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Received: 21.01.2021.

Correction received:

06.03.2021.

Accepted: 17.03.2021.

ATTITUDES TOWARD EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN SERBIA AND CROATIA - THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND NATIONAL ATTACHMENT

For the past few decades, European integration has been one of the primary issues not just in politics, but also in the social sciences. This issue becomes even more important when research takes place in countries where the population is ambivalent in their support for the EU and European integration. The main aims of the study presented in this paper are to investigate differences in Serbia and Croatia in pro-European orientation and the perception of European integration (EI) as a threat, and to determine the factors underlying both constructs by focusing on sociodemographic variables, the importance of religion, and different forms of national attachment. The results show that citizens of Croatia have a stronger pro-European orientation, while there is no difference in the perception of EI as a threat. Pro-European orientation is determined by the respondents' national identity (in both countries) and gender, the importance of religion, and national pride in the state (only in Serbia). The significant predictors for the perception of EI as a threat were constructive patriotism and national pride in successful individuals (in Serbia), blind patriotism (in Croatia) and the importance of religion (in both countries). The practical importance of the results could be in understanding the obstacles and reservations different people have regarding European integrations.

Key words: Pro-European orientation, European integrations, EU as threat, national identity, attitudes toward Europe

Introduction

Since the first economic integrations in Europe began with the ECSC in the 1950s, researchers from different areas of the social sciences have been questioning how these integrations impact the everyday lives of Europeans. The main idea behind a unified Europe does not necessarily only refer to Europe as one political entity, such as the EU. It also involves cultural unification usually achieved through the use of historical myths such as a common Christian heritage and a common political and legal history (Bryant, 1991). Furthermore, the idea of Europe as a peaceful and democratic project, a manifestation of secular rituals, and the use of common Euro symbols (the flag, anthem, passport format, etc.) promoted a “common cultural identity” (Jacobs & Maier, 1998; Shore, 1995). It was this idea of a common Europe that was often taken for granted (not without merit) by European elites as being strongly supported by European citizens well into the 1970s (Hooghe & Marks, 2008; Ionescu, 1974; Lindberg & Scheingold, 1970). However, after the first referendums on EU membership and the first elections for the European Parliament in 1979, researchers began raising questions concerning citizens’ involvement in European integrations, as well as their growing scepticism regarding this topic (Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; Hobolt, 2009).

What is a “pro-European orientation”?

Although there is some confusion about the definition of a pro-European orientation and similar terms like pro-European feelings (Evans, 2000), EU enlargement support (Karp & Bowler, 2006) and even (reverse) Euroskepticism (Elenbaas & de Vreese, 2008; Hooghe & Marks, 2007), in this paper, pro-European orientation will be used as a synonym for positive attitudes toward European (political and cultural) integration.

First, a considerable part of pro-European orientation in both media and research is linked to support for the EU. As we will try to demonstrate, a pro-European stance—no matter how it is referred to—should not be linked (exclusively) to the support of EU membership as it is also associated with a united Europe in general, which includes political, economic and cultural integration. An even more important question that studies have tried to answer is what determines favorable attitudes toward European integration, i.e., a pro-European orientation? Is this positive attitude toward European integration primarily a result of different national and international economic factors, or are there more specific national and international cultural and historical contexts that influence opinions on the matter? For example, there were clear trends of support for European integrations in different countries pre-Maastricht (Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993) followed by a sharp decline in support

post-Maastricht (Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007; Guinadeau & Schanetterer, 2017; Vries, 2013).

If we consider these results from the perspective of the average EU citizen, there are at least two explanations for why people do (not) support European integration. The first, which was almost uncontested in the 1980s, rested on utilitarian theories based on the premise that citizens evaluate the costs and benefits of integration and, according to the result of this analysis (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Cram, 2012; Eichenberg & Dalton, 1993; McLaren, 2004), they consequently support integration. These theories also assume that citizens are rational actors and this calculation is based on their knowledge and evaluations (Cinnirela, 1997); therefore an economic crisis in any country, or in the EU itself, would result in a decrease in pro-European orientation (Verhaegen et al., 2014). However, after a sharp decline in pro-European attitudes in the post-Maastricht era, new theories had to be constructed since research showed economic factors could not solely explain the significant drop in support for European integrations since the 1990s (Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007; Vries, 2013).

The second explanation relies on findings showing that the drop in pro-European attitudes in the 1990s was more visible in the decline in support for policy integrations traditionally related to national symbolism, history, culture and national internal affairs such as education, healthcare, social security and cultural policy (Eichenberg & Dalton, 2007). Also, the very fact that the Maastricht Treaty and subsequent treaties were based on political and symbolic factors, rather than economic ones, could have been perceived as a threat to the nation state, and therefore led to more negative attitudes toward European integration (Carey, 2002). However, there is a large body of evidence that European integration can be perceived as a threat not only to national matters, but also to the social security issues, public security (especially in the light of the new wave of terrorist attacks in Western Europe) or even health crises (such as COVID-19 in 2020; Ladi & Tsarouhas, 2020). In the period after the beginning of the migrant crisis in Europe, serious questions were raised about the future of the Schengen regime, because the idea of non-existent borders inside the area proved too challenging for many of the countries, as it was never prepared to deal with the massive influx of refugees at one time (Schimmelfennig, 2018). In the light of the mentioned emerging crises of European integration, we raised, as one of the issues of this paper, the question of whether we can even claim that the same factors (both sociodemographic and psychological) influence pro-European attitudes and the perception of European integration as a threat to national interests (national identity, national security and even economy). Are these just two extremes of the same position, or are they qualitatively different, and are the factors contributing to the perception of European integration as a threat different from those that lead to a decrease in pro-European orientation?

