

THE DEMAND-SIDE OF EUROSKEPTICISM IN EASTERN AND WESTERN EUROPE: Romania and France*

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Abstract

Euroskepticism is on the rise in both Eastern and Western Europe. In this paper I use survey data¹ from an Eastern country (Romania) and a Western country (France) and highlight important similarities between the determinants of Euroskepticism, on the one hand, and its electoral consequences, on the other. The analysis shows that Euroskepticism, albeit correlated with authoritarianism, has an independent and significant effect on support for extreme right parties (PRM and the National Front, respectively). These results suggest that, even though the PRM is now practically extinct, the potential for the rise of a new Euroskeptic party in Romania is significant.

Keywords: Euroskepticism, authoritarianism, left, right, extreme right, Romania, France

Up until recently, Euroskepticism (generally understood as a set of negative attitudes towards, even rejection of furthering European integration and EU governance) was a relatively minor issue on the political agenda of both individual European countries and the EU. However, several developments have given this issue prominence and salience. On the one hand, the role of European citizens in the policy decision-making process is more important than in the past, as shown by the results of recent national and European elections, as well as the results of several EU-related referenda. On the other hand, political entrepreneurs have seized this opportunity, so that Euroskepticism is now well represented by a number of important parties all across Europe.

In this context, Romania's accession to the EU raises some interesting questions, ones that are equally relevant for scholars, policy-makers and the general public. When we look at the demand-side or voter perspective,

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one important issue is whether the determinants of Euroskepticism in Romania resemble those from the West. For instance, if better educated people in Western Europe are more sympathetic vis-à-vis the EU, compared to their less educated counterparts, do we see the same effect of education in Romania? Then, from a supply-side or party perspective, an equally significant question is whether Romanian political parties can make electoral gains from embracing a Euroskeptic agenda and, if so, whether there are ideological affinities between the ideological profile of parties and the prospects for success of such attempts. For the time being, Euroskepticism has little, if any, presence in Romania, at least at the political level, but things may rapidly change, especially given the current economic conditions, the migrant crisis and the recent terrorist attacks, all of which offer good opportunities for nationalist parties and politicians to blame the country's problems on external factors such as the European Union.

To address these issues, this paper will compare the impact of socioeconomic, demographic and attitudinal variables on Euroskepticism in Romania to the impact of these variables on Euroskepticism in a Western European country, France. There are substantial differences between the two countries in terms of economic, social and political development, in addition to their institutional experience with the EU. France was one of the six founding members of the European Economic Community, the EU's ancestor, more than half a century ago, while Romania has joined the EU less than a decade ago (in 2007). Last, but certainly not least, the French public is among the most Euroskeptic among all 28 member states, as illustrated by their rejection of the new European constitution in the 2005 referendum and the significant electoral gains made in recent years by the strongly Euroskeptic National Front, while various polls have consistently showed the Romanian public as one of the most Europhile.

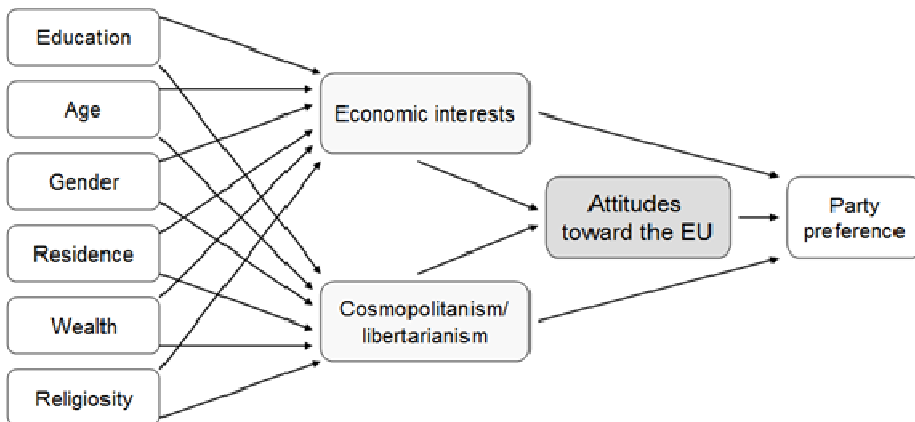
In spite of all these differences, the analysis will show important similarities between the two countries, not just in terms of the determinants of Euroskepticism but, perhaps most significantly, in terms of the impact of Euroskepticism on party competition. Various studies have indicated that, in Western Europe, extreme right-wing parties appear as the natural vehicle for Euroskepticism. The analysis in this chapter will confirm this finding in the case of France, where the extreme rightist National Front (and its former leader, Jean Marie Le Pen), appear to be the sole beneficiaries of Euroskepticism. Most interestingly, this finding is mirrored in the case of Romania, where another extreme right party, the PRM

(Greater Romania Party) and its leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, emerged as the natural choice for Romanian Euroskeptics, even though the party did not embrace a Euroskeptical position. Certainly, the PRM has become rather irrelevant politically in recent years, even before the death of Vadim Tudor. However, given the ideological profile of the PRM –a nostalgic of the previous regime–, this can actually offer an opening for genuine Euroskeptical parties.

