



Cambridge University Press
International Organization Foundation

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Source: *International Organization*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Autumn, 1976), pp. 669-677

Published by: University of Wisconsin Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706377>

Accessed: 17/08/2010 12:31

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Roles and attitudes of French and Italian delegates to the European Community

William R. Pendergast

Students of regional integration have suggested that participants in international activities may experience attitudinal changes which are favorable for subsequent integrative processes. Interviews with 24 French and Italian staff members of permanent delegations at European Community headquarters, however, indicate that these delegates did not increase their support for integration during their tenure, but that they became more realistic about European Community politics. Delegates appear to differ primarily on the basis of ministerial affiliation and nationality, while no significant variations appeared to be correlated with other factors tested.

A hypothesis which is widely cited in the literature on international organization but which remains unsubstantiated is that attitude changes favorable to international organization may occur in individuals who participate intensely in international activities.¹

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¹Literature on attitudes and integration includes: Karl Deutsch, et al., *France, Germany and the Western Alliance*, (New York: Scribner's, 1967); Daniel Lerner and Morton Gorden, *Euratlantica: Changing Perspectives of the European Elites*. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969); Herbert C. Kelman, "Changing Attitudes Through International Activities," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1962): 67-87; Peter Wolf, "International Organization and Attitude Change: A Re-examination of the Functionalist Approach," *International Organization*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Summer 1973): 347-71; G. Matthew Bonham, "Participation in Regional Parliamentary Assemblies: Effects on Attitudes of Scandinavian Parliamentarians," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (June 1970): 325-336; Henry Kerr, Jr., "Changing Attitudes Through International Participation: European Parliamentarians and Integration," *International Organization*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Winter 1973): 45-84; Chadwick Alger, "Personal Contact in Inter-governmental Organizations," in Herbert Kelman, ed., *International Behavior*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1965), pp. 521-47.

This focus has been particularly prominent among students of regional integration. On the one hand, there is agreement that attitudes are central to the process of community formation. For example, Ernst Haas defines integration as a process of attitude change, Karl Deutsch speaks of a "sense of community," and Amitai Etzioni emphasizes the "identive power" of unions.² On the other hand, the relative intensity of interaction in integrating subsystems makes this an attractive hypothesis for students of regional integration. In the European context, Leon Lindberg suggested that the European Community (EC) decision-making pattern contributes to integration by virtue of "actor socialization" and attitude change.³ More recently, Lindberg and Scheingold stressed "actor socialization" as one of their four "coalition formation" devices which they believe comprise the core of the integrative process.⁴ However, they recognize the hypothetical nature of their observations and the possibility of contrary outcomes. They also admit to uncertainty concerning the process variables.

Some empirical research has been done on the attitudes of certain classes of individuals within the European Community. These include studies of former Commission personnel by Keith Smith, of Strasbourg parliamentarians by Henry Kerr, and of national legislators by Werner Feld and John Wildgen.⁵ The evidence which these authors present does not encourage optimistic prognoses that participation in Community activities will result in attitude changes in the direction of increased support for integration.

This note reports recent research on the attitudes of staff members of the French and Italian permanent delegations to the EC in Brussels. I conducted personal interviews during the Spring of 1974 with experts from the foreign and technical ministries of these member governments, excluding the Permanent Representative and his Deputy. I interviewed a total of 24 individuals, 11 French and 13 Italian. This represented 61 percent of the French and 50 percent of the Italian delegation membership. Interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, the interview schedule was flexible, and the menu of inquiries varied to accommodate individual peculiarities and to pursue lines of interest not provided in the prepared questionnaire. This procedure also circumvented prejudices against structured surveys. Questions were open-ended to permit spontaneity and to capture subtleties of viewpoint. Responses were classified afterward to permit quantitative presentation.

² Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 5; Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community in the North Atlantic Area*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), *passim*; Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1965), pp. 16–34.

³ Leon Lindberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), pp. 286–87.

⁴ Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold, *Europe's Would-Be Polity*, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 119, 159–60.

