The Future of Europe
Comparing Public and Elite Attitudes

CHATHAM HOUSE
The Royal Institute of
International Affairs

Contents

Summary

- The European Union and its member states have faced almost a decade of political tumult. If the EU is to move beyond crisis management towards political and economic renewal, a prerequisite is to understand better the foundation of public and 'elite' attitudes to the EU, and where these align and diverge.

- This paper is based on a unique survey conducted between December 2016 and February 2017 in 10 countries that polled two groups: a representative sample of 10,000 members of the public; and a sample of over 1,800 of Europe's 'elite', individuals in positions of influence from politics, the media, business and civil society at local, regional, national and European levels.

- The data reveal a continent split along three lines. First, there is a divide between elites and the public. There is alignment between the two groups in their attitudes to, among other things, EU solidarity, EU democracy and a sense of European identity. However, the data also show an important divide in general attitudes, beliefs and life experiences. The elite are more likely to experience the benefits of EU integration and are more liberal and optimistic. Meanwhile, there is simmering discontent within the public, large sections of whom view the EU in negative terms, want to see it return some powers to member states, and feel anxious over the effects of immigration. Only 34% of the public feel they have benefited from the EU, compared with 71% of the elite. A majority of the public (54%) think their country was a better place to live 20 years ago.

- Second, within the public, there is a pronounced divide between more liberal and authoritarian-minded groups, particularly on issues of identity. This divide plays a much stronger role than other measures, such as economic status or experience of social hardship, in shaping attitudes towards the EU. The political challenges resulting from this divide are likely to persist for many years, even after economic growth is restored and sustained.

- Third, there is a lack of consensus among the elite on important questions about the EU's direction. While the elite overwhelmingly feel they have benefited from the EU, they are far from united in their attitudes to further integration. Contrary to assumptions that the elite are pro-integration, 28% support the status quo, 37% think the EU should get more powers, and 31% think the EU should return powers to member states. More oppose than support the eventual creation of a 'United States of Europe', although there is support for deeper eurozone integration.

- The survey makes clear that EU politics has moved from a period in which it was mediating between an integrationist political class and an occasionally sceptical public to one in which there is a more mixed picture among both groups. The findings have important implications for the debate on Europe's future.

- There is a reservoir of support among the public and the elite for a union based on solidarity. For example, 77% of the elite and 50% of the public think that richer member states should financially support poorer member states, while only 12% of the elite and 18% of the public disagree. This does not simplify the challenges of building a fairer, more cohesive union, but it underlines the belief that an EU marked by very different levels of income and economic performance should still be based on solidarity.

- Divides among the elite about the future of the EU leave space for new ideas and vision. There is no consensus among the elite about the balance of powers between the EU and member states, or about a federalist vision. This shows the need for political leadership able to articulate a longer-term vision that might command the support of a majority of elites, as well as of the public. The improving European economy and relative political stability that could follow this year's elections in France and Germany may create a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a process of political and economic renewal. Such a process appears more likely given the election of President Emmanuel Macron in France, while the survey shows on balance positive views of German leadership. 48% of the public and 62% of the elite think Germany plays a positive role in the EU. 28% of the public and 23% of the elite disagree.

- Europe needs to move beyond a binary debate. The absence of a clear majority view on the way forward requires an integration agenda that recognizes the diversity of perspectives on Europe's future, and moves beyond crude notions of 'more' or 'less' Europe. Many who are broadly content with the union's performance do not want to transfer more powers to the EU. A substantial number among the public and the elite feel they have benefited from the EU, but also want powers to return to member states. Genuine political renewal in Europe will require a more open, imaginative and even conflictual debate.

- Strategies for the EU's future that emphasize a process of multi-speed integration among specific states ignore the fact that important fault lines cut across the continent as a whole. This suggests the need for a flexible approach to future integration that is built on more than a notion of an EU core and periphery.

- Divides within the public are as significant as divides between states, and will require different strategies if they are to be addressed. Those who wish to bolster public support for the EU cannot focus only on strengthening its role in improving the economic welfare of EU citizens. Leaders of EU institutions, as much as national politicians, need to invest greater effort in addressing the gap between their own attitudes and those of their citizens towards deeper social issues – such as fears over loss of national identity, the pressures of immigration, and perceived unequal access to opportunity. Debates over the future direction of the EU need to be reframed so that they address concerns about a perceived threat to national traditions and cultures as much as they respond to anxieties over economic performance.

1. Introduction

When European Union leaders met in Italy in March 2017 to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, they faced the most challenging political environment since the union's founding. This included the economic consequences of the eurozone crisis and persistently high levels of inequality, the aftermath of the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War, the planned withdrawal of the UK from the EU, and the rise of populist and anti-EU parties in parts of Western Europe alongside a drift towards illiberal and Eurosceptic politics in Central and Eastern Europe. In sharp contrast to earlier decades of increasing integration, when most citizens were broadly content to defer decisions about the EU to their political leaders (the era of a 'permissive consensus'), these challenges have eroded the EU's legitimacy and the capacity of its members to build a consensus on the way forward.

This combination of challenges demands that those committed to the value of European integration reconsider carefully the EU's direction, including what its future scope and structure should be. Such a debate will be a key component of steering the union from crisis management to political and economic renewal. But a prerequisite for a meaningful debate and effective responses is to understand better current public and 'elite' attitudes to the EU, as this is the foundation upon which its future will be built.

This research paper offers insights into these attitudes. It is based on a unique survey conducted between December 2016 and February 2017 examining attitudes to the EU, as well as to the state of domestic and European politics and society, in 10 countries: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK. The survey covered the two following groups:

• A representative sample of the general public in each country, comprising respondents aged 18 or over, using gender, age and geographical quotas, with 10,195 respondents surveyed online.

• A sample of members of the 'elite' – i.e. individuals in positions of influence at local, regional, national and European levels across four key sectors (elected politicians, the media, business and civil society) – with 1,823 respondents (approximately 180 from each country) who were surveyed through a mix of telephone, face-to-face and online interviews.

The approach was to examine opinions across the European body politic, and for this reason this paper does not explore variations between national subsamples. The elite survey predominantly targeted those based in the member states rather than in Brussels or the EU institutions. While the term 'elite' is liable to different interpretations, it serves as a useful descriptor to distinguish between the general public and those individuals likely to have greater interest and influence in shaping the direction of the EU in the years to come.

Figures that refer to EU averages use a population-weighted sample from the nine countries excluding British respondents, since, given the UK's June 2016 vote to leave the EU, they will not be directly involved in decisions that will shape the evolution of the EU. An exception is made in Chapter 3 (specifically, in Box 1 and Table 3), however, which includes UK data to highlight how Brexit may affect the broader balance of opinion among the remaining member states. Methodological details for the survey can be found in the Appendix.

The paper begins by examining the political trends that are shaping politics across Europe. It then outlines how the data demonstrate a continent that is split along three fronts. First, there is a divide between elites and the public. Although there is some alignment in their respective attitudes to solidarity, democracy and the EU's achievements, there are also pronounced differences in terms of broader political values, feelings towards the EU, and attitudes to diversity and immigration. Second, there is a societal divide among members of the public whose diverging values are pulling Europe in two different directions. Third, there is a lack of consensus among the elite on important questions about the EU's direction. The final chapter considers the implications of these results for the future of the EU. It argues that divides within the public are as significant as divides between states, and that addressing them will require different strategies. To better reflect the diversity of public and elite perspectives, the EU needs to move beyond a binary debate of its future. And given the lack of a consensus, and the relative political stability that should follow this year's elections, there is the space for new ideas and vision to germinate.

2. Europe Under Strain

Six key challenges

Over the past decade, the EU and its member states have faced a period of political tumult and crisis unparalleled since it was established in 1957. Six key challenges face the EU that cut across the interlocking domains of economics, politics and demographics.

The legacy of the eurozone crisis

The acute phase of the eurozone crisis has passed, with signs of resurgent economic growth and falling unemployment. What remains, however, is the political legacy of bailouts and economic austerity, the divisions this created between 'debtor' and 'creditor' members of the eurozone, persistent gaps in economic performance, concerns about high indebtedness and banking-sector stability in some countries, and fears about Germany's disproportionate influence within the EU. Even though it is falling, unemployment varies hugely across the union,[1] while annual wage growth remains at only half the level seen before the crisis. Income inequality has increased in two-thirds of EU countries.[2] Furthermore, in the longer term globalization will continue to challenge Europe's competitiveness in its traditional areas of economic strength and employment. The EU workforce is ageing and shrinking,[3] while automation may create additional economic and social challenges.

The refugee crisis

Since 2015, a major refugee crisis – rooted in conflicts and political instability in the Middle East and North Africa – has had considerable, if uneven, effects on EU member states, generating division over the right course of action, undermining efforts to foster collective responses and sparking public anxiety. In both 2015 and 2016, around 1.3 million annual applications for asylum were lodged in the 28 member states, compared with 625,000 in 2014 and 430,000 in 2013.[4] While some EU members, including Germany, Italy, Sweden and Austria among others, welcomed remarkably high numbers of refugees, some Central and East European states were openly hostile towards this approach. Public anxiety about the refugee crisis is not rooted simply in its fiscal or humanitarian implications, but also in perceived security threats.[5] The crisis has been eased only by a fragile agreement between the EU and Turkey over the handling of refugee flows.

---

[1] In March 2017, the unemployment rate in Germany was below 4%, the lowest since reunification in 1990, while the rate in France and Italy remained above 10% and in Greece was 23.5%. Eurostat Unemployment Statistics, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics.

[2] European Parliamentary Research Service (2015), *Wage developments in the euro area: Increasingly unequal?,* http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/565884/EPRS_BRI%282015%29565884_EN.pdf (accessed 10 May 2017).

[3] Eurostat estimates a decline of 0.4% in the EU's working-age population every year until 2040. Eurostat (2015), *Demographics and the economy: how a declining working-age population may change Europe's growth prospects*, 3 December 2015, http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1196&newsId=2402&furtherNews=yes (accessed 10 May 2017).

[4] Eurostat Asylum Statistics, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics (accessed 10 May 2017).

[5] Poushter, J. (2016), 'European opinions of the refugee crisis in 5 charts', Pew Research Europe, 16 September 2016, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/16/european-opinions-of-the-refugee-crisis-in-5-charts (accessed 10 May 2017).

Brexit

On 23 June 2016, the UK became the first member state to choose to leave the EU when 51.9% of voters in a referendum supported Brexit – many of them anxious about immigration. For the first time in its history, the EU must contend with contraction rather than enlargement, and it is unclear what the implications will be for future European integration. At this time, no other member state appears likely to emulate this decision, and negotiating the UK's withdrawal and a new trade agreement with it may serve as a force for EU cohesion rather than fragmentation. But the British decision will also place strains on the EU budget, remove one of the voices most supportive of structural reform as well as of completion and expansion of the single market, and change the political balance between large and small member states.

