European Integration and Minority Nationalism:
a Literature Review and Avenues for Further Research

by

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Abstract

Does European integration impact on minority nationalism? Is there evidence that processses of European integration exacerbate or moderate minority nationalist tendencies in member states? Post-2010 development of the European Union (EU) is characterised by an unprecedented cumulation of crises, generating integration and disintegration tensions in its multi-level governance structure. How do these tensions impact on minority nationalism? Current literature is silent on this issue. Therefore, this review article seeks to survey past and present literature dealing with the complex and ambiguous relationship between European integration and minority nationalism. I find that our present knowledge of this relationship is considerably limited. To remedy this deficit, this article suggests several avenues for further research. Future research should enhance our understanding of whether, how, in which direction and under what conditions current (dis)integration processes occurring at different levels of governance impact on minority nationalism in EU member states.

Key-words

European Union, minority nationalism, substate nationalist parties, multi-level governance, integration, disintegration

1. Introduction

The influence of globalisation on nationalism has been studied since the 1960s. Today, the nationalism of substate entities, so called *minority nationalism*, represents a distinct research area within the field of International Relations and, more specifically given the non-state character of nationalist subunits necessitating substate and cross-country comparisons, of International Studies and comparative politics. Since many nationalist subunits are located in the member states of the European Union (EU), this issue has equally attracted the attention of European Studies. EU member states currently host on their territory some of the world's most active instances of minority nationalism. The independence referendum in Scotland and the attempt to proclaim independence in Catalonia show that the intensity of minority nationalism in the present-day EU has reached high levels. Similarly, other instances of nationalist subunits in the EU, although in a less turbulent way, are currently seeking to lessen their political dependency on the parent state. Growing shares of votes for substate nationalist parties in regional and national elections (Nationalia 2020; Dandoy 2019; Nationalia 2017) and pro-autonomist changes in public opinion (Awan-Scully 2020; Utz 2017) well illustrate this trend.

Research into the relationship between European integration and minority nationalism culminated between the years 2008 and 2010. For more than a decade, the impacts of European integration processes on minority nationalism have not received any significant scholarly attention. In spite of the fact that diverse aspects of minority nationalism in EU member states have been debated in recent literature, further exploration of this complex and ambiguous relationship has been largely omitted. This paper argues that, in the light of the current developments in the EU, nationalist subunits face a changing context and thereby some new dilemmas. Post-2010 occurrences such as the European debt crisis, refugee crisis, rise of Euroscepticism, a member state ultimately withdrawing from the EU, combined with stagnating integration and failed attemps to reform the EU invoke and exacerbate tensions in the multi-level governance structure. The interaction of concomitant integration and disintegration processes happening at different levels of governance may have repercussions on minority

nationalism: they can result in weakening as well as in strengthening substate nationalist claims, with the potential to threaten the integrity of the parent state.

As studying the relationship between the EU and minority nationalism has become relevant again, it is essential to examine the state of knowledge we have on this issue so far. Therefore, this review article serves two purposes. Firstly, to survey and structure past and present research and summarise key findings on the following research questions: How does European integration impact on minority nationalism? Is there evidence that processes of European integration exacerbate or moderate substate nationalist tendencies? And secondly, with regard to the post-2010 context and building on research gaps brought to the forefront by the literature review, to suggest avenues for further research.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section surveys the literature focusing on substate nationalist parties. In this section substate nationalist parties are understood as principal agents purveying the nationalist agenda in political terms. For this reason, works analysing positions of substate nationalist parties towards the EU (or its predecessors) and their strategies in voting arenas at different levels of governance are reviewed here. The paper then proceeds to survey the literature exploring the structural impacts of European integration on the regional level due to the re-allocation of political authority. Works analysing shifts in regional autonomous competences with a direct connection to minority nationalism are of concern in this section. Notwithstanding the culmination of the research towards the end of the 2000s and the subsequent waning of scholarly interest, both sections encompass the pertinent literature up to the present day. Where possible, I aim to position the relevant strands of literature within their respective broader debates. Next, the paper identifies recent works which do not explicitly delve into effects of EU integration processes on minority nationalism, but from which some relevant conlusions can be drawn. Furthermore, although without any reference to the relationship at question, the paper reviews and structures major literature strands examining current aspects of minority nationalism in the EU and its member states. The final section provides a summary of the current state of knowledge and delineates, in the context of the post-2010 developments, five areas of tension within the EU's multi-level governance structure that future research should examine. A framework for analysis is also briefly outlined in this section.

Much scholarship has been written about the relationship of EU-minority nationalism and its underlying mechanisms on an intuitive basis. However, this review article considers only original empirical evidence-based primary research. The considered literature includes qualitative and quantitative works such as original articles, monographies and chapters in edited volumes, written in English, German or French. Despite the fact that this paper strives for comprehensivness, it cannot be taken as entirely exhaustive. Works on minority nationalism having no connection to the relevant debates and works in other languages were excluded from consideration. Although dozens of substate nationalist movements exist throughout the EU, this paper focuses primarily on the most distinctive and active instances, as these have the highest potential to achieve greater autonomy or seccession, hence challenging the status quo.

2. Substate nationalist parties and European integration

The unexpected (re-)emergence of minority nationalism in the developed West in the post-1968 period attracted considerable academic attention. Scholars sought to grasp the links between new and revived self-determination movements and advancing globalisation processes. The puzzle surrounding nationalist, autonomist and secessionist claims in plurinational states in the age of global interdependence, international regimes and economic and political integration is explored in earlier (Esman 1977; Horowitz 1985; Connor 1994; Kymlicka 1995; Moore 2001; Paquin 2001; Sorens 2004; van Houten 2003; Sideri 1997) as well as in later works (Tierney 2015; Davezies 2015; Kernalegenn 2013; Tétart 2009; Gagnon 2014; Zinn 2006).