⁵ Kerr; Keith Smith, "The European Economic Community and National Civil Servants of the Member States—A Comment," *International Organization*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (Autumn 1973): 563–68; Werner Feld and John Wildgen, "Electoral Ambitions and European Integration," *International Organization*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring 1975): 447–68.

The members of national delegations in Brussels are situated at the intersection of two systems of political decision. As member state representatives to the Community they participate in the system by which national positions are formulated and articulated on issues which arise in the Community context. As members of the preparatory committees (working groups) for the Council they participate in the system in which national positions are aggregated and joint decisions are made at the Community level. The permanent delegates are intermediaries at the nexus of these interdependent systems of decision. Specifically, delegates serve in multiple capacities: 1) information relay between the Community and national capitals; 2) intelligence antenna for national authorities; 3) representative and advocate of national positions in the Community system; 4) participant in national policy-formation processes on EC issues; and 5) exponent of the "Community interest" to national authorities.⁶

Some authors have suggested specifically the likelihood of socialization among the members of permanent delegations. Their position subjects them intensely to the presumed dynamics of actor socialization. They meet collegially several times weekly for lengthy sessions. The frequency of interaction among members in working groups is normally greater than within each national delegation. The low mobility of delegates exposes them for prolonged periods to Community processes. Thus, Lindberg felt that attitude changes were probable among delegates because they should occur in rough correlation with the frequency of contact.⁷ Roy Price claims that changes have occurred which are important to the functioning of the Community system.⁸

On the other hand, Philip Jacob believed that expectations of socialization may be especially tenuous when dealing with career public servants: "What happens in highly structured societies with strong governmental bureaucracies is the submergence of the personal values of the policy maker to role values in which a concept of social responsibility is accepted as the dominant controlling norm for the policy maker's official life."⁹ Unlike members of the Commission staff, per-

⁶ A survey of the permanent representatives is: Jean A. Salmon, "Le Rôle des Représentants Permanentes" in Pierre Gerbet and Daniel Pépy, eds., *La Décision dans les Communautés Européennes*, (Bruxelles: Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1969), pp. 57-73. See also: M. Virally, et al., *Les Missions Permanentes Auprès des Organisations Internationales*, (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 1971); Altiero Spinelli, *The Eurocrats: Conflict and Crisis in the European Community*, trans. by C. Grove Haines, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966); Emile Noël and Henri Etienne, "The Permanent Representatives Committee and the 'Deepening' of the Communities," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Autumn 1971); Emile Noël, "The Committee of Permanent Representatives," *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (1967): 219-51; Helen Wallace, *National Governments and the European Communities*, (London: Chatham House/PEP, 1973).

⁷ Lindberg, pp. 286-87.

⁸ Roy Price, *The Politics of the European Community*, (London: Butterworth, 1973), p. 69. Lindberg perceived stronger European feelings among the Permanent Representatives than in the Council, (p. 79). Altiero Spinelli concurs (p. 79).

⁹ Philip E. Jacob and James V. Toscano, eds., *The Integration of Political Communities*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1964), pp. 237-38.

manent delegates continue as national civil servants. National hierarchies control their remuneration, position, and future advancement. Thus, they operate within constraints against attitude change.

Equally important, this is a group with critical influence over policy making in the national and Community systems. Attitudinal changes among them are politically more significant than among parliamentarians, although they are a numerically small group with infrequent turnover.¹⁰ Thus, they are central to the theoretical problem of socialization and to the political question of policy making.

A question which remains open concerns the depth of attitude changes and their durability. This raises the possibility of "desocialization" of an individual upon return to alternate employment. Also, much literature assumes that values or attitudes are primary determinants of human behavior. Minimally, role expectations, social norms, and political influences are additional behavioral stimuli.

Hypotheses concerning attitude change consequent to participatory socialization suffer from conceptual and operational ambiguity. There has been little effort by students of regional integration to define what is meant by "attitude." Many authors advance a smorgasbord of phenomena which includes: normative commitment to integration; reorientation of loyalties and identifications; new patterns of expectation; broadening of horizons; acquisition of professional vested interests and knowledge; cosmopolitan appreciation of the problems of others; elimination of stereotypes. The present study concentrates on the following attitudinal dimensions of permanent representatives vis à vis European integration: 1) a "support" dimension; 2) an idealism/realism dimension; 3) an "optimism" dimension; 4) a cognitive dimension; 5) an institutional preference dimension.

