

French nationalism, EU support and a possible *Frexit*: insights from survey dataEl nacionalismo francés, el apoyo a la UE y un posible *Frexit*: perspectivas a partir de datos de encuestasNacionalismo francês, apoio à UE e um possível *Frexit*: percepções dos dados da pesquisa**Natalia Melgar**<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5015-0822> Professor at the Catholic University, Uruguay.
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natalia.melgar@ucu.edu.uy (correspondence)**ABSTRACT**

This article focuses on French opinions and perceptions towards the European Union (EU). Its aim is to assess whether nationalism plays a relevant role in shaping people's views on the EU. For doing so, different proxies of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism are explored, and French perception of the EU is scrutinized through four dimensions measuring the respondents' assessment of their EU knowledge, their country's benefits from EU membership, national sovereignty and support for continuing French EU membership. The data source comes from the survey carried out in 2013 by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) in which the sample size, in the case of France, is more than 2,000 people. Findings indicate that nationalism and chauvinism correlate negatively with attitudes towards the EU. The contribution to the literature is twofold. Firstly, it is shown that there is a strong negative correlation between chauvinism and the willingness of remaining as a Member State of the EU. Secondly, this research revealed that an improvement in the communication channels between the EU's institutions and the citizenship could be crucial to counterbalance this effect.

Keywords: France, European Union, *Frexit*, nationalism, chauvinism.**RESUMO**

Este artigo se concentra nas opiniões e percepções dos franceses em relação à União Europeia (UE). Seu objetivo é avaliar se o nacionalismo desempenha um papel relevante na formação de opiniões pessoais sobre a UE. Para isso, ele explora diferentes indicadores de patriotismo, nacionalismo e chauvinismo e examina as percepções francesas sobre a UE por meio de quatro dimensões que medem a avaliação dos entrevistados sobre seu conhecimento da UE, os benefícios de seu país como membro da UE, a soberania nacional e o apoio individual à permanência na UE. A fonte de dados vem da pesquisa de 2013 realizada pelo International Social Survey Program (ISSP), na qual o tamanho da amostra, no caso da França, é de mais de 2.000 pessoas. Os resultados indicam que o nacionalismo e o chauvinismo estão negativamente correlacionados com as atitudes em relação à UE. As contribuições desta pesquisa são duas. Primeiro, ela mostra que há uma forte correlação negativa entre o chauvinismo e a disposição de permanecer como estado-membro da UE. Em segundo lugar, ela mostra que a melhoria dos canais de comunicação entre as instituições da UE e os cidadãos pode ser crucial para neutralizar esse efeito.

Palavras-chave: França, União Europeia, *Frexit*, nacionalismo, chauvinismo, nacionalismo, chauvinismo.**RESUMEN**

Este artículo se centra en las opiniones y percepciones francesas hacia la Unión Europea (UE). Su objetivo es evaluar si el nacionalismo juega un papel relevante en la configuración de las opiniones personales sobre la UE. Para ello, se exploran diferentes indicadores de patriotismo, nacionalismo y chovinismo, y se examina la percepción francesa de la UE a través de cuatro dimensiones que miden la evaluación de los encuestados sobre su conocimiento de la UE, los beneficios de su país como miembro de la UE, la soberanía nacional y el apoyo individual a seguir siendo miembro de la UE. La fuente de datos procede de la encuesta realizada en 2013 por el International Social Survey Program (ISSP) en la que el tamaño de la muestra, en el caso de Francia, es de más de 2.000 personas. Los resultados indican que el nacionalismo y el chovinismo se correlacionan negativamente con las actitudes hacia la UE. Las contribuciones de esta investigación son dos. En primer lugar, se muestra que existe una fuerte correlación negativa entre el chovinismo y la voluntad de permanecer como Estado miembro de la UE. En segundo lugar, se observa que una mejora en los canales de comunicación entre las instituciones de la UE y la ciudadanía podría ser crucial para contrarrestar este efecto.

Palabras clave: Francia, Unión Europea, *Frexit*, nacionalismo, chovinismo.**ARTICLE HISTORY****Received:** 31-05-2023**Revised Version:** 13-09-2023**Accepted:** 15-09-2023**Published:** 20-09-2023**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors**License:** CC BY-NC-ND 4.0**Manuscript type:** Article**ARTICLE INFORMATION****Science-Metrix Classification (Domain):**

Economic & Social Sciences

Main topic:International Relations: *Frexit* and UE integration**Main practical implications:**

The main practical implication of the article is to address a possible new research agenda, guide policies aimed at EU relations and some possible analysis of the situation with future data.

Originality/value:The article offers a methodological path of empirical analysis for future research/launch of databases related to the exit of countries from the European Union. Particularly the *Frexit* phenomenon that is on the rise.

INTRODUCTION

The Brexit has opened several debates about the robustness of the EU and about its depth. Even when a collapse of the bloc was discharged (Gastinger, 2019), there are doubts about what could happen if a referendum on membership would be held in another Member State, especially where nationalist sentiments are on the rise (Arnorsson and Zoega, 2016).

It is the case of France where new talks about the incompetence of the EU has emerged and made France question and reconsider its influence within the bloc (Bijmans, Galpin and Leruth, 2018). France has been a pillar in the integration process and that has benefited from common policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) (Keeler, 1990), and where the EU was a central point in the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections.

On one side, the centrist leader Emmanuel Macron has always supported the integration process and the European cohesion. On the other side, the far-right candidate Marine Le Pen had supported a Frexit although she has softened her rhetoric (Rose, 2022). In 2017 and in 2022, Macron came first and Le Pen second in the first voting round and in the second round, Macron defeated Le Pen. However, it is worth noting that in 2017, he was supported by 66.1 percent and 33.9 percent voted for Le Pen while in 2022, Le Pen gained ground, she was voted for 41.5 percent and the remaining 58.5 percent opted for Macron.

