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Following the Crowd or Developing a Thicker Skin?

Assessing the impact of politicization on the attitudes of Commission officials

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ABSTRACT[1]: This paper investigates how Commission officials' attitudes on supranationalism are affected by the politicization of the European Union (EU) within their home countries. Building on a norm-guided open system approach, I theorize that concerns about the legitimacy of their organization leads Commission officials to be responsive to politicization. However, the attitudinal impact of the EU politicization appears moderated by cultural background. Officials from Protestant and egalitarian societies are pulled towards intergovernmentalism in response to critical voices in their societies, whereas officials from Catholic and hierarchical societies defend supranationalism in response to politicization in their societies.

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INTRODUCTION

'I am deeply convinced that if we fail in the next couple of years to reconnect with the people we work for, that is the European citizens, the European project in itself is threatened. If we do not reconnect with the people we say we represent and work for, the people will turn their backs on the European project', said Commissioner, designate, Frans Timmermans at his parliamentary hearing in October 2014.

Timmermans' statements underscore the contested legitimacy of the European Commission and its politicized environment characterizing the Post-Maastricht era. Failed referenda, the forced resignation of the Santer Commission, and the growth of Euro scepticism since the early 1990s instigated a scholarly debate on Europe's 'legitimacy deficit'. Political scientists disagree about the scope of this deficit. Giandomenico Majone (2000) and Andrew Moravcsik (2002) argue that EU officials benefit from working isolated from politics as this guarantees long-term and 'Pareto-optimal' policy making. Others, such as Andreas Føllesdal and Simon Hix (2006), hold that public contestation of supranational policy-making makes EU policy-makers responsive to their environment, and thereby, the EU more democratic. The question then arises; how do officials in the Commission, Europe's executive, respond to their more politicized environment?

This paper examines how the politicization of the European polity in domestic arenas affects how Commission officials view the role of their institution in EU decision-making. Should the Commission be the government of the EU? Or should the Commission act more like an international secretariat? I argue that Commission officials respond to domestic debates about European integration by adapting their views, and that the kind of adaption is shaped by national cultural differences. Hence this paper contributes to the

scholarly debate on attitude formation in the Commission (Bauer 2012; Dimitrakopoulos and Kassim 2005; Egeberg 1996; Hooghe 2005; Murdoch and Geys 2012; Suvarierol 2011; Trondal 2007), and on the debate on politicization (De Wilde 2011; Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hutter and Grande 2014; Rauh 2014; Zürn, Binder, Ecker-Ehrhardt 2012).

My argument builds on the following five premises. First, national pre-socialization is important for shaping Commission officials' political attitudes (Beyers 2005; Hooghe 2005; Zürn and Checkel, 2005). The context in which one matures is formative for one's political convictions. Second, the politicization of the EU polity follows national, rather than pan-European patterns (Hutter and Grande 2014; Sifft *et al.* 2007). As Commission officials remain interested in EU debates within their home country (Ellinas and Suleiman 2012: 168), politicization enters the EU's administration via the attitudinal responses of Commission officials to the debates in their home countries. Third, the Commission can be conceived as a 'representative bureaucracy' (Gravier 2004; Meier and Nigro 1976), which by and large is reflective of the different geographical regions in the polity that it administers. A bureaucracy being broadly representative of the society, is said to reflect society's preferences. Fourth, consistent with pre-socialization, the central argument is that civil servants make decisions that are informed by early socialization within their society (Meier and Nigro 1976). Finally, the impact of EU politicization varies from individual to individual. National background is hypothesized to moderate the influence of politicization on officials' attitudes.

I theorize the Commission as an open system which seeks legitimacy from its environment. The politicization of the EU polity has made the Commission more open to its environment as compared to the 'permissive consensus' years (Lindberg and Scheingold

1970). The call for democratic decision-making during the 1990s has stimulated the normalization and parliamentarization of the Commission (Egeberg *et al*., 2014; Wille, 2013). Various reforms have been introduced to promote openness, transparency, and responsiveness (Biegoń 2013; Cini 2008; Haverland 2014; Hüller 2007; Mastenbroek *et al*. 2014). The Commission's search for legitimacy may then also be reflected in the attitudes of its officials.

This paper finds that the politicization of the EU polity affects Commission officials' attitudes towards the role of the Commission. Yet, this effect is moderated by cultural background: Officials from Protestant and egalitarian societies become more intergovernmentalist, whereas officials from Catholic and hierarchical societies become more supranationalist as a response to the same stimulus - politicization.

The next section elaborates on the concept of politicization and theorizes how politicization affects Commission officials' attitudes. Then, the methods of this research are outlined, which is followed by the empirical findings of the study. The paper ends with a discussion and presents avenues for future research.

COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE CONCEPT OF POLITICIZATION[2]

Three sites of politicization

The concept of politicization is contested within EU studies. Different 'manifestations', or 'dimensions', of the concept have been discerned (De Wilde 2011; Hutter and Grande 2014;

[2] My thinking about the concept of politicization has greatly benefitted from the 'politicization of European governance' workshop in Berlin in November 2014. I owe many thanks to the participants, in particular the organizers, Anna Leopold, Henning Schmidtke, and Pieter de Wilde.

Rauh 2014). Yet, politicization may be better understood as a set of distinct, yet interrelated, processes that unfold in different sites. Notwithstanding the general notion that politicization is the process of making a particular object 'political' (e.g. issues, institutions, policy-making), politicization means something different in each site. Building on the classification of Pieter de Wilde (2011: 560-3), this paper proposes the following three sites of politicization: politicization in national public spheres, politicization in the European decision-making process, and politicization in the EU institutions. I argue that the three politicization processes affect each other. In particular, politicization in national public spheres is a precondition for politicization in the other two sites.

The first site of politicization is in national public spheres. Ever since the difficult ratification process of the Maastricht Treaty in the 1990s, issues of European integration have entered the realm of national public debates. De Wilde (2011: 566-7) defines this type of politicization as: 'an increase in polarization of opinions, interests or values and the extent to which they are publicly advanced towards the process of policy formulation within the EU'. The theoretical basis for this process is anchored in neo-functionalism. Following Ernst Haas' writings about 'turbulence' (1976), Philippe Schmitter (1969: 165-5) hypothesized that the increase of supranational policy areas would elicit a wider audience being interested and engaged in regional integration. Likewise, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2009) argue that politicization is a response to national transfers of authority to the EU (*cf*. also De Wilde and Zürn, 2012). Whereas neofunctionalists initially assumed that politicization would lead to European state-building, Hooghe and Marks (2009: 5) hold that politicization may impede European integration. Politicization has led to rising levels of public scepticism and concerns about the EU's legitimacy (De Wilde 2011: 564). 'Elites (…)

must look over their shoulders when negotiating European issues' (Hooghe and Marks 2009: 5). The European Commission is often a main target of criticism, and research confirms that Commission officials tend to be responsive to politicization in their behaviour and attitudes (Bes, 2014; Ellinas and Suleiman, 2012; Rauh, 2014).

The second site of politicization is the European decision-making process. Supranational policy-making has become more political because of the increased importance of political bodies. First, the Council is said to have joined the Commission in setting the policy agenda (Bauer and Ege 2012: 418; Puetter 2013). Second, to rein in the Commission, member states have chosen to set up multiple autonomous agencies instead of entrusting the Commission with new tasks (Kassim *et al.* 2013: 131-2). Third, the European Parliament (EP) has evolved from a consultative body to a fully-fledged co-legislator ever since the 1986 Single European Act (Rittberger 2003). Frank Häge (2011) shows that a powerful EP can politicize Council decision-making by introducing new issues, promoting extreme positions, or drawing public attention to specific issues. The empowerment of the EP as co-legislator also constrains the Commission. The Parliament's legislative, and supervisory powers have been strengthened (Kassim and Menon 2004; Kassim *et al.* 2013). Moreover, the political power of the EP over the Commission is expressed by its growing influence on the appointment of the Commission (Hobolt 2014).

This leads us to the politicization in the European institutions, which can be understood as the effect of the growing dominance of party politics in these institutions. This is most clearly visible for the European Parliament, where European elections determine the relative strength of competing party groups. Politics in the EP are shown to follow ideological rather than national patterns (Hix, Noury, and Roland 2005). Whereas

party politicization seldom occurs in the European Council (Tallberg and Johansson 2008), assessments of coalition formation in the Council of Ministers support the importance of a left-right political dimension (Mattila 2004; Hagemann 2008). Within the Commission, politicization can be observed at two levels: the College and the administration. The politicization of the administration refers to 'the substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the civil service' (Peters and Pierre, 2004: 2). Anchrit Wille (2012: 388) notes that the politicization of the College can be observed in the process of selecting Commissioners, and the demand for, and supply of, candidate Commissioners with a stronger political portfolio. When looking at the relationship between the 'political' College and the Commission's bureaucracy, Michael Bauer and Jörn Ege (2012) find that the latter is weakly politicized. Although the Commission as an institution has thus become more politicized, its officials appear to be relatively de-politicized.

Politicization in the three sites contributes to the 'normalization' of the Commission, changing it from a technocratic to an executive body akin to national executives (Wille 2013). In my understanding, politicization in national public spheres (hereafter: politicization), is a precondition for politicization in the other two sites. As Anchrit Wille (2012: 384) describes: 'The call for a strengthening of democratic accountability of European policy-makers since the rise of the narrative on the "democratic deficit" in the EU at the beginning of the 1990s was one of the reasons of revision'. Wille however, does not specify where this 'call' came from. I contend that this refers to national public debates. To develop an understanding of the impact of the 'multidimensional' concept of politicization

on the Commission, this paper assesses the impact of public debates on the attitudes of Commission officials.