Second, one encounters a variety of experiential and structural factors as explanations for changes in attitudinal dimensions. This study investigates variations in response among delegates which correlate with differences in: 1) nationality; 2) frequency of interaction; 3) duration of tenure; 4) age; 5) ministerial affiliation; 6) quality of experience as rewarding or disappointing.

The results of my research both confirm and qualify some of the general hypotheses and empirical findings which others have reported, while they introduce new information concerning other pertinent questions. Responses indicate an almost total absence of increased support for integration by delegates during their residence in Brussels. Because of French and Italian differences concerning institu-

¹⁰The size of French and Italian delegations has varied. Between January 1960 and January 1974 a total of 53 individuals passed through the French delegation while the Italian delegation sponsored 65 persons. Turnover occurs most frequently among Foreign Ministry representatives, with much longer tenure for some representatives of technical ministries.

tional preferences, this question was left open-ended so that respondents could define in their own terms the meaning of "support." A predetermined equation of "Europeanism" with specific institutional formulae would have prejudiced the outcome. Also, this question relied on retrospective self-evaluation by delegates. Only 10 percent of respondents (N=19) reported increased support for European integration. These responses were matched by an equal percentage of diminished support. Eighty percent of respondents experienced no change in basic support for integration. This conclusion is parallel to those by Kerr, Smith, and Feld and Wildgen in different institutional contexts.

At the same time, however, delegates shared a commitment to succeed in the task of common policy elaboration. Yet this constitutes an immediate professional obligation rather than an ideological commitment to European integration.¹¹ Responsible political authorities have "engaged" their governments in the development of common policies over a range of issues.¹² This framework of prior political commitment distinguishes the EC environment. This interpretation is substantiated by delegate responses concerning extension of Community activities to new sectors. Virtually all delegates (N=22) favored the expansion of Community competence. When asked specifically what areas they felt should be included, however, most defined them as those which are noted in the treaties and subsequent commitments. The exceptions were Italian respondents committed to complete federation. Many French delegates stressed that EC processes would be ineffective in sectors beyond those identified in the treaties. Still, there was unanimous support for movement beyond the status quo.

The realism/idealism dimension emerges clearly. The distinction refers to the balance between underlying historical forces and human volition as agents of integrative dynamics, the impact of historical contingencies and politics, the methods which may be appropriate for the EC, and the time required for the successful attainment of integration. Eighty-five percent of the respondents (N=20) claimed to be more realistic according to these criteria than when they arrived in Brussels. Respondents who registered no change claimed to have brought with them a healthy sense of realism. This confirms the conclusion by Keith Smith in interviews with former Dutch Commission members that the primary result of participation was the growth of a "profound sense of 'realism'" about the European Community rather than the development of more fervent support.¹³

Another attitudinal dimension is optimism/pessimism defined as expectations concerning long-run probabilities for the EC. Fifty-eight percent (N=19) claimed to be pessimistic. This appeared to be an unstable mood which respondents claimed shifted periodically in response to events. Thus, 63 percent (N=19) believed that

¹¹ This conclusion supports the earlier suggestion by Laurence Scheinman in "Some Preliminary Notes on Bureaucratic Relationships in the European Economic Community," *International Organization*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1966): 564.

¹² The concept of "engagement" was introduced by Ernst Haas, p. 522.

¹³ Smith, p. 564.

European integration had become irreversible in the economic sector. At the same time, 71 percent (N=17) of these delegates who were close to the policy process shared perceptions of current stagnation. Those few respondents who claimed progress mentioned meeting together and exposition of views as components of progress. The 1973–1974 crisis extended throughout the Community system.