Several drivers are likely to shape people's attitudes towards the EU. For example, the perception of the benefits from being a Member State, the performance of the country and/ or of the place of residence (Arnorsson and Zoega, 2016 and Becker, Fetzer and Novy, 2017) and, in the near future, the performance of Britain after the Brexit in comparison with the performance of the EU would also have an impact on this decision.

Far beyond these macro level foundations, personal drivers could be crucial. Even when the list of attributes is long, the target is to focus on the role of sentiments such as nationalism and chauvinism that emerge as key drivers of these opinions.

The main hypotheses to be tested in this empirical research is that these sentiments are correlated to people's opinions towards the EU. The survey carried out in 2013 by the ISSP allows to assess this issue and it is worth mentioning that when considering EU's membership, in the case of the United Kingdom (UK), the survey outcomes were very similar to Brexit results (see table 1).

Table 1: Comparison between the ISSP results and the Brexit outcomes (percentages)

	Leave	Remain
Referendum results (2016)	51.9	48.1
ISSP results (2013)	52.0	48.0

Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013 and The Electoral Commission (2022).

Although a decade has passed, rather than a limitation, this fact could be an advantageous tool for assessing the case of France because it took place before significant events that may have influenced people's views such as the Brexit referendum, the exit process and Great Britain's performance since then. The fourth wave is currently under development, and it will provide more evidence on this issue. According to the ISSP, these survey results will be released in spring 2026.

Moreover, there are recent literature on this issue that is based on this ISSP's survey. For example, Aichholzer, Kritzinger and Plescia (2021) argued that there were several identity profiles in the EU that implied different relationships between measures of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism and EU support and Huddy, Del Ponte and Davies (2021) showed that nationalism increased the opposition to the EU and authors pointed out that the presence of neo-nationalist political party enhanced this effect. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion by focusing on the case of France.

This paper is organized as follow. Section 2 explains the French and British role in the integration process. In Section 3, relevant definitions and empirical evidence is presented. Section 4 describes the database and section 5 deals with the results. Finally, the conclusions are drawn in section 6.

France, the United Kingdom and the integration process

After the Second World War, the collaboration in Western Europe emerged has a key driver to recover and to secure peace. Firstly, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was created through a Treaty among Belgium, France,

Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Troitiño (2014) argued that the UK disagreed with separating political power from the national level and the author linked this attitude with British nationalism. The author held that according to Churchill, the UK could guide the integration process without being an active member of it and despite its clear nationalism, France (and de Gaulle) had a leading position in the integration process because other interest made membership a key strategy.

In 1957, the Treaty of Rome was signed by the same group of countries, it created the European Economic Community (EEC). Even when the UK was invited to join, it was not part of this process (Ellison, 2016). In 1960, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK signed the Stockholm Convention, and they established the European Free Trade Association (EFTA).

According to Troitiño (2014), De Gaulle felt betrayed by the relationship between the UK and the United States (US), this relationship with the US made him to reject the application of the UK twice (in 1963 and in 1967) and he perceived the bloc as a third leading power in the context of the Cold War. Finally, in 1973, the UK ceased to be a member of the EFTA and it joined the EEC. Only two years later, there was a referendum and 67 percent of the voters was in favor of being a member, although several political leaders argued that the agreement should be renegotiated (Cook and Francis, 1979).

Before the accession of the UK to the EEC, France succeeded in the approval of the CAP that was in line with its interest while the UK agricultural sector had other needs. The CAP significantly improved France's agricultural sector (Keeler, 1990). In 1992, EEC's members signed the Maastricht Treaty, and the name of the bloc was changed to European Community. This treaty created the Euro and aimed at preparing the bloc for the European Monetary Union. The cooperation among members was deepened by including two pillars: common foreign and security policy and cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs. There was only one exemption: the UK. The Maastricht Treaty included protocols on the UK that gave them opt-outs with the right to decide if they would join the Euro zone and from implementing the Schengen acquis (Cuel, 2017). Finally, in 2016, there was a new referendum and 52 percent voted to leave the bloc, the withdrawal took place on 31st January 2020.

In line with this facts, Startin (2015) held that the European identity was not shared by UK citizens and this issue became a relevant psychological impediment to pro-European British attitudes. Additionally, McLaren (2015) stressed that, through its history, the British considered that the European integration has limited their sovereignty and the capacity of the government to take decisions. Medrano (2020) argued that Europeans disagreed with transferring sovereignty to the EU.

On the other hand, as it was mentioned, France is characterized by its nationalism but at the same time, it has been a clear leading economy among the EU's Members States and the country has benefited from policies such as the CAP and from the strengthening of the trade ties (Timofeev, 2017). Dennison and Zerka (2020) found that France was the Member State most appreciative of the geopolitical role of the EU and Likaj, Rieble and Theuer (2020), based on the Eurobarometer survey, showed that most of the French considered that being a Member State had been beneficial for France, but authors highlighted that the percentage indicating that membership was a "waste of money" was up from almost 26 percent in 2005 to 35 percent in 2014.

Moreover, Arnorsson and Zoega, 2016 and Becker, Fetzer and Novy (2017) assessed the Brexit results, and they showed that socio-economic attributes (such as education profile, income level and unemployment level) correlated with the referendum results. Becker, Fetzer and Novy (2017) also compared these results to 2017 voting patterns for Le Pen and they argued that the same factors played a significant role.