Populist anti-EU parties

The vote for Brexit illustrates a wider challenge to the union in the form of populist right anti-EU parties that are well entrenched in most member states. Particularly in Western Europe, large-scale immigration provides an ideal climate for the growth of radical parties that are hostile to the EU and associate European integration with threats to their countries' sovereignty, culture, security and welfare states. But the rise of the populist right has been a long time coming. According to one analysis, their average vote share in national and European elections has more than doubled since the 1960s, rising from 5.1% to 13.2%, while their share of seats has tripled.[6] Nor are populists exclusively outsiders. In recent years, they have joined governing coalitions in 11 Western democracies, including several EU member states. Such parties also have powerful indirect effects on politics in EU states, fundamentally reshaping patterns of political competition by pushing the mainstream parties rightwards.[7]

An illiberal drift in Central and Eastern Europe

Today, a major threat to the EU comes from nascent autocracies within its own borders. In Hungary, Poland and Romania, the rule of law and democratic norms are being challenged by governments with authoritarian tendencies. As one scholar recently observed: 'With some EU member states now sliding towards authoritarianism, we can look back with nostalgia on the days when scholars believed the greatest threats to democracy in Europe stemmed from the EU's own democratic shortcomings.'[8] These governments have also been critical of several EU policies and frequently clashed with EU institutions.

A legitimacy crisis

These challenges have led to a fall in trust in governing elites and integration. Similarly, critics have argued for many years that shortcomings in public engagement and political accountability at the EU level, combined with the absence of a common European demos, have produced a democratic deficit

[6] Stockemer, D. (2017), 'The success of radical right-wing parties in Western European regions – new challenging findings', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 25(1): pp. 41–56, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14782804.2016.1198691 (accessed 10 May 2017).

[7] Wagner, M. and Meyer, T. (2017), 'The radical right as niche parties? The ideological landscape of party systems in Western Europe, 1980-2014', *Political Studies* 65(1): pp. 84–107, doi: 10.1177/0032321716639065 (accessed 10 May 2017).

[8] Kelemen, R. D. (2017), 'Europe's other democratic deficit: National authoritarianism in Europe's democratic union', *Government and Opposition*, 52(2): pp. 211–238, https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2016.41 (accessed 10 May 2017).

at the heart of the union. In 2013, the proportion of voters who said they 'tend not to trust' the EU reached a record high, although this figure has improved marginally since.[9] This legitimacy challenge is making it more difficult to forge consensus among governments at the EU level.

The end of the permissive consensus

The above challenges sit within the context of a broad shift in European politics. In recent years, there has been an erosion in the public's willingness to continue offering their leaders a 'permissive consensus', where voters were generally loyal to the main parties and, with a few notable exceptions, content to defer decisions about European integration to their leaders. The old tribal allegiances between voters and the established parties have become weaker, leaving voters more volatile and less willing to defer decisions to their elected leaders. Research has emphasized the role of values and culture – rather than income or class – in defining this erosion, making this a difficult problem for mainstream parties to address.

The loss of public trust in the political establishment is creating space for new parties to emerge that offer a distinctive message on the issues above. It has also given a political boost to longer-established parties on the populist right. In contrast, many of the older mainstream parties are struggling to respond. As two scholars recently noted:

> Change has come not because mainstream parties have shifted in response to voter preferences, but because voters have turned to parties with distinctive profiles on the new cleavage. These parties raise issues related to Europe and immigration that mainstream parties would rather ignore.[10]

Given this context, there is a clear need to examine attitudes to the EU and explore their structural drivers among not just the public but also leaders from politics, business, the media and civil society. More than ever, it is important to understand how those who wield influence within European societies think about the key challenges facing Europe, how their views may differ from those of the public, and how, if at all possible, points of disagreement between the two sides could be bridged. Populists promote the notion that there is a self-serving and corrupt political class that does not share the values of 'ordinary' voters. The perception of a public–elite divide is a fundamental dimension of populist politics, particularly so within the EU, which is often portrayed as elite-driven and built on foundations designed to restrain nationalism. Hence nativist and anti-establishment messages have particular potency against the EU. Any progress towards deeper integration – even if regarded as necessary to fix structural issues in the governance of the EU – will be undermined if it does not rest upon broad public consent as well as having the support of the elite. Understanding the nature of these divisions and identifying areas of consensus are prerequisites to overcoming the challenges described above.

---

[9] European Commission (2013), 'Public Opinion in the European Union. First Results', Standard Eurobarometer 79, p. 9, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/archives/eb/eb79/eb79_first_en.pdf (accessed 10 May 2017).
[10] Hooghe, L. and Marks, G. (2016), 'Europe's Crises and Political Contestation', paper presented at the conference 'Theory Meets Crisis', Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute, Florence, 30 June–1 July 2016.

3. How Extensive is the Public–Elite Divide?

European integration has often been characterized as an elite-driven enterprise. As one study puts it, the EU is the 'the accumulated construction work of several generations of European elites under changing conditions, following different standards and building plans'.[11] At the same time, the history of the union is punctuated by tensions between the plans of the elite and the extent of popular consent, exemplified by national referendums in the Netherlands, France, Sweden and elsewhere that occasionally served as a check on integration. The comparison of the attitudes of members of the public and of the elite allows the exploration of this political dynamic and of the extent of the divide between the two groups.

The results from this survey paint a nuanced picture: a mix of surprising consistency and significant divisions between the two samples. Unexpected points of alignment include solidarity, democracy, European identity and the achievements and failures of the EU.

However, there is also a visible divide between the general attitudes, beliefs and life experiences of the two groups. Compared to the public, decision-makers and influencers are notably more liberal and optimistic, more committed to a pan-European identity and a common set of European values, and more likely to feel the benefits of integration. Meanwhile, there is simmering discontent among the public about a range of political concerns. For example, large sections of the public view the EU in negative terms; want to see it return some powers to member states; feel anxious over immigration and its perceived effects, as well as over the role of Islam in society; and are pessimistic about the future. Such views are especially strong among those with lower educational qualifications.

Areas of public–elite alignment

The data reveal four notable areas of relative alignment: a resilient commitment to a union based on solidarity that has survived the eurozone crisis, unexpectedly positive attitudes to democracy at the EU level, broadly positive attitudes towards the notion of a common European identity, and similar views on the EU's core achievements and its main failures.[12]

Solidarity

The notion of solidarity, which lies at the heart of European integration, has been under persistent strain in recent years. In particular, the eurozone crisis created a divisive narrative of 'creditor' and 'debtor' states laced with moral fervour on the fringes of both sides, while the refugee crisis generated radically different responses across the continent. Solidarity is one of the treaty objectives of the EU, but lingering tensions over the proper balance between solidarity and responsibility demonstrate the competing interpretations of the concept that exist in a union that contains very different levels of wealth and prosperity.

---

[11] Best, H., Lengyel, G. and Verzichelli L. (eds) (2012), *The Europe of Elites: A Study into the Europeanness of Europe's Political and Economic Elites*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.
[12] The data for the UK public and elite have been excluded. Figures that refer to EU averages in this section use a population-weighted sample from the remaining nine countries.

The survey findings reveal robust support for the assumption that the EU should be a redistributive union, and for the solidarity that this implies.

- 50% of the public agreed that richer member states should financially support poorer ones, while only 18% disagreed (see Figure 1). Among the elite, support was more emphatic, with 77% agreeing and 12% disagreeing.

- Among the public, those who were most likely to think that richer member states should financially support poorer states tended to be older, to hold a university degree and to live in cities.

- Those who were the least likely to support this measure of European solidarity tended to have lower levels of education (i.e. below university) and to live in more rural areas.

- In addition, while Germany has attracted criticism for its approach to the management of the eurozone crisis, nearly two-thirds of the elite, and almost half the public, said that it plays a positive role in the EU.
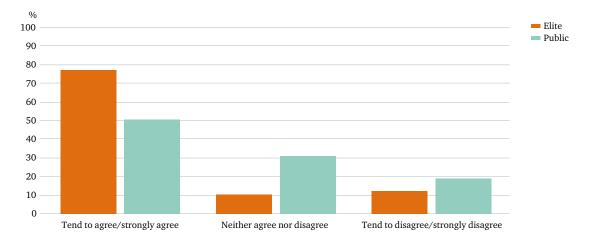
Figure 1: 'Richer member states should financially support poorer member states'
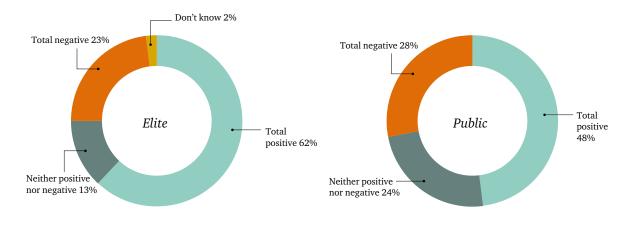

Figure 2: Perceptions of Germany's role in the EU

Democracy and participation

A second area in which public and elite attitudes are relatively similar concerns democracy in the EU. Despite the widespread concern about a 'democratic deficit', attitudes towards democracy at the EU level were surprisingly positive among both groups.

- Asked how democratic the EU was, on a scale from 0 to 10 (where 10 was very democratic), 64% of the public and 79% of the elite answered 5 or above, with 30% and 45% respectively answering between 7 and 10.

- There is still a sizeable proportion within each group – 25% of the public and 13% of the elite – that sees the EU as undemocratic.

There is much wider dissatisfaction when it comes to perceptions of democratic responsiveness. Respondents were asked whether they felt that 'politicians care about what people like you think'. Majorities in both groups – 51% of the elite and 74% of the public – disagreed. Only 8% of the public answered that politicians care about what people like them think.

European and national identity

Many criticisms of the EU as a political project are rooted in the sense that citizens do not share a common European identity. It was therefore appropriate for the survey to explore perceptions of such an identity, beginning with whether or not respondents felt proud to be European.

- Majorities in both samples – 56% of the public and 68% of the elite – said they feel either 'very' or 'quite' proud of being European.

- Among public respondents who expressed a view, relatively few – 17% – said they are proud of their nationality but not of being European.

- Members of the elite are twice as likely to say they feel very proud of their European identity – 29% compared with 14% of the public.

- There is a hard core – 29% of the public and 10% of the elite – who say they do not feel proud of their European identity.
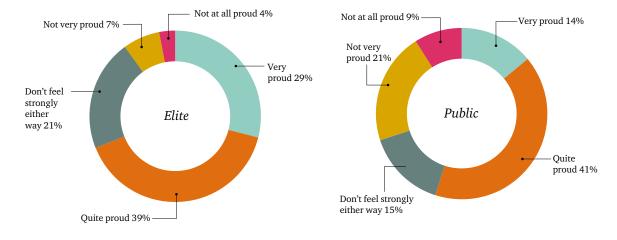
Figure 3: Attitudes to feeling European

These results highlight a degree of consciousness among the public of being European, and of feeling generally positive about that. This is noteworthy given that EU leaders are sometimes derided for seeking to artificially manufacture such feelings. Of course, though, claiming a European identity does not preclude a sceptical or hostile attitude to the EU.

Members of Europe's elite are sometimes portrayed as promoting or valuing a European identity above their national identity, but this claim is wide of the mark. A large majority of the elite express pride about a European identity, but this does not come at the expense of attachment to a national community. A majority of elite respondents say they are proud of their national identity and do not view national and European identities as irreconcilable. Among those of the elite who express a view, only 6% express pride in their European identity but *not* their national identity, whereas 81% do so for both identities.

Table 1: Attitudes to national and European identity (% of respondents)

	Elite	Public
Proud of national and European identity	81	58
Proud of European identity but not national identity	6	8
Proud of national identity but not European identity	9	17
Not proud of either national or European identity	4	17

Note: Excludes those who do not feel strongly either way.

What has the EU ever done for us?