The European Commission in a politicized environment

So what can we learn from the literature on the relationship between politicization and officials' attitudes? Antonis Ellinas and Ezra Suleiman (2012) are among the first who researched how Commission officials respond towards a more 'hostile environment'. Although they do not use the concept of politicization, their research assumes that the Commission operates in a more hostile climate. They argue that when bureaucracies are not recognized by their environment, they tend to generate 'legitimacy from within', and so shield themselves (ibid.: 32-3). This self-legitimation strategy is an inherent corollary of bureaucracies that aim to survive and justify their authority. Ellinas and Suleiman expect that an important narrative for Commission officials' self-legitimation involves the idea that they serve the interests of 'future Europeans'. As Commission officials have the expertise and thus know 'what is best' for Europe, this narrative justifies them to downplay the demands of present citizens and their political masters. The authors find indeed that, as a response to their more hostile environment, EU officials 'closed the ranks'. The self-legitimation process then instigates, or strengthens, their supranationalist attitudes.

In investigating the impact of politicization on Commission officials, Christian Rauh (2014) takes the Commission as an organization rather than as an amalgam of individual attitudes. Rauh finds that the Commission responds to the general politicization of the EU selectively, that is, when it coincides with the contemporaneous salience of particular regulatory issues. Based on the rationalist assumption that the Commission is a

'competence-seeking actor' (Pollack, 2003), Rauh (2014, pp. 229-30) argues that responsiveness to the politicization of salient issues increases the output legitimacy of the Commission and prevents a negative public evaluation which might hamper the further transfer of national competences to the European level.

In operationalizing politicization, Rauh engages with the recent wave of politicization research, which is inspired by Elmer Schattschneider's (1960) idea of conflict being a 'key ingredient' for politics. In order for politicization to occur, there should thus be conflict within the political system. Politicization results from the expansion of conflict within a political system (De Wilde and Zürn 2012: 139; Hutter and Grande 2014). Three dimensions of politicization are specified: issue salience, actor expansion, and actor polarization (De Wilde 2011; De Wilde and Zürn 2012; Hutter and Grande 2014; Rauh 2014). Issue salience may be regarded as the most important dimension as politicization equals the presence of public debates. Political parties, or other types of collective actors, need to publicly address conflictual issues before they become salient (Hutter and Grande 2014). Second, actor expansion refers to the diversification of actors involved in EU issues, most notably, the increasing involvement of non-executive actors such as civil society or interest groups (Beyers and Kerremans 2004; Koopmans 2007; Della Porta and Caiani 2009). Finally, actor polarization regards with the intensity of conflict. Politicization is strongest when conflict is polarized (De Wilde 2011; Rauh 2014). Finally, politicization not only refers to the increased salience and contestation of the EU, and the growth of involved actors, it also has a 'direction'. The politicized climate involves more public and political suspicion of supranationalism, and the rise of nationalism within member states (*cf*. 'integration – demarcation cleavage' in Kriesi *et al.* 2008).

In their ambitious project to trace the development of politicization in five West-European countries, Swen Hutter and Edgar Grande (2014) combine the three dimensions of politicization into one 'politicization index'. This index is used for the analysis in this paper and is further explained in the method section. The next section theorizes how politicization enters the Commission.

Theorizing Commission Politicization

How does politicization affect Commission officials? Building on open system approaches, I start from the observation that organizations depend on their environment for self-preservation (Brunsson 1986; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978; Scott 1981; Weick 1995). From a functionalist view, this means that organizations depend on their environment to the extent that it provides them with resources or flows of information (Aldrich and Pfeffer 1976; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967; Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). From a norm-guided view, organizations depend on their environment to the extent that it provides them with support and legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Meyer and Rowan 1977; cf. also Radaelli 2002).

In this paper I take the norm-guided view, which is centred on the need for 'legitimacy'. Whereas open system approaches theorize that organizations adjust their *structures* to their environment, I argue that the environment also has a direct impact on the attitudes of *individual bureaucrats*. For the Commission to conceive itself as 'legitimate', it is important for Commission officials to perceive the role of the Commission to be consistent with prevalent norms and values in their environment. The key hypothesis is therefore:

Politicization-attitude link hypothesis (H1): Commission officials' attitudes respond to the politicization in their home country.

This paper attempts to shed light on *how*, in which direction, Commission officials respond to the current climate of politicization. Concretely, the paper proposes a model that theorizes how cultural characteristics moderate the impact of politicization on Commission officials' attitudes. This idea was developed in an interview with a senior Dutch Commission official, who argued: "I think that Dutch Commission officials are way less influenced, or less busy with, what happens in the Netherlands, than our colleagues from other member states (...). To put it roughly, officials from Northern countries are less influenced by domestic debates than officials from Southern countries" (official #15: personal communication 2014). Another official notes[3]: "(…) Most of the new member states have a strong Euro-skeptic, let's say, consideration that is reflected also among the young people. (…) I think that this influences the approach and the ideas that they [officials from new Member States] have". Depending on where they come from, Commission officials may thus respond differently to politicization.

