will help us understand better the influence of opposition groups in particular.

## DOMESTIC RESPONSES AND INTEGRATION THEORY

Many of the questions asked above demand detailed empirical answers. But making sense of domestic responses to integration requires an explanatory framework. An examination of the literature on regional integration provides some helpful direction, but nothing that satisfies completely.

How should groups respond to proposed and actual integration? The integration literature offers two general approaches: supranationalism and intergovernmentalism.<sup>12</sup> Supranational approaches, while differing widely on specifics, take as their primary concern the existence and operation of supranational institutions. They focus on the process of integration as it involves community-wide institutions and interest groups. Therefore, any discussion of group responses must take place on a regional level. Intergovernmental approaches, on the other hand, minimize the importance of supranational entities and concentrate on the interests, institutions, and decision-making processes of nation-states. For intergovernmentalists, the nation-state never lost its central role in European relations. Group responses, therefore, are understood in the context of domestic rather than regional politics.

Supranationalist approaches are, quite naturally, more concerned with community-wide interests than with national groups. Beyond their interest, however, they usually see these community groups as somehow important to the forward progress of integration. For instance, federalists are convinced that a broad-based popular movement demanding a European federation is necessary to overcome the strong resistance to unification found in the national governments, particularly among the "permanent agents of executive power," such

as "diplomats, civil servants and the military."<sup>13</sup> The federalists more or less assume that the people desire European unification and would strongly support the establishment of a constitutional assembly--and the European constitution that emerged--if given a proper chance by their governments.<sup>14</sup> In other words, federalists believe that integration is blocked by nationalist elites not popular opinion. Given this theoretical orientation, federalists are hard pressed to explain the emergence of powerful grassroots opposition movements, such as those in the Nordic countries, that oppose EC integration because it is moving the Community too close to the federalist model.

Functionalists agree with federalists that supranational institutions are necessary to the economic and political survival of Europe, but they disagree over the strategy and even the ultimate objectives of integration. Functionalism, in its purest form,<sup>15</sup> is a theory of education as much as it is a theory of integration. For the functionalist, the problem of war is only the outward manifestation of wrong thinking on the part of most Europeans. Like the federalists, functionalists believe the problem lies with national leaders whose self-serving activities lead to political conflicts between nations. Unlike federalists, however, the functionalists do not believe European citizens are much different than their leaders. What is needed is a complete transformation of the heart, mind, and soul of the European citizen; what Jean Monnet called a "silent revolution in men's minds."<sup>16</sup>

How is this revolution to be accomplished? Through a process of education that instructs people over a long period of time in cooperative means to security and well being. To accomplish this, institutions must be created to manage systems of transaction that "reflect human needs and maximize welfare." In these functional institutions "problems will be dealt

with in an open participatory manner by the relevant experts and concerned public on the basis of the best technical knowledge and felt needs, free from the pressures of power politics and state chancelleries."<sup>17</sup> As functional cooperation expands, people will develop a "sense of community" that will result in the peaceful resolution of conflict.<sup>18</sup> True to their anarchist roots, however, functionalists do not posit a federal state as the end result of integration, but rather a world-wide technocratic administration that rejects power politics as a method of international problem solving.<sup>19</sup>

Functionalists, therefore, view integration as an educational rather than political process. Those in favor of functional integration have absorbed the "values" and "ways of thinking" necessary to end national divisions.<sup>20</sup> Opponents of integration are still on the learning curve; they will come to understand and support the integration process as task expansion and spillover enlarge the cooperative space in Europe and elsewhere. In sum, functionalists believe that while politicians and powerful bureaucrats should be expected to resist integration, the people should undergo a transformation in their thinking as transactions increase and the success of supranational institutions is generally recognized. Unfortunately for the functionalists, the exact opposite is occurring: national leaders call for increased integration while societal groups, especially anti-establishment groups--some of which would respond very positively to the anti-power flavor of functionalism--resist any attempt to diminish national sovereignty.