Given this evidence, the aim of this article is to assess the role of patriotism, nationalism, and chauvinism, sentiments that may be associated to people's perception of the impacts of these socio-economic characteristics (the benefits from EU membership, the impacts on national sovereignty and the support for continuing as a Member State). For doing so, two set of variables were identified. The first group is linked to sentiments such as patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism and the second group measures people's opinions towards the EU (both groups are described in section four).

Attachments to one's country and its role in shaping attitudes

Feelings such as the attachment to the country play a relevant role in any debate concerning external policies issues. O'Rourke and Sinnott (2006) held that they matter in trade-policy preferences because they could translate into feelings of national superiority and the rejection of foreign products. Sidanius *et al.* (1997) defined national attachment as a sense of belongingness to the nation as a whole. There is now a vast literature on this issue and its different levels or dimensions. For example, authors have distinguished among patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism (Aichholzer, Kritzingner and Plescia, 2021, Coenders and Scheepers, 2003, Feshbach, 1994, Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989 and Smith and Jarkko, 1998).

Patriotism is the genuine feeling of attachment to one's country and its symbols, while nationalism is a less neutral form of national attachment because it implies a greater devotion for one's country placing it above others and chauvinism is an extreme form of nationalism characterized by a feeling of superiority regarding other nations. Moreover, Smith and Kim (2006) deepened those contributions from a comparative perspective across countries in which France ranked 26th out of 33rd countries.

Even when these sentiments are linked, they are clearly different. National pride and patriotism coexist, while nationalism goes far beyond national pride. Indeed, the latter is a prerequisite to the former. Thus, there is no contradiction between feelings such as national pride and cosmopolitanism, while nationalism and cosmopolitanism are in essence contradictory (Warf, 2012).

These contradictions have a great variety of consequences, and they may shape multiple decision-making processes. Attitudes towards immigrants are clearly determined by nationalism (Baker, 2005 and Kentmen-Cin and Erisen, 2017). Moreover, Rajzman et al. (2008) and Harris and Kim (2021), focused on attitudes towards minorities and immigrants and the authors showed that nationalists were more likely to have exclusionary attitudes than patriots.

The same is true in the case of international trade and trade agreements. Even when different models show that countries benefit from trade, most of them have restrictions that are approved by governments. Multiple reasons may explain these measures that contradict the theory, and the demand of voters could be one of them. In line with this point, several studies show that nationalist tend to support protectionism (Mansfield and Pevehouse, 2002, Mayda and Rodrik, 2005, O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2006, Rodrik, 1997, Sabet, 2014, and Scheve and Slaughter, 2001, among others). In other words, if trade is perceived as a zero-sum game in which some nations win and others lose or if they consider that the social consequences could be adverse, they would be likely to support trade restrictions. Mayda and Rodrik (2005) argued that those who consider their country better than others are more likely to prefer their country's isolation and therefore, would support import-restrictive policies.

Finally, it is worth remembering the Brexit because the campaign in favor of leaving the EU highlighted anti-immigrant measures and nationalism among another issues. According to Calhoun (2017), Melgar, Bartesaghi and De María (2021) and Scuirra (2017), among others, the Brexit was not only a vote against the EU but also against globalization and multiculturalism because nationalism matters.

DATA SOURCE AND EMPIRICAL STRATEGY

The microdata comes from the National Identity module of the 2013 survey carried out by the ISSP. This wave collected information about people's opinions on a great variety of issues, including trade preferences, immigration, several measures of nationalism, as well as demographic and socio-economic information such as age, gender, education, religion, religiosity and political party affiliation, among others.

Aichholzer, Kritzingner and Plescia (2021) pointed out that this was the only survey that includes simultaneously questions that allow to identify different sentiments such patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism as well as attitudes towards the EU. In line with this argument, by considering the National Identity module (included in the ISSP surveys in 1995, 2003 and 2013), Callens and Meuleman (2023) examined the evolution of anti-immigrant sentiments.

Moreover, even when this wave is not recent, this research deals with sentiments that has characterized countries such as France and Great Britain for centuries (Troitiño and Kerikmäe, 2019 and Troitiño, Polese and Braghiroli, 2018) and it brings the opportunity to assess the relation between nationalism and attitudes to the EU before the Brexit, a relevant process that may influence French's perceptions. The fourth wave will shed light on this impact (it will be released in 2026).

In each country, the questionnaire was administrated to a representative sample of the population (ISSP Research Group, 2015). More than 2,000 people have answered the questionnaire in France. The survey asks respondents several questions that could be considered as indicators of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism. Moreover, the questionnaire includes questions that allow to explore perceptions and visions of the EU and the willingness to remain as a Member State. Table 2 presents the questions that will be considered as proxies of the feelings of attachment to the country and of the attitudes towards the EU.