Delegates were also questioned on their preferences concerning institutional alternatives for the “European union” which had been projected for 1980, the Council veto provision, and direct popular election of members to the European Parliament. Fifty-four percent (N=22) favored either federation or confederation while 32 percent were unsure. Fifty-four percent (N=22) also favored abolition of the Council veto and extension of majoritarian procedures. Seventy-six percent (N=22) favored eventual or immediate provision for direct, popular election of the European Parliament. Thus, on institutional issues delegates favored intensification of structural integration.

Finally, all respondents (N=24) confirmed that their knowledge had increased concerning Community institutions, policies, and processes. Many also claimed that vague initial ideas and opinions had crystallized and become more precise. This might be trivial but for possible eventual consequences which could not be verified in the interviews. Knowledge acquisition represents for an individual a personal investment which is likely to orient future activities. Knowledge also conveys a sense of competence and familiarity which it is comfortable to maintain. This may have a supportive effect for Community institutions when a specialist acquires a vested interest in the perpetuation of his expertise and sources of information.

Similarly, all delegates (N=24) acquired a greater appreciation for the diversity of national viewpoints and problems. This cognitive development may have attitudinal and behavioral consequences. It tends to de-emotionalize conflicts and to ground them in comprehensible differences in national structures and policies. The unitary actor image is replaced by sensitivity to the organizational and political demands to which colleagues are subject. This may be significant as a subjective prerequisite for further integration based on compromise.

These findings were broken down to investigate the correlation with responses of factors such as frequency of interaction, length of tenure, age, nationality, ministerial affiliation, and quality of experience as gratifying or disappointing.

The frequency of communication among individuals is a key variable to students of socialization. The conventional assumption is that attitude change occurs most readily under circumstances of intense, sustained interaction. Delegates maintain similar schedules which are subject, however, to variations according to seasonal changes and sectoral differences. Due to these irregularities, meaningful measurement is not possible. It is significant, however, that few delegates claimed to have established friendships with colleagues from other nations beyond purely professional relationships. This was attributed to the busy schedule and heavy work load. Most new acquaintances are confined to the respondent’s own national community in Brussels.

The consequences of age for attitudes pertain to malleability and generational differences. It is often assumed that younger persons are more susceptible to attitude change. Also, generational experiences which influence attitudes vary among age groups. The effect of age differentials on responses was small for most questions. Respondents were classed into three age groups: 30–40; 41–50; 51 and up. The small number of individuals in each of these groups, however, gives the results only suggestive value. The middle-age group was more inclined to favor retention of the Council veto, less certain about institutional preferences, and most pessimistic. The oldest delegates were most in favor of veto abolition and least convinced of EC irreversibility. The youngest group was most certain of EC irreversibility and most optimistic. Otherwise there is insignificant variation in responses by members of different age groups.

A variable which is sometimes encountered as an explanation for socialization is gratification/deprivation as a consequence of participation in a political system.¹⁴ Gratification can be viewed from the perspective of the individual delegate or from that of the country which he represents. All of the delegates claimed to be satisfied with their positions, although there were variations among countries, ministries, and individuals in terms of policy influence, status, and material rewards. In view of the consensual satisfaction, however, this study does not discriminate among delegates on the basis of the factors which contribute to this sentiment. From the national perspective, on the other hand, there is reason to believe that France has derived greater tangible benefits than has Italy from the EC. The French delegation has a reputation for effectiveness in the Community system which suggests a more frequent association with successful outcomes. Yet French responses do not indicate greater support for European integration. Indeed, the only delegates who claimed increased support were Italian (see below). Another variable differentiates delegates from foreign and technical ministries. Some authors suggest that socialization occurs most readily from activities in non-controversial “technical” sectors than in “political” ones.¹⁵ This strikes at the core of the functionalist advocacy of separation of political and technical tasks. David Mitrany posited that the “cardinal virtue of the functional method [is] what one might call the virtue of technical self-determination.”¹⁶ Ernst Haas concluded that the “remarkable degree of compromise” reached for the ECSC treaty-drafting conference was due partly to the fact that “The talks were carried out by expert civil servants, not by diplomats or ministers.”¹⁷

Delegates from technical ministries showed more volatile changes in support, with only five of eight claiming no change, compared to ten of eleven diplomats. Two of the three technical delegates, whose attitudes changed, however, reduced

¹⁴ Wolf, pp. 369–70.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *passim*, but especially pp. 367 ff.