So which cultural background factors matter? Does the context of one's pre-socialization determine how Commission officials respond to politicization within their home country? Various nation-specific factors for explaining support for EU integration have been proposed. Here I propose three arguments of how national culture moderates the extent and direction of influence of politicization Commission attitudes.

[3] From the 2008 EUCIQ dataset (Kassim *et al.* 2013) – see for further information the method section.

Authority relationships. Aaron Wildavsky (1987:6) observes that people's relationships with other people, and other people's relationships with them, are deeply formative for interests and preferences. According to Wildavsky, groups or societies tend to privilege particular patterns of human relationships. Culture can be categorized along two dimensions: 'number and variety of prescriptions', and 'strength of group boundaries'. A society is egalitarian when there are few and similar prescriptions and when group boundaries are strong. Officials from such a society are expected to be responsive to politicization because they feel more responsive towards their fellow-citizens. When there are numerous and varied prescriptions and group boundaries are strong, this is indicative of a hierarchical culture. Officials coming from a hierarchical culture are not expected to respond to politicization, or to harden their present attitudes, because they identify with the 'higher levels of the hierarchy' and will be less influenced by what people say from 'lower levels of the hierarchy'. They are likely to close the ranks, to close ranks by adopting the idea that they serve the 'future Europeans', justifying them to downplay the preferences of ordinary citizens (Ellinas and Suleiman 2012: 32-3).

> *Authority relationships hypothesis* (H2): Officials from egalitarian societies are more prone to become intergovernmentalist, whereas officials from hierarchical societies tend to become more supranationalist as a response to politicization.

Religious norms. There is an extensive literature that seeks to make sense of why support for European integration has tended to be stronger in Catholic than Protestant

countries. This regularity has been observed most systematically for political leaders (Nelsen, Guth, and Highsmith 2011: 2). One argument is that the support from the Catholic church for the EU has been based on its suspicions of the nation-state and their idea of a single European political community with the Church as centre. As a response to the political and economic crisis in the late 1940s, devout Catholic leaders such as Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide de Gasperi steered for economic and political integration (Nelsen *et al.* 2011:2-3). Elites in Catholic countries have tended to be solidly pro-European and often supranationalist. In contrast, protestant politicians in the United Kingdom and Scandinavia share the idea that the sovereign nation state guarantees their political and cultural autonomy (ibid.).

Nelsen *et al.* (2011) argue that these politicians successfully influenced public opinion towards the EU as long as the permissive consensus was the norm. This hold over public opinion has weakened, but, given that most officials from Catholic countries were socialized when pro-European elites held sway, I expect officials from catholic societies to be more predisposed to close ranks for politicization and defend supranationalism, whereas officials from protestant countries will be prone to adjust their views in a more intergovernmentalist direction.

> *Religion hypothesis* (H3): Officials from Protestant societies are more prone to become intergovernmentalist, whereas officials from Catholic societies tend to become more supranationalist as a response to politicization.

National identity. In explaining support for European integration, Hanspeter Kriesi and colleagues (2008) describe how globalization, or in Western Europe, European integration, impacts national political party systems in Western Europe. Kriesi *et al.* (2008) identify 'winners' and 'losers' of integration which crosscut the cleavages on which most party systems are traditionally build. One element differentiating winners and losers of globalization is identification with the 'national community' (ibid.: 8). People with an exclusive national identity see themselves more as losers, and they are more likely to oppose European integration, whereas people with a cosmopolitan identity are more likely to support European integration (cf. also Hooghe and Marks 2009). If officials are pre-socialized in a community with a strong and exclusive national identity, they may be more predisposed to adjust their attitudes to politicization within their home country.

> *Nationalism hypothesis* (H4): Officials from societies characterized by a strong and exclusive national identity tend to be intergovernmentalist, whereas officials coming from societies characterized by more multiple identities or cosmopolitan values, tend to espouse more supranationalist views as a response to politicization.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Question

How does politicization affect the attitudes of Commission officials? To what extent do they adjust their attitudes to societal norms and values? The following section presents how this paper tackles this question.

Operationalization

Dependent variable: The dependent variable is Commission officials' attitudes which have been collected in a large-scale survey in 2008 (Kassim *et al.* 2013).[4] In particular the following two items were used: 'Some people want the College of Commissioners to become the government of the European Union. What do you think?' (a supranationalist item) and 'Some argue that Member States, not the Commission or the European Parliament, should be the central players within the European Union. What is your position?' (an intergovernmentalist item). Both items are answered on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly agree (1) to Strongly disagree (5). These two items are combined into one scale ranging from supranationalist to intergovernmentalist.

Independent variable: The independent variable is 'the politicization of European integration' within domestic debates. This paper uses the politicization index constructed by Swen Hutter and Edgar Grande (2014: 1005).[5] Their dataset covers debates on every major treaty reform since the Treaty of Rome in 1957. For each integration step, newspaper articles concerning a set of larger formal sub-decisions were coded: 1) the initiation of the project; 2) the reaction of the European Commission; 3) the beginning of the negotiations; 4) the paraphrasing and signing of a Treaty, and 5) the national adoption.