This second wave of theories relies more on affective, cultural, and emotional support in relation to a pro-European orientation (Hooghe & Marks, 2008). Not surprisingly, these studies tend to be more interested in individual determinants of pro-European attitudes; although, these often do overlap with economic factors. For example, in most studies, a more positive stance on European integration is more common among younger, well-educated, urban, highly skilled citizens with higher incomes who are more open to different cultures and have lower “subjective vulnerability” (fear of loss of benefits); in short, groups that can benefit more from integrations (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Deflem & Pampel, 1996; Perez & Lopes, 2009; Petithomme, 2008).

All of these issues can lead to the conclusion that attitudes toward European integration are rather unstable and can change rather quickly from one study to the next as a result of different political and societal changes, and, possibly, that they are more complex than researchers initially thought. Therefore, it is extremely important to indicate not only the levels of pro-European attitudes in one country, but also the political and social atmosphere (including the existing crisis, both locally and in Europe itself) at the time of the research. Furthermore, fear of European integrations is more pronounced in non-EU countries and new member states, since citizens lack experience with the EU and European integration in general, so the issue of differentiation between pro-European attitudes and fear of European integrations again becomes an important point (Lavine et al., 1998; Vries, 2013).

National attachment and pro-European orientation

One of the main questions in these studies has often been whether national identity and a strong sense of national pride can interfere in the creation of pro-European attitudes, or whether it is possible for these attachments to strengthen a pro-European orientation if they are seen as an integral part of European orientation (e.g., Bruter, 2001; Cinnirela, 1997).

We have already mentioned more recent studies and theories that tend to take into account national politics as being the most important factor for citizens' attitudes toward European integration and claim that citizens (especially in new member states) lack important information about this issue and often rely on national parties, governments, and state policy toward the EU to make up their minds (Boomgaarden et al. 2011; Ray, 2003). National identity can also play important role in the formation of these attitudes, although the results of this relationship are quite ambiguous. In most studies, data show that strong national sentiments do in some instances interfere with pro-European orientation (Azrou, et al., 2011; Carey, 2002; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; McLaren, 2007), since EU integration and European identity compete with national identity for citizens' group loyalties (Duchesne & Frogner, 2008; Smith, 1992). Also, nationalists (as well as many others) point out that the European

integration project still does not provide the strong sense of security that nation states and national attachment provide to their citizens, and therefore it is not uncommon for people with higher attachment to their nation state (or even to the regions they live in) to be less enthusiastic about and more fearful of European integration (Petithomme, 2008).

However, numerous studies have also shown that citizens with higher national identity tend to be more pro-European if they do not perceive European integration as a threat to their national sentiments (Boomgaarden et al., 2011), or if there is no significant relationship between the two, especially in countries where there is overwhelming support for European integration among the elites (Pérez & Lopez, 2009). Furthermore, another important issue is how national attachment is measured, as different forms of national attachment seem to correlate differently with pro-European orientation. Namely, we can speculate that national identity and national pride are more often indicators of one's attachment to the state, whereas nationalism and patriotism are related more to attachment to one's nationality (ethnic group) and plausibly correlate differently with pro-European orientation.

Pro-European orientation in the Western Balkans

As mentioned before, the research presented in this paper was conducted in Serbia and Croatia, two countries with different paths to EU membership after 2003. So, what is noteworthy concerning pro-European attitudes in Serbia and Croatia? First of all, although Serbia and Croatia share a lot of similarities in their historic development, a common history and, for the majority of the 20th century, culture and political situation for the better part of the 20th century, the period after the 1990s is quite different in these countries. Also, it is, in part, a replication of the study from 2003. when neither of the countries was a member of the EU, or was even close to becoming a member.

After the end of the civil wars in Croatia and Bosnia in 1990s, Croatia almost immediately started its path towards the EU. Granted, the path was slow and consensus did not come easily until 2003, but it was much more goal-oriented than it had been in Serbia in the 1990s. One of the most important mottos of this consensus was that Croatia is Europe, meaning it belonged to Europe much more than to the Balkans, and was more progressive and cultured than the Balkan states were (Bartlett, 2003; Čehulić Vukadinović, 2013; Lindstrom, 2003; Subotić, 2011). After eight years of preparation, Croatia was on the threshold of EU membership, and in 2013. it became the newest member state after a 2011. referendum with a very low turnout (only 44% of people from Croatia voted, although, granted, the referendum was non-binding for the government). On the other hand, in Serbia, nationalist parties tend to see European integration as fundamentally in conflict with national interests (Subotić, 2011). Even those who were moderately pro-European (but anti-