¹⁶ David Mitrany. *A Working Peace System*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948, p. 35.

¹⁷ Haas, p. 251.

their support for integration. Seven of twelve technical delegates claimed uncertainty about institutional preferences while all diplomats had more precise ideas, eight of ten favoring either federation or confederation. Seven of twelve technical delegates favored retention of the Council veto compared to only three of ten diplomats, seven of whom favored eventual abolition. Technical delegates were more pessimistic and also developed less realism. This evidence offers little encouragement for confidence in the efficacy of “technical” cooperation as a means to promote attitude changes favorable to integration. It does support, on the other hand, Scheinman’s observation of the negative consequences of “technical nationalism” in Euratom.¹⁸

Delegates were classed into three groups based on 18-month differentials in duration of tenure. There was too little variation in response among delegates based on length of tenure in Brussels to merit comment. This conflicts with common assumptions about the socialization mechanism. The most recent arrivals, however, expressed more optimism concerning long-run EC probabilities but were also least sure of EC irreversibility.

The consequence of nationality for attitudes is crucial to socialization hypotheses since it is the effect of this factor which interaction is supposed to diminish if it is to prove an effective peace strategy. In the present case, nationality reveals strong response variations on issues concerning institutional preferences but makes little difference to changes in support or realism. Eleven of the thirteen Italians preferred federation or confederation, while only one of nine French respondents favored this solution. French respondents were wary of prefabricated institutional forms and claimed faith in pragmatic, empirical adaptation. Besides these quantitative indicators, the difference in tone of responses was striking. Italians proffered their institutional biases almost ritualistically while French responses were often justified by intricate rationalizations. Further, eleven of thirteen Italians favored immediate or eventual abolition of the Council veto while only one of the nine French respondents felt this practical. All Italian delegates (N=12) favored either the principle or the immediate establishment of direct, popular election of members of the European Parliament. French respondents (N=10) were more evenly divided. The greater Italian pessimism may reveal disappointment over their institutional preferences; nine of thirteen Italians were pessimistic compared to two of six French delegates answering the question. At the same time, Italians were more convinced of EC irreversibility. These findings suggest that nationality is a major source of differentiation.

II

The dominant impression from interviews is of national civil servants who

¹⁸ Laurence Scheinman, “Euratom: Nuclear Integration in Europe,” in J.S. Nye, Jr., ed., *International Regionalism: Readings*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), p. 279.

function within the lines of national policy and yet are constrained by cross-pressures and obligations. The impact of conformity to group norms and social pressures, however, is less pronounced in working groups where members are recognized as national representatives than in the parliamentary committees at Strasbourg with their cross-national organization of parties.

Permanent delegates are practical, professional individuals. Most volunteered for the position for pragmatic reasons rather than European enthusiasm. The combination of these initial incentives, occupational roles, and national policies deprives the Community process of significant effects on their basic attitudes, at least in the short run. Delegates developed no enthusiasm for integration as a result of their experience. Rather, they acquired a "realism" which in some cases bordered on cynicism.

Whatever influence is exerted as a consequence of interaction in the Community context seems counter-balanced by the effect on delegates of nationally defined political objectives. There is a homogeneity about some responses of members of each delegation which suggests servility to perceived goals of national authorities. The uniformity of the Italian preference for structural federation and of the French insistence on "realistic" methods suggests political orthodoxy rather than different experiences or national character. It is likely that national delegations incorporate pressures for political conformity among members and are themselves critical socialization structures. From this perspective, a variable which remains to be tested for effects on interview response is turnover in national leadership and change in policy line.

The general position of these delegates towards European integration is supportive within the parameters of existing EC commitments and prevailing national foreign policies. Support reportedly did not increase as a result of interaction in the Community system, but delegates favor institutional innovation and policy expansion to the extent that these are anticipated by existing commitments and national political aspirations.