Determinants of Euroskepticism: previous research

Studies conducted in older members of the EU from Western Europe as well as newer EU members from Central and Eastern Europe have identified a series of socioeconomic, demographic and attitudinal variables with an impact on Euroskepticism (Hix 2005: 147-74, Markowski and Tucker 2010: 540, McLaren 2004). Not surprisingly, these variables are the same that play a central role in explanatory accounts of partisanship. The literature on voting describes the linkage between the socioeconomic and demographic profile of voters and their partisan preferences as being mediated by their attitudes and policy positions - the so-called “funnel of causality” (Campbell et al. 1960, 24-37). In a similar vein, Figure 1 presents a modified version of the classical model of voting behavior, adding Euroskepticism as a determinant of party preference.

Figure 1. A theoretical model of Euroskepticism and its partisan consequences



As it is the case with voting, attitudes toward the European construction and the EU are shaped by a mix of normative concerns (cosmopolitanism and libertarianism versus nationalism and authoritarianism) and utilitarian

considerations – or, to put it differently, by both politics and economics (Cichowski 2000, 1245; Hix 2005, 166-73; Tverdova and Anderson 2004, 190). That is to say, citizens with a more cosmopolitan-libertarian worldview and those who think that they will get social and economic benefits from European integration will support it, while the more nationalist-authoritarian respondents and those who do not expect to get material benefits from integration will oppose it (Gabel 1998, 335-8; Hooghe and Marks 2005, 421-6; Tverdova and Anderson 2004, 186-92).

In turn, the political and economic positions of citizens are affected by their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (that is, the former are a consequence of the latter). Consequently, we expect those who are better educated, younger, wealthier, or residing in large cities to be more favorable toward the EU compared to those who are less educated, older, poorer, or residing in rural areas, either because the members of the first groups are more cosmopolitan, or expect to perform better economically in a more integrated EU, or both (Hix 2005, 157-66; Markowski and Tucker 2010, 540; Tucker, Pacek and Berinsky 2002, 558-64). Additionally, gender and religiosity are variables whose potential impact on Euroskepticism is perhaps less intuitive. Previous research indicates that women tend to be less supportive of the EU compared to men (Hix 2005, 163), a result that is likely to reflect gender differences in terms of position in the workforce and economic interests (Hix 2005, 162). Finally, both religiosity (Markowski and Tucker 2010, 540) and religious affiliation (Hix 2005, 163-5) are related to EU support. Nelsen and Guth (2003) found that in the 1980s and 1990s, support for EU among devout Catholic and Orthodox Christians was higher compared to their less devout counterparts; however, for Protestants, the pattern of support was reversed: devoutness was *negatively* correlated with support for EU.

When we analyze Euroskepticism as an independent, rather than dependent variable (that is, when we move our focus from individual-level determinants of Euroskepticism to its consequences for party competition), one party family emerges as the clear beneficiary of Euroskepticism: the extreme right. The extreme nationalism and authoritarianism that is the core ingredient of both the ideology of extreme right parties and the worldview of their constituents seems to have an affinity with Euroskepticism (Grunberg and Schweisguth 2003; McLaren 2002). However, rather than seeing Euroskepticism as a mere component of the nationalist-authoritarian position of the extreme right, as Grunberg and Schweisguth do, I conceptualize Euroskepticism as a separate variable, though largely

influenced by nationalism and authoritarianism. One additional important caveat is that, in order to reap maximum electoral benefits from Euroskepticism, an extreme right party should endorse at least a centrist position on economic issues in order not to alienate the economic losers of European integration.

Subsequent empirical analyses will confirm that both economic leftism and nationalist-authoritarian attitudes have a significant impact on Euroskepticism. In turn, in addition to the economic and political positions of citizens, their level of Euroskepticism is an important predictor of support for extreme right-wing parties: the more Euroskeptic the respondents, the more sympathetic they are toward those parties and the higher the chances that they will vote for such parties and candidates. Before moving on to the actual analysis, what follows is a brief description of the datasets employed, the methods used and the operationalization of variables.