EU) often talked about the blackmail and humiliation the EU was subjecting Serbia to in an effort to undermine its national independence (Antonić, 2008). During this time, and certainly before 2012, the European idea was far from universally shared. The first ideas of joining the EU and the first glimpse of pro-European attitudes on a larger scale came after the fall of Slobodan Milošević in 2000. Even afterwards, political opinion on whether EU membership was a positive choice was conflicted; but the majority opinion, and the opinion of the ruling political parties, was that Serbia had “no alternative” to EU membership (Marković-Tomić, 2016). Since 2012, no major political party has based its policies on opposition to the EU, and more focus has been given to the benefits Serbia would have after joining the EU. This is not unusual, since a pro-European stance often means several changes in government and ultimately major splits in the Eurosceptic parties or changes in their political agendas (Konitzer, 2011). Contrary to this, in the latest opinion poll in December 2018, only 55% of Serbian citizens voted in support of EU membership, which is one of the lowest levels in the past fifteen years. For example, in 2003, there was a pro-EU majority of 72% that remained consistent until 2009. (European Orientation of the Citizens of Serbia, 2019; Marković-Tomić, 2016). The steady decline in pro-EU (and pro-European) opinion in Serbia over the last decade is sometimes attributed to the “inevitable ambiguous and unclear message on why Serbia should join the EU, and the ever-pending dissolution of the EU” reported on almost daily (BBC World Service Trust, 2010). This is a constant in most EU candidate countries, as big words like “European standard” and “European integration” are not meaningful for the average person and tend to diminish pro-European orientation and/or raise fears about European integration over time (Baltezarević & Baltezarević, 2015).

One of the most prominent distinctions between Croatia and Serbia concerns the predominant religion (Roman Catholicism in Croatia and Orthodoxy in Serbia). Therefore, in this paper, we also deal with the importance of religion for pro-European orientation and the perception of European integration as a threat. Most of the previous studies show that more religious citizens tend to be more Eurosceptic, although this correlation is much weaker in Catholic countries than in Protestant ones (Boomgaarden & Freire, 2009; Guerra, 2013; Nelsen et al., 2001; Scherer, 2015; Young, 1998). But in Orthodox countries, the situation is somewhat ambiguous. Even though pro-European opinion is higher in predominantly Orthodox countries (such as Cyprus, Romania, and Bulgaria) than in Protestant (and to some degree Catholic) countries, the fact remains that these are also some of the newest EU members. The trend of higher optimism for the EU before and just after accession has been well documented (Pettithome, 2008; Scherer, 2015; Tverdova & Anderson, 2004; Vries, 2013). Therefore, religion might in fact not play such an important role in the results. Meanwhile, the Serbian Orthodox Church itself has remained ambivalent towards European integrations. On the one hand, most church scholars do perceive the danger of exclusive viewpoints for society, including Euroscepti-

cism, but on the other hand, they call for caution concerning the “secular” idea of Europe (Bigović, 2010; Krstić, 2015). This leads to an overwhelming opinion in the Serbian public that, similarly to non-Catholic countries in Europe, religious people are more Eurosceptic than non-believers. However, we have no data that support this claim, which is why we have chosen to include the importance of religion as a potential factor in pro-European orientation and the perception of European integration as a threat in Serbia and Croatia.

The present study

The main research question we raise here is: Is there a difference in pro-European orientation and perception of European integration as a threat in Croatia (an EU member state) and Serbia (an EU candidate country)? Second, our aim is to find out how sociodemographic factors (respondents' gender, education, and age), the importance of religion, and different forms of national attachment contribute to the levels of pro-European orientation, with the focus being on national identity, national pride, and patriotism (both blind and constructive). Finally, we want to determine if the same factors contribute to the perception of European integration as a threat, or if these sets of factors are unique for each of the variables used.

Method

Sample and procedure

Our sample consisted of 484 Serbian citizens and 483 Croatian citizens (total $N = 967$) aged 18 to 79, and only the majority ethnic group in both countries was taken into account (i.e., ethnic Serbs from Serbia and ethnic Croats from Croatia). The sample roughly represents the majority in both countries in gender, age and education.

The Serbian participants were aged 18 to 68 ($M = 36.58$, $SD = 12.59$), and 50.40% were women. The Croatian participants were similar in age to the Serbian sample (aged 18 to 79; $M = 38.70$, $SD = 13.89$), and the majority of this sample (59%) were women. About half of the participants in both samples had completed secondary education (55.20% in Serbia, 47.90% in Croatia), and the rest of the sample had completed either primary education (16.90% in Serbia, 19.90% in Croatia) or higher education, including MA and PhD levels (29.70% in Serbia, 32.20% in Croatia). Four age groups were created, comparable to the similar study of European identity in 2003. of which this study is a continuation: 18-25 years (26.90% in Serbia, 22.30% in Croatia), 26-35 years (22.50% in Serbia, 21.70% in Croatia), 36-45 years (23.10% in Serbia, 18.80% in Croatia) and older than 45 years (27.50% in Serbia, 37.30% in Croatia). However, in all of the analysis, age was used as a continuous variable, not as four categories.

The sample was collected during 2016. and 2017. Paper-and-pencil questionnaires were administered individually with all participants.

Measures/Instruments

Subjects filled the questionnaire in their own language (Serbian or Croatian, respectively). Also, all of the scales used in the questionnaire were tested several times in different studies beginning in 2003, either in Serbia or Croatia, or, in most cases, in both countries. However, we have re-tested the factor structure and reliability of all scales for this paper and they proved to be stable in time and in different samples. In the analysis, mean scores for all the instruments have been used.

National Identity Scale (Cinnirella, 1997)

The scale represents a measure of self-assessment, and consists of 7 items. Responses are given on a continuous 5-point scale ending with contrasting categories (e.g., "To what extent do you feel close to other members of your nation?") from *not close enough* to *very close*. A higher score indicates a stronger national identity. The scale showed high reliability in both samples ($\alpha = .86$ in Serbia and $.88$ in Croatia).

