National Identity and Public Support for Membership to the European Union in the Republic of North Macedonia and Serbia

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Twenty years have passed since the signing of the Thessaloniki Treaty, which, for the first time, unequivocally confirmed that the future of the Western Balkan (WB) countries is within the European Union (EU) (European Commission, 2003). However, the countries in this region, except from Croatia which joined the Union in 2013, remain far from achieving full membership to the European Union (Kmezić, 2020) and progress in the accession process has stagnated (Elezi, 2019; O'Brennan, 2014; Richter & Wunsch, 2020).

Literature on this slow progress of the integration of the Western Balkan countries into the European Union identifies a range of explanations for this lack of progress (e.g., Elezi, 2019; O'Brennan, 2014; Panagiotou, 2013; Richter & Wunsch, 2020; Subotic, 2011). 'Enlargement fatigue', an unwillingness or declining willingness from EU member states to admit new countries (Szolucha, 2010), has been pointed out to be an important factor contributing to the slow and unsatisfactory process of the accession of the Western Balkan countries to the EU (O'Brennan, 2014; Panagiotou, 2013). This fatigue around the integration process is not only being felt by the EU member states but has also been observed within the Western Balkan countries (Belloni & Brunazzo, 2017; Panagiotou, 2013) in what Panagiotou (2013) labels 'evaluation fatigue'. Between 2006 and 2022, except for Albania, all the countries of the region, have experienced substantial decline in public support for European integration (Belloni, 2016; ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute, 2022). In Serbia for example, this support has decreased from 61% in 2006 (Belloni, 2016) to 38% in 2022 (ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute, 2022). While the declining enthusiasm for the enlargement of the Union within the EU and its member states has been extensively researched, the growing Euroscepticism within the Western Balkan region has been much less investigated (Belloni, 2016; Belloni & Brunazzo, 2017). However, as public opinion in candidate countries can play an important role in shaping the course of their accession process (Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-

Kesebir, 2016), and this accession process has been slow and faltering in the case of the

Western Balkan countries (Elezi, 2019; O'Brennan, 2014), it is relevant to understand what

determines public attitudes toward the EU integration process in the Western Balkan

candidate countries. Furthermore, previous research on public opinion toward the European

Union has found identity related factors to be of great importance in explaining support for or

opposition to EU integration (Azrout et al., 2011; Carey, 2002; De Vreese & Boomgaarden,

2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005, 2009; McLaren, 2002; Tillman, 2013; Van Klingeren et

al., 2013). For example, anti-immigration sentiments (Azrout et al., 2011; De Vreese et al.,

2008; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005), national identity (Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks,

2004, 2005, 2009; Van Klingeren et al., 2013) and authoritarian value orientation (Tillman,

2013) have been found to be important factors in determining public attitudes toward EU

integration. It is interesting to note however that there is very little literature that investigates

how identity-based factors relate to the growing Euroscepticism in the Western Balkan

countries. By zooming in on one of these identity-based factors, national identity, this thesis

aims to create and understanding of the influence that identity-based factors have on the

declining public enthusiasm for the WB country's integration into EU. To do this, the

following research question is investigated: *to what extent does national identity influence*

public support for EU membership in the Republic of North-Macedonia and Serbia?

There is some research that focusses on the role of identity related factors

(Damjanovski et al., 2020) and specifically national identity or threats to this identity

(Belloni, 2016; Belloni & Brunazzo, 2017; Çarkoğlu & Glüpker-Kesebir, 2016; Damjanovski

& Kirchner, 2019; Mihić et al., 2021; Stojic, 2006), in shaping public opinion in the context

of the Western Balkan countries. However, of these inquiries, only the studies by

Damjanovski and Kirchner (2019) and Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-Kesebir (2016), investigated

specifically national identity, or the fear of loss of this national identity in the study by

Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-Kesebir (2016), in the case of North Macedonia, and were quantitative in nature. For Serbia, this has only been the case in the study of Mihić and co-authors (2021). Thus, to my knowledge, there is very limited quantitative research on the influence of national identity on public opinion on EU integration in North Macedonia and Serbia. In answering the research question, this thesis contributes to the limited existing literature on the relationship between identity related factors and public attitudes on EU integration in the Western Balkan countries. Furthermore, insights from this study can create a better understanding of the factors that contribute to opposition to EU membership in North Macedonia and Serbia and therefore to explaining the slow and stagnating integration process. Such an understanding is an important consideration to accurately interpret both past and future developments in the process of European integration. Moreover, this can contribute to improving the effectiveness of EU integration policies and approaches to realize the reforms required for EU membership in the Western Balkans and other countries that wish to become EU member states. This is particularly relevant in a time where, as Kartsonaki and Wolff (2023) note, EU integration is not the only foreign policy option for the Western Balkan countries, as China and Russia continue to exert their influence in the region. Recurring setbacks in the integration process, together with increasing disillusionment and dissatisfaction among the local populations toward EU policies and principles, are gradually distancing some of the WB countries from the EU, which can have uncertain repercussions for the regional stability (Kartsonaki & Wolff, 2023). Also, public support for the integration process is important to the legitimacy of the European Union (Hobolt & De Vries, 2016), making understanding the factors that shape such support highly valuable.

Based on existing literature on the determinants of public support for or opposition toward EU integration and membership, this thesis expects national identity to have a negative influence on individual's support for their country's membership to the European

Union. To assess the nature and impact of the relationship between national identity and support for EU membership in North Macedonia and Serbia, this thesis conducts a hierarchical multi-variate logistic regression analysis with Eurobarometer survey data from the two case countries that were selected using the extreme case method. The findings indicate that in both North Macedonia and Serbia, national identity played an important role in shaping public attitudes toward EU membership. The hierarchical analysis revealed that national identity explained a significant proportion of the variance in support for EU membership in both North Macedonia and Serbia, beyond the effects of other economic and pollical factors. Furthermore, in North Macedonia, national identity was found to have a negative impact on individual support for EU membership: individuals with a higher level of national identity were less likely to support their country's membership to the EU, than those individuals with lower levels of national identity.

The next chapter builds the theoretical framework of this research. First, two concepts that take center stage in the research, support for EU membership and national identity, are conceptualized and defined. Secondly, theories on public attitudes toward EU integration are discussed and the hypothesis is formulated. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the research, followed by a presentation of the results of the analysis in chapter 4. Subsequently, the results are interpreted and discussed in chapter 5. The final chapter provides an answer to the research question and makes suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter first conceptualizes two concepts that are central to this research: support for EU membership and national identity. The chapter then goes on to discuss the literature that identifies determinants of support for European integration. This section discusses three theories that explain public support for European integration. The third theory, the identity approach, is the main focus of this thesis. The identity approach section is concluded with the hypothesis that is derived from this theory. This hypothesis will be tested to formulate an answer to the main question of this research: to what extent does national identity influence public support for EU membership in the Western Balkan countries.

2.1 Understanding Support for EU Membership and National Identity.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing Support for EU Membership

In line with much research on political support for and attitudes toward the EU, this thesis uses David Easton's (1975) seminal work on understanding political support as the theoretical foundation to study attitudes toward the EU in North Macedonia and Serbia. Easton (1975) understands support as "the way in which a person evaluatively orients himself to some object through either his attitudes or his behavior" (Easton, 1975, p. 436). Here, the central attitude that relates to support is evaluative, as people are unlikely to support another when they do not also hold favorable opinions of them (Easton, 1975). Easton (1975) distinguished between two modes of support, specific and diffuse, and three objects of support, the authorities, the regime, and the community. Specific support is an attitude or behavior that comes from the evaluation of the authorities' action (Beaudonnet & Di Mauro, 2012). Here, Easton (1975) understands authorities as those that are accountable for the daily activities on behalf of the political system. Thus, specific support relates to specific policy outcomes, or the economic and political performance of a polity (Boomgaarden et al., 2011).

Diffuse support on the other hand, relates to the system as a whole (Easton, 1975). It is a general evaluation about "what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person - not of what it does" (Easton, 1975, p. 444). The perception of its legitimacy or the trust in the polity are central to diffuse support (Ares et al., 2017). Diffuse support is therefore more durable, while specific support is more subject to change (Beaudonnet & Di Mauro, 2012). Furthermore, Ares and co-authors (2017) note that specific support starting from an individual's experiences with political entities may in the long run bring about diffuse support. It is important to note here, that although these experiences with the regime as a whole imply a general evaluation, they are still in the category of specific support (Easton, 1975). This is because "this support is still of a specific kind since its extension or withdrawal is contingent on the authorities' presumed behavior" (Easton, 1975, p. 439).

As this study investigates public support for membership to the European Union in two candidate countries and, not attitudes toward specific policies or the performance of the EU in the eyes of Macedonian and Serbian citizens, this thesis focusses on diffuse support for the European Union in North Macedonia and Serbia.

2.2.2 Conceptualizing National Identity

Although widely used, there is no standard definition of the concept of national identity (Christin & Trechsel, 2002; Luedtke, 2005). This section will outline some different conceptualizations and aspects of national identity and identify how this study understands the concept of national identity.

Blank and Schmidt (2003) describe national identity in general terms as the intensity and feelings of closeness an individual feels toward their nation. Tsygankov (2001) similarly defines national identity as "a cultural norm that reflects emotional or affective orientations of individuals toward their nation and national political system" (Tsygankov, 2001, p. 15). Carey (2002) puts forward a conceptualization of national identity as the strength of positive

attachment toward, or bond with, their nation that an individual feels. Carey (2002) notes that national identity can furthermore be understood in relation to an individual's attachment to different territorial identities, such as the neighborhood, or the region, or country they live in. In this view, the concept of a terminal community is central, which indicates the highest political unit that an individual identifies with or feel committed to, giving the example that "people in Scotland may see Scotland, or the United Kingdom, or the European Union as the terminal community" (Carey, 2002, pp. 391–392).

