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A unified autonomous Europe? Public opinion of the EU's foreign and security policy

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ABSTRACT

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has pushed the EU into a new phase where both the political elites and the public start to rethink its foreign and security policies. This paper uses a unique survey in seven European countries in the wake of the war to examine European public opinion on how the EU's foreign and security policies should be made and how autonomous they should be. We find that Europeans not only favour increasing military capacity at the national or NATO level but also prefer increasing military capacity at the EU level, though to a lesser degree. We also show that perceptions of both short-term and long-term threats, European identification and mainstream left-wing ideology lead Europeans to favour a more militarily powerful, unified and autonomous EU.

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KEYWORDS public opinion; EU; foreign and security policy; EU defence; strategic autonomy

Europe is an economic giant, a political dwarf and a military worm.

– Mark Eykens, Former Belgian Foreign Minister

1. Introduction

Regardless of the outcome, Putin's invasion of Ukraine has profoundly impacted the stability and security of the European region. The solidarity at the elite level¹ and the major shift in public opinion during the current

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Ukraine crisis have rekindled the discussion of the EU's foreign and security policies (European Commission, 2022; Steiner et al., 2022). While some politicians and foreign policy experts have been calling for a stronger common foreign policy and strengthening European military capacity and strategic autonomy since the war broke out, it is less clear whether the European public has similar beliefs: at what level should foreign policies be made? Who should be the leading responsible actor for defending European security? And what factors influence these opinions. Addressing these questions is highly relevant for the future of the EU's foreign and security policy² and the EU in general, not only because public opinion, though usually not being directly turned into policies, can instigate or constrain coercive foreign and security policies (Baum & Potter, 2015; De Mesquita et al., 1999), but also because common foreign and security policies affect the sovereignty and core state powers of member states. Consequently, such authority transfer requires democratic legitimacy. Failing to consider public opinion on this issue would damage the legitimacy of any European-level foreign and security policies to come after the war and jeopardise European integration in general (Wagner, 2005).

Therefore, this article aims to examine public opinion on these issues in the context of the current Russian invasion. Utilising an original two-wave panel survey in France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Poland, as well as one wave in Finland and Portugal, we first describe public opinion at the national level and concentrate on three interrelated issues in the foreign and security policy area: whether foreign policy decisions should be taken at the EU level, whether military capacity should be enhanced at the national and the EU level, and whether Europe should rely on the US for military protection. Second, we identify three factors that influence public opinion: (a) threat perception, (b) EU identity, and (c) political orientation.

Our findings first show that Europeans, on average, not only favour increasing military capacity at the national or NATO level but also prefer having an EU-level army, though to a lesser extent compared with the former. This echoes the argument that the 'functional condition' for EU integration due to the war is undermined by the existing efficient structures at the national and NATO levels (Genschel, 2022). However, the high support for EU military capacity may still provide demand-side impetus for centralisation. Furthermore, we also show that Europeans prefer the EU to be more militarily independent from the US and is in favour of transferring the authority of foreign policy-making to the EU. We show that this is in large part due to perceived threat in the short and long-run, thus providing evidence that the 'postfunctional condition' of shared threat is present (Genschel, 2022). Our findings therefore lend support to the theory that 'bellicist' collective security of war is a causal impetus for EU polity building from the demand side (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022). Europeans do not want Europe to remain as a 'political dwarf and a military worm' any longer, and the war in

Ukraine indeed created a potential 'Tillian' moment for European polity building (Truchlewski, Ioana-Elena, & Moise, 2023; Tilly, 1992). Whether this public opinion potentiality gets translated into actual further integration remains to be seen. Capacity building and state formation do not happen in months but in years and decades (McNamara & Kelemen, 2022).

By focussing on the public opinion of foreign and security policy-making in Europe, this article not only contributes to the debate on whether external threats can result in further EU integration (Freudlsperger & Schimmelfennig, 2022; Genschel, 2022; Genschel & Schimmelfennig, 2022) but also speaks to the literature on the development of EU foreign and security policy and strategic autonomy in general (Howorth, 2001; Howorth & Keeler, 2003; Ojanen, 2006; Smith, 2004). In addition, with the emphasis on the demand side of foreign and security policy, this article, by analysing the citizens' preferences, also taps into the discussion of how domestic partisan politics could influence foreign and security policy decision-making (Otjes et al., 2022; Raunio & Wagner, 2020).

We structure the paper as follows: first, we undertake a tour of the literature on the factors that influence the formation of European public opinion on foreign and security policies. Afterwards, we present the data, followed by a descriptive section showing the national-level difference in public opinion. We then proceed with regression analysis to determine the empirical relationship between the three sets of individual-level factors and the attitudes towards the three issues in the foreign and security policy area.