A fourth area of convergence between the public and elite is their views on the achievements and failures of the EU. The survey asked respondents in both samples what they regard as the single greatest achievement and failure of the EU, and also what they thought were the top three. In broad terms, members of the elite and public view the EU's record very similarly.

Achievements
- Elite respondents were most likely to identify peace as the EU's greatest achievement, while for the public it was freedom of movement.

- Both identified the same top five achievements: peace, the Schengen area, freedom of movement, the single market and the single currency. It appears that these landmark achievements of the EU carry the greatest weight.

- Respondents in both groups were least likely to identify the protection of workers' rights, of the environment and of consumer standards as the top achievements of the EU.

- The main difference between the two samples was that a hard-core group of 14% of the public said the EU has no achievements, which was the third-most popular public response (among the elite this figure was 2%).

Failures

- Members of the public were most likely to select the refugee crisis, bureaucracy and excess regulation, and immigration as the greatest failures of the EU, underscoring how identity-related issues are at the forefront.

- By some distance, elite respondents saw bureaucracy and regulation as the greatest failure, although they also identified the refugee crisis and immigration among key failures, alongside austerity and unemployment.

Dissatisfaction with the refugee crisis may owe more to how it has been handled than to opposition to refugees *per se*. It does demonstrate, however, the way this failure is associated with the EU, even though the lack of coordination at the EU level is partly due to differences in approach between member states.
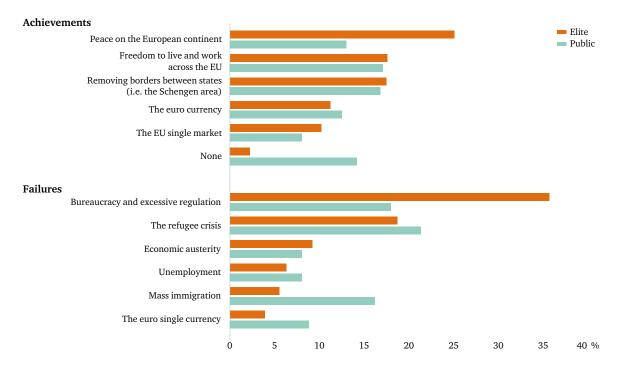
Figure 4: Greatest achievements and failures of the EU

Areas of public–elite division

While the public and elite share broadly similar views on the EU's achievements and failures, there is a pronounced divide between them in several important areas, in particular perceptions of the EU, integration and enlargement, and immigration.

Perceptions of benefiting from the EU

By asking respondents if people 'like you' benefited from being members of the EU, the survey tried to measure the perceived effects of EU membership on individuals personally, rather than how they thought it affected their country or economy. As shown in Figure 5, members of the public were not only considerably less likely than those of the elite sample to think that people like them had benefited from the EU, but they were more divided among themselves.

Members of the elite overwhelmingly (71%) said they have benefited from European integration. In contrast, the public was divided almost perfectly into thirds: 34% said they have benefited, 32% that they have not, and 34% did not express a strong view either way.

- A much higher proportion of the elite (37%) than the public (9%) felt 'strongly' that they had benefited from the EU.

- Thus members of the elite were more than twice as likely as the public to say they had benefited, and four times as likely to feel this strongly.

- Those most likely to say that people like them benefit from the EU tend to be men, aged 18–29 or over 60, with university degrees, who live in a city and have higher incomes.

- Conversely, those least likely to say they benefit from the EU are middle-aged (45–59), have low levels of education, live in rural areas or small towns, and are on moderate rather than high or low incomes. (Chapter 4 examines the significance of these factors in depth.)
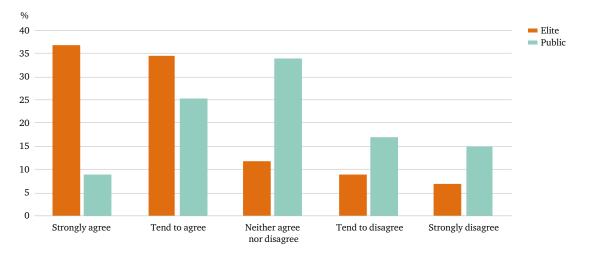
Figure 5: 'People like you have benefited from being members of the EU'

This pattern continues when looking at the words and phrases that the two groups associate with the EU. Both associate the EU with 'peace' and 'cultural diversity', but also strongly with 'bureaucracy'. However, among the elite, the other leading associations are 'freedom', 'democracy' and a 'better quality of life', while the public highlight a 'loss of national power' and 'economic crisis'.

Emotions and feelings are an important consideration in politics. Recent research has shown how they shape the way people think about the political world.[13] For instance, ahead of the 2016 EU referendum, the dominant feeling among UK voters about the EU was 'unease'. This negative feeling was notably more prominent than positive notions such as 'hope', 'optimism' and 'confidence'.[14] The survey asked elites and publics, therefore, to choose an adjective from a list provided that described most closely their feeling about the EU. Among the elite, the most popular answers in descending order were 'confident', 'positive' and 'uneasy'. The least popular were 'disgusted', 'indifferent' and

---

[13] Wagner, M. (2014), 'How do emotions shape the choices of voters? Evidence from the 2010 UK general election', LSE Europp Blog, 23 December 2014, http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2014/12/23/how-do-emotions-shape-the-choices-of-voters-evidence-from-the-2010-uk-general-election (accessed 10 May 2017).
[14] Clarke, H. D., Goodwin, M. J. and Whiteley, P. (2017), *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

'happy'. Among the public, however, the most popular in descending order were 'afraid', 'uneasy' and 'pessimistic'. The least popular were 'happy', 'proud' and 'involved'.

EU integration and further enlargement

In the early years of the eurozone crisis, there was an expectation among some observers that institutional political reforms would be as important as economic ones. In 2015 this was the vision of the *Five Presidents' Report*, which anticipated a progressive integration process, from full economic and monetary union to a financial union to a fiscal union to finally a political union.[15] But just as the crisis has eased, so has talk of a political union, particularly as many of the necessary policy changes that were made to strengthen the single currency were possible within the current EU framework. However, this also means that the challenges to the EU's legitimacy exposed by the crisis and enhanced by deepening fiscal coordination have not been addressed.

The survey examined attitudes about the balance of powers between the EU and member states. Respondents were asked whether the EU should get more powers, whether it should return powers to member states, or whether the balance was right as it is now (see Figure 6).

- Members of the elite were split on what is the proper balance. A narrow plurality of 37% said the EU should get more powers, while 31% said powers should be returned to member states. The least popular option was the status quo (28%).

- Members of the public were significantly more likely to want a return of some powers to the member states – 48% supported this, double the number who would like to see the EU have more powers (24%), while 28% endorsed the status quo.

- Those most likely to want powers returned to member states tended to be older (45 and above), to have only a secondary-level education, and to be slightly more likely to come from rural areas or small towns, while there were no major differences related to income.
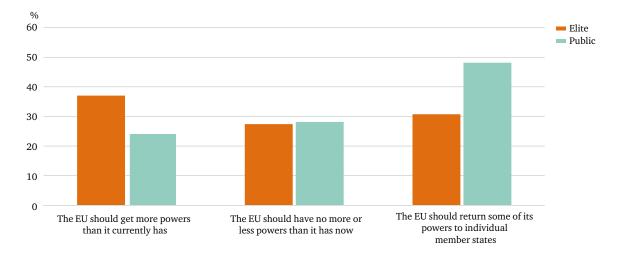
Figure 6: Should the EU get more powers?

[15] European Commission (2015), *The Five Presidents' Report: Completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union*, 22 June 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/five-presidents-report-completing-europes-economic-and-monetary-union_en (accessed 10 May 2017).
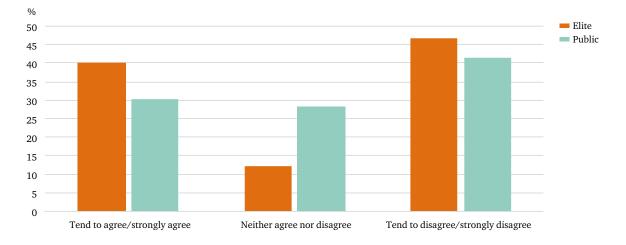
Figure 7: Ever closer union? 'The EU should become a United States of Europe with a central government'

The EU's enlargement to much of formerly communist Central and Eastern Europe is regarded by many scholars as among its greatest achievements, with the accession process underwriting transitions to democracy and market economies in the new member states. At the same time, enlargement has changed the character of the union, altering the political and economic balance within it as well as leading to higher levels of intra-EU migration. The survey examined views on enlargement to date as well as on the prospects of more countries joining the EU.

- 47% of the public said that enlargement has 'gone too far', with only 22% disagreeing. A plurality of the elite (44%) disagreed, although 41% took this critical view.

- However, 58% of the elite still support new countries joining the EU. The public is split, with 34% supportive, 36% opposed and 31% neutral.

- 62% of the public opposed enlargement to Turkey, the largest candidate country but one with only remote prospects of accession. Members of the elite were more split: 49% were opposed, while 42% were supportive of Turkey's accession as long as it undertakes the necessary reforms.

Table 2: Elite and public attitudes towards the EU (% of respondents)

	Elite	Public
Sovereignty		
The EU should return some powers to member states	31	48
The EU should have no more or less power than now	28	28
The EU should get more powers	37	24
Federalism		
Should be a 'United States of Europe' with a central government	40	30
Neutral	12	28
Should not be a 'United States of Europe' with a central government	47	41
EU enlargement		
Has gone too far	41	47
Has not gone too far	44	22
Neutral – no view either way	14	30
Brexit contagion		
More EU states will leave in next 10 years	43	55
Neutral	14	28
More EU states will not leave in next 10 years	40	18
Role of Germany in the EU		
Germany plays a positive role	62	48
Germany plays a negative role	23	28
Neutral – neither positive nor negative	13	24
Turkey joining the EU		
Support Turkey joining	6	5
Support Turkey joining but only if it reforms	42	33
Oppose Turkey joining	49	62

Box 1: How might Brexit change the direction of the EU?

The result of the UK's 2016 referendum on EU membership represents a turning point in the history of the EU. For the first time since its founding, a member state has chosen to leave. The vote is also an illustration of the central importance of public attitudes to the direction of the EU. This is not a new phenomenon: European integration has been checked by referendums in Denmark on the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, in Sweden on the euro in 2003, in France and the Netherlands on the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, and in Ireland on the Lisbon Treaty in 2008. Last year, the Dutch voted against the EU's association agreement with Ukraine. National elections have also become tests for the union, driven by the breakdown in the mainstream consensus on the EU in some states, the decline in support for traditional mainstream parties, and the rise of radical Eurosceptic parties of the left and right. This was epitomized by France's recent presidential election in which the two top candidates put forward radically different visions of the EU.

Brexit has already created impetus for a fundamental discussion about the future of the EU. Leaders have so far been united in reaffirming their commitment to the EU and have begun to sketch a vision for the road ahead, including the potential for deeper integration in areas like foreign and security policy. But Brexit will also have important consequences for the balance of power within the EU and the direction of integration. In the European Council, there will also be a shift in voting weight such that the bloc of countries that have historically been more oriented towards free-market liberalism and sceptical of government intervention in the economy will no longer have a blocking minority in the Council when decisions are taken by qualified majority voting (even with

Germany).[16] While Brexit will reinforce Germany's position as the EU's most influential power, is it also likely to increase the influence of states more inclined to protectionism. In the European Parliament, the removal of the UK's 71 members (out of 751) will affect the balance among parliamentary groupings, potentially emboldening the radical-right Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group and shrinking the centre-left Socialists and Democrats group.[17]

Prior to the referendum, there were, broadly, two theories on the effect that Brexit might have on the EU's direction. On the one hand, it was expected that a British vote to leave would energize anti-EU movements in other countries and, at the most pessimistic end, that it could lead to a wider process of fragmentation within the union. The alternate view was that the shock of Brexit, the imperative to avoid fragmentation and the absence of the historically Eurosceptic UK as an obstacle could pave the way for deeper integration. It is still too early to know which of these alternatives will dominate.