However, Blank and Schmidt (2003) furthermore note, that national identity is a general concept that reflects various facets of an individual's relationship with or attachment to their nation. Aichholzer and colleagues (2021) and Davidov (2009) illustrate that there is a strand of empirical work that has understood national identity as a two-dimensional construct of national attachment, differing in the conception of how the relation between the individual and the nation is constructed. Here, national identity has two aspects. Davidov (2009) identifies these two aspects as a 'positive' and a 'negative' aspect of national identity, while Aichholzer and co-authors (2021) talk about an 'inclusive' and an 'exclusive' aspect of national identity. The negative or exclusive aspect of national identity refers to feelings of national superiority and hostility toward other nations or cultures, which have been labeled as 'chauvinism', 'nationalism' or 'blind patriotism'. From this perspective, national identity is characterized by an idealization of the nation together with feelings of superiority and uncritical loyalty towards national authorities (Aichholzer et al., 2021; Davidov, 2009). The positive or inclusive aspect of national identity on the other hand, is characterized by positive association with a nation's socio-economic institutions, culture and governance, without implying a hostile stance toward the out-group. This has been labelled 'constructive patriotism' or 'positive patriotism' (Aichholzer et al., 2021; Davidov, 2009).

Aichholzer and colleagues (2021) note that citizenship is another aspect of national identity. Here, citizenship is divided between 'civic' and 'ethnic' citizenship (Aichholzer et al., 2021). The notion of ethnic citizenship is rooted in a shared cultural heritage, lineage, and ethnic identity. Ethnic citizenship can be seen as an ethnic community where membership is determined by national ancestry (Aichholzer et al., 2021). Civic citizenship on the other hand, is founded on a common political history and constitution. Citizenship is viewed as being determined by an individual's commitment and capacity to conform to the national laws (Aichholzer et al., 2021). The concept of ethnic citizenship emphasized national identity as characterized by cultural similarities, whereas civic citizenship is attainable to those who adhere to a nation's constitution (Aichholzer et al., 2021).

Based on the definitions and conceptualizations discussed, and in line with other research investigating national identity in relation to European integration (e.g., Carey, 2002; Christin & Trechsel, 2002; Luedtke, 2005), this thesis understands the concept of national identity as the strength of attachment to the nation. The literature discussed above, illustrates that national identity is a multi-dimensional concept. However, the Eurobarometer data that is used to investigate the research question, does not allow for the separate investigation of the various aspects of national identity, such as blind and constructive patriotism and ethnic and civic citizenship.

2.2 Literature Review: Theorizing Support for European Integration

The research investigating public opinion and attitudes on EU integration has produced three main explanatory approaches to explaining individual attitudes toward European integration: the utilitarian, political cues, and identity-based approaches. This thesis focusses on public support for EU membership in two Western Balkan candidate countries. Literature investigating public attitudes toward EU membership in former Central and Eastern European (CEE) candidate countries, has relied for a large part on the theories of public

opinion on European integration, originating from Western European countries (e.g., Ehin, 2001; Slomczynski & Shabad, 2003; Tanasoiu & Colonescu, 2008). Therefore, this thesis utilizes these theories of explaining public attitudes toward EU integration, combined with findings from the literature on public opinion toward EU membership in former CEE candidate countries, to theorize determinants for public attitudes toward EU membership in North-Macedonia and Serbia, and formulate the hypothesis.

2.2.1 Utilitarian Approach

The most dominant approach to explaining public support for or opposition to the European integration process is the utilitarian approach. This perspective is embedded in the rational choice tradition, as it holds that individuals form their opinions about EU integration based on economic and materialist cost-benefit calculations (Damjanovski et al., 2020). Research within this approach finds that the costs and benefits of European trade liberalization varies among citizens with different socio-economic situations, and that the differences in economic consequences from integration shape citizens' attitudes toward EU integration (Anderson & Reichert, 1995; Foster & Frieden, 2021; Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Herzog & Tucker, 2010; Tucker et al., 2002).

Literature on utilitarian explanations finds that support for EU integration is positively related to an individuals' level of human capital, that is occupational skills, education, and income (Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Hakhverdian et al., 2013; Lubbers & Jaspers, 2011). Here, the argument is that individuals with higher levels of human capital have better capacity to adapt to the occupational competition resulting from a more liberalized labor market in the EU (Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995). Furthermore, Gabel and Palmer (1995) argue that citizens with higher levels of income tend to profit more from the liberalization of capital and the freedom of movements of goods and services, as they possess the means to capitalize on the wider range of investment opportunities that these more open

financial markets offer. Also, low inflation due the European Monetary System typically proves advantageous for people that have financial assets (Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995). Individuals with low incomes on the other hand, are generally more hurt by capital liberalization. This is because it reduces the costs of capital mobility, incentivizing capital to move rather than acceding to labor demands, and because it constrains social welfare spending (Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995).

Utilitarian explanations have also been found to be relevant on national level. Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) find that if countries perform well economically, as a result of the trade liberalization and the Single Market that the EU entails, citizens will be more supportive of EU integration. Gabel and Whitten (1997) confirm this finding and add that citizens also take their personal economic situation into account. The better their evaluation of their personal economic welfare, the higher their support for EU integration (Gabel & Whitten, 1997).

These utilitarian explanations have also been tested in former CEE and Baltic candidate countries, and found utilitarian considerations to be an important, although not always the dominant, explanation of support for EU membership. For example, Doyle and Fidrmuc (2006) and Slomczynski and Shabad (2003) find that in seven CEE and Baltic countries individuals with favorable and flexible human capital tend to support EU membership. Also, Slomczynski and Shabad (2003) find evidence from 13 CEE and Baltic countries that individuals that are positive about their personal economic situation are more likely to be supportive of EU membership. Furthermore, research has found that in the CEE countries, citizens' attitudes toward their country's membership to the EU were significantly affected by their self-perception of being a 'winner' or 'loser' from the economic transition toward a free market after the end of communism (Herzog & Tucker, 2010; Tucker et al., 2002). They find that citizens who benefitted from the economic transition and were

supportive of the free market were more likely to support their country's integration into the EU (Tucker et al., 2002). Here, membership to the EU functioned as an implicit guarantee that economic reforms undertaken, away from communism toward a market economy, would not be reversed. EU membership is viewed as a continuation of free market reforms, and therefore citizens shape their attitudes toward EU membership according to their self-perception as a winner or loser from this membership (Herzog & Tucker, 2010; Tucker et al., 2002).

I expect these utilitarian explanations of support for EU membership to also be relevant in the case of North-Macedonia and Serbia. First, North-Macedonia and Serbia share a communist legacy with the CEE countries and are subject to similar conditions of accession like the consolidation of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, and the transition to a functioning market economy, and also face similar challenges with regards to implementing reforms to adhere to these conditions. Therefore, although there are also considerable differences between these two sets of countries, this leads me to expect that the factors that have been confirmed to have shaped attitudes toward support for accession to the EU in the CEE countries, are also relevant in North-Macedonia and Serbia.

Furthermore, Stratulat and colleagues (2020) argue that people in the Western Balkan countries are supportive of the EU integration process as they see it as an opportunity to change their country's economic and government performances. Milenković and Milenković, (2013) similarly note that Serbian candidacy is generally seen as an opportunity to gain individual economic prosperity. Also, recent public opinion surveys show that in both North-Macedonia and Serbia, economic prosperity, and the freedom to study/work in the EU are the most important consequences of EU membership among citizens (ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute, 2022; Outbox Consulting d.o.o, 2020). Therefore, utilitarian explanations are expected to be of importance to explaining support for EU membership in the countries at hand. It is, however, interesting to note that literature that investigates the influence of

utilitarian factors on support for EU in Western Balkan countries finds no conclusive evidence that human capital is positively related to support for EU integration (e.g., Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-Kesebir, 2016; Damjanovski et al., 2020). Damjanovski and colleagues (2020), for example, find no significant impact of human capital on Euroscepticism in the Western Balkan countries, with the exception of a negative relation between income and Euroscepticism in Serbia, and lower Euroscepticism among experts and businesspeople in North Macedonia and Kosovo.

2.2.2 Political Cues Approach

Another approach to explaining attitudes toward the EU integration process focusses on the role of national political factors. This approach connects individual attitudes toward EU integration with opinions on domestic politics, particularly evaluations of the incumbent government, party preferences and satisfaction of the workings of democracy in their country (e.g., Anderson, 1998; Kritzinger, 2003; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). The central premise of this approach is Anderson's (1998) domestic political proxies' model. Anderson (1998) argues that European integration is a complex and distant process for most citizens. This causes citizens to have insufficient awareness and information to make an evaluation of the integration processes' implications on which to base their attitudes toward European integration. Therefore, citizens instead use their "domestic political reality" (Anderson, 1998, p. 591) as proxies to form their opinion about the process of EU integration (Anderson, 1998). As citizens are usually much better acquainted with their domestic political situation, they base their opinions about the EU on how they feel about their domestic political parties, the political system as a whole (including democratic political institutions), and their government (Anderson, 1998). The results of Anderson's (1998) analysis, find evidence supporting this hypothesis for a selection of Western European countries.

Support for this line of argumentation has also been found in the former Baltic and

CEE candidate countries (Cichowski, 2000; Ehin, 2001; Slomczynski & Shabad, 2003). Ehin (2001) for example, finds that in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, supporters of the incumbent government are significantly more likely to vote in favor of EU accession, than individuals that distrust the government. Similarly, Slomczynski & Shabad (2003) find that Polish citizens who express higher levels of satisfaction with the performance of the democratic regime are more likely to be supportive of EU integration than citizens that are dissatisfied with the workings of democracy in their country.