[4] This data was collected as part from the European Commission in Question (EUCIQ) project, funded by the United Kingdom Economic and Social Research Council (grant RES-062-23-1188) and conducted by Michael Bauer, Renaud Dehousse, Liesbet Hooghe, Hussein Kassim (co-PI), John Peterson (co-PI) and Andrew Thompson. Data can be obtained by writing the principal investigators, and I thank the research team for providing access. For further information, visit «http://www.uea.ac.uk/psi/research/EUCIQ».

[5] I owe many thanks to Swen Hutter and Edgar Grande for sharing this data with me.

For each critical date, a period of two periods before the date, and one week after the date were selected. All articles within these three weeks were coded (Hutter and Grande 2014). For this analysis, the index values of the 2007 Lisbon Treaty were used for five countries: Austria, France, Germany, Great-Britain, and Sweden.

The politicization index is built up from three elements. First, and foremost, the *salience* of the EU in national quality newspapers. The newspaper articles were coded with core sentence analysis (Kleinnijenhuis, De Ridder, and Rietberg 1997). In this analysis the unit of analysis is a 'core sentence' in each article which consists of a relation between a subject and an object. The selected core sentences deal with European integration and solely concern domestic subject actors. The average number of articles coded per selected day is then the measurement for salience. For these countries the following newspapers were coded; Die Presse (Austria), Le Monde (France), Süddeutsche Zeitung (Germany), Svenska Dagbladet (Sweden), and The Times (Great Britain).

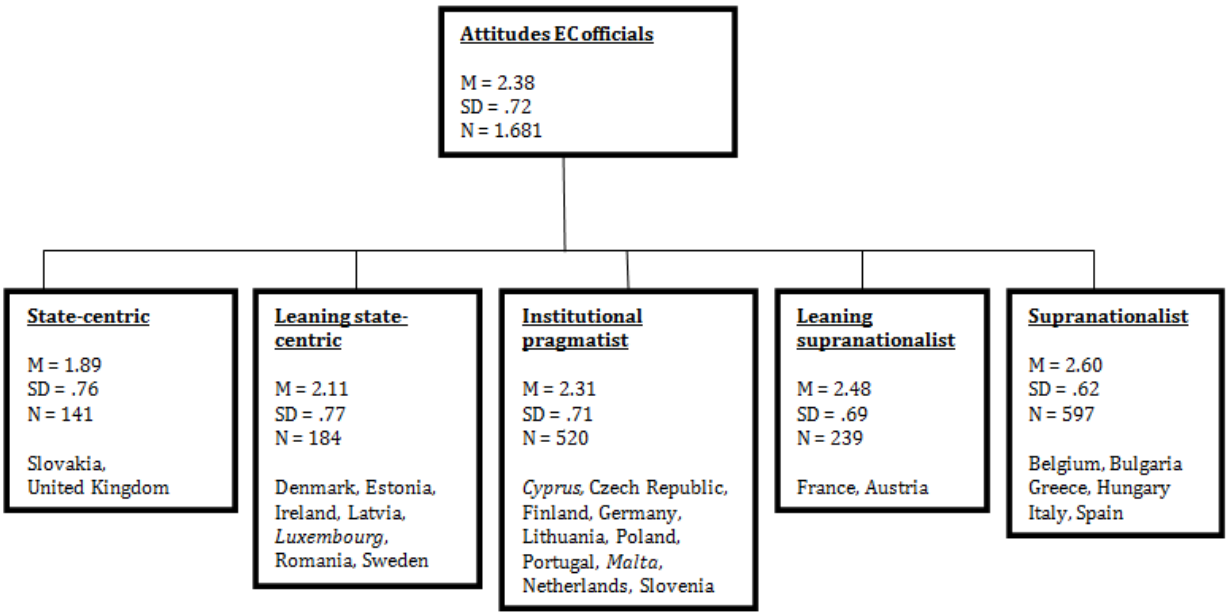
The second element of the index is a*ctor expansion* which is measured as the share of non-governmental actor statements (opposition leaders, parliamentary spokespersons, civil society actors) as a percentage of all coded statements. The final element, *polarisation*, is based on Taylor and Hermann's (1971) measure of ideological polarisation and ranges from 0 (no polarisation) to 1. With salience regarded as the most important element of politicization, the index is based on the following formula :

[Politicization = salience x (actor expansion + polarization)]

Moderators: After assessing whether there is an impact of politicization on the attitudes of the Commission officials, the paper attempts to analyse whether this relationship is moderated by a third variable, i.e. 'cultural background'. A moderation/interaction effect means that the influence of politicization (X) on Commission officials' attitudes (Y) depends on one's cultural background. Concretely, I assess whether cultural background can predict the direction of the attitudinal effect of politicization (more towards supranationalism, or more towards intergovernmentalism).