One important but underexplored area is the effect of the UK's departure on the wider balance of public opinion within the EU. In this regard, the survey's results shed some light on the potential for a fragmentation effect and an integration effect.

A fragmentation effect?

Brexit was celebrated by anti-EU forces across the continent, such as by France's Front National and Italy's Lega Nord. Since then, however, the picture has been mixed in terms of the electoral impact in other countries. In the Netherlands, the anti-EU Party for Freedom gained votes and seats in the general elections, but failed to become the largest party. In Austria's presidential election, the pro-EU candidate Alexander Van der Bellen narrowly defeated the Eurosceptic Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party of Austria. And in France's presidential election, the centrist Emmanuel Macron won 66% in the second round with a pro-EU agenda, although it should not be overlooked that the Front National candidate, Marine Le Pen, received an unprecedented one-third of the votes.

The survey sought to measure expectations of the contagion effect of Brexit: whether respondents thought that the example of a member state leaving might lead to others doing so in future. It asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement: 'Within the next 10 years other member states will decide to leave the European Union.'

A majority of the public (55%) across the nine countries agreed with the statement, with nearly as many strongly agreeing (15%) as those who disagreed (18%). Among the elite, the picture was more balanced, but there was still a plurality (43%) saying they expected a further contraction in the size of the EU, while 40% disagreed. This question does not address whether further fragmentation would be a positive or negative development, let alone whether respondents would support their country leaving the union. But it does provide a sense of the uncertainty and pessimism that many Europeans feel about the EU's future. It also jars with the fact that in no EU member state other than the UK is there a governing party that supports leaving the EU. In most countries this remains a radical, fringe position.

Integration effect

In the aftermath of the UK's referendum, there was evidence to suggest there had been a small rise in public support for the EU in other member states.[18] It is also important to consider how the balance of EU public opinion may change with the UK no longer a member. The potential integration effect can be explored by comparing the averages of the sample with and without the UK data.[19] This shows that the UK's withdrawal, beyond the symbolic and institutional effects it will have, will cause an important shift in the balance of public attitudes within the union.

---

[16] Niblett, R. (2016), *Britain, the EU and the Sovereignty Myth*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 19, https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/britain-eu-and-sovereignty-myth (accessed 10 May 2016).
[17] Chryssogelos, A. (2016), 'How Brexit will affect the balance of power in the European Parliament', LSE Europp Blog, 29 September 2016, http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2016/06/29/brexit-balance-of-power-european-parliament (accessed 10 May 2017).
[18] Hoffman, I. and de Vries, C. (2016), *Brexit has raised support for the European Union*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/flashlight-europe-022016-brexit-has-raised-support-for-the-european-union/(accessed 10 May 2017).
[19] All data are weighted by population.

As shown in Table 3, it is clear that, with UK data excluded, the sample becomes notably and consistently more integrationist. The differences are not dramatic, but members of the elite and the public are slightly more supportive of an expansion of EU powers and a shift towards federalism, and generally less expectant of further fragmentation.

With the UK data removed, net support for the EU gaining more powers becomes more significant among the elite (increasing from +1 to +6 percentage points, compared to support for returning powers). However, with the UK included, members of the elite are more opposed – by 14 percentage points – to a United States of Europe than support it. With the UK out of the sample, this net preference halves to +7 points, while a plurality of the public continue to support returning powers to member states and oppose a federal Europe.
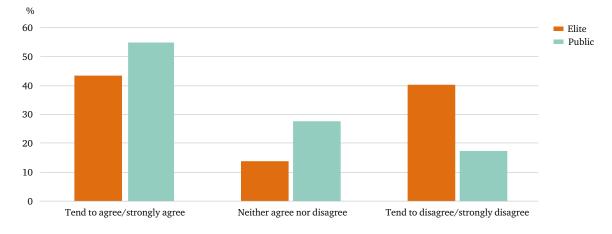
Figure 8: Brexit contagion? 'Within the next 10 years, other member states will decide to leave the EU'

Note: Excludes UK data.

Table 3: Shifting the balance: Attitudes to the EU with and without the UK (% of respondents)

	Elite incl. UK	Elite excl. UK	Public incl. UK	Public excl. UK
Sovereignty				
EU should return some powers to member states	33	31	50	48
EU should have no more or less power than now	28	28	28	28
EU should get more powers	34	37	22	24
Federalism				
Should be a United States of Europe	37	40	28	30
Neutral	11	12	28	28
Should not be a United States of Europe	51	47	44	41

Immigration and identity

Concerns over immigration and identity are central to European politics and a core driver of public support for the populist right. But these are also issues on which the elite and public diverge significantly. The survey asked both groups questions that were designed to probe their attitudes towards the perceived effects of immigration, the refugee crisis and how this was being managed

since 2015, and the specific issue of Islam in European societies, which is being targeted by populist nationalists and generating concern amid terrorist attacks by Islamist extremists. As shown in Table 4, there are striking differences between the elite and the public on what can be described as an identity axis. There is also clear evidence that public anxiety about ethnic and cultural change and its perceived effects is widespread.

- Clear majorities of the elite said that immigration has been good for their country and has enhanced cultural life, while rejecting the idea that immigrants have made crime worse.

- A plurality of the elite also rejected the suggestion that immigrants are a strain on welfare states, and majorities strongly disagreed with the notion that immigrants have taken jobs away from native citizens.

- In stark contrast, pluralities of the public said immigration has had a negative effect on their country and rejected the view that immigration has enriched its cultural life.

- A majority of the public said immigration has made crime worse and puts strain on the welfare state.

- However, a plurality of the public rejected the view that immigration has taken jobs from native citizens.

Table 4: Comparing elite and public attitudes towards immigration (% of respondents)

Perceived effects of immigration on …	Elite	Public
The country		
Has been good for country	57	25
Neutral – neither agree nor disagree	16	31
Has been bad for country	24	44
Cultural life		
Immigrants enhance cultural life	58	32
Neutral – neither agree nor disagree	15	29
Immigrants have not enriched cultural life	26	38
Crime		
Has made crime worse	30	51
Neutral	15	25
Has not made crime worse	54	24
Welfare		
Is a strain on the welfare state	35	55
Neutral – neither agree nor disagree	14	24
Is not a strain on the welfare state	49	21

The refugee crisis has placed particular strains on frontier states such as Greece and Italy, and led to a very uneven level of support from other member states, with Germany and Sweden taking very large numbers of refugees while other countries have strongly resisted doing so. The survey examined support for refugee quotas across the EU, as well as comparing attitudes to different groups of migrants.

- Half of the public (49%) supported a quota system, while 27% said that member states should be able to decide how many refugees to accept and 24% said that they should not have to accept any.

- The elite overwhelmingly supported quotas: 63% agreed, with just 10% saying no EU member state should have to accept refugees.

- Only 14% of the elite expressed negative views of refugees or asylum-seekers, compared with 34% of the public.

- Members of the public were most likely to express negative views about economic migrants from outside the EU (43%) and least likely to express such views about Western European immigrants (9%).

The survey also explored attitudes to Islam. It presented respondents with a series of statements about Islam and included some proposals advocated by radical-right parties, in an effort to measure the degree of latent support for Islamophobic sentiments.
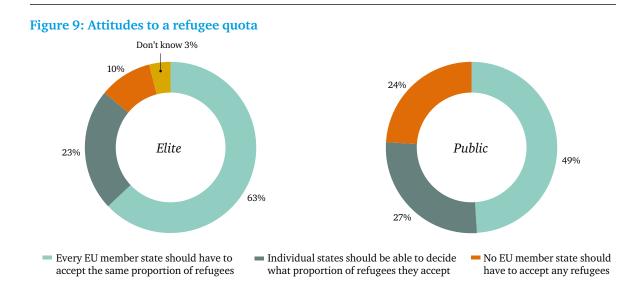
Concern over the role of Islam in society in Europe was significant and more widespread among the public. However, members of the elite seemed to share some of this concern. 61% of the elite and 73% of the public supported banning Islamic dress that covers the face in public places.

- Almost one-third of the elite (32%) supported halting all further migration into Europe from mainly Muslim states, compared with just over half of the public (56%).

- Just over one-third of the elite (35%) said European and Islamic ways of life are irreconcilable, compared with just over half of the public (55%).

These views reveal latent public sympathy for the core messages of the radical right on these topics. There are big socio-demographic differences, however, between those who hold such views. Citizens aged over 60 and with a lower level of education are notably more likely to view European and Islamic ways of life as irreconcilable. On some questions, there is also significant support among the elite sample. One possible explanation for such views among the elite is anxiety over the perceived challenge from Islam to liberal values, a concern that has become manifest in debates in France and the Netherlands over moves to impose partial bans on Islamic dress that covers the face. It may also be a consequence of recent Islamist terrorist attacks and of the fears of an increasingly divided society.

Table 5: Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims (% of respondents)

Perceptions of Islam and Muslims	Elite	Public
Islamic dress that covers the face should be banned in public	61	73
Neutral – neither agree nor disagree	12	16
Should not ban Islamic dress that covers the face in public	26	11
All further immigration from Muslim states should be halted	32	56
Neutral – neither agree nor disagree	13	25
All further immigration from Muslim states should not be halted	53	20
European and Muslim ways of life are irreconcilable	35	55
Neutral – neither agree nor disagree	15	24
European and Muslim ways of life are not irreconcilable	50	21

Figure 9: Attitudes to a refugee quota

Elite

Don't know 3%
10%
23%
63%

Public

24%
49%
27%

- Every EU member state should have to accept the same proportion of refugees
- Individual states should be able to decide what proportion of refugees they accept
- No EU member state should have to accept any refugees

Values and outlook

A comparison of elites and citizens in Europe demonstrates that there are fundamental differences between the public and the elite in general outlook and values, as shown in Table 6. The data also confirm the perception that Europe's leaders and opinion influencers are notably more liberal. It reveals that they are significantly more likely to be in favour of same-sex marriage and against the death penalty, two issues that are classic indicators of where people fall on a liberal–authoritarian spectrum (see more detail on this in Chapter 4).

> 50% of the elite disagreed with the statement that 'hard work doesn't generally bring success – it's more a matter of luck and connections', while only 25% of the public disagreed.

While the data confirm the liberal values of members of the elite, they also show that the elite hold a more positive outlook on the future, thereby deepening a divide with a public that is notably more uncertain about the future and less liberal. This divide is also replicated in different perceptions of social mobility.

- A majority of the public (54%) said their country was better 20 years ago. Among the elite, 42% said it is better today while 32% preferred the past (and 21% said there is no difference).

- 50% of the elite disagreed with the statement that 'hard work doesn't generally bring success – it's more a matter of luck and connections', while only 25% of the public disagreed.