Sánchez-Cuenca (2000) proposes an alternative view on the relationship between domestic proxies and support for the EU integration process. In this perspective, the EU can function as a remedy to poor performance and inefficiencies of the domestic political system. Citizens that are not satisfied with the performance of their national institutions, will be more willing to accept the transfer of national sovereignty from the government to the supranational level of the EU, as they do not have so much to lose from this transfer (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). In this view, mistrust of national institutions comes from problems such as corruption, political instability, structurally high unemployment, and low responsiveness of political parties. Here, the transfer of sovereignty to EU institutions appears as a more efficient solution to these deficiencies (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000). Tanasoiu and Colonescu (2008) find evidence supporting this hypothesis in their case study of public opinion on European integration in Bulgaria. Their results indicate that dissatisfaction with the performance of the national government among Bulgarian citizens is positively related to their support for European integration, and that this is due to the presence of corruption in the national political system (Tanasoiu & Colonescu, 2008).

Stratulat and co-authors (2020) note that people in the Western Balkan countries support the EU integration process, because they perceive certain benefits from it that they value, such as the freedom to work and travel, but also peace and security (Stratulat et al.,

2020). For this reason, together with the arguments mentioned earlier, the political cues explanations are expected to apply also to North-Macedonia and Serbia.

Thus, this thesis acknowledges the utilitarian and political cues explanations of support for EU integration and membership, and utilitarian and political cues explanations of support for the EU membership will be included in the analysis as control variables. However, the focus of this research will be on the identity-based explanations for support for EU integration. There is very little research that investigates the identity-based explanations, and particularly national identity, in Western Balkan candidate countries. Mihić and colleagues (2021) find evidence that a strong national identity negatively influences pro-European integration in Serbia. Damjanovski and Kirchner (2019) find similar results in North-Macedonia, pointing out that identity-based explanations of EU support are becoming increasingly important. Furthermore, the process of European integration was, until the late 1980s, mostly focused on economic cooperation and market liberalization (Christin & Trechsel, 2002). However, since the difficulty with the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, issues other than economics, such as issues concerning legitimacy and identity, have become increasingly important (Laffan, 1996). Therefore, the utilitarian and political cues explanations may not suffice to explain support for EU integration. This may be the case particularly in North-Macedonia and Serbia, as, specifically in Serbia, issues of identity have been found to be obstacles to the integration process of these countries (Subotic, 2011).

2.2.3 Identity Approach

Utilitarian and political factors are not the only influencers to support for or opposition toward EU integration. A third set of arguments links group identity with attitudes of European integration (Elgün & Tillman, 2007). Research has found that an individual's sense of (social) identity also is an important source determining attitudes toward EU integration. Carey (2002) and Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005) for example, find that the effects of

feelings of national identity are at least equally potent in explaining an individuals' evaluation of European integration, as the utilitarian explanations of cost/benefits calculations of EU membership. Previous research has focused particularly on the relationship between national identity and individual attitudes toward the process of EU integration and has established that national identity is a powerful determinant of an individual's attitude toward the process of European integration (Aichholzer et al., 2021; Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005; McLaren, 2002). This body of literature asserts that EU integration is not only about the single market, but also about the pooling of sovereignty that can undermine national sovereignty and self-determination. Furthermore, it contends that the process of European integration "blurs boundaries between distinct national communities" (Hooghe & Marks, 2005, p. 423), therefore undermining cultural autonomy (Damjanovski et al., 2020; Hobolt & de Vries, 2016). McLaren (2002) contends that rather than being concerned with an individual calculation of the personal costs and benefits of European integration, citizens are more concerned with, and fear the extent to which this integration changes and degrades the nation state and the national community. McLaren (2002) shows that individuals who are concerned with the disappearance or degradation of their nation and culture, hold more negative views toward the EU. Opposition toward the EU integration process she argues, is largely explained by a "fear of, or hostility toward, other cultures" (McLaren, 2002, p. 553), that are rooted in attachments to the nation state. Here, the European Union is regarded as a threat, as it is not merely a free trade zone, but also has competences in policy-areas that were formerly the prerogative of the nation state (McLaren, 2002). This can be seen as threatening the national cultures and control over resources of the national state and have a homogenizing effect on the EU member states (McLaren, 2002). Similarly, Kriesi and Lachat (2004) find that European integration is often perceived as a threat by individuals that identify strongly with the national community and support exclusionary norms. (Hooghe & Marks, 2005) explain

this observation as European integration promotes multi-culturalism, which challenges exclusionary principles of 'us' versus 'them' that have deep historical roots in the formation of European nations.

The results of research investigating the relationship between national identity and public attitudes on EU integration are ambiguous. Carey (2002), for example, shows that individuals with a strong feeling of national identity and pride are less supportive of EU integration. His results illustrate that these effects are at least as significant as the impact of the utilitarian factors such as an individuals' education, income or economic evaluations (Carey, 2002). Christin and Trechsel (2002) find a negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership among Swiss citizens: the stronger the national attachment and national pride of Swiss citizens, the less likely they are to support Switzerland's membership to the EU. Kaltenthaler & Anderson (2001) and Luedtke (2005) find similar results in their studies of the relationship between national identity and public support for specific policies in the EU. Luedtke (2005) finds that national identity has a significant negative influence on the public opposition to harmonization of the EU immigration policy. Luedtke's (2005) results indicate national identity to hold the strongest explanatory power of public attitudes towards EU control over immigration policy. Europeans that identify predominantly with their national identity, rather than with Europe, are much less likely to support the EU immigration policy (Luedtke, 2005). Similarly, in the monetary policy of the EU, Kaltenthaler and Anderson (2001) find that Europeans that are attached to their national identity are less supportive of the common currency.

However, there is also evidence suggesting that national identity can reinforce individual support for EU integration (Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005; Marks & Hooghe, 2003; Marks, 1999). Marks and Hooghe (2003), and Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005) find that national identity is double-edged, and can both reinforce and undermine support for European

integration. In light of this contradictory evidence, they argue that there is a distinction to be made between inclusive and exclusive national identity. They find the extent to which an individual conceptualizes their national identity in exclusive terms, rather than inclusive terms is decisive for their support for EU integration. Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005) and Marks and Hooghe (2003) show that individuals who conceptualize their national identity as exclusive of other territorial identities are more Eurosceptic than those individuals who do so in inclusive terms. This contention is based on research which finds that individuals often identify with various territorial communities at the same time (Brewer, 2001; Klandermans et al., 2004; Menéndez-Alarcón, 1995). For example, Menéndez-Alarcón (1995) finds that European people mostly poses more than one identity, adding that these do not necessarily have to oppose one another. Different identities can exist next to each other, such as membership to different groups and their social positions (Kohli, 2000). Moreover, multiple identities can be complementary or reinforcing (Kuhn & Nicoli, 2020), or partly overlap with each other like a marble cake (Risse, 2005). With regards to EU integration, an individuals' regional and national identity can be seen as an integral part of a European identity (Kuhn & Nicoli, 2020). This line of reasoning is illustrated in the work of Diez Medrano and Gutierrez (2001), who find that Spanish citizens can feel Catalan, Spanish and European at the same time. Furthermore, their results indicate that Spanish citizens who identify strongly with their country and/or with their region, also identify strongly with Europe. Therefore, Aichholzer and colleagues (2021) argue that multiple identities, whether complementary or reinforcing, enable citizens to experience a sense of belonging to their nation-state, whilst at the same time being supportive of the EU integration process.

Thus, the literature finds national identity to be a relevant determinant of public attitudes toward European integration and membership of the European Union (Aichholzer et al., 2021; Carey, 2002; Christin & Trechsel, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005, 2009;

McLaren, 2002). However, the question whether national identity has a positive or negative impact on these attitudes remains contested, as national identity has been found to both reinforce and diminish support for EU membership (e.g., Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005). Sielska (2020) highlights that nationality is an important form of identification in North Macedonia and argues that concerns about the loss of the (national) identity, particularly in light of cooperation or integration with international structures like the EU, are prevalent in the North Macedonian society. Also, Damjanovski and Kirchner (2019) highlight the increasing importance of identity related issues in explaining Eurosceptic sentiments in North Macedonia. Similarly, research has shown that in Serbia citizens have strong attachment to their country (Krstić, 2011) and issues relating to national identity have hindered the accession process (Subotic, 2011), as demands of the EU for Serbian accession have touched, in part, in the Serbian national identity (Dobbels, 2009). Taking into account the importance of national identity as a determinant in shaping opinions toward EU integration (e.g., Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005; McLaren, 2002), alongside the considerable presence of national identity and the challenges this has presented in the accession processes of North Macedonia and Serbia (Damjanovski & Kirchner, 2019; Krstić, 2011; Sielska, 2020; Subotić, 2011), this thesis bases its expectation on the negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership that (Carey, 2002) theorizes. Therefore, this study expects the following:

H1: A high level of national identity of an individual is negatively related to an individual's support for EU membership.

The literature review outlined a range of utilitarian, political cues and identity related factors that have been found to be important to shaping attitudes toward EU integration. However, it is important to note that the literature on public attitudes toward EU integration identifies other factors that are influential in determining such attitudes. For example,

sentiments about immigration (Azrout et al., 2011; De Vreese et al., 2008; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005), authoritarian value orientation (Tillman, 2013), religious affiliation (Boomgaarden & Freire, 2009; Kolpinskaya & Fox, 2019; Nelsen et al., 2011) have also been found to play a role in shaping public opinion toward EU integration. However, due to limited availability of data, and the limited scope of this research, these factors are not included in this research.

3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology of this research. The first section discusses the case selection. Thereafter, the methods of the data collection and data analysis are explained. Then, the different variables are operationalized. Finally, the limitations, validity and reliability of this research will be considered.