2. Theoretical considerations

What factors affect attitudes towards foreign and security policies? And what factors are likely to affect European's foreign policy preferences under the specific context of the Ukraine crisis? Although many studies analysed what determine public support for the EU as a whole (e.g., Hobolt & De Vries, 2016; Hooghe & Marks, 2005), only a small number of empirical works examined what factors affect Europeans' opinion on EU's foreign and security policies (e.g., Graf, 2020; Kentmen, 2010; Schoen, 2008). Most existing studies rely on Eurobarometer surveys conducted in early 2000s, which fail to take into account recent crises and dramatic events that happened since Russia annexed Crimea (Irondelle et al., 2015; Kentmen, 2010), while more recent works solely focus on public opinion in a single country (Graf, 2020). Given that the field of public opinion research has come a long way from the traditional 'Almond-Lippman consensus' the notion that public opinion on foreign policy is unstructured, whimsical, and easily falls under manipulation (Almond, 1950) – the lack of advancement on this research topic is unexpected. We further argue that the present moment is more appropriate to study the public opinion of EU foreign policy due to its increased salience.³ Prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine it is unlikely

that most Europeans had seriously considered and definitively formed clear preferences regarding foreign policy. The incredibly high salience of the war pushed these issues to the forefront and likely lead to more concrete opinion formation⁴ (e.g., see Gartner & Segura, 1998; Shapiro & Page, 1988, on how salience of international and security problems form and change public attitudes and policy preference).

Three sets of factors have been emphasised in the existing literature: threat perceptions, identity, and political orientation. First, regarding threat perceptions, the literature has long shown that public attitudes towards European security and defence are influenced by assessments of common goods like military security. This argument is predicated on the premise that individuals who feel threatened should support policies designed to protect them from these dangers. Carrubba and Singh (2004) derive a decision-theoretic model and test it with attitudes towards the EU common defence policy and show that the relative valuation of military to economic security is discriminating. Similarly, more recent studies have demonstrated that external threats increase the likelihood that EU citizens support integration in the area of defence (Irondelle et al., 2015; Schoen, 2008). However, others show that only some forms of threats, such as terrorist attacks rather than threats based on wars, have significant effects in driving support for more integrated EU security policies (Ray & Johnston, 2007).

The mixed results regarding the relationship between threat perceptions and support for European defence cooperation could be due to issue salience. There is a strong connection between the salience of foreign affairs in the media and the salience of foreign affairs for the public (Soroka, 2003). Before 2010, terrorism had been a much more salient threat since 9/11 than invasion and other forms of military threats, and this high salience could lead to a stronger effect of terrorism on the support for more integrated EU security policies. Numerous studies have shown the myopic nature of the general public who only cares about imminent issues rather than long-term ones (e.g., Achen & Bartels, 2017), and one of the reasons for this could be that imminent threats are more salient than long-term threats. The previous literature does not distinguish between short-term and long-term threats, which might lead to mixed results in early analysis. For the European public, threats of the current Russian territorial incursions are much more salient and imminent than, for instance, China's increasing assertiveness on the global stage, challenging the liberal order, a possible threat to Europe only in the long run. Based on these considerations, we hypothesise:

- H1a: The higher the perceived threat, the more support for a more unified autonomous EU foreign and security policy.
- H1b: The positive impact of long-term threats is smaller than that of short-term threats.

Second, attitudes to EU foreign and security policies are likely to be affected by one's European identification. Individual identification with the member state and the EU affects how individuals perceive the EU (Hooghe & Marks, 2005). Given that European defence capacity building and foreign policy integration are essentially a component of the broader European integration process, personal identification is likely to affect how people perceive this authority transfer as well. In this vein, identifying with Europe should lead to support for a more integrated foreign and security policy. Conversely, strong national identification should lead to disapproval of a more integrated policy. Transferring authority to the EU level entails restricting the flexibility of member state governments to follow diverse paths of action in international politics. People who uphold the ideals of national sovereignty and self-determination are hence less supportive towards the transfer of core state powers to the EU, as shown by Schoen (2008). Therefore, we hypothesise:

H2: European identification has a positive effect on supporting a more unified autonomous EU foreign and security policy.

Besides threat perceptions and European identification, we also expect individual's political orientation to exert influence. Unlike domestic policies featured with party politics, the analysis of foreign policy used to be deemed free from partisanship and ideology, following the realist understanding that states are unitary actors who follow what one considers to be the nation's best interests. However, the assumption that partisanship and ideology do not play a role in foreign and security issues has been challenged by a growing body of research. These analyses reveal consistent differences between parties across the ideological spectrum on fundamental issues of foreign and security policies (e.g., Verbeek & Zaslove, 2015; Wagner et al., 2017). For instance, right-wing parties in Europe are often more in favour of military spending and military actions than left-leaning ones Wagner et al. (2017). This ideological difference at the party level has important implications for analysing individuals' attitudes towards foreign and security policy. It is well documented that partisanship offers cues that people utilise when they attempt to establish opinions on complex issues (Berinsky, 2009; Kam, 2005). These cues then push voters to advocate the position of their party (Petersen et al., 2013). It is, therefore, plausible to suggest that attitudes toward foreign and security issues may in fact be an inherent part of an individual's ideology. Even though right-wingers are more 'hawkish', they not necessarily support military capacity building at the EU level, since they have more faith in protecting national interests (Raunio & Wagner, 2020). As shown by Schoen (2008), right-wingers are less likely to support a single European defence policy than their left counterparts. Based on these arguments, we expect the following:

H3: People on the right are less likely to support a more unified autonomous EU foreign and security policy than people on the left.