Table 2: People's attachment to the country and attitudes towards the EU

	Mean			Standard deviation			Min	Max	
	France	Great Britain	EU	France	Great Britain	EU			
How close do you feel to your country?	1.7	2.2	1.8	1.0	1.0	0.9	1	5	
How close do you feel to Europe?	2.7	3.2	2.6	1.3	0.9	1.1	1	5	
How proud are you of being (<i>corresponding nationality</i>) ?	2.1	1.9	2.1	1.1	1.0	1.1	1	5	
How important do you think each of the following is....	... to have your (<i>corresponding nationality</i>) ?	1.7	1.7	1.8	1.0	0.9	0.9	1	5
	... to feel (<i>corresponding nationality</i>) ?	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.0	1.0	0.9	1	5
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	I would rather be a citizen of (<i>corresponding country</i>) than of any other country in the world.	2.4	2.1	2.3	1.4	1.2	1.3	1	6
	Generally speaking, (<i>corresponding country</i>) is a better country than most other countries.	3.1	2.6	2.9	1.3	1.1	1.3	1	6
How much have you heard or read about the EU?	1.8	2.6	1.8	0.9	1.1	1.2	1	5	
Generally speaking, would you say that (<i>corresponding country</i>) benefits or does not benefit from being a member of EU?	2.9	3.9	3.7	1.4	1.4	1.6	1	6	
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? (<i>corresponding country</i>) should follow EU decisions, even if it does not agree with them.	Generally, do you think that the EU should have much more, more, as much, less, or much less power than the national governments of its member states?	3.6	4.3	4.1	1.3	1.2	1.4	1	6
	If there were a referendum today to decide whether (<i>corresponding country</i>) does or does not remain a member of the EU, would you vote in favor or would you vote against?	3.4	4.1	3.7	1.3	1.2	1.5	1	6
If there were a referendum today to decide whether (<i>corresponding country</i>) does or does not remain a member of the EU, would you vote in favor or would you vote against?	1.6	1.7	1.4	0.8	0.9	0.9	1	4	

Note: In the case of the EU, this survey was not carried out in the following group of Member States: Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland and Romania.

Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

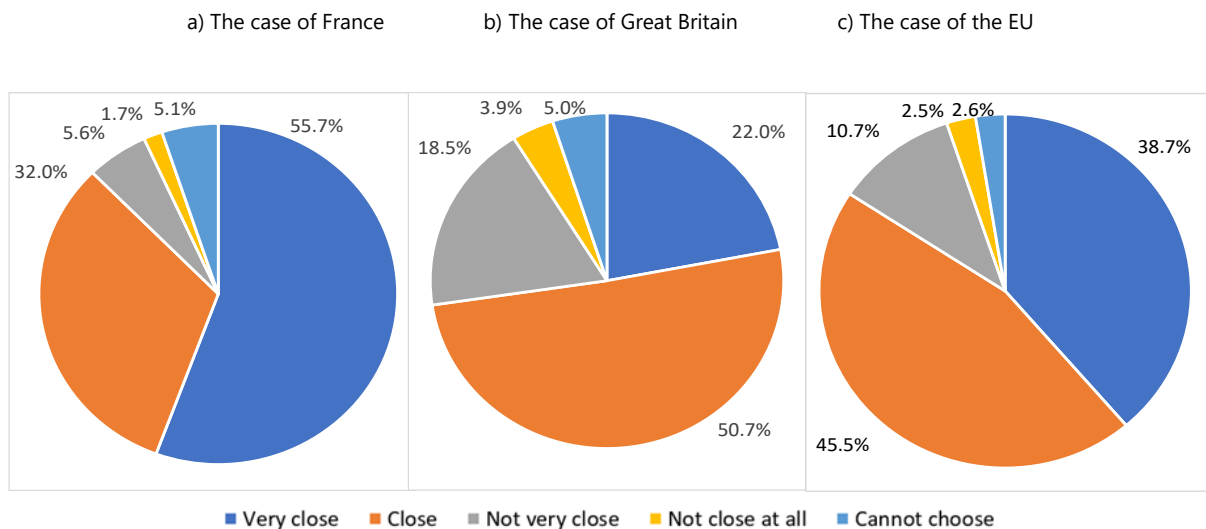
With the aim of deepening the understanding of the linkages among these opinions, the Spearman's correlation coefficient is computed (it is ordinal data). The correlation is a measure of an association between variables and these results should not be taken as a causality. If they are correlated, the changes in one variable are associated with changes in the other variable. The Spearman's correlation coefficient, ρ , ranks from -1 (a perfect negative association) to 1 (a perfect positive association).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Patriotism, nationalism and the perception of the EU in France: how nationalistic is the citizenship?

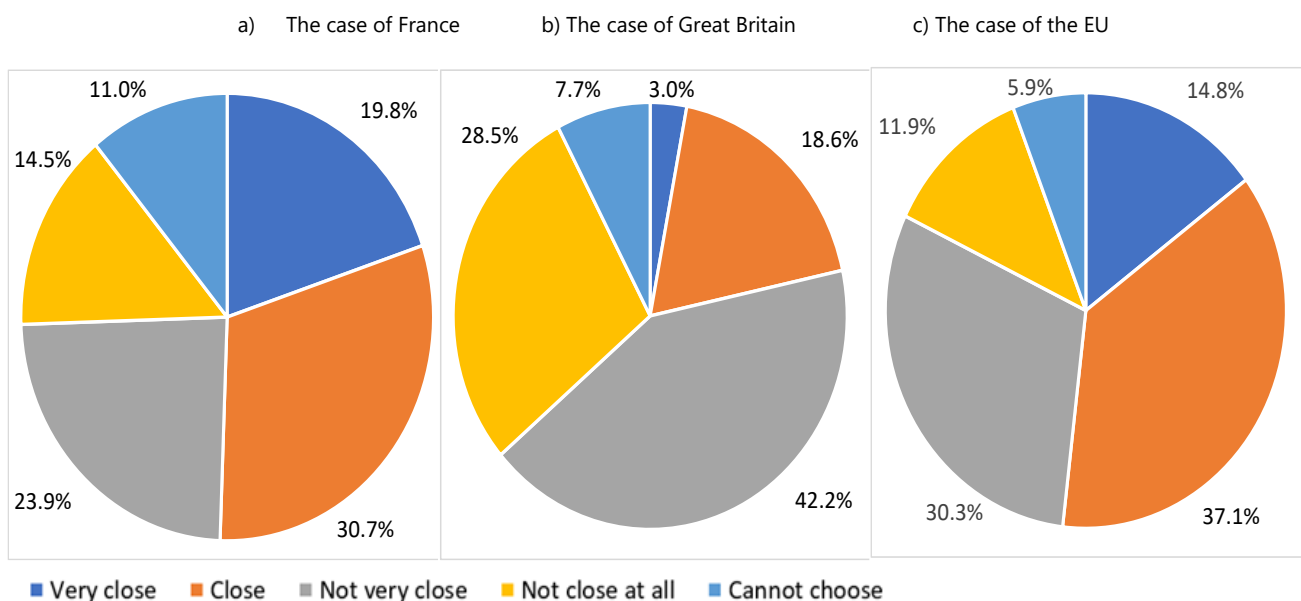
The following charts show that not only patriotism but also nationalism and chauvinism are significant in the case of France. Firstly, almost 88 percent of the citizenship indicate that they felt very close or close to France, a higher ratio than the percentages registered in the cases of the EU (84.2 percent) and of Great Britain (72.7 percent). However, it is worth noting that, when Europe is considered, 51.9 percent of those who belong to the EU felt very close or close to their continent and a very similar ratio is found in the case of France (50.5 percent). However, in the case of Great Britain, it fell to 21.6 percent.