3.1 Case Selection

This thesis has selected two Western Balkan candidate countries as case countries for the study: North Macedonia, and Serbia. The main consideration for this case selection is that from the six Western Balkan countries, North-Macedonia and particularly Serbia have experienced the most decline in support for EU membership between 2006 and 2022 (Belloni, 2016; ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute, 2022). Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has also seen a considerable decline of support for EU membership, from 70% of respondents indicating that they were in favor of joining the EU in 2006 (Belloni, 2016) to 50% expressing this sentiment in 2022 (ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute, 2022). However, the geographical coverage of the Standard and Special Eurobarometer waves that are used for this thesis does not include Bosnia and Herzegovina, thus rendering including BiH in this research is not feasible. Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-Kesebir (2016) highlight that within candidate countries for EU membership, public opinion can significantly influence the course of their accession process. This can happen directly, through accession referenda, and indirectly through the impact that opinion polls have on the decision-making of policymakers that seek re-election (Çarkoğlu & Glüpker-Kesebir, 2016). Consequently, it is important to understand the factors that shape these attitudes toward the EU integration in such candidate countries. Thus, opinions on EU membership are investigated in two of the Western Balkan candidate countries, that have experienced the most change in their public attitudes on EU membership.

Across the region, the declining support for EU accession has been most marked in

Serbia. The percentage of citizens in favor of joining the EU dropped from 61% in 2006

(Belloni, 2016) to 38% in 2022 (ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute, 2022). Unfortunately, the

public opinion survey from the ACIT Centre & EPIK Institute (2022) does not go further back

than 2015, and the data from the Gallup Balkan monitor which Belloni (2016) used to assess

the level of support for EU membership in the Western Balkan countries before 2015 is not

available. The data that is available on levels of support for EU membership in the Western

Balkan countries, from the Balkan Barometer Public Opinion Surveys from the ACIT Centre

and EPIK Institute (2022) and the numbers from the Gallup Balkan Monitor available in

Belloni's (2016) article, indicate that in 2015 the levels of support for EU membership were

lowest for both North-Macedonia and Serbia. Support was lowest in Serbia, with only 24% of

the citizens expressing that they were in favor of Serbia's membership to the EU. In North-

Macedonia this support was 41% (Belloni, 2016). The selection of North Macedonia and

Serbia as case countries is based on the extreme case method as discussed by Seawright and

Gerring (2008), where a case is selected "because of its extreme value on the independent (X)

or dependent (Y) variable of interest" (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 301). As North

Macedonia and Serbia have experienced the most decline in support for EU membership (the

dependent variable of interest in the study) from the countries in the Western Balkan region,

they can function as extreme cases. Seawright and Gerring (2008) note that extremity can be

defined using the sample mean and the standard deviation, however in this case, it was

inferred from public survey data as discussed above.

3.2 Data Collection

Data for this research were taken from the Standard Eurobarometer 84.3, which was

conducted in November 2015 (European Commission, 2015). The Standard Eurobarometer is

one of the three Eurobarometer public opinion survey that asks a broad variety of questions

regarding perceptions and expectations of the European Union, priorities of the European

Commission as well as attitudes on current political and social issues (European Union, n.d.).

The Standard Eurobarometer is conducted bi-annually throughout all the EU Member States

and some additional countries and territories such as Albania, Cyprus CTT, Montenegro,

North-Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey (European Union, n.d.).

Eurobarometer data are widely used in research on public opinion about European

integration and membership (e.g., Carey, 2002; Cichowski, 2000; McLaren, 2002; Sánchez-

Cuenca, 2000), as it "allows for cross-national and longitudinal comparisons" (Hobolt & De

Vries, 2016, p. 416). However, there is also criticism on the Eurobarometer. Höpner and

Jurczyk (2015) for example, note that the questions in the Eurobarometer survey are selected

and framed in a manner that consistently generated outcomes favorable to EU integration

(Höpner & Jurczyk, 2015). Hobolt and De Vries (2016) furthermore point out that the

formulation and presence of questions in the Eurobarometer surveys are not consistent over

time, which makes longitudinal analysis of public opinion on EU integration challenging. As

this thesis uses data only from the Eurobarometer in 2015, the concern noted by Hobolt and

De Vries (2016) does not apply here. The criticism of Höpner and Jurczyk (2015) is quite

relevant for this study. However, the Eurobarometer data was the only data source publicly

available, that provided the data that was required for the purpose of this research for the

selected case countries. The selection of specifically the Standard Eurobarometer 84.3 was

based on data availability, as not all the Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 2015 were

conducted in the selected case countries, and included questions that could be used to

operationalize the factors that influence support for EU membership as discussed in the

theoretical framework.

3.3 Variables and Operationalization

The survey questions that are used to operationalize and measure the different variables have been based on previous research on individual attitudes toward EU integration and membership.

3.3.1 Dependent Variable

The dependent variable of this research is support for EU membership. Following Elgün and Tillman (2007) and Kentmen (2008), I use the following Eurobarometer question to operationalize the dependent variable: 'Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the EU would be...?' (European Commission, 2015). Some studies on attitudes toward EU integration and EU membership in former CEE candidate countries utilized the survey question asking respondents if they would vote for or against a referendum for joining the EU if one were to be held tomorrow, to operationalize this variable (Cichowski, 2000; Ehin, 2001; Tucker et al., 2002). These studies relied on the specific New Baltic Barometer and the Central and Eastern European Eurobarometer for the data collection. This question about voting for a referendum on EU membership was not included in the Standard Eurobarometer 83.4. Thus, following Elgün and Tillman (2007) and Kentmen (2008), I used the question stated above for the operationalization of the dependent variable, which also captures opinions on EU membership. Following Ehin (2001), I coded support for EU membership as a binary variable, with those expressing EU membership to be a good thing as 1 and the remaining responses of 'A bad thing', 'Neither good nor bad', and 'Don't know' as 0. This type of coding was used, as Ehin (2001) argues that this has several methodological benefits, such as a more equal distribution and a larger sample size, compared to coding that excludes undecided answers. An overview of the variables, their operationalization, Eurobarometer question ID and response categories can be found in the Appendix.

3.3.2 Independent Variable

As discussed in the conceptualization section presented in the theoretical framework, this thesis understands national identity as the strength of attachment that an individual feels toward their nation. In line with previous research, the level of national identity an individual feels, is measured through the question that asks respondents 'Please tell me how attached you feel to - (OUR COUNTRY)' (European Commission, 2015). Earlier research on national identity in relation to support for EU membership or integration, has often used a survey question measuring the extent of pride respondents feel toward their country. However, such a question has not been asked in the Eurobarometer 84.3 and can therefore not be included in this analysis. The unclear answers and refusals have been omitted from the analysis. The theoretical framework noted how Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005) and Marks and Hooghe (2003) argue that there is a distinction to be made between inclusive and exclusive national identity, and that these relate differently to public opinions on EU integration. However, the Eurobarometer survey data did not allow this research to measure whether individuals felt exclusively attached to their country (exclusive national identity) or also felt attached to other territorial identities (inclusive national identity).

3.3.3 Control Variables

The main focus of this thesis is to investigate the influence feelings of national identity on support for EU membership. The theoretical framework discussed two other types of explanations that have been shown to be influential in determining individual support for EU membership: utilitarian and political cues explanations. Therefore, a number of independent variables from these utilitarian and political cues approaches are included in the analysis in order to control for the effects of these variables as established in the theoretical framework. From the utilitarian approach, human capital is operationalized through three indicators, education, income, and occupation. Education is operationalized with the question 'How old

were you when you stopped full-time education?' (European Commission, 2015). The responses to this question are coded in the same manner as Marks and Hooghe (2003), on a four-point scale ranging from 1 for up to 15 years of age into low education, 2 for those of 16 – 19 years of age into medium education, 3 for 20 years and above into high education and 4 for those still studying. Respondents who have received no education are included in the first category. The Eurobarometer 84.3 (European Commission, 2015) does not inquire directly about individuals' income. Therefore, the variable income is operationalized with the question asking respondents to what social class of society they perceive themselves to belong on a five-point scale ranging from 'The working class of society' to 'The higher class of society' (European Commission, 2015). Occupation is operationalized with the question asking respondents what their current occupation is. Following (Marks & Hooghe, 2003) and Kentmen (2008), I created dummy variables for three occupational groups. The first occupation group is 'professional', which takes a value of 1 for respondents who are a self-employed or employed professional, general manager, business proprietor, director, work at a desk, or are in top management or middle management. The second dummy variable is 'manual worker' also taking a value of 1 for respondents who are skilled or unskilled manual worker, or non-desk employees (e.g., salesman, driver). The third category is 'unemployed', taking a value of 1 for those respondents who are unemployed, responsible for household work, retired, or unable to work due to illness.

To measure evaluations of the national economic situation the question asking respondents to judge the current situation of the national economy is utilized, with responses ranging from 'very good to 'very bad' on a four-point scale (European Commission, 2015). Anderson (1998) uses a similar indicator to measure evaluations of the national economy, asking respondents about the general economic situation in their country compared to 12 months earlier.

Similarly, Anderson (1998) and Cichowski (2000) use Eurobarometer survey questions regarding the financial situation of the respondents' household to measure personal economic conditions. This thesis therefore uses the question asking respondent to judge the current financial situation of their household, with the responses ranging from 'very good' to 'very bad' on a four-point scale.

Finally, to operationalize the perception of individual's as being a 'winner' or 'loser' from reform, this thesis utilizes a similar method to operationalize this variable as Tucker and colleagues (2002). They argue that it is best, in the absence of information that clearly identifies who have benefitted or lost from the economic transition, to ascribe winner or loser status based on self-assessment rather than socio-economic characteristics (Tucker et al., 2002). Tucker and co-authors (2002) use two Eurobarometer questions asking respondents to evaluate their own financial situation over the past twelve months and their expectations for the next twelve months to ascribe winner or loser status to respondents. Eurobarometer 84.3 does not include the question evaluating the financial situation of the respondent's household of the past twelve months. Therefore, in this thesis, this question is substituted with the question: 'During the last twelve months, would you say you have had difficulties to pay your bills at the end of the month' with responses on a three-point scale ranging from 'most of the time' to 'almost never/never' (European Commission, 2015). In line with the operationalization of Tucker and colleagues (2002), the second question used to ascribe winner or loser status from economic reforms, asks respondents 'What are your expectations for the next twelve months? Will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same when it comes to - The financial situation of your household' (European Commission, 2015). Here, I recoded the responses from the first question, with 1= worse 2 = same and 3 = better. Then, following Tucker and co-authors (2002), I combined these two variables into a single measure, and calculated the measure by taking the mean of each voter's score across both the

categories. Here, values were only assigned to respondents who answered at least one of the two questions. If they answered two questions, the 'winner' value was the mean of the two responses. If they answered only one question, the 'winner' value was the value of the answered question only. Winners are those respondents that evaluate their past and present financial situation positively, and losers those respondents evaluating their past negatively.