Table 6: Comparing the values and outlooks of the elite and public (% of respondents who agree)

	Elite	Public
People of the same sex should be allowed to get married	70	56
Young people today lack respect for traditional values	36	63
Hard work doesn't generally bring success, it's more a matter of luck and connections	35	49
For some crimes, the death penalty is the most appropriate sentence	18	43
Country was better place 20 years ago	32	54
Country is a better place to live today	42	27

These questions may appear tangential, but they are important in revealing how a deeper divide over values underpins current debates about the future of Europe. The next chapter explores the divide within the European public, and shows how it is also pulling voters – and thus the politics of Europe – in two very different directions.

4. The Divide Within the Public

This chapter explores a second divide – between different sections of the public based on values and outlooks – and its significance in shaping attitudes to the EU.

Since the 1990s the rapid expansion of EU powers, rising immigration, the free movement of EU nationals, and a surge of international trade and economic globalization have brought to the fore a series of challenges to people's identity. Whereas some have broadly welcomed these rapid changes, others feel profoundly anxious and perceive in them threats to their sense of belonging and community.[20]

As a result, a new societal divide has emerged along the liberal–authoritarian political spectrum, increasingly regarded as an important framework through which to understand the mindset of different groups of voters. In this context, authoritarianism is understood not as a system of government but rather as an outlook and set of preferences among voters that favours order, deference to authority and resistance to change. In the wider public debate it has been characterized as a clash between 'cosmopolitans' and 'nativists', or between competing visions of 'open' and 'closed' societies, or between perceived 'winners' and 'losers' of globalization.[21] This division has less to do with the traditional questions of economic redistribution and class interest that have defined European politics in past decades. Rather it is between those with the qualifications, skills and outlook needed to thrive in the more economically and socially liberal environment and those who lack them. These two groups feel very differently about the effects of social change and how public resources should be distributed.[22]

To determine the size and nature of this divide, the survey used attitudes to the death penalty to categorize respondents in the sample along the liberal–authoritarian spectrum. Research has established a clear predictive relationship between an authoritarian outlook and support for the death penalty.[23] In total, almost 45% of the sample falls into one of the groups at either end of this spectrum: 23% of the sample are strongly opposed (identified in this paper as 'liberal-minded') and 21.5% of the sample are strongly supportive of the death penalty (identified as 'authoritarian-minded'). Far from a fringe view, an authoritarian-minded outlook appears to be fairly widespread in Europe.

In terms of demographics, those who hold a more authoritarian-minded outlook are:

- More likely to be middle-aged males, to have low levels of education, and to be economically active.

- Slightly more likely to live in rural areas and away from big cities, to have no or only a few friends from different backgrounds, and to speak only one language.

[20] Over the past 10 years, a large body of research has shown how public scepticism towards the EU and integration has become widespread and entwined with other issues, particularly angst over immigration and perceived threats to the nation from rising diversity. For an early influential example, see McLaren, L. M. (2006), *Identity, Interests and Attitudes to European Integration*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
[21] Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S. and Frey, T. (2006), 'Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared', *European Journal of Political Research*, 45(6): pp. 921–56, doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00644.x (accessed 10 May 2017); *The Economist* (2016), 'The new political divide', 30 July 2016.
[22] Ibid.
[23] See, for example, Stack, S. (2003), 'Authoritarianism and Support for the Death Penalty: A Multivariate Analysis', *Sociological Focus,* Vol. 36, 2003 – Issue 4, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00380237.2003.10571228.

In contrast, those who hold the more liberal outlook are:

• More likely to be females, older, to have a degree, to come from small towns, to be retired.

• To have friends from different backgrounds, to align with centrist or left-wing parties and to speak two or more languages.

There are, however, no significant differences in terms of income between the two groups – an important point that is returned to later in the paper.

The survey reveals that this divide over values among the public is a significant driver of attitudes to European integration. Figure 10 shows the significant drivers of whether or not an individual wants the EU to return powers to member states, derived from a regression analysis (see Box 2).

A number of factors are clearly significant, including if people feel they have no control over their life or have been 'left behind', as well as their age, education and geographic location. But none is as significant as being authoritarian-minded.

Controlling for other variables, holding authoritarian values significantly increases the probability that somebody will want EU powers returned to member states. Being less educated is also important but relatively speaking not as important as holding authoritarian values. In contrast, having a low income has almost no effect.
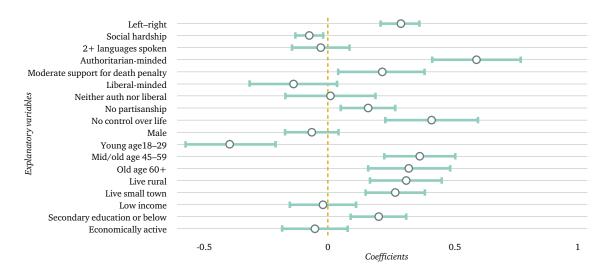
Figure 10: The key drivers of anti-EU sentiment – returning powers to member states

Box 2: The importance of values in driving Eurosceptic sentiment

Using regression analysis it is possible to examine the main drivers of anti-EU sentiment. This statistical model takes account of all the standard social and demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education, income, whether or not somebody is economically active and what kind of geographical region they live in (i.e. a small town, big city or rural area). But it also tests for the impact of the authoritarian–liberal value divide outlined above, as well as experiences of social hardship, whether somebody speaks many languages, whether or not they feel left behind in society, how close they feel to political parties, and where they place themselves politically.

Figure 10 presents this analysis, showing the significant predictors of whether or not somebody wants the EU to return more powers to individual member states. For ease of interpretation the results are presented in the form of a coefficient plot. A coefficient plot draws markers for the coefficients of variables estimated in a regression model and horizontal spikes for confidence intervals. The plot reveals that those who are authoritarian-minded, who identify with right-wing politics, who are left behind, feeling as though they have no control over their life, and do not identify with political parties are significantly more likely to want to return powers from the EU to individual member states. Some other factors also matter. Younger people are significantly less likely to voice anti-EU sentiment, while middle-aged and elderly citizens are more likely to want powers returned, as are citizens who live in rural areas or small towns. Crucially, there is also a clear educational divide – citizens who have a secondary-level education or below are significantly more likely to want powers to be returned to their nation state than those who have gone on to achieve higher qualifications.

To further ease interpretation of our results, we also estimate the discrete change in the probability for each of the values averaged across the observed values – which is shown in Figure 11.[24] The results reveal that, after controlling for all of the other factors, holding authoritarian-minded values is in fact the biggest driver of anti-EU sentiment in Europe today. On average, holding authoritarian-minded values increases the probability that an individual supports a return of powers back from the EU by 14 percentage points, when compared to those who are moderately liberal-minded, i.e. those who oppose rather than strongly oppose the death penalty. This compares to 5 points for those who hold moderate support for the death penalty. The increase in probability for those who feel left behind is 10 percentage points, while individuals who position themselves on the right wing of the political spectrum have an increased probability of supporting a return of powers of 7 percentage points. Those who are below the age of 30 are 9% less likely to share similar sentiments, while for every additional individual aged 45–59 or 60 plus, the increase in probability of expressing a return of EU powers is 7 percentage points compared with those aged 30–44. Being less educated is an important driver, but relatively speaking it is not as important as holding authoritarian-minded values.
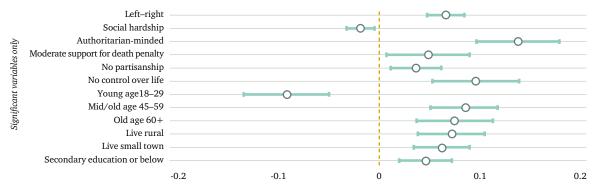
Figure 11: What drives support for returning powers from the EU? (Average marginal effects)

Change in the probability of anti-EU sentiment/return powers

---

[24] A marginal effect measures the effect on the conditional mean of y of a change in one of the regressors. In linear models, the marginal effect equals the slope coefficient, but in nonlinear models this is not the case. Hence this has led to a number of methods for calculating marginal effects. We use average marginal effects (AMEs). To get the AME, the marginal effect is first calculated for each individual with their observed levels of covariates. These values are then averaged across all individuals.

As shown in Table 7, this divide shapes and frames how individuals think about the EU. It helps explain why issues like immigration, integration and the refugee crisis have been pushed to the very forefront of political debates, and is reshaping voting behaviour across Europe.

- While on average 34% of citizens said they have benefited from EU membership, among liberals this jumped to 47%, but among the authoritarian-minded group it was only 25%.

- The authoritarian-minded reject the idea that the EU has key achievements – their most common answer when asked for these is 'none'. Those with a liberal outlook, on the other hand, celebrate the achievement of peace on the continent, freedom of movement and the removal of national borders.

- The authoritarian-minded group views mass immigration alongside the refugee crisis as the EU's major failures, while those with liberal views identify excessive bureaucracy as a key failure. Liberals are also twice as likely to view austerity and a lack of democracy within the EU as major failures.

- Authoritarian-minded voters are far more likely than 'liberals' to reject the idea that there are common European values, to say that more states will leave the EU over the next 10 years, and to reject the idea that politicians care what people like them think.

- When asked how they feel about the EU, authoritarian-minded citizens are far more likely to say they feel afraid, uneasy, pessimistic, angry and disgusted. 'Liberals', meanwhile, are more likely to say they feel involved, happy, confident, proud, positive and optimistic.

- On issues of identity and attitudes to diversity, the issues are particularly pronounced. The authoritarian-minded are considerably more likely to say that immigration has not been good for their country, has not benefited cultural life, has made crime worse and is a strain on welfare.

- They are also more likely to express a range of negative views about Islam: that European and Muslim ways of life are irreconcilable, that Islamic dress that covers the face should be banned, and that all further immigration from Muslim states should be halted. On many of these questions, more than 70% of this group agree.

Table 7: Comparing liberal- and authoritarian-minded Europe (% of respondents agreeing, unless otherwise noted)

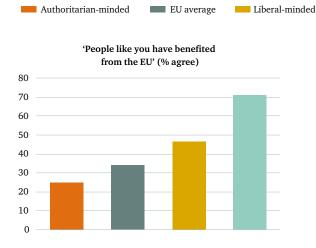|	Authoritarian-minded	Liberal-minded	EU average
General perceptions of the EU			
People like me have benefited from the EU	25	47	34
More member states will leave the EU in the next 10 years	69	51	55
European integration			
The EU should return powers to member states	61	39	48
Oppose Turkey joining the EU	74	62	62
European solidarity			
There are common European values (disagree)	31	19	21
Refugee crisis			
Member states should have to accept a number proportionate to their population size	29	73	49
Member states should be able to decide the number	24	18	27
No member states should have to accept any refugees	47	9	24
Identity, immigration and refugees			
Immigration has not been good for my country	69	25	44
Immigrants take jobs away from native citizens	49	11	28
Immigration has not benefited my national culture	63	21	39
Immigration has made crime worse	74	31	51
Immigration is a strain on the welfare state	78	36	55
European and Muslim ways of life are irreconcilable	75	38	55
Islamic dress that covers the face should be banned	86	68	73
All further immigration from Muslim states should be stopped	84	33	56
Democratic engagement			
The EU is not democratic	39	22	25
Politicians care about what people like you think (disagree)	83	74	74

Note: Data are weighted by population.