With the exception of Québec, all major instances of minority nationalism in the West can be found in Europe and, more specifically in the 'old' member states of the EU. Since any extention of regional self-rule within the institutional context of Western democracies can be achieved solely through means of negotiation, explicit attention is paid to substate nationalist parties as major purveyors of political change in this respect. There is a broad spectrum of literature engaging with multifarious nationalist (ethnoregionalist) parties[1] in West European EU member states (de Winter and Türsan 1998; de Winter et al. 2018; de Winter 1994; Newman 1994; Fegerholm 2016), providing a detailed account of their genesis, evolution, structure, goals

and strategies. Although contributing with valuable insights into the complex realities of this heterogeneous party family, this strand of literature largely leaves out the European dimension.

The origin of the academic debate on the relationship between European integration and minority nationalism can be traced back to the second half of the 1980s, when scholars started to reflect the changing positions of substate nationalist parties towards the European Economic Community (EEC). Studies from this period (Keating 1988) and from the mid-1990s (Lynch 1996) can be considered pioneering work, as the vast majority of the literature appeared between 2001 and 2010. In the introduction to one of the most fundamental edited volumes on this topic, European Integration and the Nationalites Question, McGarry et al. (2006: 8-11) sum up four major factors which account for the increased support for the EU on the part of minority nationalists. In fact, these factors coincide with reasons why the relationship between the processes of European integration and minority nationalism was studied: 1) the post-sovereignist nature of the EU capable of accommodating subnational minorities by means of shared sovereignty; 2) the declining significance of borders; 3) the creation of a political space enabling the participation of non-state actors such as nationalist subunits, hence offering alternative forms of self-determination short of secession; and 4) the adoption of pan-European minority rights conventions, transferring the protecting authority for minorities from the nation state to a supranational entity.

Qualitative studies engaging with the evolution of substate nationalist party positions towards European integration reflect, under great simplification of the domestic political conditions, a common three-stage pattern: 1) a period of animosity or outright hostility during the 1970s caused by the lack of regional representation in the state-dominated EEC and by fear of economic dislocation in the emerging Common Market; 2) a period of gradual change into a highly positive stance induced by reforms related to the Single European Act and culminating in the early 1990s, leading to enthusiastic but vague ideas of 'full national status' in Europe, 'independence in Europe', 'Europe of the Regions' or 'Europe of the Peoples' to name a few[II], promising other compelling forms of self-determination than statehood; 3) and finally a subsequent period of disillusionment caused mainly by the fact that these post-sovereignist concepts failed to materialise.

This three-stage pattern best fits the observed cases of the Scottish National Party (Elias 2009; Jolly 2007, 2013) and the Welsh Plaid Cymru (Elias 2008a, 2009, 2006; Laible 2008). Although not occurring simultaneously due to the later accession of Spain, it applies almost equally to the nationalist parties of the The Basque Country (Jáuregui 2006). To a much lesser degree, similarities can be found in the cases of Bavaria's Bayernpartei, Sardinia's regionalist parties (Hepburn 2010) as well as Brittany's (Nicolas 2006) and Galicia's (Elias 2009). The 'U-turn' from Euro-enthusiasm to Euroscepticism is also valid for the Northern League (Giordano 2004; Chari et al. 2004). However, strikingly different cases exist which render the appliction of the pattern impossible: Flemish nationalist parties saw some potential in the external projection of the Flemish nation through the EU's institutional framework. Nevertheless, they perceived the deepening of intergration, each to a different degree, as a threat to the protection and promotion of Flemish identity, culture and language and therefore adopted a critical stance (Laible 2001, 2008). As for major nationalist parties in Catalonia, constant support for the EU with no serious fluctuations could be observed (Giordano and Roller 2002).

Cross-country quantitative research corroborates this three-stage evolution pattern. Most distinctively, Massetti's large-scale analysis (2009) reveals that the support of substate nationalist parties for further integration reached its peak during the late 1980s and 1990s, whereas in the 2000s support started to wane and substate nationalist parties across the political spectrum were frequently divided over this issue. More recent works confirm this view. According to Massetti and Schakel (2015), attitudes of substate nationalist parties towards European integration are positively affected by the allocation of structural funds. Interestingly, having no effect during 1994-1999, when the idea of 'Europe of the Regions' was reaching its zenith and when the majority of substate nationalist parties embraced this idea, the relationship became more significant in moments of opinion change, in particular after the 'Eurosceptic turn' in the early 2000s (see also Gross and Debus 2017: 607-609). Put in other words, the support of substate nationalist parties for European integration is deemed to be conditional outside the enthusiastic period.

Some conclusions reached by qualitative studies contradict what is commonly believed about the family of substate nationalist parties. Although party positions display a high variation in

time and place over the past decades, at the aggregate level in comparision with other party families this particular family is supportive of the EU only slightly above the average value. Therefore, not only is the substate nationalist party family on aggregate much less homogenous, but also less Europhile oriented than usually assumed (Goméz-Reino 2013; Jolly 2007, 2013; Ray 1999).