In addition to mainstream left-right differentiation in the centre, there exist differences between the centre and the fringe within the left camp and the right camp respectively. Radical right parties in Europe are characterised by nationalist, sovereignist, and Eurosceptic ideals (Kriesi, 2020; Vasilopoulou, 2016; Zaslove, 2004). Most of these parties on the right fringe vehemently reject supranationalism and further EU integration, arguing in terms of loss of sovereignty in various policy domains and questioning the democratic legitimacy of the EU. Right-wing radicals stress threats to the sovereignty of the people and national identity (Kriesi, 2018). These nationalist mindsets are likely to exacerbate divides inside the EU and hinder the further development of a unified foreign and security policy. Moreover, this anti-EU challenge to the integration of foreign and security could also come from the left fringe of the ideological spectrum. Further EU integration is typically opposed by the radical left as well, though to a lesser extent compared with the radical right, as they frequently associate the EU with neoliberalism (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2017). Albeit for differing reasons, both the far-right and far-left ends of the ideological spectrum have been more inclined than centrists to demonstrate Euroscepticism (Hooghe et al., 2002) and instigate and organise disputes surrounding European integration (Hobolt & De Vries, 2015). Hence, based on this 'flank attack' argument, we expect support for a more unified autonomous EU foreign and security policy comes most clearly from the centre left and declines as one moves along the left/right axis and bottoms at the far-right end.

H4a: People on the far right are less likely to support a more unified autonomous EU foreign and security policy compared with those on the centre right.

H4b: People on the far left are less likely to support a more unified autonomous EU foreign and security policy compared with those on the centre left.

3. Data and context

Data was collected as part of two surveys⁵ conducted in seven EU countries (Germany, France, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Finland, and Portugal) with considerable heterogeneity regarding their geopolitical positioning.⁶ in the framework of the *[anonymised]* research project. Interviews were administered in March (hereafter called wave (1) and then in July 2022 (hereafter, wave (2) on national samples obtained using a quota design based on gender, age, macro-area of residence (NUTS-1), and education.

The total sample size, including responses from both waves, is 20,536. However, part of our analysis focuses on the panel in our survey, of which we have 12,676 observations, two responses each from 6338 respondents.⁷

The timing of our surveys comes at two crucial moments for the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Wave 1 was carried out between 11 March and 5 April 2022, a period when the beginning of the war dominated media channels across Europe. The share of respondents who viewed the war as the most serious threat to the survival of the European Union was 32.3 per cent in wave 1, compared to 29.0 per cent in wave 2 (8 to 28 July 2022).

3.1. National-level differences

Figure 1 shows our main variables of interest which are repeated across the two waves for five out of the seven countries. We asked respondents the level of their agreement with increasing military capacity at different levels.⁸

We see that in most countries, respondents are on average more favourable to increasing capacity at the national or NATO level. The two exceptions are France and Italy, two countries traditionally sceptical of NATO, who prefer the EU to NATO. However, in all countries, with the exception of Finland (and Hungary in wave 2), there is a majority view in favour of increasing capacity at the EU level as well. Finish respondents likely reflect the country's focus on joining NATO, disconsidering the EU option. Hungary, on the other hand seems to prefer national to either EU or NATO solutions. We see the highest approval for all three levels in Poland, the country that bore the

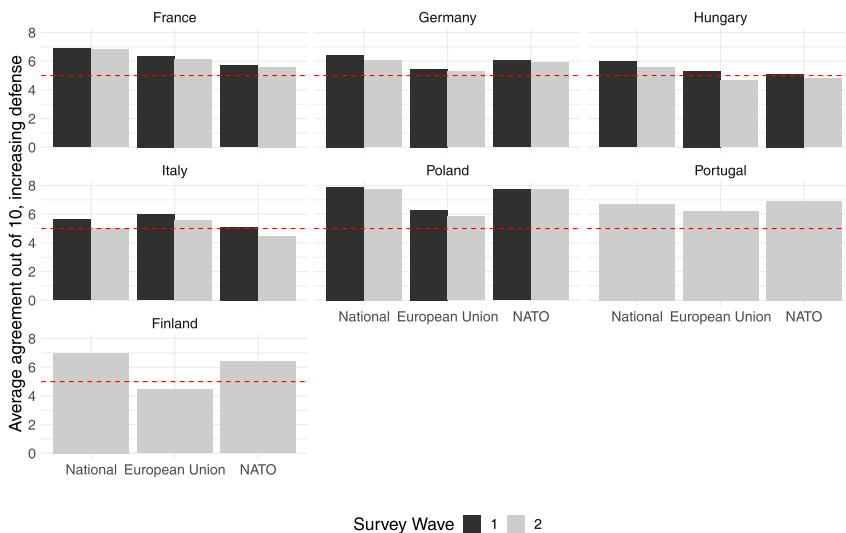


Figure 1. Country differences in security policy views – both waves.

brunt of Ukrainian refugee intake, which likely also feels the most threatened by Russia.