National Pride Scale (adapted from the General Social Survey, 1996)

This scale consists of 10 items (e.g., "Indicate how proud you are of your country regarding...its political impact in the world?"). Two factors were extracted describing pride in the state ($\alpha = .70$ in Serbia and $.69$ in Croatia; pride in the nation's political influence, social welfare system, democratic achievements, etc.) and pride in the successful individuals of one's nation ($\alpha = .62$ in Serbia and $.68$ in Croatia; pride in the nation's achievements in sports, history, art, literature etc.). As these match the theoretical structure, mean scores for both factors were used in the analysis.

Blind and Constructive Patriotism Scale (Schatz, 1995)

This scale measures attachment to the nation (i.e., levels of patriotism). Blind patriotism implies the rejection of any kind of criticism aimed toward one's own people, while constructive patriotism implies openness to criticism of actions conducted on behalf of the nation that respondents consider to be violations of basic national values and long-term interests. The scale consists of 18 items. Examples of blind and constructive patriotism include: "People who do not support Serbia/Croatia with all their heart should live somewhere else", and "We should have complete freedom of speech, even for those who criticize this country". After excluding three items due to their poor psychometric

characteristics, a two-factor interpretive solution was obtained for both samples that formed blind ($\alpha = .82$ in Serbia and $.83$ in Croatia) and constructive patriotism ($\alpha = .69$ and $.75$, respectively) subscales.

Pro-European Orientation and Perception of European Integration as a Threat (PEO; Authors, 2007, Appendix A and B)

The Pro-European Orientation Scale ($\alpha = .82$ in Serbian sample and $.78$ in Croatian sample) consists of eight items measuring respondents' attitudes toward Europe, the EU and European political, economic, and cultural integration (i.e., "All citizens of Europe should work on developing a new European culture and way of life"). The Perception of European Integration (EI) as a Threat Scale ($\alpha = .77$ in Serbian sample and $.72$ in Croatian sample) had six items mostly dealing with the potential threat a unified Europe poses to the national interests of the respondent's country (i.e., "A united Europe is an idea imposed by the few most economically powerful countries in the West").

The data collected also included several potentially important sociodemographic variables such as gender, age, education, and importance of religion (measured by one item: "How important is religion in your life?" on a five points scale).

Results

Pro-European orientation and perception of European integration (EI) as a threat in Croatia and Serbia

The first step in determining differences between respondents from Serbia and Croatia was invariance testing on both constructs. Confirmatory factor analysis and measurement invariance were performed in R packages "semTools" (Jorgensen et al., 2018) and "lavaan" (Rosseel, 2012). Because multivariate kurtosis was violated, robust maximum likelihood estimator (*MLR*) was used. Three levels of measurement invariance were tested: 1) a configural invariance model, in which the number of factors and the items that load on these factors were the same, but factor loadings and intercepts were allowed to vary between groups; 2) a weak or metric invariance model, in which the factor loadings were constrained to be equal between groups; 3) a strong or scalar invariance model, in which factor loadings and intercepts were constrained to be equal between groups, thus enabling mean comparison (e.g., Brown, 2006). Several model fit indices were calculated: χ^2 , which should not be significant for good model fit, comparative fit index (*CFI*) and Tucker-Lewis index (*TLI*), with acceptable values above $.90$, the standardized root mean square residual (*SRMR*), with acceptable values below $.08$, and the root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*), for which acceptable values were below $.10$ (e.g., Hu

& Bentler, 1999). For nested model comparisons, $\Delta\chi^2$ was used, however this index is sensitive to sample size, therefore other indices were also considered, ΔCFI which should be less than .01 with model with higher CFI obtained a better fit, and $\Delta RMSEA$ which should be less than .015, with model with lower $RMSEA$ obtained a better model fit (Chen, 2007). If measurement invariance levels do not differ significantly, we could conclude that a higher level of measurement invariance is achieved.

The results of invariance testing show that Pro-European Orientation (PEO) demonstrated strong scalar measurement invariance with regard to both versions (Table 1). In the case of Perception of EI as a Threat (PET), the results show that weak metric invariance was achieved; however, strong scalar invariance was not achieved. Based on further analysis of items, the results show that partial scalar invariance could be achieved if Item 3 were omitted. With this item omitted, although $\Delta\chi^2$ is still significant ($p < .05$), other indices (ΔCFI and $\Delta RMSEA$) indicate no significant differences between metric and partial scalar invariance (Table 1). Since mean comparison is needed for testing the hypotheses, we excluded item 3 from the PET from both Serbian and Croatian versions in order to achieve strong scalar invariance.

Table 1

Model fit indices for measurement invariance for Pro-European Orientation (PEO) and Perception of EI as a Threat (PET)

Scale	$\chi^2(df)$	$\Delta\chi^2(\Delta df)$	CFI	ΔCFI	TLI	Robust $RMSEA$ (90%CI)	$\Delta RMSEA$	$SRMR$
PEO								
configural	78.27(40)***		.92		.89	.08 (.07-.09)		.05
metric	86.74(47)***	5.88(7)	.92	-.001	.91	.08 (.07-.09)	-.004	.05
scalar	175.16(54)***	9.10(7)	.92	.001	.92	.08 (.06-.09)	.005	.05
PET								
configural	36.92(18)**		.99		.98	.04 (.01-.07)		.02
metric	40.87(23)	3.61(5)	.99	-.001	.99	.03 (.00-.06)	.007	.03
scalar	64.68(28)	23.32(5)***	.97	.017	.97	.05 (.03-.07)	-.015	.04
scalar partial	53.77(27)	12.4(4)*	.98	.008	.98	.04 (.02-.06)	-.007	.04

Notes. Scalar partial referred to released item no 3.