As can be seen in Figure 12, the liberal group is often closer to the elite than to the authoritarian-minded group, although on many measures the elite is still distinctively more cosmopolitan and pro-EU. These charts also reveal the chasm between authoritarian-minded voters and the elites. This partly explains the continuing appeal of radical-right parties, from France to the Netherlands and from Sweden to Hungary, that wrap their social and economic policies in authoritarian language (for example, being tough on crime and stigmatizing minorities) and combine this with populist rhetoric about a corrupt elite acting against the interests of the people.

The political divide along the liberal–authoritarian spectrum is pulling Europe in two very different directions. The survey results underscore that the political challenges facing the EU – particularly the appeal of populist-authoritarian leaders and parties – are likely to remain on the landscape for many years, even after economic growth has been restored and sustained.
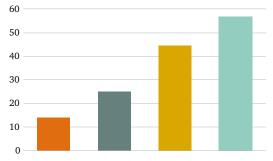
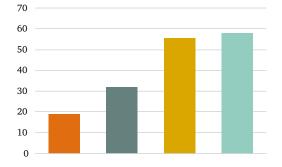**Figure 12: Comparing the elite with liberal- and authoritarian-minded voters**

5. The European Elite: Unity and Division Over the EU's Future

This survey of over 1,800 members of Europe's elite from government, business, media and civil society offers new insights into the thoughts of these decision-makers and influencers. One of the most frequent criticisms of the EU is its elite political character. Integration is often portrayed as being a process steered and advanced by a political class that consists of fundamentally – and homogeneously – committed Europhiles. In this narrative, political elites are assumed to be instinctively pro-European for reasons of perceived national interest or out of self-interest.[25] Therefore, understanding intra-elite differences is an important goal with obvious political implications.

As shown above, in aggregate members of the elite do tend to be more positive than the public about many aspects of the EU. However, there are significant areas in which they are divided among themselves; these areas are explored in more detail in this chapter.

Threats

The elite sample was asked what they regard as the greatest threats facing the EU, from among a range of political, economic and foreign policy challenges (see Table 8). By far the most common response was 'populist and anti-European parties'.

What is striking is that the pre-eminent concerns of the elite are those that threaten the integrity of the EU (anti-EU parties) or its coherence (divisions between member states). This perhaps reflects the fact that the survey was conducted in the shadow of the vote for Brexit, a strong performance by the Freedom Party of Austria in that country's presidential election, and the approach of Dutch and French elections in which populist nationalists were expected to perform well.

> For all the shock and symbolism of Brexit, it is conspicuous in its low placing:
> fewer than one in 10 of the elite regard it as one of the greatest threats to the EU.

Interestingly, economic risks do not rank especially highly, and relatively few elite respondents said they feared a new crisis of the single currency. This suggests a degree of economic confidence among the elite that is matched by the current stream of comparatively good news about the eurozone and the EU economy as a whole. For all the shock and symbolism of Brexit, it is conspicuous in its low placing: fewer than one in 10 of the elite regard it as one of the greatest threats to the EU. And, despite the extremely challenging international environment the EU faces, issues such as the situations in Ukraine and the Middle East and climate change are at the bottom of the list.

---

[25] Best, Lengyel and Verzichelli (eds) (2012), *The Europe of Elites.*

Table 8: Elite attitudes – greatest threats to the EU (% of respondents)

Populist and anti-European parties	45
Divisions between EU member states	29
Migration and refugee crisis	24
Terrorism	23
Unemployment	22
Radical Islam	17
Lack of economic growth	17
Lack of public support for the EU	15
A new crisis of the euro	15
Russia	11
Germany having too much power in the EU	11
Britain's decision to leave the EU (Brexit)	7
Climate change	5
Situation in the Middle East	4
Situation in Ukraine	3
Other	2

The only notable variation in perception of threats between the subsamples of the elite group is that business respondents are less likely than the average to be concerned about populist parties and more likely to be concerned about terrorism. Beyond this, there is little variety among the subsamples (see Box 3). The survey results point towards unease about the EU itself and a lack of confidence about the future.

Box 3: Intra-elite differences

The survey's elite sample encompassed four different groups: politicians, journalists, business leaders and civil society leaders. On many issues, they expressed largely similar views, although there were notable exceptions where the views of business elites were slightly closer to those of the public. For example, business leaders were not only the least likely to say the EU should get more powers, but also the only subsample where this was not a plurality view (see Table 9). Support for a United States of Europe, however, is consistent across the subsamples.

Table 9: Intra-elite attitudes to integration

	Civil society	Business	Politicians	Journalists
The EU should get more powers	37%	31%	43%	36%
The EU should have no more or less powers	28%	28%	23%	32%
The EU should return some powers to member states	28%	36%	30%	27%

There were also some other notable divergences. While a majority of members of each of the subsamples say they have benefited from EU membership, the figure is lower for business leaders (64%) and highest among politicians (75%). Likewise, there was overall strong support for fiscal redistribution among member states, with 81% of politicians, 80% of journalists, 79% of civil society leaders and 68% of business leaders in favour. The latter were also the least likely to support quotas for refugees or to regard peace as the EU's greatest achievement. Journalists were more likely to think Brexit has weakened the EU (80%, compared with 68% of business leaders). Politicians were the least likely to think another state will leave the EU in the next 10 years (see Figure 13). Civil society leaders were notably more supportive of enlargement and were the only group with a plurality in support of Turkey's accession to the EU. There were also some significant differences in attitudes to democracy at the national level, with civil society leaders notably less likely than politicians or journalists to view their country as democratic.

Figure 13: Elite subsamples – 'Within the next 10 years, other member states will decide to leave the EU' (Net figures: agree minus disagree)

EU integration

As noted in Chapter 3, Europe's elite are divided about whether the EU should get more powers or become more federal. However, when asked whether the eurozone should become more integrated over the long term, 71% of the elite were in favour, while only 13% rejected the idea.

Members of the elite were asked to identify other key policy areas that would benefit the most from deeper integration. Their most popular responses, in descending order, were security and defence, economic policy, welfare, and energy and climate change. It is notable that, despite elites identifying the predominant threats to the EU as coming from internal political concerns, they see the greatest future benefit from integrating Europe's response to external security challenges. This may reflect a belief that integration is politically simpler in the area of security and defence, or a view that the solutions to the EU's internal cohesion do not necessarily only lie in deeper integration. That economic policy is high on the list is consistent with elite support for a deepening of integration among eurozone members.

The eurozone's policies of economic austerity continue to generate significant discord in the EU, as the survey results confirm (see Table 10). Only 28% of the elite said that austerity has been an effective response to the financial problems within the eurozone, while 54% disagreed. Even among business leaders, which are the group most likely to think austerity has been effective, a plurality still reject this view. There appears to be support among a sizeable portion of the elite, therefore, for an alternative course to fiscal austerity.

Table 10: Elite economic attitudes (% of respondents)

	Elite
Austerity and the eurozone	
Austerity has been an effective policy in the eurozone	28
Austerity has not been an effective policy in the eurozone	54
Neutral – no view on austerity	14
Eurozone integration over the longer term	
Eurozone should become much more integrated	71
Eurozone should not become much more integrated	13
Neutral – no view either way	13

The refugee crisis clearly features prominently in the minds of the elite, yet there is also disagreement on how to respond to it.

• Asked about Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to open Germany's borders to refugees, a majority (59%) said that she was right while 30% said it was the wrong course of action.

• The elite was more evenly divided on the merit of the EU–Turkey refugee deal. While 38% said it has been good for the EU, 40% disagreed. This could help explain why no significant progress on the refugee crisis has been made. Clearly, it will remain at the forefront of Europe's political debate for some time.

Table 11: Elite views on the refugee crisis (% of respondents)

	Elite
Chancellor Merkel's decision on refugees	
Was right to open Germany's borders to migrants	59
Was wrong to open Germany's borders to migrants	30
Neutral – no view either way	9
Elite feelings towards refugees/asylum-seekers	
Very positive	14
Fairly positive	37
Fairly negative	11
Very negative	3
Neutral – neither positive nor negative	33
EU–Turkey deal on refugee crisis	
Has been good for the EU	38
Has not been good for the EU	40
Neutral – no view either way	17

The survey shows that, contrary to the perception of them as being unquestionably in favour of more integration, not all members of the EU's elite are committed federalists as they are sometimes caricatured. As a whole, they were divided on some key questions about the direction the EU should take. For example, there was no strong support for a rapid expansion of EU powers or a 'United States of Europe' with a central government. They were split on the merits of the EU–Turkey refugee deal, whether EU enlargement has gone too far, and on Turkey's EU membership bid. Members of the elites did, however, broadly agree on some key areas that will strongly influence the future of the EU. They said they want further integration within the eurozone, were strongly supportive of key aspects of EU solidarity and economic redistribution, and were united in believing that the EU should not compromise on its core principles when negotiating Brexit. They were also united on areas for reform: in frustration over the level of regulation in Europe, and in concern about the lack of unity among member states and the handling of the refugee crisis. Finally, they expressed clear doubts about the effectiveness of fiscal austerity.

6. The Impact of Public and Elite Attitudes on the Future of the EU

The overview of public and elite attitudes in the EU in the previous chapters has revealed divides along three lines: a complex dynamic between public and elite attitudes, characterized by a mix of alignment and disconnect; differences in values held by segments within the public; and a lack of an elite consensus about the direction of EU integration. This chapter considers what these divisions mean for the EU's agenda, and for the debate over its longer-term future, by mapping these elite and public attitudes on to the agenda recently presented by the European Commission.

Testing Juncker's scenarios

In the run-up to the Rome summit marking the EU's 60th anniversary, the European Commission published a *White Paper on the Future of Europe*.[26] This sets out five scenarios for different ways in which the EU might develop over the next decade, and outlines the policy and political implications of each.

The fact that the commission chose to publish a set of different scenarios rather than a roadmap or plan is in many ways a reflection of the trends the survey reveals. While differences in public and elite attitudes to integration, and high levels of Euroscepticism, are not a new development, the absence of a sufficient integrationist consensus is now also evident, and reflected in the commission's approach.

The commission offers five alternative scenarios for the future. These do not constitute the full spectrum of how the EU might develop; the scenarios do not include radical alternatives to the current treaty framework, nor do they outline how these different scenarios might come about. And, despite seeking a neutral tone, it is also clear that the commission views some of these futures more favourably than others. Despite these shortcomings, they remain a valuable starting point for considering the EU's future and provide a useful framework to test which vision may attract the most support among publics and elites.

Scenario 1: Carrying on

Under this scenario, the EU sticks to its current path. The commission continues with its agenda of regulatory reform, incrementally strengthening the eurozone, deepening the single market in energy and digital services, and trying to improve the management of the EU's external borders, as well as taking modest steps to improve foreign policy and defence cooperation. Divisions between member states continue to hamper the coherence of the EU's approach, particularly when responding to crises.

This scenario might also qualify as 'muddling through'. There is no leap forward, but nor is there any adjustment to the balance of powers between the EU level and member states. Reform of the governance of the eurozone is incremental and reactive. And, from the commission's point of view, the EU still has too few tools and levers to address the challenges it faces.

---

[26] European Commission (2017), *White Paper on the Future of Europe: reflections and scenarios for the EU27 by 2025*, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/white_paper_on_the_future_of_europe_en.pdf (accessed 13 May 2017).

For some, this scenario represents a desire to defend the gains of European integration, particularly in the absence of a political basis on which to advance it at this stage. However, given the challenges that the EU has faced and the current level of public discontent revealed in this survey, a response in which little changes may not be sufficient.