While the options in these questions are not mutually exclusive, for the purposes of the analysis we want to see what distinguishes those who prefer increasing military capacity at the EU level to those who prefer the national level. We therefore construct a four-category variable described in the next section.

Figure 2 shows the country differences for two questions that were only asked in wave 2 of our panel. Respondents were asked whether the EU should become more militarily independent from the US, and whether foreign policy should be handled at the EU level rather than by each individual member state.

We see very high approval across countries for the EU to be more militarily independent of the US. This further highlights that when it comes to increasing defence capacity, Europeans do not necessarily see a trade-off between NATO and the EU, but rather complementary. Secondly, and perhaps more surprisingly, we see that a majority across all countries is also in favour of delegating foreign policy decisions completely to the EU.

3.2. Models and measurement

For our main analysis we use two variables in order to divide respondents into four groups. We label respondents who want to increase military capacity at

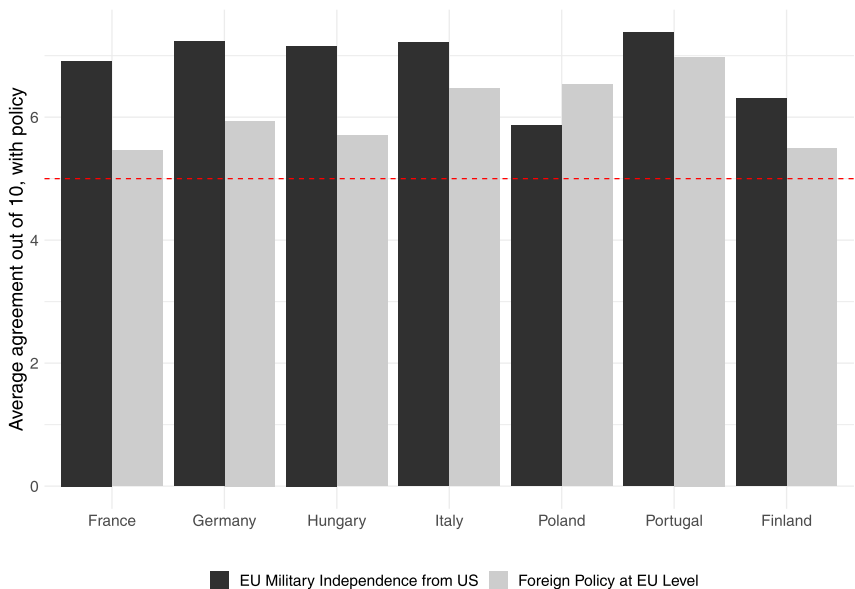


Figure 2. Country differences in foreign policy views – wave 2.

both the EU and national level as *militarists*. Those who do not want to increase military capacity at either level, we consider *pacifists*. Those who want to increase capacity at the national level but not at the EU level, we label *nationalists*. Lastly, we label those who want to increase at the EU level but not the national as *europeanists*. We prefer this variable for several reasons. Following the bench-marking theory (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016), we expect that, in the context of the current war, European citizens' preference of foreign and security policy are a function of their country's policies relative to the EU policies. Therefore, it is not enough by just analysing national and EU preferences separately, but their relative differences jointly, i.e., whether EU citizens prefer the one policy level over the other. Hence, we want to capture two dimensions across the two variables: whether respondents want to increase military capacity (militarist vs. pacifist), and the level at which they want to increase them (national vs EU). If we were to analyse the questions as they are, we could not separate those who want to increase military capacity at the EU level (europeanists) from those who want to increase military capacity no matter how (militarists). Our reasoning here is that if public opinion creates pressure for policy change (increasing military capacity in our case), it is important to see if this pressure is broad or specific. Broad pressure for military capacity allows politicians to satisfy the pressure in different ways (national or EU or NATO) while specific pressure (at the EU level) incentivises politicians to build policy at that level.⁹

Figure 3 shows the average predicted probability for each category per country and per wave of our survey, constructed from a multinomial logistic regression model interacting country and wave dummies. It essentially describes the average preferences of the four groups by country and by wave. The top of the figure shows pacifists and militarists. We see a higher share of militarists across all countries. Interestingly we see that across the two waves, the share of pacifists increase, while the share of militarists decreases. This might suggest that Europeans felt less threatened as the war raged on, or might reflect the dwindling salience of the war.