The cultural variables are presented in Table A2 in the appendix. The items for the first two hypotheses are derived from the World Value Survey (WVS) wave 5, (2005-2009). For the egalitarian hypothesis (H2) this paper uses the item V78. 'Please tell me (...), whether you think it would be a good thing, a bad thing, or you don't you mind: Greater respect for authority', which could be answered by 'good' (1), 'don't mind' (2), 'bad' (3). The 'don't mind' category was filtered out. For the cosmopolitan hypothesis (H3) the item V209 is used; 'How proud are you to be [nationality]?', with answer categories 'very proud' (1), 'quite proud' (2), 'not very proud' (3), 'not at all proud' (4). For the religion hypothesis (H4), the percentage of the Protestant population in the Member States was subtracted from the percentage of the Catholic population in the Member States <<data from http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/>>. In this way, a net variable was created in which positive values indicate societies with a greater percentage of Catholic citizens and negative values signify societies with a greater percentage of Protestant citizens.

Figure 1: Cluster analysis nationality and attitudes



Note: The EUCIQ dataset included very few officials from the member states which are presented in italics.

Case selection, weighing, analysis

Figure 1 shows a cluster analysis of nationality and Commission officials' attitudes over the whole 2008 EUCIQ dataset (N = 1.681). I select the five countries that are also covered by the politicization index data: Austria (n = 40), France (n = 223), Germany (n = 183), the United Kingdom (n = 138), and Sweden (n = 47) (*cf.* Table A1 in appendix). These five countries are broadly representative of the population in terms of the dependent variable, except for a truly supranationalist cluster. In order to accurately compare the countries, the values of the Commission officials were weighted. All statistical analyses are done with Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regressions and are complemented with qualitative data from the EUCIQ project.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The analysis assesses the relationship between the national politicization of the EU, and Commission officials attitudes in three steps. First, I evaluate the influence of a set of individual-level (control) variables on the attitudes of Commission officials. This model is supplemented with a set of nation-specific factors, including politicization. As a last step, I estimate models with interaction effects to discover whether the impact of politicization is conditional on cultural characteristics.

Model I: Individual-level characteristics

A set of individual-level variables are selected from the 2008 dataset of Kassim *et al*. (2013): age, gender, ideology, length of service, and motivations to join the European Commission (M EC). These have been theorized having an effect on EU attitudes (Kassim *et al.* 2013), and serve here as control variables. Table 1 shows that overall, the strength and direction of the controls are relatively stable. Model I shows that around 19% of the variance in the attitudes of Commission officials can be explained by these controls. Older Commission officials (Beta = -.02, p<0.01) and female officials (Beta = -.27, p<.0.01) are less supranationalist than younger officials and men respectively.

Two measures capture the ideological preference of Commission officials: the conventional economic left vs. right dimension, and the 'new politics dimension' GAL vs. TAN (Green Alternative Libertarian vs. Traditional Authoritarian Nationalist) (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002). Consistently over the models, the Left-Right indicator shows that Commission officials with more right wing ideals regarding economic policy, are less supranationalist (Beta = -.06, p<0.01). The GAL-TAN scale is not significant effect. Model I

Table 1: Commission officials' attitudes in 2008

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V	Model VI	Model VII
Independent Variables							
Politicization		.677 (.226)***	-.772 (1.128)*ns*	1.273 (.279)***		1.542 (.313)***	-.769 (.426)*
Respect for authority			.729 (.252)***	.580 (.240)**	.696 (.247)***	.233 (.302)*ns*	
Cosmopolitanism			-.839 (.696)*ns*	.380 (.245)*ns*	-.401 (.269)*ns*	.558 (.262)**	
Net Catholic-Protestant			.797 (.426)*		.515 (.105)***		.623 (.163)***
Interactions							
Politicization x respect for authority						-2.897 (1.548)**	
Politicization x cosmopolitanism						[a]	
Politicization x net catholic-protestant							1.675 (.581)***
Controls							
Age	-.025 (.007)***	-.024 (.007)***	-.026 (.007)***	-.027 (.007)***	-.026 (.007)***	-.026 (.007)***	-.026 (.007)***
Female	-.267 (.097)***	-.272 (.095)***	-.275 (.094)***	-.278 (.095)***	-.277 (.094)***	-.275 (.094)***	-.276 (.094)***
Left-Right	-.058 (.022)***	-.045 (.022)**	-.036 (.022)*	-.042 (.022)*	-.038 (.022)*	-.036 (.022)*	-.037 (.022)*
GAL-TAN	.023(.018)*ns*	.019 (.018)*ns*	.013 (.018)*ns*	.014 (.018)*ns*	.013 (.017)*ns*	.013 (.018)*ns*	.013 (.017)*ns*
Length of service	.018 (.008)**	.016 (.008)**	.025 (.008)***	.025 (.008)***	.025 (.008)***	.025 (.008)***	.025 (.008)***
M EC: material	-.061 (.102)*ns*	-.043 (.101)*ns*	-.024 (.100)*ns*	-.034 (.100)*ns*	-.027 (.100)*ns*	-.024 (.100)*ns*	-.025 (.100)*ns*
M EC: non-material	.229 (.092)**	.232 (.091)**	.207 (.090)**	.198 (.090)***	.203 (.089)**	.207 (.090)**	.204 (.089)**
M EC: Commitment to Europe	.628 (.104)***	.620 (.103)***	.581 (.102)***	.609 (.102)***	.590 (.102)***	.581 (.102)***	.585 (.102)***
M EC: Non-European idealism	.049 (.144)*ns*	.076 (.142)*ns*	.038 (.140)*ns*	.056 (.140)*ns*	.046 (.140)*ns*	.038 (.140)*ns*	.040 (.140)*ns*
Constant	2.969 (.335)***	2.882 (.332)***	2.871 (.328)***	2.937 (.328)***	2.893 (.326)***	2.805 (.334)***	2.765 (.325)***
R^2	.193	.218	.261	.252	.260	.261	.261
Adj. R^2	.168	.191	.227	.220	.228	.227	.229
Weighted N	295	295	295	295	295	295	295