The political cues approach is represented by the variables trust in national institutions. In the theoretical framework, the performance of the incumbent government and the democratic system of a country were also mentioned as relevant determinants of public attitudes toward EU membership. However, the Eurobarometer data selected for this thesis did not allow for the measurement of these variables. Trust in national institutions is measured with the question 'I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. - The (NATIONALITY) Government' with the responses 1 = tend to trust and 2 = tend not to trust (European Commission, 2015).

I also include two demographic control variables, gender, and age. Previous research has shown these variables to be related to attitudes toward EU integration (e.g., Foster & Frieden, 2021; Mau, 2005; Nelsen & Guth, 2000; Szczerbiak, 2001). Therefore, I include these variables into the analysis to control for their effects. The age variable is exact age of the respondents at the time of the survey. The variable gender consists of responses 1 = male and 2 = female.

3.4 Data Analysis

The Eurobarometer data was analyzed using a logistical regression model in the statistical software IBM SPSS Statistics 29. I conducted separate analyses for each country, North Macedonia and Serbia, to examine the relationships between the dependent variable, and the independent and control variables. Subsequently, I conducted an analysis including

both countries with a dummy variable. This third analysis was conducted to be able to compare if the effect of the independent variable is significantly different across countries. I built each analysis hierarchically. This means that the variables were entered into the model sequentially, first the control variables and then the independent variable. This method allows me to understand the additional variance explained by the successive block, in this case the independent variable. I first added a block of control variables, followed by a block with the independent variable. Respondents who answered, "don't know", "refusal", "other" or "none" to the relevant survey questions, with the exception of the question on support for EU membership, were excluded from the analysis. Due to this omission of missing values, the sample size shrank from the original 1062 respondents to 933 respondents in North Macedonia and 1010 respondents to 834 respondents in Serbia. The data was also tested for multicollinearity and for a linear relationship of the continuous independent and control variables and the logit of the dependent variable. The assumption of multicollinearity was not violated. The assumption of linearity was tested using the Box-Tidwell test. The results indicated that the interaction terms of the control variables age ($p < .001$), personal economic situation ($p = .003$) and winner/loser from reform ($p = .003$) were statistically significant, indicating that the assumption was violated. Garson (2014) notes that "when the assumption of linearity in the logits is violated, then logistic regression will underestimate the degree or relationship of the independents to the dependents and will lack power (generating type II errors, thinking there is no relationship when there actually is)." (Garson, 2014, p. 194). Therefore, the effects of these variables may be underestimated, which leads to the need to be cautious with the interpretation of the results. Ideally, this issue would have been resolved, for example by transformation of the variables that violated this assumption, however, due the limited timeframe of this research, it was not feasible to explore and perform such methodological adjustments.

3.5 Limitations, Validity, and Reliability

The Eurobarometer used a multi-stage random probability sampling method (European Commission, 2019), which contributes to representativeness of the data and results to the entire populations of North Macedonia and Serbia. However, one limitation of this research is that the method of case selection was not ideal, as Seawright and Gerring (2008) note that the extreme case method is mainly an exploratory method. Also, the reliance of this research on a dataset exclusively from the year 2015 is a limitation of this research, as the findings reflect the attitudes, perceptions, circumstances, and sentiments of North Macedonian and Serbian citizens at one point in time. Consequently, the findings of this study give a snapshot picture of the impact that national identity had on attitudes toward EU integration in North Macedonia and Serbia during this year, limiting the study's longitudinal relevance. Also, due to this limitation, the results may be influenced by specific national circumstances or events of 2015. Damjanovski and Kirchner (2019) for example, note the extensive influence that the debate on the implications of the name change of North Macedonia resulting from the Prespa agreement had on the public opinion on EU integration and motivations behind those opinions in North Macedonia in 2018. This illustrates how contextual factors can be influential to public sentiments and opinions. Thus, the use of data exclusively from 2015 can limit the generalizability of the results. Although the use of data form one specific year in this study may come with certain limitations, the findings are useful nonetheless as they do provide useful insights on how national identity, and other utilitarian and political factors affected support for EU membership in a year of much public opposition toward integration into the EU.

By including a variety of control variables derived from the literature to the models used for the regression analyses, this study controls for several alternative determinants of support for EU membership. However, there are several limitations to the internal validity of

this research that need attention. First, as noted in the theoretical framework, the models used

for the regression analysis is not exhaustive. This is due to constraints in the data that did not

allow for the operationalization and measurement of these variables and the defined scope of

this research. This means that there may be factors that are influencing support for EU

membership that are unaccounted for in the analyses, potentially affecting the precision and

accuracy of the findings in the established causal relationships. Also, the violation of the

assumption of linearity of logistic regression, as discussed in the previous paragraph, makes

that the findings of this research must be interpreted with caution and reduces the internal

validity of this research, as the estimated effects of the independent and control variables may

not accurately reflect their true relationship to support for EU membership.

This study is further limited by the fact the hierarchical logistic regression analysis

allows for an assessment of the predicative capability and variance in support for EU

membership explained by the model, which creates an understanding of the extent to which

national identity influenced support for EU membership in North Macedonia and Serbia.

However, this does not allow for the assessment of the influence of national identity on

support for EU membership compared to the other variables in the model, constraining the

ability to give a specific answer to the research question.

Lastly, a note on possible reversed causality is also important. It could be the case that

opinion on EU integration influences an individual's level of national identity. However,

Hooghe and Marks (2005) argue that it is sensible to presume that identities come prior to

attitudes on EU integration in the causal chain, as identities are more firmly entrenched in

people's minds than opinions on the EU. Particularly as the EU is an institution that is quite

distant to most people (Hooghe & Marks, 2005).

4. Results

This chapter shows the results of the analysis of the Eurobarometer 84.3 survey data using a hierarchical logistic regression model. First, the demographic characteristics and distributions of national identity among the respondents from North Macedonia and Serbia are presented. Thereafter, the results of the regression analysis are presented first for each country and then for the regression that included both countries with a dummy variable.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

In North-Macedonia, the data included 558 men and 504 women, with mean age 46.90 (SD ± 17.30). In Serbia, the data included 518 men and 492 women, with a mean age of 44.93 (SD ± 16.30). An overview of the frequencies and descriptives of the independent variable and the control variables is presented in Table 1. In North Macedonia, most of the respondents, 54.6 %, reported to feel very attached to their country, 30% of respondents indicated to feel fairly attached to North Macedonia, 8.9 % of respondents felt not very attached to their country, and 6% reported to feel not at all attached to their country. 4 participants indicated to be unsure of their level national identity. In the Serbian sample, 47.4% of respondents felt very attached to Serbia, 33% reported to feel fairly attached to Serbia, 14.9% of respondents reported to feel not very attached, and 3.9% felt not at all attached to Serbia. Here, 9 participants reported to be unsure of their level of national identity.

Table 1

Frequencies and Descriptives Independent Variable and Control Variables

Variable	North Macedonia		Serbia		Both countries	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender						
Female	504	47.5	492	48.7	996	48.1
Male	558	52.5	518	51.3	1076	51.9
Education						
0-15 year of age	274	25.8	88	8.7	362	17.5
16-19 years of age	413	38.9	491	48.6	904	43.6
20 + years of age	359	33.8	420	41.6	779	37.6
Still studying	16	1.5	11	1.1	27	1.3
Social class (income) [1,2,3]						
Working class	296	27.9	306	30.3	602	29.1
Lower middle class	176	16.6	171	16.9	347	16.7
Middle class	514	48.4	380	37.6	894	43.1
Upper middle class	43	4,0	64	6.3	107	5.2
Higher class	7	0.7	5	0.5	12	0.6
Occupation						
Professional	83	7.8	103	10.2	186	9,0
Manual worker	330	31.1	384	38,0	714	34.5
Unemployed	649	61.1	523	51.8	1172	56.6
Trust in national institutions [4,5,6]						
Tend to trust	325	30.6	394	39,0	719	34.7
Tend not to trust	651	61.3	535	53,0	1186	57.2
Attachment to country (national identity) [7,8,9]						

Very attached	580	54.6	479	47.4	1059	51.1
Fairly attached	319	30,0	333	33.0	652	31.5
Not very attached	95	8.9	150	14.9	245	11.8
Not at all attached	64	6.0	39	3.9	103	5.0
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Age	46.90	17.30	44.93	16.30	45.76	16.86
Country economic situation	2.52	0.83	2.79	0.80	2.65	0.83
Personal economic situation	2.91	0.88	3.27	0.69	3.08	0.81
Winner/loser from reform	1.63	0.58	1.61	0.59	1.62	0.59

[1] Missing data for 26 participants in North Macedonia

[2] Missing data for 84 participants in Serbia

[3] Missing data for 110 participants

[4] Missing data for 86 participants North Macedonia

[5] Missing data for 81 participants Serbia

[6] Missing data for 167 participants

[7] Missing data for 4 participants North Macedonia

[8] Missing data for 9 participants Serbia

[9] Missing data for 13 participants

4.2 Inferential Statistics

The hypothesis of this research expects a negative relationship between an individual's national identity and their support for their country's membership to the European Union. It is expected that a high level of national identity is negatively related to an individual's support for EU membership. National identity was conceptualized and measured as the intensity of feelings of attachment toward an individual's country. In order to test whether, and to what extent, support for EU membership can be explained by an individual's national identity, three hierarchical logistic regressions were performed. For all logistic regressions support for EU membership (a good thing vs a bad thing) was the dependent variable. In the first step (Model 1) the control variables age, gender, personal economic situation, national economic situation, winner-loser reform, education, income, occupation and trust in national institutions were tested. In the second step (Model 2) the independent national identity was added to the model. The logistic regression was performed once for respondents from North Macedonia, once for respondents of Serbia, and once for respondents of both countries. In the latter analysis, an extra control variable was added, namely country. The results of the regression analyses are summarized in Table 2.