The research on substate nationalist party positions equally explores factors which have a bearing upon the formulation of these positions. In two key multiple-case studies, Elias (2009, 2008a) argues that positions of substate nationalist parties towards European integration are, in fact, considerably nuanced depending on the specific aspect at question. Drawing from the examples of Plaid Cymru, Bloque Nacionaliste Galego and Corsican nationalist movements, she demonstrates that substate nationalist parties clearly differentiate between the general idea of an ever-closer Europe, on the one hand, and concrete realities and policies of the EU (EEC), on the other. In a similar vein, Mitchell and Cavanagh (2001) counter the assumption that substate nationalist party positions are primarily determined by their primordial identities and value orientations. Concluding from a case study on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, formulation of positions on the EU pertains rather to party opportunism in the form of responding to public opion and seeking opposition to the central government's stance on Europe, both of which substate nationalist parties tactically exploit for their electoral ends. A similar conclusion is asserted in a case study of four peripheral regions in Great Britain and the Netherlands (Mols and Haslam 2008) and is also valid for the Northern League (Chari et al. 2004).

The context of domestic politics impacts on the positioning of substate nationalist parties towards European integration. As presented by Hepburn (2006), in the post-devolution era in Scotland practically all regional branches of state-wide parties had to re-position themselves and articulate a vision of Scotland's future in the EU. Consequently, the position of the Scottish National Party towards the EU evolved in this new context of party competition at the substate and national level and was continuously co-shaped by it. Furthermore, the positioning of substate nationalist parties on various facets of European integration is influenced by their territorial and constitutional demands vis-à-vis the central government (centre-periphery

spectrum) as well as by their regional socio-economic goals (traditional left-right spectrum). Content analyses of election manifestos confirm the considerable diversity of issues in 'issue packages' that substate nationalist parties position themselves on along these two spectra (Alonso et al. 2017, 2015; Massetti 2009). Echoing past findings, the most up-to-date study tracing the history of support for EU membership among separatist parties in the Basque Country, Catalonia, Flanders and Scotland situates the main drivers of self-determination claims in the dynamic context of domestic politics (Cetrà and Liñeira 2018).

With the deepening of European integration, the regional level of governance started to interact with the supranational one. Building upon the literature on the interaction between the national level and the regional level governed by minority nationalists (Hepburn 2009; Deschouwer 2009, 2003; Elias and Tronconi 2011), scholars examined how regionalist parties responded to the new opportunities and constraints of the European multi-level governance structure in the pursuit of their territorial demands. Most notably, Hepburn (2010) points out that the existence of vertically connected political and voting arenas influences the positions of nearly all regionalist parties, not only those seeking independence. Comparing regionalist parties in Scotland, Bavaria and Sardinia, she finds that in the EU's multi-level governance structure independence-seeking parties moderated their 'radical' stance over time, whereas regional branches of state-wide parties adopted a more clear-cut position on the territorial autonomy of their regions. What is more, changes in parties' positions occurred largely in accordance with the three-stage evolution pattern.

Behaviour of substate nationalist parties in the European Parliament (EP) represents another important area of scholarly concern. For this party family the EP has served, since the first direct elections in 1979, as a platform for transnational mobilisation and coordination in the pursuit of territorial and institutional reforms. The most distinct group ever to be formed in the EP by substate nationalist parties was the Free European Alliance. As past studies reveal, the European Free Alliance failed to institutionalise itself as a full-fledged parliamentary group (since 1999 it has been aligned with the European Green Party), and failed to develop a common position or encompass more than a fraction of all the regionalist parties represented in the EP. The reasons for this were the goup's increased fragmentation and differences in party ideological positioning

(Lynch and de Winter 2008; Lynch 1998). Correspondingly, substate nationalist parties are said to vary greatly in the degree of Europeanisation and politicisation of European issues (Goméz-Reino 2018; De Winter and Cachafeiro 2002).

The last strand of literature explicitly connecting substate nationalist parties with the European dimension focuses on the secessionist discourse of separatist parties in Catalonia and Scotland. General notions of the EU and notions of a continuing EU membership represent major reference points in the election manifestos of separatist parties in these two subunits (e.g. Bremberg 2020; Anderson and Keil 2016). These content analyses do not, however, provide any substantial understanding of the relationship under study.[III]

3. Structural impacts of European integration on nationalist subunits

The rise of the regional level within the framework of European integration constitutes a prominent debate in the literature. There is abundant research into the genesis of the regional level in the EU, shifts in the weight of regions relative to member states (a process termed territorial restructuring or 'rescaling'), the institutionalisation of regional representation in the EU and the role of regions in the EU decision-making process. These aspects are intensely debated in earlier (Jones and Keating 1995; Bitsch 2003; Conzelmann and Knodt 2002; Marks et al. 1996b; Hrbek und Weyard 1994; Bullmann 1994; Bartolini 2005) as well as in later works (Abels and Battke 2019; Keating 2013; Braun 2018).

Within this broad debate, a specific strand of literature can be discerned exploring the impacts of European integration on autonomous competences of the regional level. Scholars attempt to shed some light on the following conundrum: substate units gain through the integration processes formal and informal representation in European institutions and their weight relative to the central government increases (empowerment). At the same time, the transferral of competencies to the supranational level entails, paradoxically, a loss of regional autonomy (disempowerment). This effect, also dubbed 'competence overlap' in the literature, is caused by the fact that in the state-centered EU central governments serve as ultimate gate-keepers in Europeanised policy areas previously reserved to subunits. In the Council, central

governments bind the whole state and in the case of regional non-compliance enforce EU regulations, hence reducing the role of regions to implementing EU legislation. The more autonomy the subunits possess, the more pronounced this effect is. It is important to note that the upward transferrals of competences occurred mostly without the subunits' consent. For this reason, the supranationalisation (Europeanisation) of previously decentralised policy areas may generate frictions between the regional and national level of governance. Past empirical studies confirm that the EU has both enhancing and constraining effects on the decision-making process of selected municipalities and regions (Fleurke and Willemse 2007a, 2007b).