Chart 1: How close do you feel to your country?



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

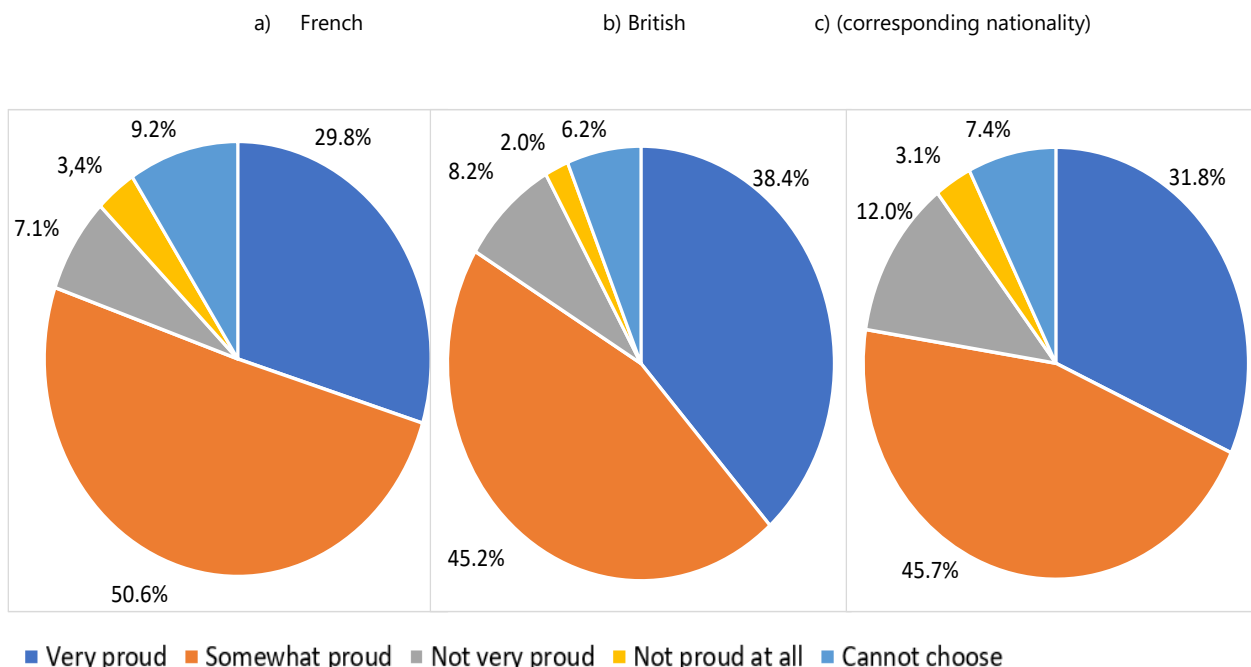
Chart 2: How close do you feel to Europe?



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

Secondly, almost 81 percent answered that they were very proud or somewhat proud of being French. In line with this result, 85.2 percent considered that to have French nationality is very important or important and in the case of the importance of feeling French, the ratio reached to 89.2 percent. Similar ratios were found in the case of the British and the EU.

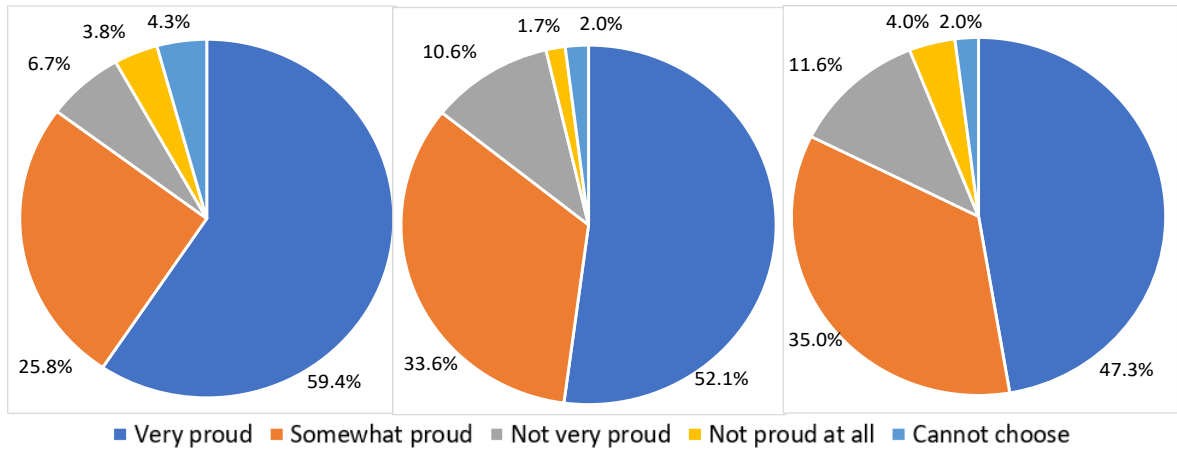
Chart 3: How proud are you of being...?