For our predictors, we measure the current perceived threat of the war via a factor analysis of four questions which ask respondents how much of a threat, if any, does the Ukraine conflict pose for (1) the safety and stability of their country, (2) the safety and stability of the EU, (3) their own personal safety and (4) the safety of people they know personally. These four items form a strong factor, which we use in our analysis.¹⁰ We measure long-term threat by specifically asking the respondents two questions: how much of a threat they think Russia and China represent for Europe in the long term respectively.¹¹ Ideology is measured by self-placement on a 11-point left-right scale of the respondents in the survey. To measure European identity, we ask the respondents how they classify themselves into the following four groups, (1) European only, (2) European and national of the member

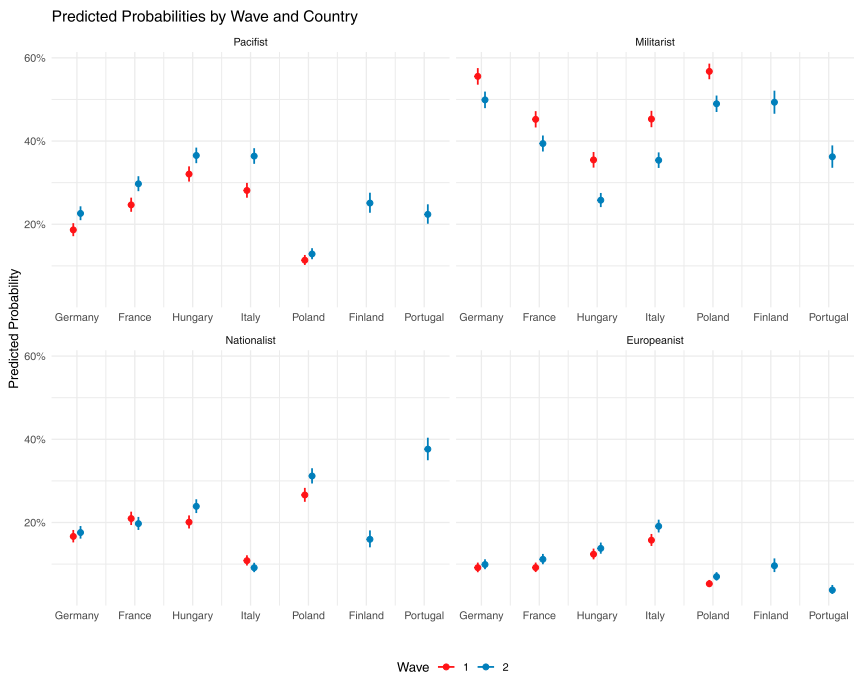


Figure 3. Military preferences by wave and country.

state, (3) national of the member state and European and (4) national of the member state only. We then reverse the scale, with higher number meaning being more identified as European.

We analyse the data with both pooled models and mixed models that utilise the panel structure of the data. The panel analysis can alleviate the bias with pooled OLS estimators in the presence of endogeneity problems, with which we can check whether the relationship we see in the pooled analysis is spurious. Additionally, for the panel analysis, we use hybrid specification (random-effect-within-between model), which disentangles between and within effects. For every model, we also include variables of social demographics, political interest, trust in various political entities, other relevant attitudinal variables and country and wave fixed effects.

4. Results

4.1. Pooled analysis

Figure 4 shows the results from pooled linear probability models comparing on the one hand militarists to pacifists, and on the other, europeanists to nationalists.¹² All predictor variables are rescaled from 0 to 1. Therefore all effects can be interpreted as maximum effect of predictors on change in

predicted probabilities. We consider our three factors in turn. Higher perceived threat from the current war is associated with a higher probability of being a nationalists, but not with being a europeanist. We consider this moderate support for H1 given that respondents who perceive higher threat are in favour of both national and European military capacity. However, higher threat does not make respondents prefer solely the EU to the national government.

Turning to identity, we see that those who have a stronger European identity are more likely to be europeanists compared to nationalists, by about 20 per cent. However, they are not more likely to be militarists across the board. We consider this to support H2. Ideology plays an interesting role. As the upper marginal effect plot, which is based on the linear regression, shows, the left wing respondents are less likely to be nationalists but more likely to be europeanists, as compared to right wing respondents. We therefore find support for H3. Furthermore, as shown in the lower two plots, based on polynomial regressions which includes both cubic and quadratic terms of ideology, the relationship between ideology and military preference is no longer linear. The probability of being a militarist increases as one moves along the left/right axis and peaks at the centre-right and then declines again towards the far-right. At the same time, the probability of being a europeanist peaks at the centre-left and decreases as one moves along the left/right axis and bottoms at the far-right. We therefore find support for H4A and H4B.

We further explore the role of ideology by looking at national differences. Figure A1 shows the predicted probabilities by ideological category across countries for militarists compared to pacifists. We see that the polynomial pattern of ideological effect is strongest in Hungary, Germany and Poland, the pattern is more linear from left to right in France, and insignificant in Italy, Finland, and Portugal. Figure A2 looks at the same breakdown comparing europeanists to nationalists. Here the ideological divisions are clearer. The difference between centre and fringe respondents are more pronounced in France, Hungary, Italy and Finland. Germany and Poland follow a more linear left-right pattern, while Portugal does not show ideological differences.

4.2. Panel analysis

Besides the pooled analysis, we also utilise the panel structure of our data. In this section, we focus on the 6338 respondents who appeared in both waves. We opt for random effect models due to the fact that too few respondents changed their camps in term of military capacity building from wave 1 to wave 2. Therefore, there is not much within-unit variation that can be explored. We use random effect models to utilise both the within-unit and between-unit variance.