It is well-known that nationalist subunits commonly enjoy a considerable degree of self-government. Bearing in mind the relationship under examination, it is vital to address the question of whether minority nationalists seeking emancipation from the central goverment perceive the loss of autonomous competences induced by European integration as a threat, fuelling anti-EU sentiments. Existing literature remains, however, completely silent on this matter. In the only contribution linking regional disempowerment with a nationalist subunit, Bourne (2003) argues that European integration, to a considerable extent, indeed encroached on the decentralised competencies of the Basque Autonomous Community. Nevertheless, she does not conjecture any causality between the encroachment and Basque nationalism.

Although not referring explicitly to nationalism, several studies discuss the effects of regional disempowerment in those EU member states which accommodate one or more nationalist subunits. The most studied case is the federation of Belgium: in the Council in Europeanised policy areas, two subunits with the most extensive self-rule of all EU member states are forced to adopt a shared national position, thus renouncing their hard-won autonomy (de Becker 2011; Hooghe 1995a; Kerremans and Beyers 1997; see also Laible 2001). Since Eurosceptic moods in Flanders are barely alluded to in these studies, no solid conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the transferral of competences and minority nationalism. According to Palmer's two-case study (2004), inner-state tensions produced by upward competence shifts largely depend on the character of the domestic political system and the moment of transferral. The federal government of Germany was not afraid of giving up sovereignty, whereas the German Länder, which are granted extensive autonomy, were historically very hesitant. As

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regards the United Knigdom, the central government was highly anxious about transferring competences, whereas its constituent nations were not – they achieved devolution only in 1997, when the majority of 'decentraliseable' competences had already been transferred (Europeanised). Thus, no tensions between the regional and national level over regional disempowerment were observed.

Within the debate on European integration and the regional level, some scholarship investigates the impact of the EU's multi-layered structure on social identity dynamics. Individual attitudes towards European integration in peripheral regions are said to be shaped by comparative identity processes. Studies exploring the interaction of regional, national and supranational identity in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland show that the presence of a European identity encourages and intensifies regional self-identification contrasting the national identity (Carl 2004). Conversely, when regional identity is made salient to individuals, they tend to identify positively with the EU and oppose the Eurosceptic stance of the central government/nation state (Mols et al. 2009). In either way, a complementary European identity does not challenge the legitimacy of the nation state.

The character of the regional identity influences significantly the level of individual attachment to the EU. Works measuring individual attachment to the EU at the regional level reveal some interesting findings on this issue. Individuals having an inclusive (nested) regional identity display higher levels of pro-Europeanism than individuals with an exclusive (parochial) regional identity. An exclusive regional identity is therefore deemed to have a dampening effect on citizens' support for the EU (Chacha 2012; Brigevich 2016). Large-n cross-country analyses corroborate this view. An exclusive regional identity, if not explicitly combined with a supranational identity, lessens support for the EU. Most suprisingly, individuals in minority nations are less supportive of the EU than individuals with inclusive and exclusive regional identity. On aggregate, distinctive regions and minority nations express the least pro-European attitudes of all analysed groups (Brigevich 2018; Olsson 2007; see also Brigevich 2012 for Spanish regions). These findings stand in contrast with works on positions of substate nationalist parties. Although the family of substate nationalist parties has proven to be less Europhilie than

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commonly assumed, the reviewed literature suggests a disparity between EU-attitudes of regional political élites and the regional public.

The literature on territorial restructuring in the EU encompasses one last strand which includes at least implicit connections to nationalist subunits. As the period between 2001 and 2005 marked the build-up and failure of adopting the European Constitution, scholars reflected territorial demands of subunits that were to be communicated to the intergovernmental body named The Convention on the Future of Europe and included in the draft Constitution. This issue is examined universally (Lynch 2004; Keating 2004) and region-specifically in the cases of Catalonia (Guibernau 2006; Roller 2004), Spanish regions (Bourne 2006), German Länder (Bauer 2006) and German Länder in comparison with Scotland (Jeffery 2004). Regions with an extensive degree of self-rule (the majority of which is constituted by nationalist subunits) displayed a high variation in territorial demands ranging from strict application of the subsidiarity principle and protection of minority languages to institutionalisation of the Committee of the Regions as a regional co-decision power. Amongst the most frequently discussed aspects were the choice of representation channels for conveying demands to the Convention, fears of an aggravating competence overlap due to further integration deepening as well as the subsequent disenchantment when the regions were denied direct participation and most of their demands remained unheard. Notwithstanding some negative perceptions on the part of regional élites as a consequence thereof, no repercussions on minority nationalism were detected.

The rejection of the European Constitution by some EU member states marks the definitive demise of 'Europe of the Regions'. The genesis, evolution and waning of this notion is reflected in an extraordinary wave of literature (Keating 2008; Hepburn 2008; Elias 2008b; see also Moore 2008). Scholars who had been contributing to the above debates throughout the years summarise, analyse, but also challenge the principal reasons that led to an increased scholarly interest in this issue. Although their works do not address minority nationalism expressly, and although a number of crucial studies appeared afterwards, this wave represents a symbolic culmination of the research into nationalist subunits and European integration.

4. Minority nationalism and European integration: additional insights

In parallel with debates on minority nationalist parties and structural impacts on the regional level, we can gain some insight from the voluminous literature on regional mobilisation in the EU. Earlier (Marks et al. 2002; Jeffery 2000; Hooghe and Marks 1996; Marks et al. 1996a; Hooghe 1995b) as well as later works (López and Tatham 2017; van Hecke et al. 2016; Tatham 2016; Keating and Wilson 2014; Högenauer 2014; Greenwood 2011) attempt to pin down the determinants accounting for regional action in the EU's multi-level governance structure. Even though these large-scale cross-country analyses do not place minority nationalism at the centre of their inquiry, they occasionally comprise among independent variables aspects commonly associated with minority nationalism such as regional language, regionalist or nationalist parties and self-perception as a minority nation.