It is clear that large sections of the public are not happy with the status quo. Less than one-third of either the public or the elite (28% in each group) said they wanted to retain the current balance of powers. In no country is there even a plurality of public support for this position. Also of interest are the expressions of emotions that reflect worries about the future: among the public, 34% principally said they feel afraid, uneasy or pessimistic about the EU. Younger voters (18–24) are the only age group in which a plurality supported the EU keeping the same amount of powers. Nonetheless, this remains a minority view. Such a lack of confidence about the future is unlikely to be addressed by the status quo approach.

Scenario 2: Nothing but the single market

Under this scenario, the EU gradually refocuses on the single market. This presumes that in the future member states are unable – or unwilling – to make progress in areas of cooperation such as migration and foreign and security policy, and so choose to focus on deepening aspects of the single market and reducing the regulatory burden within the EU. Under this scenario, cooperation in areas other than the single market becomes increasingly bilateral. Because cooperation on migration is more limited here than in other scenarios, the commission expects systematic checks at borders to become more common.

The scenario does not state it explicitly, but the implication is that the EU will have fewer powers, or at least exercise fewer powers than it has at present. This would seem to reflect the views of the 48% of the public and the 31% of the elite who want the EU to have fewer powers. Among the public, those who were most likely to want to return powers to member states tended be older and to have lower levels of education; these groups may be most supportive of such an approach. This is the scenario most likely to satisfy the authoritarian-minded group in the survey.

As described in the European Commission's white paper, this scenario would involve the greatest focus on removing regulatory burdens. Despite efforts by the commission and a commitment to a 'Better Regulation' agenda, the perception of the EU as excessively bureaucratic is broad and deep. Across the subsamples of the elite, bureaucracy and excessive regulation were identified as the EU's single greatest failure. Among the public, respondents were more likely to associate the EU with bureaucracy than with anything else. Thus, a serious focus on tackling the perceived excess of bureaucracy would fit both public and elite preferences. However, given the nature of the single market – a project designed to harmonize regulation – such a scenario will inevitably still involve common European rules across a range of areas.

An additional attraction of this scenario is the acknowledgment that an EU focused on the single market would be simpler and, therefore, in the commission's language, 'easier to understand'. It is true that a less complex union might be easier for voters to connect with. Among the public, there is a positive and not insignificant correlation between those who say they have a good understanding of how the EU works and those who say they have benefited from it. Therefore, an increase in understanding provided by a simpler union could lead to more positive attitudes. However, a focus on simplifying how the EU operates could also take place under other approaches laid out in the white paper.

Scenario 3: Those who want more, do more

This scenario might also be called 'multi-speed Europe'. Some states take forward a more integrationist agenda in some policy areas, while for others there is broad continuity with the current arrangement. Groups of member states decide to cooperate more deeply depending on the policy area, rather than deeper cooperation happening for all member states. The European Commission suggests defence, security and justice, and tax and welfare as areas where 'coalitions of the willing' could emerge.

This vision does appear to match some attitudes revealed by the survey, especially among the elite. A clear majority of the elite (71%) said that the eurozone should become 'much more integrated'. Given the number of member states that are still outside the euro, and the reasonable expectation that a number of them will not join in the near future (or perhaps at all), a more deeply integrated eurozone is the likely spearhead of a more multi-speed Europe. It also reflects the broader logic among many analysts and leaders in Europe that some of the structural deficiencies in the design of the single currency are rooted in the fact that the eurozone is only partially integrated. Similarly, those areas that the elite identified as where the EU offers the greatest benefits in the future – defence, economic and welfare policy – match those highlighted in this scenario.

The flexibility of a multi-speed EU would allow any future integration to better reflect variations among the public across member states. In the past, differential integration has come about only through politically hard-fought opt-outs following treaty revisions, involving special deals for individual countries that demonstrated political intransigence not to compromise on their perceived national exceptionalism. Indeed the fear of an irreversible drift towards greater integration has been a significant component of British Euroscepticism, particularly within the Conservative Party, and is the reason Prime Minister David Cameron sought to clarify the UK's exclusion from the concept of 'ever closer union' in his renegotiation ahead of the referendum. Therefore, an EU that can incorporate more structurally concepts and practices of flexibility and differentiation is less likely to run against the grain of public opinion.

However, the weakness of this scenario is that it is based on the notion that the chief variation in desire for greater integration is between countries rather than between groups of voters within and across countries. Such an approach may be relevant on issues where there is strong variation between governments of member states, such as the refugee crisis, but this kind of differentiated integration would not address the important divides between different groups of voters, and between voters and the elites highlighted above, which cut across national boundaries.

Scenario 4: Doing less more efficiently

Under this scenario, the EU's attention and resources are focused on a smaller number of policy areas (including migration, trade, security and defence) while in other areas it does less or stops acting altogether. In other words, the EU does both more and less. This involves closer, more efficient cooperation in chosen areas, with the EU given more policy and regulatory tools and greater powers of enforcement, while in other areas its role becomes more limited. While the white paper is vague on the details, it highlights regional policy, some aspects of employment and social policy, and public health – where the EU's powers are relatively limited anyway – as potential candidate areas for reduced activity.

This is the most innovative of the scenarios, since it departs from the conventional and crude choice between 'more' or 'less' Europe. It retains the potential for deeper cooperation in certain areas as called for by the survey's elite sample, such as a more integrated eurozone. Under this scenario, deeper integration on some issues like migration, on which the most supported policy among the public was a quota system, would also be possible. But it would also allow for the EU to return powers to member states in other areas, in line with public opinion. By taking a more sectoral approach rather than a state-based approach as set out in scenario 3, EU integration may have a better chance of reflecting the variety of public preferences.

> The sectoral approach is the most innovative of the scenarios, since it departs from the conventional and crude choice between 'more' or 'less' Europe. It retains the potential for deeper cooperation in certain areas as called for by the survey's elite sample, such as a more integrated eurozone.

There is a palpable sense in the white paper that the European Commission feels the gap between unreasonable expectations and limited delivery is a key driver of discontent with the EU. Development along the lines of this fourth scenario would reduce the degree to which the EU is in a liminal position with regard to key areas of policy, in which expectations are high but policy competence is limited. A broader political bargain of 'more and less', in which the perceived necessity of deeper cooperation in certain areas is matched by a visible reduction in the role of the EU in others, would also seem to chime more closely with several currents in public and elite opinion.

This vision would still involve difficult compromises that cut across the priorities and interests of different groups. For example, one of the areas highlighted for less intervention is regional policy, but structural and cohesion funds under this policy are a clear priority for Central and Eastern European member states. Yet, if it could be sold as a vision that strengthens the EU as well as member states, it would have the greatest chance of running with the grain of public opinion.

Scenario 5: Doing much more together

Under this scenario, the EU is given more powers and resources across the board, and integration between member states deepens significantly in a wide range of policy areas. For example, the EU's role in fiscal, tax and social affairs is increased, not just for eurozone members but also for those countries committed to joining the single currency (which after the UK's departure will formally exclude just Denmark). This is in effect the federalist scenario, in which moves towards a deeper political union accelerate.

Respondents in both survey samples were asked if they agreed or disagreed that 'the European Union should become a United States of Europe with a central government'. Among the public, 41% disagreed (21% strongly), 30% agreed (10% strongly) and 28% were neutral. Although a plurality oppose the idea, the fact that a third of the public supports this view shows the resilience of the vision of a genuine European republic despite the multiple challenges that the EU faces and the generally negative mood of the public. On this question the elite is split, with 40% agreeing and 47% disagreeing. Replicating the pattern among the public, significantly more members of the elite strongly disagree (25%) than strongly agree (16%).

Where next for Europe?

For almost a decade now, the EU has been navigating continual challenges and crises. As its leaders debate the post-Brexit future, its institutions are struggling to project an image of effectiveness and legitimacy. Meanwhile, member states are grappling with different levels of wealth, growth, competitiveness and income inequality, as well as with the divisive legacy of the eurozone and refugee crises. As this paper makes clear, these challenges can only be addressed successfully by taking into account public and elite opinion.

As noted earlier, the survey's findings reveal how the EU is caught between competing pressures along three fronts: a disconnect between the elite and public, a public that is divided over values, and an elite that lacks consensus on key issues that will shape Europe's future.

Among these divisions, EU leaders are trying to steady the ship. Shows of unity in response to Brexit and more positive economic growth figures in 2017 have helped provide greater calm. The electoral successes of pro-EU figures in Austria, France and the Netherlands this year have also given the union more room to manoeuvre, while pressures on the euro have eased, as have flows of migrants and refugees from the Middle East and North Africa, at least for now. There is a sense that there may now be space for the EU to consider its long-term shape and identity post-Brexit, and a process of political renewal might now supplant constant crisis management. This will require that the EU address the issue of political legitimacy.

The EU may lack the intrinsic legitimacy of a nation state but it has historically sought to derive legitimacy in two ways. In the first, political legitimacy is built upon the benefits that integration brings in terms of benefits and rights for citizens – what is sometimes termed 'output' legitimacy. In the second, political legitimacy comes from greater citizen participation in, and scrutiny of, EU decision-making through enhanced democracy, transparency and accountability – what is sometimes termed 'input' legitimacy.

Both these approaches appear weak at present. Recent crises, particularly over the euro, have corroded the economic fortunes of large parts of southern Europe and generated divergence rather than convergence between its economies and societies, undermining the sense that the EU is an engine of prosperity. As the survey shows, the long-term political, economic and cultural benefits of Europe are losing their salience or are increasingly contested, while substantial portions of the public do not feel these benefits. Meanwhile, attempts to make the EU more democratic have generally focused on top-down initiatives or emphasized the role of the European Parliament, which has failed to convey the democratic legitimacy of the union. Importantly, the data also suggest that, while democracy in the EU is important for the public, it is not its main concern.

These challenges do not have simple solutions, but the survey's results do contain the following important implications for the debate about the future of the EU.

Divides among the elite about the future of the EU create space for new ideas and vision

EU politics has moved from a period in which it was mediating between an integrationist political class and an occasionally sceptical public to one in which there is a more mixed picture among the public and the elite. The two greatest policy challenges of the past decade – the eurozone and refugee crises – were amplified by the same issue: a partial process of integration, with European

monetary union without fiscal union and the removal of internal EU borders without a common EU external border. The process of integration is incomplete, yet the way forwards – or backwards – is highly contested.

While many in Brussels may be convinced of the longer-term need for deeper integration, there is no consensus among the elite about the balance of powers between the EU and member states or about a federalist vision. In the absence of a majority view on the way forward, this creates the need and the opportunity for political leadership based on a longer-term vision for the future, if there is the political space for such leadership to emerge. The improving European economy and the relative political stability that after this year's elections could descend on Germany and France – historically the two engines of integration – may create a once-in-a-generation opportunity for a process of political and economic renewal. This appears more likely given the election of President Emmanuel Macron in France.

Europe needs to move beyond a binary debate

As part of this process of political renewal, decision-makers and leaders within the EU must recognize the diversity of perspectives over its future. At times, the debate has been reduced to a crude binary choice between 'more' or 'less' Europe, between a loosely defined notion of deeper integration and full-blown fragmentation. The survey's findings reveal that there is a far broader diversity of perspectives among the public and the elite.