Datasets, methods, and operationalization of variables

The sources for the data used in this paper are two surveys conducted in France and Romania. The first survey was the second wave of the French Political Barometer, sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior and Regional Planning and implemented by IFOP (Institut français d'opinion publique) in September 2006. The sample was representative for the adult eligible population of France (N = 5,647). The second was a post-election survey, conducted in Romania during the weeks immediately after the last European elections (June 2009). The survey was sponsored by the Soros Foundation and implemented by Gallup Romania, and the sample was representative for Romania's adult eligible population (N = 1,200).

To analyze the impact of socioeconomic and demographic variables on economic and political attitudes, as well as Euroskepticism, I will use multivariate linear regression. In subsequent analyses I will add Euroskepticism to all the aforementioned variables and use all of them as predictors of vote intention in a multivariate regression model. Multivariate linear regression is a statistical technique that enables the researcher to assess the impact of each independent or explanatory variable on the dependent variable (the variable to be explained), while holding the effect of the other independent variables constant. For example, in a multivariate regression where we have the respondents' education measured as "low," "medium" and "high" and their age (measured in

years) as predictors of the likelihood that the respondent will vote for party X (say, on a 0-10 scale), the coefficient for education will tell us the amount by which this likelihood changes, on average, when education increases by one "unit" (from "low" to "average" or from "average" to "high").

The operationalization of "gender" and "age" is straightforward. The first variable is dichotomous (male/female), while the second is continuous (measured in years). I recoded "education" in four categories, "elementary", "vocational", "high school" and "higher education". "Residence" was recoded in three categories, "rural", "town" (under 100,000), and "city" (over 100,000). The respondents' religiosity was measured using their answer to a question about Church attendance (four categories, from "never or almost never" to "very frequently").

The measurement of the respondents' wealth was less clear-cut. In the Romanian survey, I used the answer to questions about ownership of various items (car, mobile phone, computer, washing machine, bank account), in addition to having Internet access and air conditioning in the household. Each answer was coded "0" for "no" and "1" for "yes"; these scores provided a cumulative index with a range from zero (respondents who had none of the seven items) to seven (respondents who had all of them). A similar approach to the measurement of wealth was previously used by scholars studying the post-Communist region (White, Rose and McAllister 1997, 60), while a slightly modified form of it was used in older studies conducted in France (Evans and Mayer 2005, 44). Unfortunately, the 2006 survey did not include questions that would have measured the respondents' wealth directly. Therefore, I had to use an indirect measure, a question about how easily the respondent's financial situation enables him or her to manage everyday life; the answers (four categories, from "very difficultly" to "very easily") were used as a proxy (indirect measure) for wealth.

With the partial exception of wealth, the measurement of socioeconomic and demographic variables was simple. Things are less straightforward with regard to attitudinal variables, where we do not have such a simple meter for measuring authoritarianism or Euroskepticism as it is the case with, say, education or age. One possible solution to this problem is to use a statistical method called factor analysis. Without getting into technical details, the idea behind factor analysis is that we start with the notion that there is an unobserved latent variable (for instance, authoritarianism), and we use a number of observable and measurable variables for which we

have theoretical reasons to believe that they are related to our latent variables (say, in the case of authoritarianism, support for the death penalty or hostility toward foreign people or religions). We can then start from the set of observable variables to compute an overall score (factor) that represents an empirical measure of the unobserved latent variable. Table 1 presents the questions used in factor analysis to compute economic (left-right), libertarian-authoritarian, and Euroskeptic scores for each French and Romanian respondent.

Table 1. Questions used in factor analysis to compute left-right, libertarian-authoritarian and Euroskeptic scores for French and Romanian respondents

Factor	France	Romania
Economic (left-right)	Favors the CPE ² ; More freedom to businesses; Positive views about profit	People get their fair share; Government should not intervene to reduce income inequalities; Against government ownership of main utilities
Authoritarianism	Favors the death penalty; Negative views on immigrants; Negative views on Islam	Democracy is not the best political regime; A military regime would be good for Romania; A democratic regime is not good for Romania
Euroskepticism	Voted “no” in the referendum on the new European Constitution; Negative views on the EU; France should not open up	Romania’s membership in the EU is a bad thing; Not proud to be a citizen of the EU; Never felt European

Finally, for party preference I used questions about the respondents’ likelihood to vote for the leaders of each of the major parties (left, center and right) in France and Romania, respectively, as well as the likelihood of voting for the leaders of the two extreme right parties, Jean-Marie Le Pen

² The CPE, or First Employment Contract (*contrat première embauche*) was a measure promoted by the conservative government of Dominique de Villepin and passed by the French parliament in April 2006. The law, favored by business and opposed by labor unions, enabled employers to fire young employees easier than it was the case prior to the passing of the law (*Le Monde* 2006).