4.2.1 North Macedonia

For North-Macedonia, Model 1, with only the control variables, was statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 66.798$, $p < .001$, and explained about 9% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in support for EU membership. The model correctly classified 61.6% of cases. After adding the variable national identity in Model 2, the model fit significantly improved, $\chi^2 = 20.06$, $p < .001$ and Nagelkerke R^2 improved with 2.1 %. Model 2 correctly classified 62.8 % of cases.

The results indicated that all levels of national identity were significant in the model; feeling fairly attached to one's country was significant in the model (OR = 1.41, $p = .032$), indicating that individuals who reported feeling fairly attached to North Macedonia had 1.41

higher odds of supporting EU membership compared to individuals who felt very attached to North Macedonia. Also, individuals who reported to not feel very attached to North Macedonia had 2.72 times higher odds to support EU membership compared to those that felt very attached (OR = 2.72, p < .001). Lastly, individuals that felt not at all attached to North Macedonia had 2.77 times higher odds to support EU membership than those individuals that felt very attached to North Macedonia (OR = 2.77, p = .004).

Of the control variables, gender (OR = 0.67, p = .006), personal economic situation (OR = .68, p < .001), national economic situation (OR = 1.52, p < .001), and trust in national institutions (OR = 0.68, p = .02) were also significant. For the variable income, only the category lower middle class of society had statistically significant results (OR = .62, p = .025). The odds ratio for the variable gender was 0.67 (p = .006). To facilitate interpretation, I consider the inverse of this value, which is approximately 1.49. This inverse value indicated that women had approximately 1.49 times smaller odds of supporting EU membership than men. Deceasing one unit of assessment of personal economic situation, for example moving from assessing the personal economic situation as rather good to assessing it as rather bad, decreased the odds that an individual supported EU membership by 32 % (OR = .68, p < .001). For national economic situation, each unit deterioration in the assessment of the national economic situation, the odds of supporting EU membership increased with 52% (OR = 1.52, p = < .001). The odds ratio for the variable trust in national institutions was .68 (p = .024), indicating that the odds of individuals who tended not to trust national institutions to support EU membership was 1.47 times lower compared to those individuals that tended to trust national institutions. For the variable income, only the category lower middle class showed a significantly different support for EU membership than the working class (OR = .62, p = .03), indicating that individuals who perceived themselves to belong the lower middle class of society had 1.62 times lower odds of supporting EU membership than those who

perceived themselves to belong the working class of society. The control variables age, winner/loser from reform, education, occupation, and the remaining categories of the question measuring the variable income, were not statistically significant.

4.2.2 Serbia

For Serbia, Model 1, again including only the control variables, was statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 124.62$, $p < .001$, and explained about 19% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in support for EU membership. The model correctly classified 70.5% of cases. After adding the variable national identity in Model 2, the model fit significantly improved, $\chi^2 = 10.28$, $p = .016$ and Nagelkerke R^2 improved with 1.3%. Model 2 correctly classified 69.7% of cases.

The results indicated that for Serbia, only the second category of national identity, 'not very attached', was significant in the model. Feeling not very attached to one's country was significant in the model (OR = 2.07, $p =.002$), indicating that individuals who reported feeling not very attached to Serbia had 2.07 times higher odds to support EU membership than those who felt very attached to Serbia. The other two categories of national identity, 'fairly attached' and 'not at all attached' were not significant.

The control variables age (OR = .97, $p <.001$), personal economic situation (OR = .74, $p = .021$), winner/loser from reform (OR = 1.54, $p = .011$) and trust in national institutions (OR = .49, $p < .001$) also were significant. For the variable age, increasing one unit of age (i.e. one year) decreased the odds that an individual supported EU membership by 3% (OR = .97, $p < .001$). Deceasing one unit of assessment of personal economic situation, was associated with a decrease in the odds that an individual supported EU membership of 26 % (OR = .74, $p = .018$). For the control variable winner/loser from reform, the results indicated that a one unit increase on the scale of the variable winner/loser from reform, reflecting a shift toward a more positive self-assessment of the personal consequences of economic reforms, is associated with a 54% increase in the odds of individuals supporting EU membership

compared to the previous level of assessment as winner or loser from reform (OR = 1.54, p = .011). Lastly, the odds that Serbian individuals who tended not to trust national institutions supported EU membership was 2.04 times lower compared to those that tended to trust national institutions (OR = .49, p < .001). The control variables gender, national economic situation, education, income, and occupation were not significant.

4.2.3 Both Countries

For the regression that at the aggregate level, Model 1, with the control variables and the extra control variable country, was statistically significant, χ^2 = 145.629, p < .001, and explained about 11% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in support for EU membership. The model correctly classified 62.6% of cases. After adding the variable national identity in Model 2, the model fit significantly improved, χ^2 = 30.78, p < .001, and (Nagelkerke R^2) improved with approximately 1.7%. In Model 2, 62.1 % of the cases were classified correctly.

The results illustrate that, at the aggregate level, all levels of national identity were significant in the model; feeling fairly attached to either North Macedonia or Serbia was significant (OR = 1.35, p = .010) meaning that individuals that indicated feeling fairly attached to their country had 1.35 higher odds of being supportive of EU membership, compared to individuals that felt very attached to their country. Also, individuals that reported that they felt not very attached to their country had 2.42 times higher likelihood of supporting EU membership (OR = 2.42, p = < .001). Lastly, individuals that felt not at all attached to their country, had 1.97 times higher odds of supporting EU membership than those individuals that felt very attached to their country (OR = 1.97, p = .008).

Furthermore, the results illustrated that the control variable country was significant in the model (OR = 2.04, p < .001), indicating that North Macedonian citizens had 2.04 higher odds to support EU membership than Serbian citizens. The control variables age (OR = .98, p < .001), personal economic situation (OR = .68, p < .001), national economic situation (OR =

1.13, $p < .001$) and trust in national institutions (OR = .58, $p < .001$) were also significant in the model. For the variable age, increasing one year in age, decreased the odds that an individual supported EU membership by 2% (OR = .98, $p < .001$). The results indicated that for the variable personal economic situation, decreasing one unit in assessment of personal economic situation, (for example moving from perceiving one's personal economic situation as being rather good to perceiving it as being rather bad) decreased the likelihood that an individual supported EU membership by 32% (OR = .68, $p < .001$). For national economic situation, a one unit decrease in perception of the national economic situation was associated with a 13 % increase in the likelihood of individuals supporting their country's EU membership (OR = 1.13, $p < .001$). The odds that individuals who tended not to trust national institutions supported their country's EU membership was 1.72 times lower than those individuals who tended to trust national institutions (OR = 0.58, $p < .001$). The remaining control variables did not yield any statistically significant results.

Table 2

Logistic Regression Results for Support for EU Membership

| | North Macedonia | | | | Serbia | | | | Both countries | | | |
| | Model I | | Model II | | Model I | | Model II | | Model I | | Model II | |
	OR	*p*	OR	*p*	OR	*p*	OR	*p*	OR	*p*	OR	*p*
Constant	3.42*	.043	2.38	.160	5.21*	.038	4.74	.055	2.38	.066	1.68	.284
Country (North Macedonia = 1)									1.95**	<.001	2.04**	< .001
Age	.99*	.003	.99	.053	.98**	<.001	.97**	< .001	.98**	<.001	.98**	< .001
Gender (female = 1)	.64*	.002	.67*	.006	1.17	.313	1.16	.347	.84	.089	.86	.128
Personal economic situation	.70**	<.001	.68 **	< .001	.74*	.018	.74*	.021	.69**	<.001	.68**	< .001
National economic situation	1.58**	<.001	1.52**	< .001	.84	.196	.85	.209	1.34**	<.001	1.13**	< .001
Winner - Loser reform	.71*	.014	.77	.052	1.51*	.014	1.54*	.011	.97	.759	1.02	.836
Education (16-19 years of age)	.80	.221	.81	.244	1.55	.198	1.48	.250	.86	.306	.86	.328
Education (20+ years of age)	.90	.586	.91	.647	2.04	.051	1.84	.100	1.08	.646	1.07	.694
Education (still studying)	1.25	.703	1.03	.963	1.00	.996	1.05	.951	1.33	.535	1.28	.597
Social class (lower middle class)	.65*	.038	.62*	.025	.91	.687	.87	.566	.84	.225	.79	.126
Social class (middle class)	1.05	.796	1.03	.882	.81	.290	.82	.337	1.04	.775	1.04	.785
Social class (upper middle class)	1.33	.464	1.27	.544	.67	.254	.70	.319	1.13	.622	1.15	.574
Social class (higher class)	3.15	.305	3.32	.285	.87	.899	.92	.938	2.06	.311	2.00	.331
Occupation (manual worker)	1.06	.830	1.10	.724	.82	.462	.81	.45	1.04	.857	1.08	.711

Occupation (unemployed)	1.47	.162	1.48	.160	.71	.202	.73	.248	1.17	.392	1.24	.265
Trust national institutions (tend not to trust = 1)	.71*	.038	.68*	.024	.54**	<.001	.49**	< .001	.63**	<.001	.58**	< .001
Attachment to country (fairly attached)			1.41*	.032			1.11	.580			1.35*	.010
Attachment to country (not very attached)			2.72**	< .001			2.07*	.002			2.42**	< .001
Attachment to country (not at all attached)			2.77*	.004			.82	.669			1.97*	.008
df	1.00		3.00		1.00		3.00		1.00		3.00	
χ^2	4.34		2.06		12.96		1.28		15.88		3.78	
p	.04		<.001		<.001		.02		<.001		< .001	
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	.09		.12		.19		.20		.11		.13	

Note 1: Reference categories for education (≤ 15 years). social class (lower class). occupation (professional). attachment to country (very attached).