In unison with earlier findings, later literature asserts that dispersion of authority upwards and downwards has engendered significant competence overlaps between the levels of governance (Jensen et al. 2014: 1248). An analysis of regional preferences shows that demands for control over future upward dispersion depend on the degree of self-government. Greater self-rule implies a greater potential loss of competences and thereby greater apprehensions of an increasing competence overlap. In contrast, regions with greater shared-rule rely on domestic co-decision and representation channels allowing them to influence and obstruct future disempowerment intentions (Tatham and Bauer 2014a: 1380). Since nationalist subunits enjoy a considerable degree of self-rule, but often fail to be represented as one single entity in the unitary system of the parent state, this is an ambiguous finding. Concerning the preferences of nationalist subunits for deeper integration, two contradicting trends can be observed. The presence of a regionalist party is strongly associated with deepening supranationalism (measured in terms of substate preferences for the empowerment of the European Commission). In contrast, self-perception as a minority nation is negatively associated with further supranationalism. Without attempting to ascertain causality, the authors interpret the latter by suggesting that minority nations may aspire for statehood hence preferring

intergovernmentalism to greater supranationalism once independent states (Tatham and Bauer 2014b: 258-9).[IV]

As regards factors leading to conflicting paradiplomacy, the frequency of conflicts between substate and national authorities is neither significantly affected by party political incongruence nor the level of devolution. It is therefore surmised that mobilisation of regions governed by opposition, regionalist or nationalist parties does not undermine the position of states and central governments in the EU. This applies equally to devolved and nondevolved states (Tatham 2012: 76-77, 83). In other words, regional action in the EU has no significant disintegrative effect on member states whatsoever. When regions communicate their interests to European institutions, regional distinctiveness in terms of ethnicity is said to affect positively the use of intra-state representation channels. On the other hand, a region governed by a regionalist party, although not necessarily a nationalist one, fails to affect the use of representation channels in any significant way. The fact that ethnicity and regionalist (nationalist) party variables do not affect the use of representation channels in the same significant way is attributed to the ambivalent relationship of regionalist parties to European integration (Huwyler et al. 2017: 772).

Last but not least, we can gain some insight from the current literature strand exploring citizens' voting behaviour and popular support for the EU. Alongside the research on individual preferences at the national level (e.g. Dellmuth and Chalmers 2017; Chalmers and Dellmuth 2015), a number of studies also examine individual preferences at the regional level (Bauhr and Charron 2019; Nicoli 2018; Schraff 2017). Of particular note is the analysis of Dijkstra et al. (2019) mapping at the largest geographical scale the share of anti-EU and anti-system votes in the last national elections. One can draw from this study that individuals in nationalist subunits tend to vote more pro-European parties than the rest of the country. Contrary to findings on individual attachment and regional identity highlighting Eurosceptic attitudes, regions considered minority nations display the lowest percentage of votes cast for anti-EU parties. The highest pro-European vote share in member states accommodating minority nationalism can be found in Scotland, Catalonia[V], Corsica, South Tyrol, Flanders and, partially, Wales. The main drivers for higher anti-EU votes are associated with relative economic decline, lower levels of education and fewer employment opportunities, with lower population density serving as a

catalyst for voting behaviour (Ibid: 12). Since some of these characteristics fully apply to some of these nationalist subunits, the absence of a higher anti-EU vote share must be explained by other factors.

5. Minority nationalism in the EU: current debates beyond the relationship at question

Within the current literature on minority nationalism in EU member states having no reference to integration processes, three distinct strands can be discerned. Firstly, in the light of the recent secessionist aspirations in Scotland and Catalonia, scholars seek to theorise the scenario of an independent region-state (re-)joining the EU. A number of monographies and single case studies inquire into legal issues surrounding a region's withdrawal from an EU member state. In particular, the following aspects are addressed: continuity of EU membership, EU citizenship and common currency (Hipold 2018; Closa 2017; Petit 2017; Duerr 2015; Connolly 2013; Tierney 2013) and prevalence of European law over public international law during the secession process (Chamon and van der Loo 2014; Gounin 2013). Admitting that scholars build on existing knowledge and valid law, it is fair to say that the nature of their studies renders the conclusions rather speculative.

Secondly, distinctive secessionist, nationalist and autonomist movements in EU member states are compared and contrasted from various perspectives. The focus ranges from domestic political and institutional aspects concerning the accommodation of minority nationalism (Hipold 2016; Belser et al. 2015) to economic aspects represented by the centre-periphery cleavage (Dalle Mulle 2018). These comparative studies concentrate exclusively on inner-state tensions between the nationalist subunit and the central government, disregarding influences of the European dimension. If references to the EU and integration processes are made, they are sporadic, unsystematic and not driven by an intention to unravel the linkages between the two phenomena.

Thirdly and finally, a considerable amount of literature exists on the relationship between minority nationalism and immigration. In this debate scholars attempt to explore the effects that

immigration flows into the territory of nationalist subunits have on minority nationalist parties and their discourse. The principle puzzle addressed is as to whether immigration accelerates or hampers the region's independence project. The major aspects under study are as follows: frictions with the central government over immigration control and integration policies, trends in cultural and political identification of migrants (identification with the minority nation vs. with the majority nation) and migrants' voting behaviour once endowed with suffrage. These aspects are examined in multi-region comparative studies (Medda-Windischer and Popelier 2016; Barker 2015; Zuber 2019), two-case studies (Medda-Windischer and Carlà 2015; Carlà 2017; Hepburn and Barrero 2014) as well as in single case studies (Byrne 2020; Franco-Guillén 2015; Carlà and Medda-Windischer 2018). The most frequently studied cases comprise Catalonia, Scotland, South Tyrol and Flanders. Although multiple factors regarding the impact of immigration on minority nationalism are at play, the crucial one is deemed to be the very character of minority nationalism (ethnic vs. civil based).