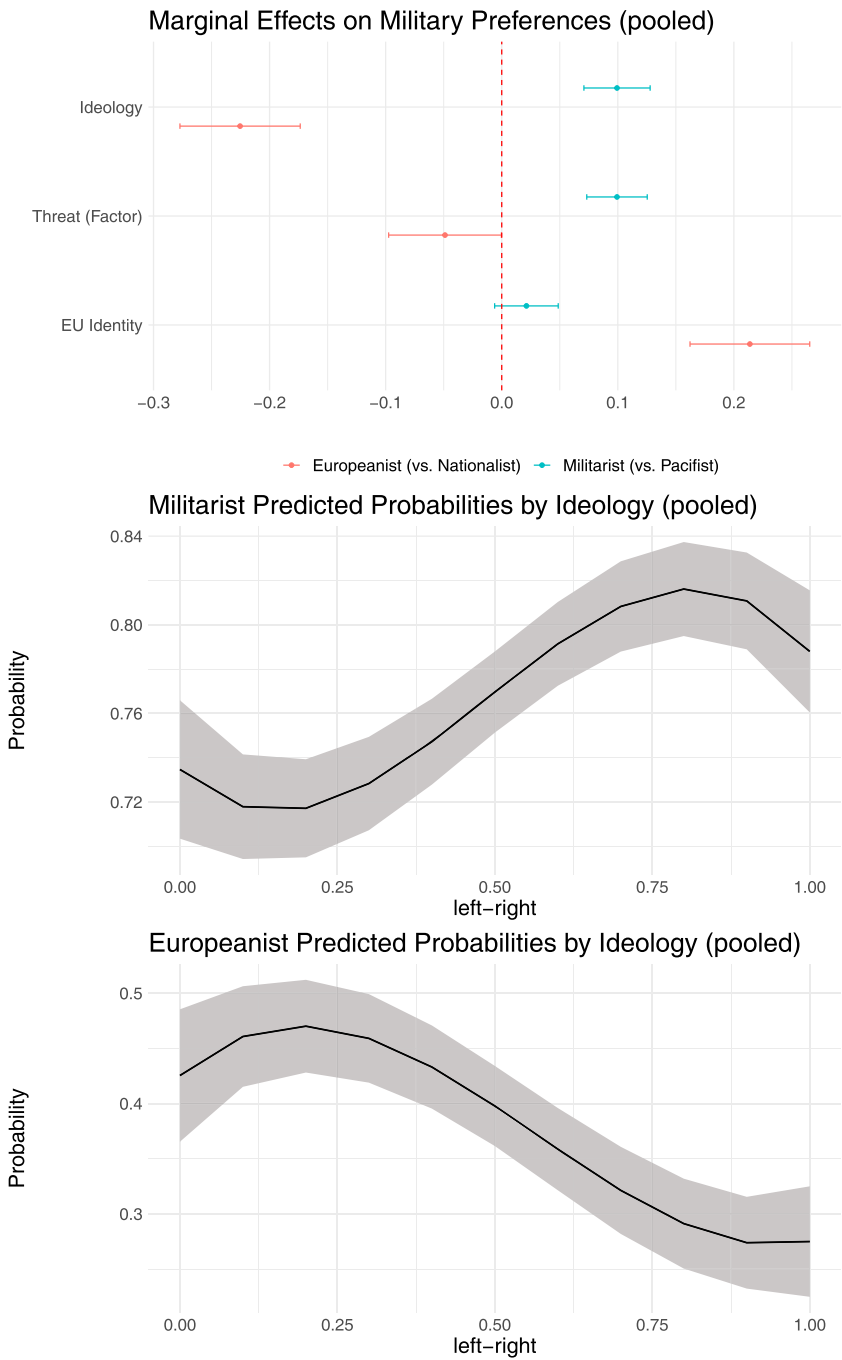


Figure 4. Marginal effects on military preferences and predicted probabilities (pooled).

Figure 5 displays the results which are very similar to those in the pooled model. However, we distinguish between within respondent effect and between respondent effect here. We see that those who have a stronger European identity are more likely to be europeanists compared to nationalists, by about 30 per cent. That the within effect of European identity is not significant is most likely due to the fact that respondents rarely changed their European identification between the two waves. European identity does not drive people to be militarists. This result supports H2.

Regarding ideology, which is stable across the two waves for each respondent, the left-wing respondents are less likely to be nationalists but more likely to be europeanists, as compared to right wing respondents. This confirms the effect we find in the pooled model. We therefore find support for H3. Again, the lower two plots, based on polynomial regressions which includes both cubic and quadratic terms of ideology, show the same pattern we see in the pooled model. The probability of being a militarist increases as one moves along the left/right axis and peaks at the centre-right and then declines again towards the far-right. The probability of being a europeanist peaks at the centre-left and decreases as one moves along the left/right axis and bottoms at the far-right. We again find support for H4A and H4B.

Perceived threat from the current war is no longer significantly associated with a higher probability of being a nationalists in the panel model. People who perceive higher threat from the current war are in favour of both national and European military capacity building. We consider this moderate support for H1.