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Descriptives for variables used are presented in Table 2. Respondents from Croatia have a statistically higher pro-European orientation than respondents from Serbia, although the size of the effect is not very large ($t(964) = 2.95$, $df = 961$, $p = .003$; Cohen's $d = 0.19$), and there are no significant differences in the levels of perception of EI as a threat between these samples ($t(964) = 1.77$, $df = 961$, $p = .076$; Cohen's $d = 0.09$).

Table 2

Descriptive indicators for tested variables in Serbia and Croatia

	Serbia				Croatia			
	M	SD	Sk	Ku	M	SD	Sk	Ku
Pro-European orientation	2.61	0.75	-0.03	-0.24	2.75	0.64	-0.03	0.24
Perception of EI as a threat	3.54	0.85	-0.32	-0.48	3.46	0.74	-0.37	0.16
National identity	3.58	0.85	-0.48	-0.41	3.40	0.89	-0.44	-0.57
Blind patriotism	2.47	0.77	0.34	-0.48	2.24	0.77	0.34	-0.49
Constructive patriotism	3.87	0.67	-0.43	-0.03	3.90	0.70	-0.55	0.46
National pride in the state	2.15	0.73	0.96	1.46	2.09	0.71	0.89	1.13
National pride in successful individuals	3.72	0.82	-0.55	0.19	3.59	0.88	-0.59	-0.01

Correlation analyses (Table 3) show that pro-European orientation is negatively related to the importance of religion and positively related to gender in Serbia, as well as to the perception of EI as a threat and national identity in both countries. On the other hand, the perception of EI as a threat is positively related to the importance of religion, national identity, blind and constructive patriotism, as well as national pride in successful individuals in both countries, and to national pride in the state in the Croatian sample. Taking these results into account, as well as the fact that pro-European orientation and the perception of European integration as a threat correlate only moderately, it seems justified to treat these variables separately in further analyses.

Table 3
Intercorrelations of variables in both samples (correlations in the Croatian sample are written in italic)

	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Gender	<i>-.02</i>	<i>-.01</i>	<i>.12**</i>	<i>.13**</i>	<i>-.09</i>	<i>-.04</i>	<i>.02</i>	<i>-.21**</i>	<i>-.02</i>	<i>.01</i>
	<i>.12**</i>	<i>.00</i>	<i>.09</i>	<i>.01</i>	<i>.02</i>	<i>.05</i>	<i>-.00</i>	<i>.02</i>	<i>-.05</i>	<i>.06</i>
2. Age		<i>.00</i>	<i>.06</i>	<i>.08</i>	<i>.03</i>	<i>.11*</i>	<i>.22**</i>	<i>.20**</i>	<i>.11*</i>	<i>.10*</i>
		<i>.09*</i>	<i>.11*</i>	<i>.02</i>	<i>.13**</i>	<i>.11*</i>	<i>.24**</i>	<i>.18**</i>	<i>.06</i>	<i>.07</i>
3. Education			<i>-.06</i>	<i>-.00</i>	<i>.07</i>	<i>-.04</i>	<i>-.20**</i>	<i>.07</i>	<i>-.10*</i>	<i>.06</i>
			<i>-.11*</i>	<i>.05</i>	<i>-.09</i>	<i>-.18**</i>	<i>-.15**</i>	<i>.03</i>	<i>-.09</i>	<i>.03</i>
4. Importance of religion				<i>-.20**</i>	<i>.16**</i>	<i>.41**</i>	<i>.37**</i>	<i>.01</i>	<i>.18**</i>	<i>.17**</i>
				<i>-.07</i>	<i>.22**</i>	<i>.49**</i>	<i>.45**</i>	<i>.16**</i>	<i>.31**</i>	<i>.33**</i>
5. Pro-European orientation					<i>-.42**</i>	<i>-.17**</i>	<i>-.04</i>	<i>-.06</i>	<i>.04</i>	<i>-.05</i>
					<i>-.41**</i>	<i>-.15**</i>	<i>-.02</i>	<i>.01</i>	<i>.03</i>	<i>-.05</i>
6. Perception of EI as a threat						<i>.18**</i>	<i>.12**</i>	<i>.23**</i>	<i>.04</i>	<i>.18**</i>
						<i>.21**</i>	<i>.23**</i>	<i>.11*</i>	<i>.09*</i>	<i>.12*</i>
7. National identity							<i>.45**</i>	<i>.18**</i>	<i>.32**</i>	<i>.33**</i>
							<i>.50**</i>	<i>.29**</i>	<i>.33**</i>	<i>.45**</i>
8. Blind patriotism								<i>.07</i>	<i>.44**</i>	<i>.17**</i>
								<i>.09</i>	<i>.38**</i>	<i>.26**</i>
9. Constructive patriotism									<i>.02</i>	<i>.19**</i>
									<i>.08</i>	<i>.22**</i>
10. National pride in the state										<i>.34**</i>
										<i>.40**</i>
11. National pride in the successful individuals										

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Prediction of attitudes toward European integration

A two-step hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine predictors of Pro-European Orientation and Perception of EI as a Threat. In both analyses, two sets of predictors were used: sociodemographic variables (gender, age, education, importance of religion) in the first step, and different forms of national attachment (national identity, two aspects of patriotism, and two aspects of national pride) in the second step.