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, **p<0.05, *p<0.1. Weighted least squares regression – weighted by 'weight_nat_ad4'. [a] This variable was filtered out due to multicolinearity with the cosmopolitan variable (r = -.823).

also shows that the longer officials are in the Commission, the more supranationalist they are (Beta = .02, p<0.05).

Finally, four categories of motivations for joining the Commission (M EC) are included. The officials with 'non-material professional motivations', i.e. 'quality of work', 'training', and 'professional development', are on average more supranationalist (Beta = .23, p<0,05). Unsurprisingly, Commission officials who joined the Commission for idealist motives, are on average more supranationalist (Beta = .63, p<0.01).

Model II – Model V: Bringing in nation-specific characteristics

Model II shows that on top of the individual controls, politicization has a positive significant effect on Commission officials' attitudes (Beta = .68, p<0.01). This means that the more the EU is politicized within their national public sphere, the more supranationalist officials of that country tend to be. Even though we do not know for sure the 'tone' of politicization (at least not directly from this measure), this finding may chime well with the conclusion of Ellinas and Suleiman (2012), that Commission officials tend to become more supranationalist as a response to a more hostile environment. Adding politicization to the analysis results in a robust adjusted R^2 change of 3 percent. This seems to fit Rauh's (2014) argument that politicization does impact the Commission, yet it is surely not the prime-motivator for (attitudinal) change. This results seems consistent with the politicization-attitude link hypothesis.

Interview excerpts from the EUCIQ interview data provide suggestive support for the hypothesis that politicization is noticed by the Commission's staff. On the open-ended question: 'mention one or two most important negative changes that you have

experienced', a substantial minority of Commission officials indicated their disappointment with the negative public perception of the Commission, and its inability to fix it. Exemplary concerns are: "an increasingly difficult external environment and difficulty to identify and convey why and how the EU can make a difference", "the negative public perception of the Commission is not properly handled", "the failure to get citizen's approval", and "the loss of credibility among Member States' populations". From these statements we may deduce that EU officials are positive about European integration, yet think the Commission should convey the benefits of the European project more clearly.

At the same time, officials mention three other main concerns, which may relate to each other. First, they signal the growth of the Member States' power vis-à-vis the Commission. Second, a fair share of officials note that they have to increasingly justify and check their proposals to convince the Member States, leading to unnecessary hurdles of 'bureaucracy' – 'there is an atmospheric change to "cover your ass" mentality in some areas, leading to the formalisation of procedures under the assumption of non-trust towards personnel'. Finally, some relate the growth of the Member States' power with a decline of vision among EU leaders, the demotivation of Commission staff and the loss of an 'esprit de corps'.

Table 2 shows a correlation matrix between politicization and different cultural background characteristics. Most strikingly, politicization and religion are strongly correlated, $r = .79$, $p<.001$. This means that a high level of politicization associates with Catholic societies, whereas low levels of politicization correspond with protestant societies. The high correlation may indicate a multicollinearity problem. This is confirmed in Model III which shows that the effect of politicization turns negative and non-significant when we

Table 2: Correlation between nation-specific variables 2008

	Politicization	Respect for authority	Cosmopolitanism	Net Catholic-Protestant
Politicization	1	-.550***	-.442***	.790***
Respect for authority		1	.473***	-.376***
Cosmopolitanism			1	.160***
Net catholic-protestant				1

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$.

add all cultural background variables (Beta =- .77, *ns*). Yet, the model shows that officials from societies that highly value respect for authority are more supranationalist (Beta = .73, $p<0.01$). Except for Model VI, this effect remains positive and significant. The religion variable also shows a positive significant effect (Beta = .80, $p<0.1$). Confirming earlier research, officials from catholic societies have more supranationalist attitudes whereas officials from protestant societies are more intergovernmentalist (Hooghe 2005).