Both the federalists and the functionalists could, of course, argue that the people have not had a chance to respond to the realization of their vision of a united Europe. They have no empirical grounds, however, on which to base a claim that people would behave any

differently than they do now. Thus, as theories of group behavior, federalism and functionalism have nothing to offer. But what about neofunctionalism?

Like functionalists, neofunctionalists too see integration as a learning process, but they are far less sanguine about human nature and society's capacity to escape politics. Neofunctionalists, in fact, see the political process as not only inescapable, but also as a useful tool needed to achieve the goal of a politically and economically united Europe. At the heart of neofunctionalism is a pluralist theory of European politics that posits the existence of a multitude of national and regional interests all competing for benefits and influence.<sup>21</sup> As supranational institutions are created to manage transactions in functional areas, interest groups and political parties will begin to shift their focus of attention to the community institutions that now become the ultimate dispensers of costs and benefits. As more groups, especially those organized at the regional level, recognize that their interests lie in increased cooperation, they will pressure domestic governments and supranational institutions to expand and deepen the integration process. Thus, pro-integration interest groups become the primary political force needed to overcome entrenched nationalism, while regional institutions secure supranational gains. The process, however, still involves learning. While the most sophisticated neofunctionalist models incorporate the possibility that interest groups opposed to integration could influence the process,<sup>22</sup> neofunctionalists maintained that if integration proceeded it would be because groups recognized their interests and pressured governments to encourage the process.

Neofunctionalists do expect groups opposed to integration to emerge, and sometimes these groups may block or reverse the integration process. When integration moves forward,

however, they expect to see regional interest groups at the center of that process. This has not been the case. Regional interests are conspicuous by their lack of influence over the decision-making process in the EC and over the pace of integration.<sup>23</sup> This undermines neofunctionalism's primary integration mechanism.

The supranationalist approaches all rely in some way on supporters of integration that overwhelm, teach, or pressure national governments to press forward the integration process. As for opposition forces, the supranationalist approaches cast them to a greater or lesser degree as villains: ignorant of their true interests at best, reactionary, nationalistic, warmongers at worst. Some neofunctionalists have attempted to elaborate the causes of opposition and treat the forces for and against integration as fairly as possible,<sup>24</sup> but most of them choose to remain focused on regional processes rather than explore the formation and interaction of opposing groups at the domestic political level. In the end, however, all of the supranationalist approaches have trouble explaining the empirical evidence. Thus, we turn to the second set of approaches.

Intergovernmental approaches reject the idea that integration can be understood apart from the interests and actions of nation-states. These approaches dismiss federalism and functionalism as idealistic notions unconnected to the real world of politics.

At the core of intergovernmental approaches is the belief that neither European integration nor the operation of the European Community can be understood apart from the domestic political processes that shape the bargaining positions taken by member governments.<sup>25</sup> Intergovernmental bargaining is at the heart of the integration process, so understanding why governments take their positions is essential. This understanding can only

emerge from an analysis of institutional structures, group pressures, bureaucratic politics, and political leadership in the domestic context of each nation-state.<sup>26</sup> In this framework the formation and interaction of alliances, both for and against integration, becomes very important.

Intergovernmentalism is not so much a theory as a method. To understand domestic responses, however, various theories of politics can be applied. Rational choice theory, organizational theory, domestic group theory, and state-centered theories could all yield useful insights and testable hypotheses. Such approaches, however, would have to take into account the nature of the integration process. It may be, for instance, that major advances in opposition alliance formation occur after the power elite in a particular country launch proposals intended to change the character of the integration process. If integration can be divided into various types, for instance liberal integration (the removing of barriers to economic exchange), positive integration (the coordination of policy), and formal political integration (the ceding of jurisdiction to supranational institutions),<sup>27</sup> then a shift from one type to another (e.g., the EFTA free trade agreements to the EEA) might spark organized opposition where formally there was none.<sup>28</sup>

An intergovernmental approach to integration that focuses on domestic politics seems most suited to understanding domestic responses to integration. More theoretical and empirical work needs to be done, however, before we understand why groups respond the way they do to integration and what impact they have on the integration process.

## NOTES

1. See Martin Slater, "Political Elites, Popular Indifference and Community Building," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 21(1,2)(1982): 69-87.