(National Front) and Corneliu Vadim Tudor (Greater Romania Party). In France, the question had four categories, from “very unlikely” to “very likely”, while in Romania the question was asked on a 1-10 scale. In both countries, the institutional peculiarity of a directly elected and relatively powerful president provides an important reason for preferring vote intention in presidential rather than parliamentary elections in order to capture the partisan preferences of respondents. Additionally, unlike the rest of the parties in either country, neither of the two extreme right parties that constitute the main focus of this chapter, the National Front and the Greater Romania Party, have experienced a succession at the top, being headed by the same leader from the very beginning of their inception. Thus, in both cases, the party identifies with its leader to a much greater extent than mainstream parties.

The determinants and political consequences of Euroskepticism: empirical analysis

In the first step of the analysis, Euroskepticism is the dependent variable (i.e., the variable to be explained). To this end, I use regression analysis to assess the impact of each of the socioeconomic, demographic and attitudinal variables depicted in Figure 1. The next step is to evaluate the influence of Euroskepticism on party competition. At this stage, party preference becomes the dependent variable, and Euroskepticism is added to the list of independent variables from the previous analysis. By doing so, multiple linear regression controls the effect of all the other variables and the coefficient for Euroskepticism is an accurate estimate of the impact of this variable on partisanship.

Table 2. Determinants of Euroskepticism: France and Romania compared

	Left-right		Authoritarianism		Euroskepticism	
	France	Romania	France	Romania	France	Romania
Education	+		-	-	-	
Age	+	-	+	-	-	
Male	+			+	-	-
Urbanization	+	-	-		-	
Wealth	+			-	-	-
Religiosity	+			+	-	
Left-right					-	-
Authoritarianism					+	+

For each independent variable, the sign in Table 2 represents its substantive impact on the dependent variable in the column where the sign appears. For instance, the “+” sign for the influence of education on left-right position in France tells us that better educated respondents in that country are more right-wing than less educated respondents (recall that throughout this chapter I reserve the labels “left” and “right” exclusively for economic policies positions). I chose $p < 0.1$ as the threshold for deciding whether a variable is significant or not. Intuitively, that means looking at the statistical significance for each independent variable that was reported by the statistical package performing the analysis. When the statistical significance was less than 0.1, it indicated that the chance that the impact estimated in the analysis is “true” (that is, we will find the same impact in the whole population) is greater than 90 percent, and therefore we can be quite confident in the results. For the variables where the statistical significance was greater than 0.1, there was less certainty about the results, and consequently I reported no effect (for instance, the lack of a sign for the impact of education on the left-right position of respondents in Romania indicates that the estimated impact of this variable was negligible).

The results in Table 2 point out substantial differences between the impact of socioeconomic and demographic variables on the left-right position of respondents and their level of authoritarianism in the two countries. In France, better education, older age, being male, living in a large city, having a better material situation and attending Church often are all attributes that make a significant contribution to a more right-wing position on economic policies. In Romania, only two variables have a significant effect on left-right position, and this impact is the opposite of what we observe in France

– namely, that older people and the inhabitants of large cities are more left-wing. Unlike their Western counterparts, most of the elderly in Romania live in rather poor socioeconomic conditions, and so their support for leftist economic policies is not surprising. More unexpected, though, is the leftism of residents of cities, possibly an effect of the economic crisis, which may have hit harder in urban areas.

If we look at the determinants of authoritarianism, we see that in both countries education has a dampening effect. Once again, the impact of age in France is the opposite of what we see in Romania, with old people more authoritarian in the former and less authoritarian in the latter (yet another surprising, and quite unsettling, result). Additionally, urbanization has a significant effect in France, where residents of large cities are less authoritarian than residents of rural areas. In Romania, women, the better off, and the non-religious are more tolerant compared to men, the worse off, and the very religious.

The predictive model of Euroskepticism in France is the mirror image of the model of left-right position: all the variables that make the respondents more right-wing also make them less Euroskeptic. For Romania, only two non-attitudinal variables have a significant effect: males and the better off respondents are less Euroskeptic than females and the worse off. Finally, the two attitudinal variables have similar effects in both countries: a right-wing position on economic issues is negatively correlated with Euroskepticism, while authoritarianism is positively correlated with it. These last results are consistent with the explanatory account of Euroskepticism that considers the role of economic interests (a right-wing economic position) and normative considerations (a libertarian-cosmopolitan worldview).