Predictors of Pro-European orientation

In the Serbian sample, both tested models are statistically significant ($(4, 468) = 9.2, p < .001$; $(9, 463) = 5.07, p < .001$), and total variance explained is about 9% (percentage of explained variance of both models is given in Table 4). In the Croatian sample, only the second model is significant ($(4, 454) = 1.07, p > .05$; $(9, 449) = 1.96, p < .05$), and total variance explained is lower than in Serbia (about 4%).

As shown in Table 4, pro-European orientation in the Serbian sample (in the final model) is higher in women, older citizens, and individuals who gave lower importance to religion. Out of the different forms of national attachment, only national identity negatively contributes to pro-European orientation, while national pride in the state has a positive relationship to pro-European orientation (although, as Table 3 indicates, this could be a suppressor effect). In the Croatian sample, none of the sociodemographic variables contribute significantly to the prediction of pro-European orientation. Out of the different forms of national attachment, only national identity negatively contributes to pro-European orientation.

Table 4
Hierarchical regression analysis - prediction of pro-European orientation in both samples

Step	Predictors	Serbia		Croatia	
		Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)
1	Gender	.16**	.15**	.03	.04
	Age	.10*	.10*	-.00	-.01
	Education	-.03	-.02	.06	.05
	Importance of religion	-.23**	-.20**	-.07	-.02
	National identity		-.11*		-.20**
	Blind patriotism		.01		.05
	Constructive patriotism		-.02		.07
2	National pride in the state		.11*		.08
	National pride in successful individuals		-.02		-.02
		$R^2 = .07^{**}$	$\Delta R^2 = .02^{**}$	$R^2 = .01$	$\Delta R^2 = .03^*$

Note: ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Predictors of Perception of EI as a threat

In the Serbian sample, both tested models are statistically significant ($(4, 465) = 5.27, p < .001$; $(9, 460) = 6.15, p < .001$). Total variance explained is 9% (percentage of explained variance of both models is given in table 4). Unlike Pro-European orientation, both tested models in the Croatian sample are statistically significant in this instance ($(4, 453) = 8.49, p < .001$; $(9, 448) = 4.71, p < .001$), and total variance explained is higher (7%).

As shown in Table 5, Perception of EI as a Threat (in the final model) is higher in the Serbian sample among individuals who place higher importance on religion. Out of the different forms of national attachment, constructive patriotism and national pride in successful individuals contribute positively to the perception of EI as a threat. In the Croatian sample, the importance of religion is also positively related to the perception of EI as a threat, while out of the different forms of national attachment only blind patriotism contributes positively to the perception of EI as a threat.

Table 5
Hierarchical regression analysis - prediction of Perception of EI as a Threat in both samples

Step	Predictors	Serbia		Croatia	
		Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)
1	Gender	-.11*	-.07	-.02	-.01
	Age	.02	-.04	.12**	.09
	Education	.08	.07	-.09	-.07
	Importance of religion	.17**	.12*	.20**	.13*
	National identity		.05		.04
	Blind patriotism		.08		.11*
2	Constructive patriotism		.19**		.05
	National pride in the state		-.07		-.03
	National pride in the successful individuals		.12*		.02
		= .04**	Δ = .06**	= .07**	Δ = .02

Note: ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Discussion

Before we discuss the results, we will look back on the relation between our two main concepts. Although we cannot offer a definitive answer to the question of whether pro-European orientation and the perception of European integration as a threat are two opposite poles of one dimension, we are not inclined to support this. First of all, the correlation between the two is rather low (just above .40 in both countries). Furthermore, there are obvious differences in the predictors of both variables, therefore, it is highly likely that the two are different (although related) qualities of the attitudes toward Europe and its integration. Lastly, the items in both scales show that Pro-European orientation is more cognitive (rational?) than the Perception of EI as a threat. Concerning the latter, fear, or at least reservation toward European integration

is much more distinctive, pointing us to the conclusion that these two concepts rely on different psychological factors.

The results show that pro-European orientation is higher in Croatia than in Serbia. Although this may not seem surprising at first, it is important to note that this is in complete opposition to findings from the research in 2003. (Kamenov et al., 2006). It is also in contrast to the usual result that citizens of EU candidate countries tend to have more positive attitudes toward Europe and European integration (Pettithome, 2008; Scherer, 2015; Tverdova & Anderson, 2004; Vries, 2013). However, we must take into account that in 2003, Croatia's political parties were just arriving at a consensus on Croatia's European future, and that it was also a tumultuous year for many issues in Serbia, as it was the year that a pro-European stance in Serbia was at an all-time high. On the other hand, after 2003, Croatia's elites were very keen on promoting membership in the EU, and this eventually resulted in its accession in 2013. Thus, it was not unexpected that pro-European attitudes would drop significantly in Serbia. This study demonstrates that pro-European orientation is now higher in Croatia, which is a young EU member state, and had been a member only for three years at the time the study was conducted.

One possible explanation for the finding that there is no difference between Serbia and Croatia in the perception of EI as threat might be that this perception is rather high in both countries, and that both countries are among the member states (or member candidate states) that tend to have more economic and internal political challenges than countries in Western Europe. This is not uncommon in smaller and less economically stable countries in which citizens are more fearful of a European future and what European integrations will bring to their country and to them personally (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Deflem & Pampel, 1996; Perez & Lopez, 2009; Pettithomme, 2008).