4.3. Second wave analysis

Figure 6 shows the results for our two outcome questions found only in wave 2. Both questions assess the degree to which respondents support a more powerful EU in matters of foreign policy. Those perceiving higher threat of the current war are more likely to support both more EU independence from the US and foreign policy to be made at the EU level. These results further support H1A. However, concerning H1B which distinguishes short-term and long-term threats, we find that both long term threats from Russia and China have significant effects in predicting policy preference. Those who perceive higher long-term threat from Russia and China are more likely to favour EU military independence and foreign policy-making to be transferred to the EU. Therefore, we do not find support for H1B. Europeans consider both short-term and long-term threats when deciding their foreign policy preference.

Similar to the pooled and panel results, European identity is positively associated with support for EU foreign policy-making powers and EU's independence from the US, with the former effect much stronger. Ideology also

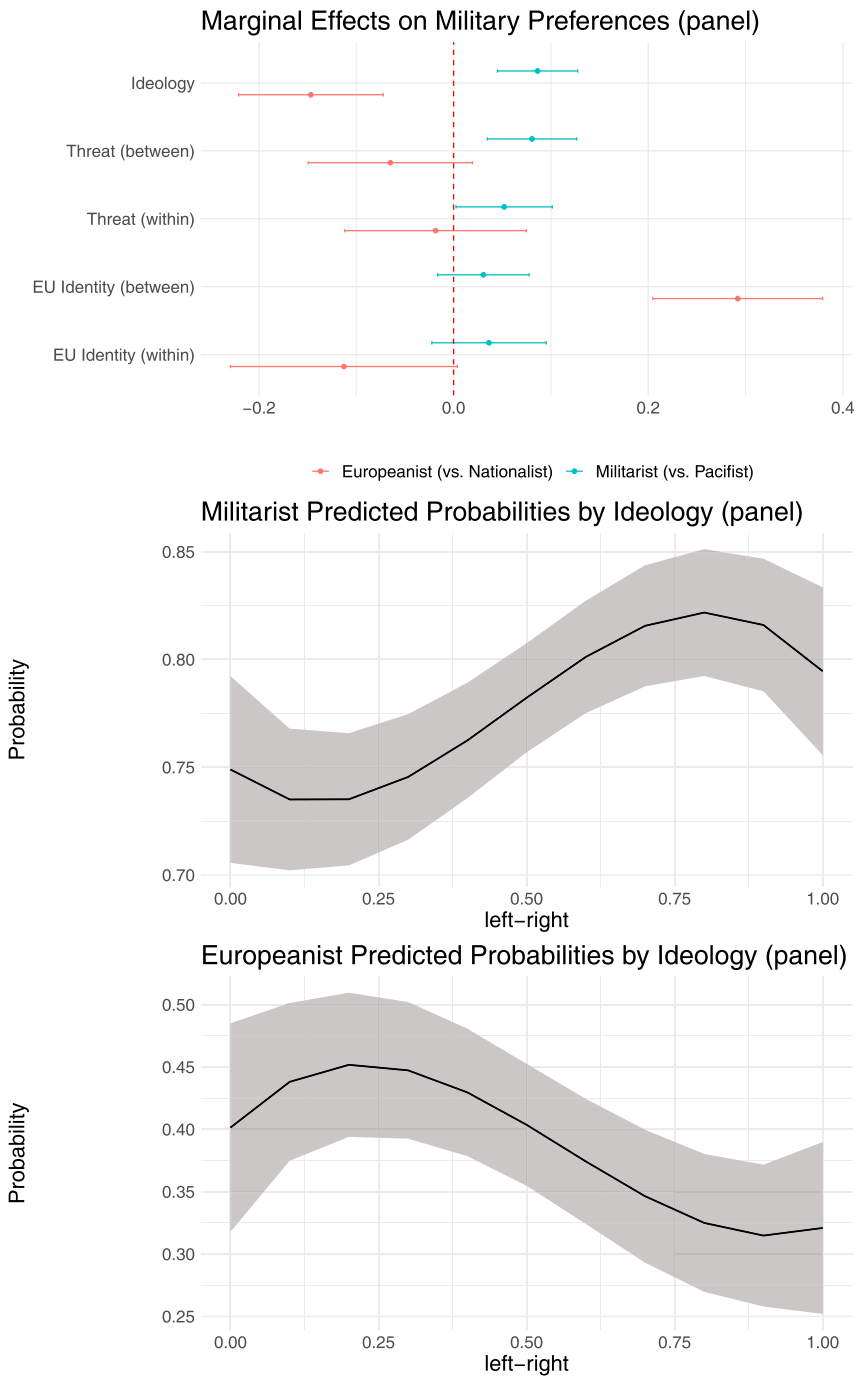


Figure 5. Marginal effects on military preferences and predicted probabilities (panel).