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

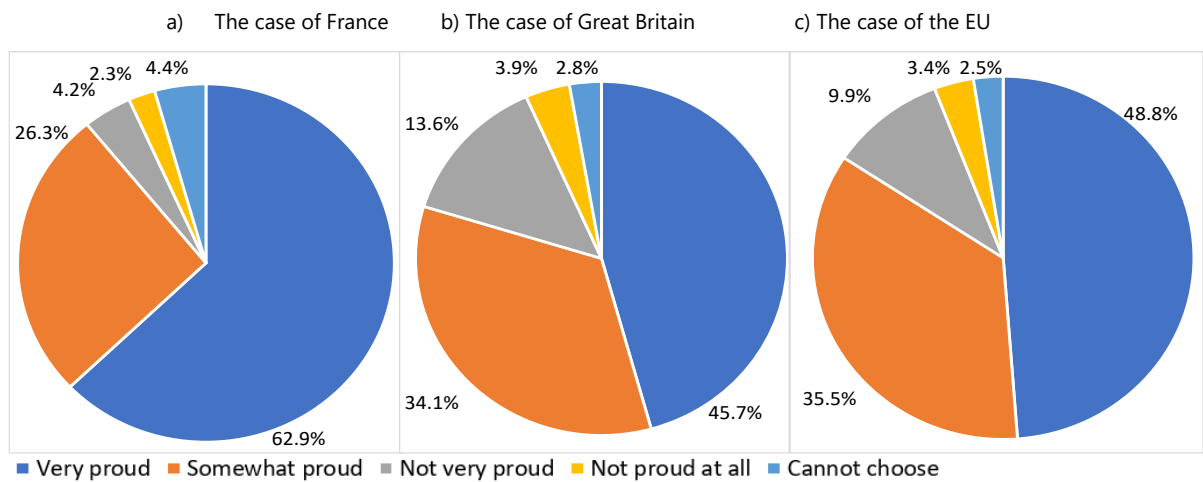
Chart 4: How important do you think is to have your nationality?

The case of France b) The case of Great Britain c) The case of the EU



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

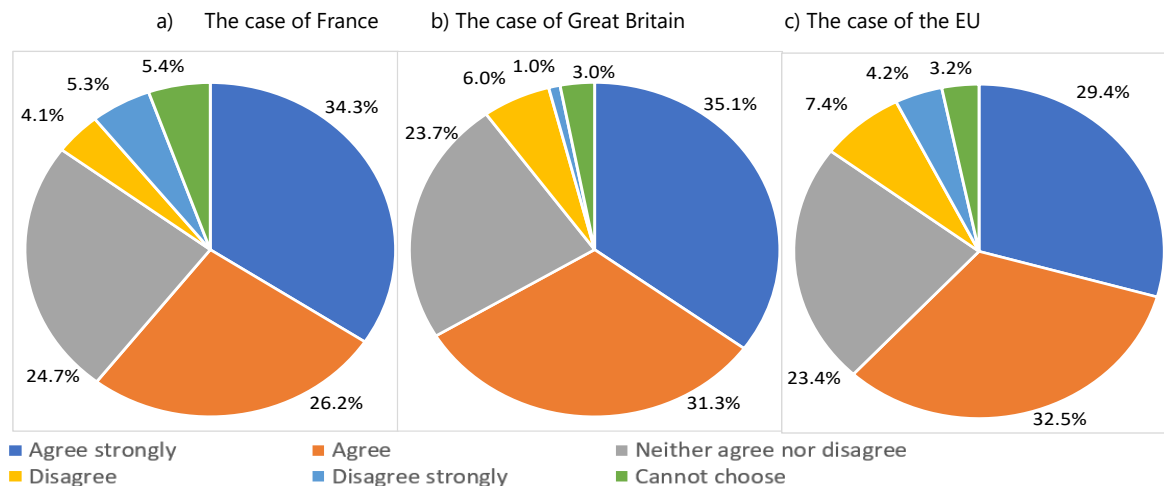
Chart 5: How important do you think is to feel your nationality?