As for the factors that contribute to pro-European orientation and the perception of EI as a threat, it is clear that the variables chosen here are better predictors of the latter. Furthermore, we can see that there are differences in the predictive models of both pro-European orientation and the perception of EI as a threat in Serbia and Croatia. However, in both models and countries, the percentage of variance explained is rather low, indicating that there are other important variables not used in these models. We could speculate that variables more directly linked to European attitudes would be better predictors of pro-European orientation and the perception of EI as a threat (such as European identity). Furthermore, a low standard deviation in both samples suggests there is a considerable consensus on the European future of both Serbia and Croatia, regardless of background and national attachment.

In terms of pro-European orientation, it is noteworthy that none of the sociodemographic variables are significant predictors in Croatia (which is in line with other studies that show that when national consensus has been achieved, a pro-European agenda is shared by most groups in the country (Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Pérez & Lopez, 2009; Subotić, 2011), while age, gender, and the

importance of religion are significant in the model in Serbia (older citizens, women, and those who find religion less important tend to have a stronger pro-European orientation). If we take only Serbia into account, the result that women have more a pronounced pro-European orientation has also been found in other studies (i.e., Boomgaarden et al., 2011; Vries, 2013), although it is not a constant (i.e., Damjanovski et al., 2020; Nelsen & Guth, 2000). Regarding age, older respondents tend to have more positive pro-European attitudes, which is in contrast with some recent studies that show higher Euroscepticism among older respondents (Damjanovski et al., 2020). However, as we argued at the beginning of this paper, low Euroscepticism is not a synonym for Pro European orientation (or, rather, Anti-European orientation), but rather a mixture of PEO and fear of European integrations, based on challenges for the individual, but also for the national identity and economy. Although this result is different in our study, age was not among the most important predictors of either Euroscepticism (Damjanovski et al., 2020) or PEO (in our study). One of the more interesting findings is the negative relationship between the importance of religion and a pro-European orientation in Serbia, but not in Croatia. Research shows that non-Catholic countries tend to have more negative attitudes toward European integration (Boomgaarden & Freire, 2009; Guerra, 2013; Nelsen et al., 2001; Scherer, 2015), and since Orthodox churches maintain a somewhat ambivalent position toward Europe and its supposed secularism (Bigović, 2010; Krstić, 2015), this result is well in line with expectations. Therefore, it appears that the deciding variable here is not so much an importance of religion, but rather importance of the specific religion. There are only four predominantly Orthodox countries in the EU, and only one (Greece) joined before 2004. As for the member-candidate states in the Western Balkans, it is clear that Orthodox countries tend to be more Eurosceptic than those with a higher number of Muslim citizens (Damjanovski et al., 2020). The solution to this issue could lie in sharing the experience of EU Orthodox countries and their role in the EU. This could lower the reservation Orthodox believers have toward integration that, still, favours economically stronger nations which are, Protestant or, in rare cases, Catholic.

The second set of variables show that a strong national identity interferes with pro-European orientation in both countries, while pride in the state's achievements contributes positively to it (although significantly only in Serbia). According to the results of the correlation analysis, the correlations between national identity and other forms of national attachments are high. This could explain why all other measures of national attachment failed to reach the level of significance in this analysis, and it is not uncommon for strong national identity not to interfere with pro-European attitudes (Azrou et al., 2011; Carey, 2002; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005; McLaren, 2007). Although the finding that people who have more pride in the state are also more pro-European may at first seem counterintuitive, the answer lies in the scale itself. The National Pride Scale measures pride in the areas that are the core principles Europe is

based on (social welfare, democratic institutions, equality, etc.). Therefore, it is not unexpected that people who are proud of Serbia's achievement in the aforementioned areas would perceive European integration as a means for Serbia's validation by other European nations. We would like to reiterate that we do not consider these two to be in any kind of opposition; higher national sentiments do not necessarily mean lower pro-European stance (as was partly the case in this study). But, most nationalistic parties in almost all European countries (and people) tend to place national identity and pro-European orientation in opposition, and it is vital that policy makers (both in Europe and in the EU and EU member countries) focus more on reassuring citizens that national identities will not be threatened in any way by the integration of assets and culture in Europe. It seems people still struggle with this notion and many of them oppose European integrations on the basis of endangerment of their national sentiments.

Predictors of the perception of EI as a threat are somewhat different from predictors of pro-European orientation, which indicates that these are not simply two extremes of the same attitude, but instead two qualitatively different aspects of a particular stance on European integration. In both countries, the importance of religion was one of the most significant (in Croatia it was the most significant) predictors of the perception of EI as a threat, which demonstrates that more religious people do not necessarily have an anti-European orientation but do feel more threatened by European integration. They most likely acknowledge that integration is more focused on economic and cultural issues, in which religious, or at least Christian, matters are often perceived as burdensome for European religious diversity. It is interesting to point out that, unlike pro-European orientation, believers of both Christian denominations in these countries share concerns over the role of religion in general in secular institutions like the European Union. A guarantee that the Christian heritage of Europe would be preserved could provide the answer, but could also increase fears of integration in non-Christian countries of Europe, many of which are on their road to the EU.

As for national attachment scales, patriotism proved its predictive strength. Blind patriotism is, in fact, very close to nationalism, and therefore it could be expected that those who are more nationalist, even in EU countries (or more precisely, especially in the smaller EU countries) tend to perceive European integration as a threat to their country due to fears of what place their country would be relegated to in such a large community. In Serbia, the reason why this kind of patriotism is not relevant potentially lies in the fact that Serbia is far from its place in the EU, so the nationalists need not use fear as a means of creating opposition to European integration, but rather some other, more tangible factors. Perhaps more interesting is the result that people who has higher constructive patriotism in Serbia tends to be more fearful of Serbia's future in a united Europe. The reason for this probably lays in the fact that people with more realistic perceptions of Serbia's problems, and who are

more critical of its internal accomplishments, fear European integration because it will impose demands and requirements that Serbia is still not ready for. This is why, in terms of constructive patriotism, the more patriotic people are, the more they tend to be more fearful of the requirements European integrations impose on Serbia. This concern could be used for good, if politicians in member-country states become more open to the ideas and suggestions of those whose patriotism lies in the desire to assist their country's path to the new Europe, rather than those whose unreasonable fear for the nation could hinder integration.