Many who are broadly content with the union's performance do not want to transfer more powers to the EU level. While a substantial number among the public and the elite said they have benefited from the EU, they also said they want powers to return to member states. Such sentiments doubtless come from a variety of motivations, none of which should be treated as illegitimate. For the elite, the greatest threats to the EU are internal political challenges, particularly those posed by populist and anti-EU parties.

> At times, the debate has been reduced to a crude binary choice between 'more' or 'less' Europe, between a loosely defined notion of deeper integration and full-blown fragmentation. The survey's findings reveal that there is a far broader diversity of perspectives among the public and the elite.

A European debate that does not reflect the breadth of the public's attitudes or give space to critics, and that delegitimizes opposition too quickly, will inevitably alienate many among the public and may serve to strengthen anti-EU forces rather than undermine them. As one observer argues, 'the excess of consensus in Brussels stifles European political life'.[27] The past 10 years have demonstrated the way the political actions of the EU can affect the very fundamentals of political life; yet its approach still often reflects 'policy without politics' where the market place of ideas, the true essence of democracy, has too often been replaced by bland consensus.[28] Genuine political renewal in Europe will require a richer, broader and perhaps even a more conflictual debate.

[27] van Middelaar, L. (2017), 'The three things the EU must do to survive', *Guardian*, 25 March 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/25/three-things-the-eu-must-do-to-survive (accessed 7 May 2017).
[28] Schmidt, V. A. (2010), *The European Union in search of political identity: Is more Politics the Answer?*, Vienna: Institute for European Integration Research, https://eif.univie.ac.at/downloads/workingpapers/wp2010-05.pdf (accessed 5 May 2017).

The public still believes in a union based on solidarity

In the long term, solidarity requires not just a budget that reflects it, but also a public that believes in it. A lack of solidarity among European publics reduces the legitimacy of the EU institutions, lowers the costs that citizens will bear in pursuit of reforms and fans the flames of populist politics. But, overall, the survey suggests that there is a reservoir of support among the public and the elite for a union based on solidarity. A majority in each group said that the EU should be redistributive. These findings do not simplify the challenges of building a fairer, more cohesive union, but they underscore the belief that one marked by very different levels of income and economic performance should still be based on solidarity.

Divides within the public are as significant as divides between states, and it will require different strategies to address them

The challenges facing Europe have frequently generated divisive narratives between member states: north versus south, east versus west, creditors versus debtors. The survey data show, however, the importance and significance of the divide among different groups *within* the public, principally driven by differing conceptions of identity and community. If such a crucial fault line in the EU runs not between member states but within them, this has important implications for how those who wish to strengthen the EU should respond.

One implication is that strategies for future European relations that emphasize differentiated integration among states in a 'multi-speed' system do not reflect this fault line, which cuts across the continent. This suggests the need for a flexible approach to future integration that is built on more than an EU core and periphery.

Second, it suggests such attitudes are unlikely to be changed solely by an improvement in economic status; those who wish to bolster public support for the EU cannot focus only on improving the economic experiences of the disadvantaged in society. The rise of Eurosceptic movements during previous periods of relative economic stability and growth should serve as a powerful reminder of the way in which perceptions of unfairness and relative deprivation are not always influenced by the immediate environment.

Strong and entrenched public anxiety over identity issues, which is increasingly merging with security concerns, is likely to increase as Europe experiences further acts of terrorism and rising rates of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. As seen in this paper, populist-right movements will continue to find resonance among the public when they seek to amplify such concerns into broader opposition towards the EU. Wider strategies will be necessary to engage more authoritarian-minded voters and to reframe debates about immigration in such a way as to reduce perceptions of a cultural threat.

Recent research has shown the power of information in producing lasting changes in attitudes to immigration, suggesting a line of further development.[29] Meanwhile, other studies have shown the effects of 'issue-framing' in shaping and changing attitudes to immigration. A recent study tested the effectiveness of presenting information in different forms to immigration-sceptical groups. It found that a fact-based narrative highlighting social continuity and the high degree

---

[29] Grigorieff, A., Roth, C. and Ubfal, D. (2016), 'Does Information Change Attitudes Towards Immigrants? Evidence from Survey Experiments', London: LSE Institute of Global Affairs, http://www.lse.ac.uk/IGA/Events/PDF/Siracusa/Ubfal.pdf (accessed 10 May 2017).

of immigrant assimilation was more effective in reducing concerns about immigration than a storyline that highlighted and celebrated change and diversity.[30] This fits with the findings of previous studies looking at how to change attitudes to immigration through public information campaigns, which emphasize the importance of trying to reframe public understanding of the issues (i.e. focusing on how information about immigration is packaged and presented), tailoring messages for different audiences, and combining information with personal stories.[31] Over the longer term, the leadership of the EU institutions, civil society and business will need to invest far more in attempting to close the gap between their own attitudes and those of many citizens in the realm of identity politics and, specifically, immigration.

For all the challenges and prevailing pessimism, Europe still has extraordinary strengths. It remains politically stable compared with much of the globe, some of its economies are among the most competitive in the world, and it has some of the healthiest, wealthiest and most equal societies. The challenge for the EU is to utilize these strengths and to build on the historic achievements of integration in a way that reflects economic needs and political realities over the coming decades. If it is to succeed and thrive, the EU's leaders must think boldly and act quickly, prioritizing flexibility over dogma and engaging frankly with political realities as the first stage in a process of political renewal.

[30] Kaufmann, E. (2016), 'Assimilation and the Immigration Debate', London: Fabian Society, http://www.fabians.org.uk/assimilation-and-the-immigration-debate (accessed 10 May 2017).

[31] Crawley, H. (2009), *Understanding and Changing Public Attitudes: A Review of Existing Literature from Public Information and Communication Campaigns,* London: Barrow Cadbury Trust, https://www.barrowcadbury.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Understanding-public-attitudes-a-review-of-existing-evidence-from-public-information-and-communication-campaigns1.pdf (accessed 10 May 2017).

Appendix

Survey design

The survey design began in July 2016 between Chatham House researchers and Kantar Public, with input from partner think-tanks and institutions. The survey was finalized in English and French in November 2016. The full translation process followed shortly after for all other languages used in the survey. The questionnaire was translated into each of the languages and a three-stage process of revision was applied.

Most questions were asked of both the general public sample and the elite sample so that comparisons could be drawn. The public survey included some socio-demographic questions not asked of the elite (for example, experience of social hardship). The elite survey included some additional policy-focused questions about the current situation in Europe which were not asked of the public (for example, on the EU's approach towards Russia).

Country	Languages
Austria	German
Belgium	French, Dutch
France	French
Germany	German
Greece	Greek
Hungary	Hungarian
Italy	Italian
Poland	Polish
Spain	Spanish
UK	English

General public survey

The general public survey was conducted between December 2016 and January 2017 among a representative sample of the population in 10 European countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK). At least 1,000 interviews per country were conducted online using Lightspeed Research panels. Quotas were applied on age, gender and region, and deviations were corrected with post-stratification weights. The total sample size was 10,195.

General public survey fieldwork details

Country	Start date	End date	No. of interviews
Austria	13/12/2016	11/01/2017	1,082
Belgium	14/12/2016	06/01/2017	1,002
France	15/12/2016	08/01/2017	1,066
Germany	15/12/2016	06/01/2017	1,003
Greece	15/12/2016	06/01/2017	1,001
Hungary	13/12/2016	11/01/2017	1,036
Italy	15/12/2016	07/01/2017	1,001
Poland	13/12/2016	06/01/2017	1,001
Spain	14/01/2016	06/01/2017	1,000
UK	12/12/2016	06/01/2017	1,003

Elite survey

The elite survey was conducted between January 2017 and February 2017 in the same 10 countries. The overall number of interviewees was 1,823 (between 160 and 205 per country). The elites interviewed were defined as follows using four broad categories: politicians (local, national, European),[32] journalists (news journalists), business leaders (small, medium and large enterprises) and civil society leaders (NGOs, associations, trade unions or universities). The survey was conducted via national research agencies (mostly Kantar agencies), predominantly by telephone. In some countries, some interviews were conducted face to face (Greece and Hungary) or online (Poland). Quotas on each of the four target groups (around 40–50 per category per country) were applied in order to ensure an even spread of respondent profiles across the sample.

Elite survey fieldwork details

Country	Fieldwork agency	Start date	End date	No. of interviews	Mode
Austria	Kantar TNS	13/01/2017	24/01/2017	162	CATI
Belgium	Kantar TNS	16/01/2017	14/02/2017	182	CATI
France	Kantar Public	13/01/2017	31/01/2017	160	CATI
Germany	Kantar EMNID	19/01/2017	13/02/2017	193	CATI
Greece	Kantar TNS	24/01/2017	20/02/2017	203	CATI/CAPI
Hungary	Kantar TNS	16/01/2017	17/02/2017	205	CATI/CAPI
Italy	Kantar TNS	16/01/2017	07/02/2017	180	CATI
Poland	Kantar Public	20/01/2017	10/02/2017	180	CATI/CAWI
Spain	Facts Ltd	16/01/2017	21/02/2017	178	CATI
UK	Facts Ltd	16/01/2017	09/02/2017	180	CATI

Note: CATI = computer-assisted telephone interviewing; CAWI = computer-assisted web interviewing; CAPI = computer-assisted personal interviewing.

[32] Very small business with fewer than five employees were not part of the sample.

About the Authors

David Cutts is a professor in political science at the University of Birmingham and an associate fellow with the Europe Programme at Chatham House. Previously, he worked at the University of Manchester and the University of Bath. He has a particular interest in electoral and political behaviour, party and political campaigning, political and civic engagement, party competition and methods for modelling political behaviour. He has published numerous articles in leading journals, including the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, the *European Journal of Political Research* and the *British Journal of Political Science*. From July 2017, Professor Cutts will be the joint lead editor of *Political Studies Review*.

Matthew Goodwin is a professor of political science at the University of Kent, a visiting senior fellow with the Europe Programme at Chatham House, and senior fellow at the UK in a Changing Europe Initiative. He is known for his work on Britain and Europe, radicalism, immigration and Euroscepticism. In 2010, he was appointed lecturer in political science at the University of Nottingham. He was also recipient of an ESRC Knowledge Exchange Fellowship and spent 12 months on a full-time secondment in a central government department, working on extremism and integration issues. In 2015 he was appointed professor of politics at the University of Kent. His most recent book is *Brexit: Why Britain Voted to Leave the European Union* (CUP, 2017), co-authored with Harold Clarke and Paul Whiteley.

Thomas Raines is a research fellow at Chatham House, where he manages the Europe Programme. Previously, he worked in the Strategy Unit of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in London. His research interests lie in the UK's relationship with the EU, British foreign policy, and public attitudes to international affairs. He is the author of a number of Chatham House research papers, including *Internationalism or Isolationism? British Attitudes Towards the UK's International Priorities* (2015); *Europe's Energy Union* (2016), with Shane Tomlinson; and *UK Unplugged? The Impacts of Brexit on Energy and Climate Policy* (2016), with Antony Froggatt and Shane Tomlinson.

Acknowledgments

Independent thinking since 1920

King Baudouin Foundation
Working together for a better society

ERSTE Stiftung

Robert Bosch **Stiftung**

STIFTUNG
MERCATOR

Cover image: Presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron meets employees of a Whirlpool factory in Amiens on 26 April 2017. The workers had been demonstrating against plans to relocate the factory to Poland.

Photo credit: Copyright © Nicolas Kovarik/IP3/Contributor

This publication is printed on recycled paper.