6. Summary, avenues for further research and an analytical framework

How does European integration impact on minority nationalism? Is there evidence that processes of European integration exacerbate or moderate substate nationalist tendencies? Although there is a spectrum of related debates, it can be argued that we know relatively little about this relationship. The literature surveyed in the previous sections provides only limited evidence as to whether processes of European integration affect aspects of minority nationalism such as its intensity and character. Acknowledging that fragmentary conclusions can be drawn from past and recent works, the current state of knowledge is certainly far from being comprehensive. The main findings are summarised thematically in issue areas in the following table. To present approximate validity of the reached conclusions, each issue area contains a listing of subunits (substate nationalist parties) that were subject of research.[VI] (For reasons of simplicity, some studies are pooled.)

Issue area	Case studies

Substate nationalist parties and European integration

Issue area	Case studies
Three-stage evolution pattern: animosity – enthusiasm – disillusionment	Large-n *Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, The Basque Country*; partially: *Bayernpartei, Sardinia, Galicia, Britanny, Northern League*; (deviant cases: *Flanders, Catalonia*)
Parties differentiate between various aspects of European integration and formulate nuanced positions	*Scottish National Party, Bloque Nacionaliste Galego, Corsica*
Positions towards the EU are co-shaped by the context of domestic politics in the form of party competition at the substate/national level and by party's territorial and socio-economic goals	Large-n *Scotland, The Basque Country, Catalonia, Flanders*
Electoral opportunism and searching opposition to the central government's stance on Europe influence party positions on the EU	*Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Northern League*
Party support for Europen integration is conditional on allocation of structural funds (outside the enthusiastic period of the 1990s)	Large-n
Multi-level governance structure led to a moderation of nationalist party positions and, at the same time, to more explicit positions on regional autonomy of state-wide parties at the substate level	*Scotland, Bavaria, Sardinia*
Substate nationalist parties did not become a full-fledged parliamentary group in the European Parliament due to their fragmentation and different ideological positioning; they display a low degree of Europeanisation and politicisation of European issues	Large-n
Substate nationalist party family is rather heterogeneous and on aggregate Europhile only slightly above the average value	Large-n

Structural impacts of European integration on nationalist subunits

Issue area	Case studies
The EU's multi-level structure impacts on social identity processes: European identity intensifies regional self-identification and contrasts the national identity by opposing the Eurosceptic stance of the central government	*Scotland, Wales, Northern Irland*
Character of the regional identity matters: exclusive regional identity dampens one's support for the EU	Large-n
Individuals in distinctive regions and minority nations display the least pro-European attitudes	Large-n
Individuals in nationalist subunits vote the most pro-European (the least anti-EU) parties in national elections	Large-n
Rejection of the European Constitution caused no discernable repercussions on minority nationalism	*Spanish regions, Catalonia, Scotland, German Länder*

The EU has constraining effects on the decision-making process at the regional level: European integration entails an encoachment on the autonomous competences of the regions; no causal links to minority nationalism were explicitly studied	*The Basque Country* *Belgium* *United Kingdom* *German Länder*

The literature review has revealed some interesting contradictions such as a discrepancy between EU-preferences of regional élites (although these are on aggregate lower than assumed) and the regional public. Similarly, there is a striking inconsistency between the unenthusiastic EU-attitudes of individuals in minority nations and their highly pro-European voting behaviour. Nevertheless, the key question of whether European integration exacerbates or moderates minority nationalism and the implications thereof for the post-2010 context remain insufficiently answered. In order to remedy this deficit, avenues for future research are suggested in this section. By connecting persistent research gaps with recent debates on minority nationalism, I delineate five areas of tension in the multi-level governance structure of the EU invoked by concomitant integration and disintegration processes which may have the potential to impact on minority nationalism. A framework is also briefly outlined by means of which the position of a nationalist subunit within these (dis)integration processes could be conceptualised.

Since the outbreak of the European debt crisis in 2010, the EU has found itself in a permanent crisis modus. Aggravated by the refugee crisis and its mismanagement from 2015 onwards and accompanied by failed attempts to reform the EU, the cumulation of crises has led to a decline in confidence in European institutions and the integration project as such. Furthermore, as the Brexit case illustrates, the EU has reached a point where the integration trajectory of a member state is, for the first time in history, ultimately regressive. For nationalist subunits, tensions produced by the interplay of current crises may pose some new dilemmas about the nationalist project. I detect these dilemmas in five major areas.

The first area is associated with the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and financial transfers to the crisis-shaken countries of the euro zone. As asserted in the literature, economic inequality and the domestic centre-periphery cleavage are amongst the major factors spurring substate nationalist claims (Dalle Mulle 2018). Since the European debt crisis, inner-state frictions over the administration of revenue have gained a European dimension: within the

institutionalised (supranationalised) 'agency' of the ESM those nationalist subunits generating revenue above the national average may see their sources vanish indirectly via the transfer channels. What is more, financial transfers of the ESM occur additionally to the already 'unjust' domestic redistribution.[VII] Interestingly, though, several nationalist subunits are located in countries hit by the debt crisis and imposing austerity measures. These subunits could be well considered beneficiaries of the ESM. One can therefore expect the transfers of the ESM to play out differently in different contexts depending on the region's relative financial position within the country as well as the country's position within the EU. The ESM as a process of European integration and its potential to bring about anti-EU or pro-EU sentiments in nationalist subunits is certainly an issue future works should explore.