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

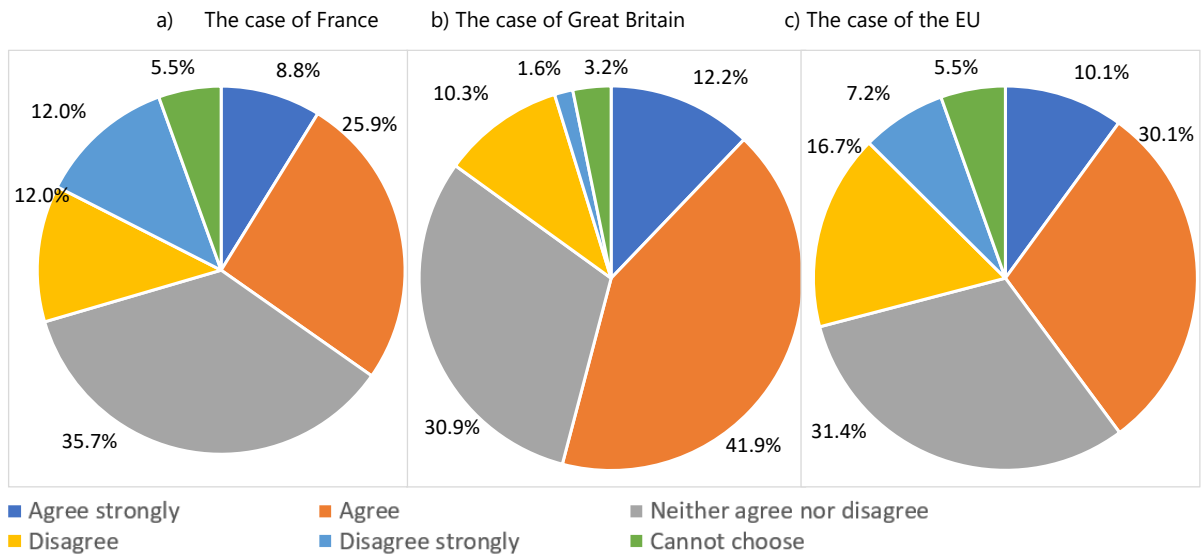
Moreover, in the case of the EU, the percentage of people that disagree or disagree strongly with preferring being a citizen of their country than of any other country equals 11.5 percent while a lower ratio is found in the case of France, 9.4 percent and it reduces to 7.0 percent in the case of Great Britain. However, when considering the bloc, this percentage is up to 11.5 percent. Additionally, only 24.0 percent disagree or disagree strongly with France being a better country than most other countries and the same percentage is found when considering the bloc. However, in Great Britain this sentiment seems to be stronger given that this ratio was lower (11.9 percent).

Chart 6: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "I would rather be a citizen of ... than of any other country in the world"



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

Chart 7: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Generally speaking, ... is a better country than most other countries"



Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013

Given these findings, the correlations among all the proxies of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism were computed in the case of France. All of them resulted significant at 1 percent. As table 3 shows, and as expected, these figures showed a positive sign, hence all of them move in the same direction. The highest positive relationship is found between the questions that may indicate the presence of chauvinism, those who would prefer to be a citizen of France than of another country are also more likely to think that France is a better country than most other countries.

Table 3: Correlation matrix among indicators of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism

	How close do you feel to France?	How proud are you of being French?	How important is to have French nationality?	How important is to feel French?	I would rather be a citizen of France than of any other country in the world.	Generally speaking, France is a better country than most other countries.
How close do you feel to France?	1					
How proud are you of being French?	0.34	1				
How important is to have French nationality?	0.25	0.17	1			
How important is to feel French?	0.27	0.18	0.33	1		
I would rather be a citizen of France than of any other country in the world.	0.31	0.37	0.28	0.26	1	
Generally speaking, France is a better country than most other countries.	0.20	0.25	0.13	0.15	0.38	1

Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

Views on the EU in France

Regarding the perception of the EU, Table 4 shows that French people seem to be informed about the EU, almost 80 percent pointed out that they have heard or read a lot or quite a bit about the bloc. Moreover, figures show that they also considered that France have benefited from being a Member State, only 3.1 percent said that this country did not benefit at all although almost 11 percent did not answer this question.

In the case of sovereignty, it seems to be that the supranational institutions of the EU have succeeded in dealing with the pooling of national sovereignty. In the case of the French people, even when most of them did not agree with following

EU decisions if France did not agree with them (almost 40 percent disagree strongly or disagree with this statement and only 28.6 percent agree strongly or agree with it), the category “neither agree nor disagree” were the single preferred option (it concentrated 26 percent of the answers). Moreover, 35.6 percent indicated that the EU should have as much power than the national governments and 18.4 percent indicated that it should have much more or more power.

In line with previous findings that did not show clear evidence of disconformity with the EU, in case of a referendum, 61.0 percent of the citizenship indicated that they would vote in favor of remaining as a Member State of the EU while only 23.2 percent would prefer to leave the bloc. The fourth wave of the National Identity module (that will be released in 2026) would provide crucial information to deep the understanding of this process and to assess whether the Brexit could have impacted on these opinions as a key antecedent.

Table 4: How is the connection between the French people and the EU?

Dimension 1: Knowledge		A lot	Quite a bit	Not much	Nothing at all	Cannot choose	Total	
	How much have you heard or read about the EU?	45.2%	34.3%	17.3%	1.2%	2.1%	100%	
Dimension 2: Benefits		Greatly benefits	Largely benefits	Somewhat benefits	Benefits only a little	Does not benefit at all	Do not know	Total
	Generally speaking, would you say that France benefits or does not benefit from being a member of EU?	13.9%	31.2%	31.7%	9.5%	3.1%	10.6%	100%
Dimension 3: Sovereignty		Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly	Cannot choose	Total
	How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement? France should follow EU decisions, even if it does not agree with them.	6.6%	22.0%	26.0%	25.3%	13.8%	6.3%	100%
		Much more	More	As much	Less	Much less	Cannot choose	Total
	Generally, do you think that the EU should have much more, more, as much, less, or much less power than the national governments of its Member States?	5.2%	13.2%	35.6%	23.4%	9.9%	12.7%	100%
Dimension 4: Willingness of belonging		Vote for France to remain a member of the EU	Vote for France to leave the EU	Cannot choose	No answer	Total		
	If there were a referendum today to decide whether France does or does not remain a member of the EU, would you vote in favor or would you vote against?	61.0%	23.2%	14.4%	1.4%	100%		

Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

Given these outcomes, the correlations among this set of variables were computed. Once again, all of them resulted significant at 1 percent. Table 5 shows the correlation matrix and as expected, they showed a positive sign, hence all of them move in the same direction. The strongest association is found between both questions linked to sovereignty (dimension 3) in other words, if a person strongly agrees with following the EU decisions even if France disagree with them, it is more likely that this person considers that the EU should have much more power than the national governments.