Note 2: * Significant at .05 level; ** significant at 0.001 level.

5. Discussion of the Findings

This thesis investigates the influence of national identity on public support for European Union membership in North Macedonia and Serbia, and expected a negative relationship between an individual's level of national identity and their support for membership to the European Union. This chapter discusses the main findings presented in the previous chapter, taking into account the hypothesis of this research and the existing literature that was discussed in the theoretical framework.

5.1 Public Support for EU Membership in North Macedonia

5.1.1 National Identity in North Macedonia

The results of the hierarchical regression illustrated that including the variable national identity to the model, significantly improved the ability of the model to predict support for EU membership in North Macedonia. This demonstrates that national identity is a meaningful predictor of support for EU membership in North Macedonia. Furthermore, the results indicated that the percentage of the variance in support for EU membership that the independent and control variables explain collectively, increased significantly with 2.1% upon adding the variable national identity to the model. This means that national identity explained a portion of the variance in EU membership that was not explained by the control variables in the model. This finding indicated that national identity had a tangible influence on support for EU membership in North Macedonia. Furthermore, the findings suggested that individuals who had lower levels of national identity (that is individuals who felt fairly attached, not very attached or not at all attached to their country) had significantly higher odds of supporting North Macedonia's membership to the EU, compared to individuals who had higher levels of national identity (that is individuals who felt very attached to their country). These findings confirm the hypothesis that a higher level of national identity of an individual is negatively related to an individual's support for EU membership in North-

Macedonia. Moreover, these results indicated an increasing negative relationship between levels of national identity and support for EU membership: the lower the level of national identity of individuals, the higher their odds of supporting North Macedonian membership to the EU, compared to individuals with a higher level of national identity. These results are in line with theories put forward by Carey (2002) Hooghe and Marks (2004, 2005, 2009) Marks and Hooghe (2003) McLaren (2002), who argue that national identity is an important determinant in attitudes toward EU integration. Furthermore, these findings are in line with theories put forward by Carey (2002) who argues for a negative impact of national identity on support for EU integration, and Christin and Trechsel (2002) who find increasing levels of national identity and pride to associate with decreasing support for EU membership in Switzerland. Furthermore, they corroborate the findings of Damjanovski and Kirchner (2019) who analyzed public opinion on EU membership in North Macedonia between 2014 and 2018 and found that national self-identification and the sense of cultural threat were significant predictors to the growing variation in support for EU membership.

Although statistically significant, Nagelkerke R^2 of .12 of Model 2 indicated a limited explanatory power of the independent and control variables to the variability in support for EU membership in North Macedonia. This modest relationship was also suggested by the outcome that Model 2 classified 62.8% of cases correctly. This percentage is quite high, however, it is 9.1% more than the baseline model. These two indicators suggest that either the model needs specification, or that there are other variables that were not included in the analysis that explain the variation in support for EU membership. As noted in the theoretical framework and methodology sections of this thesis, the literature on public opinion on EU membership and integration has identified more factors that are influential to such opinions than have been included in this analysis. For example, other domestic political proxies to form opinions on EU integration, such as citizen's satisfaction with the workings of democracy in their country, their opinion on the incumbent government and establishment

parties (Anderson, 1998), sentiments toward immigrants (Azrout et al., 2011; De Vreese et al., 2008; De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2005), authoritarian value orientation (Tillman, 2013), and religious affiliation (Boomgaarden & Freire, 2009; Kolpinskaya & Fox, 2019; Nelsen et al., 2011) have been found to be influential to public attitudes toward EU integration. As attitudes toward EU integration and membership are determined by a wide variety of different factors, the inclusion of a limited number of such factors in this analysis may account for the limited explanatory power of the model. This illustrates that attitudes toward EU integration are determined by a variety of factors, including but not limited to the variables that were included in the regression model of this research.

5.1.2 Utilitarian, Political Cues and Demographic Factors in North Macedonia

The results of the analysis suggested a negative relationship between assessment of personal economic situation and support for EU membership: a decreasing assessment of individuals' personal economic situation was associated with a decrease in the odds of supporting EU membership, compared to the previous category of self-assessment of the personal economic situation. A decrease in perceptions of the national economic situation on the other hand, was associated with increasing odds of support for EU membership, compared to the previous category of assessment of the national economy. These findings regarding the personal economic situation are consistent with the theory proposed by Gabel and Whitten (1997) who argue for a positive relationship between perception of personal economic situation and support for EU integration. However, for the national economic situation, the findings are not consistent with the relationship and mechanism that Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) propose, who argued for a positive relationship between national economic performance and support for EU integration.

Furthermore, the findings of the analysis indicated no significant relationship between human capital and support for EU membership, except for one category of the level of income. Only the lower middle-class category of the income variable had significant

results, indicating that individuals in the lower middle class of society had lower odds of supporting EU membership, compared to those in the working class of society. This suggests that the influence of income on EU membership in North Macedonia may be specific to certain segments of the population. These findings are in contradiction to work of authors like Gabel (1998), Gabel and Palmer (1995) and Hakhverdian and colleagues (2013), who argue that higher levels of human capital are associated with more support for EU integration. The findings are, however, consistent with Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-Kesebir (2016), who found that education and occupation did not significantly influence attitudes toward EU membership in North Macedonia. Furthermore, the findings of this analysis only partially align with findings from Damjanovski and colleagues (2020), who observed no significant relationship between education and income and support for EU membership North Macedonia but did find experts and businesspeople to be less Eurosceptic, compared to other occupations. These contradictory findings regarding the impact of human capital and assessment of the national economic situation, may be explained by the fact that people in the Western Balkan countries associate EU membership with an opportunity to change their country's economic and government performances (Stratulat et al., 2020). A decreasing perception of the national economic performance and lower income levels may therefore lead people to be supportive of EU membership in North-Macedonia, as they perceive membership to the EU as a tangible solution to these national economic problems and their low income. Also, Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) view national economic prosperity as a consequence of trade liberalization and the Single Market that the EU entails. However, as North-Macedonia has started accession negotiations only recently, in July 2022 (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, 2023), and these data are from 2015, these positive consequences might therefore not yet apply here.

The results furthermore suggested that there was no significant relationship between perception of being a winner or loser from the reforms stemming from the transition toward a

free-market economy and support for EU membership, as has been the case in the former CEE candidate countries (Herzog & Tucker, 2010; Tucker et al., 2002).

Also, consistent with Anderson's (1998) political proxies' model, a positive relationship between trust in national political institutions and support for EU membership was found. This conflicts with Sánchez-Cuenca's (2000) theory, who put forward that citizens who are dissatisfied with national political institutions are more likely to support European integration, as it is perceived as a possible solution to deficiencies in the domestic political system.

Lastly, the results of the demographic variables were a mixed bag. Resonating with findings from previous research (e.g., Carey, 2002; Mau, 2005; Nelsen & Guth, 2000), women were found to be less likely to support EU membership than men. However, there was no significant relationship found between years of age and support for EU membership.

5.2 Public Support for EU Membership in Serbia

5.2.1 National Identity in Serbia

The results of the analysis indicated that also in Serbia, the inclusion of the variable national identity to the model, significantly enhanced the ability of the model to predict support for EU membership. Also, the results indicated that there was an increase of 1.3% in the proportion of variance in support for EU membership that the variables in the model accounted for, when the variable national identity was incorporated in the model. These findings illustrate that feelings of national identity are an important determinant of support for EU membership in Serbia, and that national identity explained a portion of the variation in support for EU membership that remained unaccounted for by the control variables in the model. Furthermore, the results indicated that from the variable national identity, only individuals who reported to feel not very attached to Serbia, had significantly higher odds of supporting EU membership, compared to individuals who felt very attached to Serbia. As only one category of level of national identity was shown to be significant, these results do

not suggest a uniform negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership in Serbia. As such, the results do not provide evidence to support the hypothesized negative relationship between a high level of national identity and support for EU membership in Serbia, and the hypothesis cannot be confirmed. These findings correspond with literature that puts forward the notion that national identity is a significant determinant of attitudes toward EU integration (e.g., Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005, 2009; McLaren, 2002). However, they do not provide evidence for the negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership, as theorized by Carey (2002) and Christin and Trechsel (2002). They do however correspond with the findings of Mihić and colleagues (2021), whose study shows that a strong national identity interferes with positive attitudes toward European integration in Serbia. The unexpected non-significant results of two categories of feelings of national identity, may be explained by the fact that the dataset violated the assumption of linearity. As mentioned, in the methodology chapter, this can have as a consequence that the estimated effects in the results are underestimations of the actual effects. Thus, it may be that the results of the regression analysis, including the effect of national identity, are underestimations of the actual effects of the independent and control variables on support for EU membership.

The Nagelkerke R^2 value of .20 of Model 2 indicated that the model had moderate explanatory power on the variance of support for EU membership in Serbia. This moderate relationship was further suggested by the finding that Model 2 classified 69.7% of cases correctly. Although this percentage is relatively high, it is 8.7% more than the baseline model predicted correctly. In the same fashion as discussed in the case of North Macedonia, these indicators suggest that, although the model explained a moderate proportion of the variance in support for EU membership, the model and its measurements require specification, or that there are other variables that explained support for EU membership that were not included in the analysis. As outlined earlier, due to data limitations and practical considerations, the

model utilized for the analysis of this research did not encompass the complete variety of factors that have been identified as being influential to attitudes on EU integration. Thus, the moderate explanatory power of this model may be explained by the fact that there are more factors influential to determining Serbian citizen's attitudes than were included in this model.