At the end, we can conclude that pro-European orientation is somewhat higher in the EU member state than in the candidate state (at least in the SEE region). Furthermore, there seems to be no difference between new member states and candidate member states in terms of the perception of European integration as a threat; however, further research is needed to see if the same holds true in contexts outside of the Western Balkan states. It could be especially valuable to evaluate this result in other countries in Europe that share a similar history and/or culture, but are in different places on their EU membership roads (i.e., Ukraine and the Baltic states or Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina). It also appears that strong national attachment is more likely to interfere with pro-European orientation, and contribute to the perception of integrations as a threat. Finally, in both countries, strong religious feelings play an important part in the perception of EI as threat, but the predominant religion in the country is important only regarding pro-European orientation. Lastly, pride in the achievements of one's nation can also be a contributing factor to a pro-European orientation (if the pride is derived from similarities with the "European way of life") or for the perception of EI as threat, if this pride arises from achievements more likely to be overlooked within the greater European community. However, given all the above, we expect that in Serbia these differences will decrease as it draws nearer to EU membership, and also when political, cultural, and clerical elites come closer to achieving a consensus on the country's European future, as was the case in Croatia almost twenty years ago.

Authors' note

All ideas and results in the paper contain original empirical work done by the authors and their respective teams in Serbia and Croatia. The research meets all APA ethical standards. The data have been analyzed in the IBM SPSS23 software. Both authors' institutions have appropriate licenses for the software.

A Part of the data presented in this paper has been presented at the conference (Bodroža, B., Jelić, D., Mihić V., Jelić, M. & Kamenov, Ž. (2017). Pro-European orientation in Serbia and Croatia: Contribution of socio-demographic

characteristics, national attachment, European identity and perception of EU as a threat. Oral presentation on 23. *Dani Ramira i Zorana Bujasa* (6-8.4.2017., Zagreb, Croatia). Book of abstracts, pp. 80.)

Acknowledgement

We are deeply grateful to Bojana Dinić, associate professor at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad for her enormous help and insights in statistical analysis for this paper.

Funding

This work was supported by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Croatian Ministry of Science and Education. The funding institutions had no role in study design.

Conflict of interest

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pro-European Orientation scale

1. Our future lies solely in a unified Europe.
2. The identity of a European is worth giving up a part of our national identity for.
3. I support merging the cultural values of European nations and the creation of the new European way of life.
4. I consider myself first of all European, and then a member of my nation.
5. The creation of one European nation is the goal we should strive for.
6. The creation of the EU represents the path leading all European nations into a brighter future.
7. All citizens of Europe should strive to develop a new European culture and way of life.
8. Only merging human and financial resources on the European continent can create conditions for a better life.

Appendix B: Perception of European Integration as a Threat scale

1. European soil is so versatile that the idea of the European nation is pure utopia.
2. A unified Europe is an idea imposed by the few economical super-powers of the West.
3. The creation of the EU brings great harm to the national interests of the smaller countries.
4. People from different nations cannot achieve the unity that can be found in members of the same nation.
5. The creation of the EU leads to the inevitable domination of the larger European nations over the smaller ones.
6. The trend of world integration is in the interest of the big capital more than it can contribute to the better life of the ordinary people.

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STAVOVI KA EVROPSKIM INTEGRACIJAMA U SRBIJI I HRVATSKOJ - ZNAČAJ SOCIODEMOGRAFSKIH VARIJABLI I NACIONALNOG IDENTITETA

U proteklih par decenija, evropske integracije bile su jedan od najčešće istraživanih konstrukata u političkim, ali i u drugim društvenim naukama. Ova istraživanju su još važnija kada se sprovode u zemljama u kojima su građani ambivalentni u svojoj podršci EU i evropskim integracijama. Osnovni ciljevi ovog rada bili su istraživanje razlika između stanovnika Srbije i Hrvatske u proevropskoj orijentaciji i percepciji evropske integracije kao pretnje, kao i da se utvrde prediktori oba konstrukta, sa fokusom na sociodemografske varijable, važnost religije i različite forme nacionalne vezanosti. Rezultati pokazuju da stanovnici Hrvatske imaju snažniju proevropsku orijentaciju, kao i da nije bilo razlika u percepciji EI kao pretnje. Prediktori proevropske orijentacije bili su nacionalni identitet (u obe zemlje) kao i pol, važnost religije i nacionalni ponos državom (samo u Srbiji). Značajni prediktori percepcije EI kao pretnje bili su konstruktivni patriotizam i nacionalni ponos uspešnim pojedincima (u Srbiji), slepi patriotizam (u Hrvatskoj), kao i važnost religije (u obe zemlje). Praktični značaj ovih rezultata ogleda se u razumevanju prepreka i rezervisanosti građana prema evropskim integracijama.

Ključne reči: proevropska orijentacija, evropske integracije, EU kao pretnja, nacionalni identitet, stavovi prema Evropi