The second area pertains to the refugee crisis and the refugee redistribution mechanism. Drawing from the debate on the relationship between minority nationalism and immigration, migrants are said to identify rather with the larger society of the state than with the minority nation (e.g. Medda-Windischer and Popelier 2016). Following this logic, influxes of migrants threaten to dilute the cultural homogeneity of the nationalist subunit, ultimately reducing the (relative) share of nationalists. In decentralised countries, inner-state frictions over immigration emanate mainly from the domestic division of competences: policy areas such as integration and education are in general administered at the regional level, while granting asylum, citizenship and suffrage and the allocation of refugees on the state territory are deemed high politics and hence exlusive competencies of the central authorities. In the aftermath of the refugee crisis, EU member states sought to establish a permanent redistribution mechanism on the basis of binding quotas. All countries accommodating minority nationalism, with the exception of the United Kingdom, voted in favour of the mechanism. The research gap lies in examining the positions of nationalist subunits towards attempts to institutionalise a supranational refugee redistribution mechanism. The question future research should shed some light on is whether establishing yet another authority empowered to decide about the allocation of people on the subunit's territory reinforces anti-EU sentiments or not. That the outcome may not be unambiguous is suggested by the fact that all nationalist subunits are located in the EU member states that were supposed, at least in theory, to be unburdened by the mechanism.

The third area is closely linked with the previous two and addresses the deepening of European integration in the broadest sense. Notwithstanding the current lack of popular support for further integration, some representatives of West European member states highlight the necessity of further supranationalisation in certain policy areas. As the literature review has shown, for many years in the past decades nationalist subunits perceived the deepening of European integration as an advantageous process weakening the state and leading to alternative forms of self-determination than statehood. It has been equally asserted that processes of European integration were accompanied by a real disempowerment of subunits with already existing self-rule. Bearing these two contradicting effects in mind, future research should explore present stances of nationalist subunits on central governments' and the EU's proposals for further integration. One cannot rule out that, in the light of the post-2010 context, nationalist subunits may incline to perceive any further integration as a threat that should be opposed.

The current crises in the EU primarily impact on member states. As a consequence, the rise of Euroscepticism and the electoral success of right-wing and anti-establishment parties have, in some of them, changed the political landscape beyond recognition. Many new political élites see a solution in less integration and call for a less centralised EU. A goal that can manifest itself, as the Brexit case illustrates, through a full withdrawal of a member state from the EU. Such a withdrawal can have significant repercussions on the substate level. Since nationalist subunits tend to vote more pro-European oriented parties than the rest of the country (Dijskstra et al. 2019), a discrepancy emerges between preferences for the EU expressed as an average value at the national level and preferences of minority nationalists at the substate level. For nationalist subunits, the parent state's withdrawal would mean the definitive loss of the benefits acquired through integration and an end to the emancipation process on the state. A gloomy scenario with the potential to spur secessionist tendencies. The case of Scotland demonstrates that not only did the Scots vote against leaving the EU but they also requested a second independence referendum in the aftermath of the positive Brexit vote (Cetrà and Liñeira 2018: 726). Even though no other member state has come close to an 'exit-referendum', this option is addressed rhetorically every now and then. Therefore, the fourth area pertains to positions of nationalist subunits on the scenario of their parent state leaving the EU. Drawing on the example of

Scotland, future research should examine whether the rise of majority nationalism at the national level demanding less EU integration or an outright withdrawal reinforces minority nationalism at the substate level, pushing the subunit to disintegrate with the parent state.

The fifth and final area addresses the question of continuity of EU membership after secession. This question per se is not raised by the post-2010 context. Although theoretically developed, it became practically relevant only with Scotland's independence referendum and Catalonia's failed proclamation of independence in 2014 and 2017 respectively. As reiterated in the literature, these two subunits rely either on the continuity of EU membership or on its restoration with minimal costs (e.g. De Waele 2017: 121). This view is contradicted by EU representatives, according to whom a newly independent subunit would be considered a third party obliged to undergo a standard accession procedure (Gayle 2017). This implies the possibility that the region's accession is blocked in the Council by the former parent state or any other member state trying to avoid a precedent case. Future research should examine whether the scenario of not being able to rejoin the EU after secession resonates within the nationalist subunits and whether it has a moderating effect on their secessionist aspirations. This area equally includes reflections of events surrounding the independece struggle in Scotland and Catalonia by other nationalist subunits. It could be assumed that the actual outcome in these two cases may well impact on the preferences of other nationalist subunits and influence their future strategies.

The cumulation of crises in the post-2010 period in the EU gave momentum to a specific strand of literature: theories of disintegration. In this remarkable debate, scholars attempt to conceptualise and explain current forces behind European disintegration. Mainly by reversing existing theories of European integration, but also by developing new approaches, they seek to theorise alternative configurations of the integrated European polity that could emerge out of the current crises (Vollaard 2018; Jones 2018; Eppler and Scheller 2013; Vollaard 2014; Webber 2013). So far, however, theories of disintegration have been applied solely to the supranational and national level, leaving out the substate dimension completely.[VIII]

In order to conceptualise the position of a nationalist subunit caught between integration and disintegration processes occurring at different levels within the EU's multi-level governance

structure, an original framework would be needed. Current literature offers some useful frameworks that could be, when aptly combined, used as a suitable instrument to this end. Drawing upon the universal theory of exit, voice and loyality (Hirschman 1970, 1974), Jachtenfuchs and Kasak (2017) suggest that the structural dilemma of subunits in federal states between maximising autonomous policy-making (exit) and collective problem-solving (voice) on a cost-benefit basis is equally applicable to the position of member states in the EU. Hence, they propose an overreaching framework which conceptualises inner-polity tensions. As both nationalist subunits and member states can claim 'exit' from a higher unit, this universal but one-level framework needs to be joined by a multi-level framework linking the analysed polity with other levels of governance. Such a framework is suggested by Bauböck (2019). He devises a level-differentiated framework for a normative secession theory encompassing municipalities, substate units, independent states and supranational unions. The aim of Bauböck's work is to conceptualise a polity's secession as a vertical change of status that must be understood within a broader constellation of polities. When a polity strives for secession, both horizontal relations (with polities having equal legal status) and vertical relations (with upper polities deciding about the seceding polity's success) must be considered.