It is worth noting that the third dimension (perception of benefits from being a Member State) shows a high correlation with all other views on the EU. It means that if a person considers that the country has benefit from being a Member State it is more likely that this person agrees with following the EU decisions or he/she does vote for remaining as a Member State.

Table 5: Correlation matrix among the views on the EU

	Dimension 1: Knowledge	Dimension 2: Benefits	Dimension 3: Sovereignty 1	Dimension 3: Sovereignty 2	Dimension 4: Willingness of belonging
Dimension 1: Knowledge	1				
Dimension 2: Benefits	0.32	1			
Dimension 3: Sovereignty 1	0.15	0.39	1		
Dimension 3: Sovereignty 2	0.19	0.36	0.44	1	
Dimension 4: Willingness of belonging	0.20	0.37	0.36	0.36	1

Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

The relationship between nationalism and views on the EU in France

The question that emerges from previous findings is whether there is a significant association between nationalism and the views on the EU. To shed light on this issue, the correlations among them were computed and Table 6 shows the correlation matrix.

Table 6: The associations among nationalism and the views on the EU in France

	Dimension 1: Knowledge	Dimension 2: Benefits	Dimension 3: Sovereignty 1	Dimension 3: Sovereignty 2	Dimension 4: Willingness of belonging
How close do you feel to France?	0.03	0.01	-0.01	-0.01	0.02
How proud are you of being French?	-0.03	0.00	-0.01	-0.04**	-0.07***
How important is to have French nationality?	0.03	-0.09***	-0.10***	-0.07***	-0.08***
How important is to feel French?	0.02	-0.04*	-0.05**	-0.06***	-0.05**
I would rather be a citizen of France than of any other country in the world.	-0.04*	-0.11***	-0.06***	-0.06**	-0.10***
Generally speaking, France is a better country than most other countries.	-0.04	-0.04*	-0.02	0.01	-0.07***

Note: *** significant at 1%, ** significant at 5% and * significant at 10%.

Source: own elaboration based on ISSP 2013.

Firstly, there is no evidence of an association between patriotism and the views on the EU. In other words, there would not be relevant differences between those who feel close to France and those who do not. Secondly, if there is a significant correlation, nationalism correlates negatively with interest and attitudes towards the EU. For example, those who are proud of being French, tend to prefer that the national governments have more power than the EU's institutions and they are more likely to vote in favor of leaving the bloc. Moreover, the more important to have French nationality or to feel French, the less likely that people appreciate the benefits from being a Member State, that people accept the losses in sovereignty and that the French people opt to remain as a Member State.

Thirdly, the correlations indicate that the same is true in the case of chauvinism. Those who would prefer to be a citizen of France than of any other country seem to be more critical with the EU. Furthermore, if the person considers that France is a better country than most other countries, the perception of the benefits from being a Member State tend to be

lower and it is also more likely that he/ she vote for leaving the EU.

Finally, it is worth focusing on French people's opinions in case of a referendum. On one side, as it was mentioned most of the respondent indicated that they would vote for remaining as a Member State (61.0 percent). On the other hand, it should be noted that nationalism and chauvinism may play a relevant role in shaping personal opinions while there is no significant association between this opinion and patriotism. In particular, the strongest negative association is found in the case of those who would rather be a citizen of France.

CONCLUSIONS

This study focuses on nationalism, attitudes towards the EU and their relationship in the case of France. The main contribution to the literature is based on showing the significant role of nationalism in shaping French opinions towards the bloc. Although the survey was conducted in 2013 and that could be seen as a methodological limitation, it is worth considering that the responses were not biased by the Brexit process.

Findings reveal that nationalism and chauvinism play a crucial role given the strong negative association that exist between these feelings and attitudes towards the EU and specially, in case of a referendum on EU membership. Given the political context, a referendum to ask the electorate whether France should remain a member or leave the EU could not be discharged.

Even when, in 2013, most of the people indicated that they would vote to remain as a Member State and most of the people considered that France has benefited from membership, the significant role of these sentiments and Euroscepticism that have been on the rise (Arnorsson and Zoega, 2016, Likaj, Rieble and Theuer, 2020 and Timofeev, 2017) should impact on these opinions. Moreover, the economic performances of the EU and of Great Britain after the Brexit add outcome uncertainty. Moreover, it is worth remembering that in 2013, almost 16 percent cannot choose or did not answer the question about membership.

Findings shed further light on the role of supranational institutions. One clear implication is that the EU will deal with obstacles in improving people's evaluations of its performance. The bloc needs to balance the impacts on national sovereignty and how the citizenship perceives them. The communications channels may have a relevant role to influence on individual opinions. However, this result should be considered in the light of a limitation, the survey does not allow to identify if the public is either uninformed or misinformed. For instance, the EU's institutions could consider this information to reassess their strategies with the aim of having a more positive impact on the citizenship, specially, regarding the benefits from being a Member State or the functioning of the decision-making processes.

Given the potential impact of the Brexit and Great Britain's performance on people's opinions regarding a possible Frexit, future research should explore the relationship between these events and French nationalism and views on the bloc. Specifically, a longitudinal study could be conducted using the new wave (that will be released in 2026) to track changes in attitudes and beliefs over time. The fourth wave presents an opportunity to assess this issue further.

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