2. These include Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland.

3. See, for example, Brent F. Nelsen, "The European Community Debate in Norway: The Periphery Revolts, Again," in *Norway and the European Community: The Political Economy of Integration*, ed. Brent F. Nelsen (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, forthcoming, August 1993).

4. See Martin Saeter, "Norwegian Integration Policy in a Changing World," in *Norway and the European Community*; Helen Wallace, ed., *The Wider Western Europe: Reshaping the EC-EFTA Relationship* (London: Pinter, 1991); Finn Laursen, ed., *EFTA and the EC: Implications of 1992* (Maastricht, The Netherlands: European Institute of Public Administration, 1990).

5. Support for this observation can be found in Wayne Sandholtz and John Zysman, "1992: Recasting the European Bargain," *World Politics* 42(1)(1989): 95-128.

6. Andrew Moravcsik, "Negotiating the Single European Act: National Interests and Conventional Statecraft in the European Community," *International Organization*, 45(1)(1991): 52-53.

7. Stephen George, *Politics and Policy in the European Community*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35-64.

8. See Roy Pierce, Henry Valen, and Ola Listhaug, "Referendum Voting Behavior: The Norwegian and British Referenda on Membership in the European Community," *American Journal of Political Science*, 27(1)(1983): 43-63.

9. For instance, see Martin Slater, "Political Elites;" Sandholtz and Zysman, "1992;" and Moravcsik, "Negotiating the Single European Act."

10. See Karl W. Deutsch, et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1957), 105-113.

11. See Peter Cocks, "Towards a Marxist Theory of European Integration," *International Organization*, 34(1)(1980): 1-40; Kevin Featherstone, *Socialist Parties and European Integration: A Comparative History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

12. Moravcsik, "Negotiating the Single European Act," 21-27.



13. Sergio Pistone, "Altiero Spinelli and the Strategy for the United States of Europe," in *Altiero Spinelli and Federalism in Europe and the World*, ed. Lucio Levi (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1990), 134-35.

14. Pistone, "Altiero Spinelli," 136.

15. See David Mitrany, *A Working Peace System* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966); and A.J.R. Groom, "Neofunctionalism: A Case of Mistaken Identity," *Political Science*, 30(1)(1978): 15-28.

16. Jean Monnet, "A Ferment of Change," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1(1)(1962): 205.

17. Groom, "Neofunctionalism," 16.

18. Groom, "Neofunctionalism," 16.

19. Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*, 74-75.

20. Groom, "Neofunctionalism," 28.

21. Ernst B. Haas and Philippe C. Schmitter, "Economics and Differential Patterns of Political Integration: Projections About Unity in Latin America," *International Organization*, 18(4)(1964): 711.

22. J.S. Nye, "Comparing Common Markets: A Revised Neo-Functionalist Model," in *Regional Integration: Theory and Research*, eds. Leon N. Lindberg and Stuart A. Scheingold (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

23. See Philippe C. Schmitter and Wolfgang Streeck, "Organized Interests and the Europe of 1992," in *Political Power and Social Change: The United States Faces a United Europe*, eds. Norman J. Ornstein and Mark Perlman (Washington, D.C.: The AEI Press, 1991); and Moravcsik, "Negotiating the Single European Act." For a more favorable view of regional interest groups, see Sandholtz and Zysman, "1992."

24. See Haas and Schmitter, "Economics and Differential Patterns;" and Nye, "Comparing Common Markets."

25. See Simon Bulmer, "Domestic Politics and European Community Policy-Making," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 21(4)(1983); and Moravcsik, "Negotiating the Single European Act."

26. B. Guy Peters, "Bureaucratic Politics and the Institutions of the European Community," in *Euro-Politics: Institutions and Policymaking in the "New" European Community*, ed. Alberta M. Sbragia (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992).

27. Brent F. Nelsen, "Norway, the European Community, and the Integration Process," in *Norway and the European Community*, 214.

28. See Janne Haaland Matlary, "Norway and European Integration: A Theoretical Discussion," in *Norway and the European Community*.