Preferences of nationalist subunits are not invariant, but depend on a number of factors. Drawing also on Hirschman's theory of exit, voice and loyalty, Vollaard (2018: 212) identifies the following variables:

> 'The mechanism of exit, voice, and loyalty offers an explanation as to why this is so. The decision to make use of full or partial exit from member states depends on a number of considerations related to the degree of dissatisfaction, the degree of loyalty, the availability and costs of all exit options, and the voice options available to effectively address dissatisfaction.'

Combining the works by Bauböck and by Jachtenfucks and Kasak against the background of Hirschman's theory could serve as a starting point for developing a framework what would be apt for conceptualising and analysing the position of a nationalist subunit within integration and disintegration processes in the EU's multi-level governance structure.

Future investigation should undertake in-depth comparative research of the most distinctive nationalist subunits and search for similarities and common patterns in the areas of tension delineated above. Having said this, it could be assumed that an analysis of qualitative data such

as parliamentary debates, election manifestos, interviews, etc. may uncover further potential areas that are still unknown. In the case of common patterns, future research should attempt to formulate a theory of substate disintegration in the EU which would join the family of disintegration theories.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this review article was to survey and structure past and present literature strands concerning the relationship between European integration and minority nationalism and to summarise key findings on this issue. I find that the current state of knowledge remains considerably limited. In spite of some fragmentary insights, we know suprisingly little about the scope, causality and general underlying mechanisms between the two phenomena. To fill the research gaps, this paper aimed to delienate five possible areas of tension with the potential to affect minority nationalism. This article also attempted to outline a framework allowing for a conceptualisation and analysis of the nationalist subunit's position within the EU's multi-level governance structure. Regarding the developments in the EU in the post-2010 period, this paper posits that concomitant integration and disintegration processes and their impact on nationalist subunits represent a promising research avenue worth undertaking. Future research should enhance our understanding of whether, how, in which direction and under what conditions current (dis)integration processes occurring at different levels within the EU's multi-level governance structure impact on minority nationalism in EU member states.

[I] Scholars refer to minority nationalism, substate nationalist parties and movements they represent differently in the literature (see Dandoy 2010 for an overview). Distinct groups inhabiting a nationalist subunit and claiming autonomy or independence are termed 'minority nations', 'national minorities' or 'ethnolinguistic groups'. As for the nationalist parties at the substate level, the following terms can be found: 'minority nationalist parties', 'substate (or sub-state) nationalist parties', 'regionalist parties', 'ethnic parties' or 'ethnoregionalist parties'. Acknowledging that terminological nuances matter, this paper uses the overreaching terms *minority nationalism* and *substate nationalist parties*, unless referring to a surveyed work which explicitly uses a different term.

[II] Other terms referring to regions' visions of a growing influence in the 1990s and the early 2000s can be found in the literature. Regions wanted to obtain 'international actorness (personality)' and 'international recognition'.

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Regarding European integration, they strived for a 'voice in Europe', 'self-determination in Europe', 'independence within Europe' or 'equal representation in the EU'. Last but not least, regions wanted to 'have a say in Europe'.

[III] An isolated quantitative analysis examining the impact of economic integration on the votes for separatist parties, although cast at the national level, finds only a weakly signfinicant effect (Brancati 2014). This work can be joined by Jolly (2015) showing that supranational integration combined with subnational fragmentation increases the economic viability of substate units. The potential of economic viability is used as the main agrument by European minority nationalists challenging the nation state.

[IV] The authors acknowledge that, while their sample does not include the most distinctive cases of stateless nations in the EU, such as Scotland, Wales, Flanders or Corsica, generalisability of this finding is limited (Tatham and Bauer 2014b: 259).

[V] I consider Catalonia a special case. Although nation-wide parties in Spain adopt pronounced anti-establishment attitudes, they remain suprisingly in favour of the EU. Thus, the vote share for pro-EU parties is equivalent in Catalonia and in the rest of Spain (Dijkstra et al. 2019: 2, 4-6).

[VI] The surveyed literature repeatedly points to the fact that undertaking genuine comparative research is constrained due to the unique institutional (constitutional) settings of the regions. Even though every reviewed work builds on some previous research for the purpose of a theoretical background, scholars do not cease to emphasise the context-specificity of nationalist subunits and the embedding states. Therefore, they eschew any generalisable conclusions beyond the case studies.

[VII] All regions classified as net contributors within a country may perceive the transfers of the ESM negatively. However, the difference lies in the level of referrence when addressing dissatisfaction. While individuals in regions not considered minority nations may express their dissatisfaction by casting anti-EU votes during national-level elections, minority nations may do so at the substate level, voting both against the EU and the central government.

[VIII] Paradoxically, some theories of European disintegration are derived from theories of federalism, decision-making and secession in federal states and applied to the EU-member state relationship (see e.g. Vollaard 2018: 61-84).

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