Due to the multicollinearity between politicization and religion, Models VI and VII estimate two separate models interaction effects: one leaving out the religion variable, and one leaving out the politicization variable. Model V shows a slightly higher explained variance (adj. R^2 = .23) than Model IV (adj. R^2 = .22), but the difference is small. I hold that both explanations are insightful as they are conceptually as well as operationally fairly different.

Model VI – Model VII: Interactions

The impact of the politicization interaction terms are modest in both models. Model VI and Model VII explain a similar size of the variation in the dependent variable, yet model VII is

more parsimounious. Confirming the egalitarian society hypothesis, Model VI shows that officials from more egalitarian societies tend to have more intergovernmentalist views in response to politicization whereas officials from more hierarchical societies tend to be more supranationalist (Beta = -2.90, $p<0.05$). Model VII adds that officials from more Catholic societies tend to emphasize supranationalism as a response to politicization, whereas officials from more Protestant societies tend to turn more intergovernmentalist as a response to politicization (Beta = .62, $p<0.01$), which is in line with the religion hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

How does politicization of the European polity affect Commission officials' attitudes? By theorizing the European Commission as an open system which seeks legitimacy from its environment, this paper argues that individual EU officials are likely to adjust their attitudes to their relevant environment. A central component in this environment has become the politicization of the European Union in their home country. On the whole, officials tend to defend themselves against politicization by adopting a more supranationalist attitude. This confirms earlier research which finds supranationalism in the Commission as a response to politicization (Ellinas and Suleiman 2012; Rauh 2014). The strength *and* sign of the effect, however, depend on an official's cultural background. Officials from Protestant and egalitarian societies tend to become more intergovernmentalist, whereas officials from Catholic and hierarchical societies tend to become more supranationalist. Some officials thus follow the crowd, whereas others grow a thicker skin.

How can we explain this? Ellinas and Suleiman (2012: 32-3) argue that when bureaucracies are not recognized by their environment, they have a tendency to shield themselves to generate 'legitimacy from within'. This is part of a bureaucracy's survival strategy. Self-legitimation then pushes Commission officials to take on, or strengthen their, supranationalist views. The qualitative data tend to corroborate this view. In the eyes of many Commission officials Member States have lost confidence in the European project. The legitimacy of the EU is contested among the public, making governments more hesitant to be pro-European. The Commission has been subjected to a series of new internal rules to ensure 'better regulation', and these reforms seem to have demotivated officials and make the institution less visionary. To the dismay of many officials, the esprit the corps is waning, making place for the 'fear of doing wrong or being criticized'. Politicization within national contexts to influence politicization of EU decision-making which in turn seems to fuel politicization within the EU institutions.

The effect of politicization is not uniform. An important claim of this paper is that it is sensitive to the cultural context. There is more to explore here. For example, does the strong finding on hierarchical vs. egalitarian cultures shed light on the apparent North-South divide that we detect, or is there unexplained variance here that needs exploration? How about the multicollinearity between religion and politicization? Catholic societies have higher politicization, and Protestant societies have lower politicization. At the same time, officials from catholic societies are more supranationalist, and those from Protestant societies are more intergovernmentalist. Does this imply that, on balance, supranationalism in the Commission will increase faster than intergovernmentalism? And in times of high politicization in all member states, will the Commission then be increasingly polarized?

Attitudes are 'a learned, global evaluation of an object (person, place, or issue) that influences thought and action' (Perloff 2008). Clearly, how Commission officials view the European Union, and the Commission's place within, affects how they conduct themselves. As Commission officials go about their job against the backdrop of politicization, will they continue to see themselves as the engine of 'European integration'?

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APPENDIX

Table A1: Description of the sample 2008

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Valid %
Individuals						
Age	622	26	66	48.47	8.735	
Female	631	0	1	.2472	.43174	24.7
Left-Right	607	0	10	5.290	1.9705	
GAL-TAN	613	0	10	3.43	2.328	
Length of service	631	1	45	14.83	8.941	
Motivation EC: Material considerations	631	0	1	.6926	.46180	69.3
Motivation EC: Non-material considerations	631	0	1	.3201	.46690	32
Motivation EC: Commitment to Europe	631	0	1	.7829	.41261	78.3
Motivation EC: Non-European idealism	631	0	1	.0761	.26532	7.6
Nationality						
Austrian	40					6.3
France	223					35.3
Germany	183					29
Great-Britain	138					21.9
Sweden	47					7.4
Total	631					100

Table A2: Description of the sample nation-specific variables 2008

	Politicization	Cosmopolitanism	Respect for authority	Net Catholic-Protestant
Austria	.76	1.67	1.67	.69
France	.49	1.74	1.39	.49
Germany	.16	2.10	1.75	-.02
Great-Britain	.28	1.57	1.31	-.50
Sweden	.06	1.68	2.04	-.86
M (SE)	.3335 (.18754)	1.7893 (.20285)		.0389 (.47327)