In the final stage of this analysis I look at the impact of Euroskepticism on partisanship. To this end, Table 3 presents the analysis of vote intention (more specifically, likelihood to vote) for the major candidates representing the left, center, right and extreme right in recent presidential elections³ in the two countries.

³ The 2007 French presidential election and the 2009 Romanian presidential election.

Table 3. Socioeconomic, demographic, attitudinal variables and their impact on partisan preferences: France and Romania compared

	Left		Center		Right		Extreme right	
	FR ¹	RO ²	FR ³	RO ⁴	FR ⁵	RO ⁶	FR ⁷	RO ⁸
Education	-		+				-	
Age	-	+	+		+	-	-	
Male	-						+	
Urbanization					+			-
Wealth	-			+	+		-	
Religiosity	-		+	-	+			-
Left-right	-		+		+			
Authoritarianism	-		-		+		+	
Euroskepticism	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	

¹Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Ségolène Royal (Socialist)

²Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Mircea Geoană (Social Democratic Party)

³Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for François Bayrou (Democratic Movement)

⁴Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Crin Antonescu (Liberal Party)

⁵Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Nicolas Sarkozy (Union for a Popular Movement)

⁶Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Traian Băsescu (Liberal-Democratic Party)

⁷Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Jean-Marie Le Pen (National Front)

⁸Dependent variable: likelihood to vote for Corneliu Vadim Tudor (Greater Romania Party)

Whether we compare the model of support for the left, center and right candidates in the same country, or even moderate candidates from the same ideological family in the two countries, we notice substantial differences. For instance, the model of support for the Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal is not only different from the model of support for the conservative candidate Nicolas Sarkozy, but differs quite substantially even from the model of support for the Social Democratic candidate Mircea Geoană. In spite of all these inter-and intra-country differences, there is one variable that has a consistent effect across the predictive models of support for all moderate candidates, distinguishing them from the models of support for the two extreme right-wing candidates. The predictor in question is Euroskepticism, the very variable that constitutes the focus of this chapter. After controlling for the effect of the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of respondents, as well as their left-right position and level of authoritarianism, Euroskepticism has a negative effect on support for all mainstream candidates, while having a positive effect on support for Le Pen and no effect on support for Tudor.

Conclusion

This chapter offered a comparative analysis of the determinants of Euroskepticism and its consequences for party competition in France, a Western European country and old member of the EU and Romania, a post-Communist country and recent member of the EU. In the first part of the analysis (Table 2), Euroskepticism was the dependent variable. Even though the predictive models of left-right position and authoritarianism in the two countries are very different, the predictive models of Euroskepticism are not.

These results are consistent with Marks et al.'s (2006) comparative analysis of party competition and European integration. On the one hand, they describe party competition as following a different logic in the two halves of Europe: in Western Europe, the main axis of party competition is left-libertarian versus right-authoritarian, while in Eastern Europe the main axis of party competition is left-authoritarian versus right-libertarian, which explains why the models for left-right and authoritarian-libertarian positions (Table 2) and the subsequent models of partisan preferences (Table 3) in Romania are so different than the models for France. Yet on the other hand, Marks et al. argue that in spite of all these differences, the process of preference formation for European integration (i.e., Euroskepticism) follows a similar logic in Western and Eastern Europe.

This latter result explains why the partisan impact of Euroskepticism in Romania resembles so well the effect it has in France, lowering the support for all mainstream candidates, but not the support for the extreme right candidate. Even though the results indicate that, as of 2009, the impact of Euroskepticism on support for Tudor was less than its impact on support for Le Pen (no effect in the first case, a positive effect in the second), they also indicate a promising avenue for the emergence of a new extreme right-wing party. The analysis showed that all mainstream parties in Romania lose electorally from an increase in Euroskepticism. That being the case, an extreme right party becomes the natural or default choice for Romanian Euroskeptics. It is also important to mention that the PRM did not, throughout its electoral history, embrace a hardline Euroskeptic position. When an extreme right-wing party does that, such a strategic move can only improve its electoral prospects. Another important caveat is that throughout this chapter I used the label "extreme right" for Greater Romania Party and its late leader only because this is the conventional label used in the literature for such party. However, on economic policies the

PRM was rather leftist, thus placing it in an ideal position to benefit from Euroscepticism, combining economic leftism with political authoritarianism. If one were a political strategist, the consequence would be clear: taking into account the current economic, social and political conditions, in Romania and throughout Europe, it seems that the first thing a new extreme “right”-wing party should do in order to make substantial electoral gains is to fully embrace an Eurosceptic position.

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