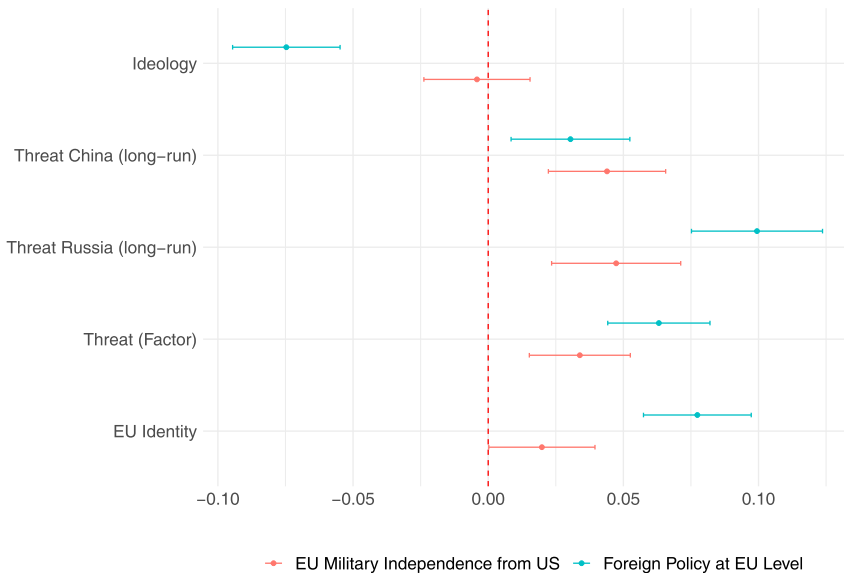


Figure 6. Marginal effects on foreign policy preferences (second wave).

seems related only to support for the EU managing foreign policy, with right wing voters being less in favour. However, ideology has no effect on EU independence from the US.

5. Conclusion

This paper studies public opinion on foreign and security policies in the EU in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. We focus on three important issues, namely the level of military capacity building, the level of foreign policy-making, and military independence. We also examine what individual-level factors influence these views. Understanding public opinion on these issues and what factors influence these views is of great importance, since there is no more ‘permissive consensus’ in foreign policy among the European public (Schilde et al., 2019) and further European integration in this area depends on the demand side.

Using an original panel survey conducted in seven European countries, we show that for most Europeans, besides the willingness to increase national military capacity, they also think that the EU should create its own army, though to a lesser extent. Similarly, we also demonstrate that the majority of Europeans want the EU to be less dependent on the US for military protection and are in favour of foreign policy decisions, such as decisions about war and peace, being taken at the EU level, rather than at the level of the member state. Based on these results, we can conclude that we do see a ‘Tillian’

moment for European polity building, as most Europeans, who used to be unclear as to whether European defence should include a shift of state-level decision-making authority to the EU level and whether to create an European army (Mader et al., 2020), now genuinely want a more unified autonomous EU in the foreign and security policy arena.

Moreover, we find that individual-level threat perceptions, European identity and ideology shape people's views. Both the short-term threat from the current war and long-term threats from geopolitical competitors, such as Russia and China, lead Europeans to favour a more powerful and autonomous EU. European identification among the public also results in support for a bigger role of the EU in foreign and security policies. So does left-wing orientation.

We therefore find a pattern of 'centralisation with polarisation', similar to the other two contributions in this debate. The war in Ukraine has resulted in high approval for centralisation of foreign and security policy at the EU level. Nonetheless, the ideological divisions seen in this policy field, as well as in approval over sanctions (Truchlewski et al., 2023) and energy and climate policy (Natili & Visconti, 2023), mean that the EU needs to proceed carefully. Increased politicisation of these differences has the potential to stall the demand side of polity building. Further research can explore the degree to which preferences for military capacity at the EU and NATO level might be influenced by developments in US politics. The slow but growing discontent among Republicans over support to Ukraine, as well as the potential return of the isolationist and NATO-sceptic former President Trump, might push Europeans further down the road of greater (military) integration.

Notes

1. EP motion of 1 March 2022: Russian aggression against Ukraine – B9-0123/2022. 637 MEPs voted in favour; 13 against and 26 abstained.
2. We combine foreign policy and security policy here as the two policy areas usually appears together and are intertwined, especially in the case of the EU, see e.g., Hofmann (2013), Wallace et al. (2020), and Raunio and Wagner (2020). For more fine-grained distinction between the two policy areas, see e.g., Manners and Whitman (2000) and Joly and Haesebrouck (2021).
3. We asked our respondents what they perceived to be the most serious threat to the survival of the EU. A plurality of them, 32.3 per cent, cited the war in Ukraine, higher than the other options which included financial crises, refugee inflows, member states leaving the EU, poverty, pandemics, and climate change.
4. For the link between issue salience and public opinion, please see Oppermann and Viehriig (2011), Ciuk and Yost (2016), Wlezien (2005), and Dennison (2019).
5. The survey was conducted via CAWI methodology using the YouGov proprietary panel in all countries to recruit participants.
6. Finland and Portugal were present only in the second wave of our survey. They are therefore present in the analysis of the second survey but absent from the panel analysis.

7. Our recontact rates were high, ranging from 56 per cent in Hungary to 69 per cent in Germany.
8. Exact wording of the questions can be found in Appendix C.
9. In Table A6 in the Appendix we also analyse the original questions.
10. Factor loading can be found in Table A7.
11. The long term threat questions are only asked in wave 2.
12. We only show the results of the variables of interest in the figures. Full regression tables can be found in Appendix A.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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