5.2.2 Utilitarian, Political Cues and Demographic Factors in Serbia

The results of the analysis indicated a negative relationship between individuals' perception of their personal economic situation and support for EU membership in Serbia. Specifically, a decreasing evaluation of individuals' personal economic situation corresponded with a decrease in the likelihood of supporting EU membership, compared to the previous category of self-assessment of one's personal economic situation. These results are in line with Gabel and Whitten (1997) who find a positive relationship between perceptions of personal economic situations, and support for EU integration. However, contrary to the theory of Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) that good national economic performance leads to more support for EU integration, the results of this analysis find no significant influence of assessment of the performance of the national economy and support for Serbia's membership to the EU. Also, contrary to findings from earlier research (e.g., Gabel, 1998; Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Hakhverdian et al., 2013), the results indicated no significant impact of human capital on support for EU membership. Interestingly, these results are also contradicting to the findings of Damjanovski and colleagues (2020), who found that Serbian citizens with lower incomes were more Eurosceptical than those with higher incomes. Furthermore, as Herzog and Tucker (2010) and Tucker and colleagues (2002) found in the former CEE candidate countries, the results indicated that increasing perceptions of being a winner from economic reforms, with being a winner indicating that one personally benefits from the economic transition in light of the accession requirements, was positively related to the likelihood of being supportive of EU membership.

The data suggested a negative relationship between distrust in national institutions and support for EU membership, indicating that individuals that tended to trust national institutions, were more likely to support EU membership compared to those who did not. These findings are consistent with Anderson (1998), and therefore conflict with Sánchez-Cuenca's (2000) opposite theorization, where low levels of trust in national institutions is associated with more support for the integration process.

Lastly, the results of the demographic control variables indicated no significant influence of gender on support for EU membership. This is interesting to note, as there seems to be a consensus in the literature that women are generally less supportive of the integration project than men (e.g., Carey, 2002; Mau, 2005; Nelsen & Guth, 2000). Mau (2005) explains that women are less likely to be in favor of European integration as women are less likely to associate membership with personal benefits than men. As women tend to depend more on the nation state in terms of employment and social transfers, they are more inclined to favor maintaining welfare responsibilities under national jurisdiction (Mau, 2005). However, there was a negative impact of years of age on support for membership found: increasing age decreased the likelihood of being supportive of EU membership. The finding that older people are less likely to be supportive of EU membership than younger people, is in line with some observations from other European countries (e.g., Foster & Frieden, 2021; Szczerbiak, 2001).

5.3 Public Support for EU Membership at the Aggregate Level

5.3.1 National Identity at the Aggregate Level

The results of the aggregate level also indicated a significant improvement of the predictive capability of the model upon the addition of the variable national identity to the model. This indicates, that also at the aggregate level, national identity was a relevant predicator of support for EU membership. Also, the results of this analysis indicated that, upon the inclusion of the variable national identity to the model, the percentage of the

variance in support for EU membership explained, increased by 1.7%. This illustrates that also at the aggregate level, national identity contributed to explaining the variation in support for EU membership beyond the effects of the control variables, signaling that national identity had a noticeable effect on support for EU membership across North Macedonia and Serbia. Furthermore, the aggregate level analysis indicated a negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership: individuals with lower levels of support were significantly more likely to be supportive of their country's EU integration compared to those with a higher level of national identity. Unlike what the data indicated in the individual analysis of Serbia, at the aggregate level, this was the case for all the levels of national identity: individuals that felt fairly attached, not very attached or not at all attached to their country, were all more likely to support EU membership, than individuals that felt very attached to their county. This showcases a negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership, confirming the hypothesis that a high level of national identity of an individual is negatively related to an individuals' support for EU membership also at the aggregate level. It is, however, interesting to note that these results indicated that the odds of supporting EU membership did not become increasingly higher with a decreasing level of national identity, as was the case in the individual country analysis of North Macedonia. While the data suggested that a decrease in level of national identity generally corresponded with an increased likelihood of supporting EU membership compared to those with a high level of national identity, this trend was not uniform. Particularly, individuals who reported feeling not at all attached to their country, exhibited a lower increase in likelihood of supporting EU membership compared to those that felt very attached to their country, than individuals who felt not very attached to their country.

As was seen in the individual level analyses, the data suggested that the explanatory power of the complete model (Model 2) was limited (Nagelkerke R^2 = .13). This modest power was further illustrated by the finding that Model 2 classified 62.2% of cases correctly,

which is a relatively small increase of 8.8% from the baseline model. As discussed in the two previous sections, this may indicate that the model requires further specification or expansion, which in this context may reflect the fact that there are more variables that explain support for EU membership that were not included in the model.

5.3.2 Utilitarian, Political Cues and Demographic Factors at the Aggregate Level

The data illustrated that North Macedonian citizens were more than twice as likely to support EU membership than Serbian citizens. This indicates that, which Belloni (2016) also illustrated, there are significant differences between North Macedonian and Serbian citizens with regards to support for EU membership and highlights that contextual factors that are unique to each country play an important role in shaping opinion on EU membership.

The results indicated that across North Macedonia and Serbia, in line with the theory proposed by Gabel and Whitten (1997) a decreasing assessment of individuals' personal economic situation was associated with a decrease in the odds of supporting EU membership compared to the previous category of this assessment. The other way around, a decreasing assessment of the national economic performance was associated with increasing odds of being supportive of EU membership across the two case countries. This is in contrast with the theory put forward by Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) who suggest a positive relationship between performance of the national economy, and attitudes toward EU membership.

The remaining utilitarian factors, perception of being a winner or loser from reform and indicators of human capital did not reveal a significant relationship to support for EU membership across North Macedonia and Serbia. As explained in more detail in the discussions of the individual country analyses, this is interesting as it is inconsistent with previous literature which highlights the importance of human capital and perceptions of being a winner or loser from reforms to attitudes toward EU membership (Gabel & Palmer, 1995; Hakhverdian et al., 2013; Herzog & Tucker, 2010; Tucker et al., 2002). These findings are however in line with some existing research that investigated the impact on utilitarian factors

on attitudes on EU membership in the Western Balkan countries (e.g., Damjanovski et al., 2020; Çarkoğlu and Glüpker-Kesebir, 2016). Particularly, the findings regarding income and education are in line with the findings of Damjanovski and co-authors (2020), who find no significant impact of level of income and education on attitudes toward EU integration across the six Western Balkans countries.

Furthermore, at the aggregate level the data suggested that, in line with Anderson's (1998) proxies' model, there was a positive relationship between trust in in national institutions and support for EU membership. Individuals who indicated that they tended not to trust national institutions had lower odds of support for EU membership compared to individual that did tend to trust national institutions.

Also, contradictory to much of the literature (e.g., Carey, 2002; Mau, 2005; Nelsen & Guth, 2000), the results suggested no significant relationship between gender and support for EU membership in North Macedonia and Serbia. Lastly, the results indicated that age was a relevant factor in shaping support for EU membership across the two case countries, and increasing age was associated with a decreasing likelihood of supporting EU membership, compared to the previous age.

6. Conclusion

This thesis investigated the influence of national identity on public attitudes toward EU membership in North Macedonia and Serbia. Using Eurobarometer data from 2015, this study conducted a multi-variate hierarchical logistic regression analysis to examine to what extent feelings of national identity influenced North Macedonian and Serbian citizens' support for their country's membership to the European Union. The results of the analysis suggested that national identity had a meaningful impact on support for EU membership in both North Macedonia and Serbia, as national identity explained an additional portion of the variance in support for EU membership beyond the utilitarian and political cues factors. Also, the analysis indicated that, at the aggregate level and in North Macedonia, there was a negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership. This confirmed the hypothesized negative relationship between national identity and support for EU membership for the aggregate level and for North Macedonia. The results regarding this relationship in Serbia were less conclusive, as this negative relationship was only suggested for one specific category of national identity. Therefore, this study supports existing literature that highlights the importance of national identity in shaping attitudes toward EU integration (e.g, Carey, 2002; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005; Marks & Hooghe, 2003; McLaren, 2002), and that argues for a negative relationship between national identity and support for EU integration (Carey, 2002; Christin & Trechsel, 2002). Furthermore, the results indicated that, although in different constellations and at different level of influence in the two case countries, factors like trust in national institutions, assessment of the personal and national economic situation, age, and gender, were also influential to determining attitudes toward EU membership. Thus, illustrating the complexity and multifaceted nature of the dynamics that shape attitudes toward EU integration in North Macedonia and Serbia.

However, the effects suggested by the data do not give an exhaustive answer to the research question. Due to the nature of the methods employed in this study, the results did not allow for the examination of the impact that national identity had on support for EU membership compared to the utilitarian and political cues variables. Thus, preventing this study from gauging precisely the impact that national identity had on support for EU membership, compared to other factors that shape attitudes toward EU integration. This is exacerbated by the fact that the found effects should be interpreted with caution, as the size of the effects are not certain to be accurate, and the model used for the regression was not exhaustive. A recommendation for further research is therefore to conduct a similar study, with longitudinal data and more advanced statistical methods, to assess in more detail the unique impact of national identity on attitudes toward EU membership, compared to other variables. Such research could contribute more comprehensive evidence of the influence national identity has on shaping attitudes toward EU integration in these two Western Balkan countries. Also, it could clarify the contradicting findings regarding the impact of human capital on attitudes toward EU integration. The distinction between inclusive and exclusive national identity is well-noted in the literature (e.g., Aichholzer et al., 2021; Hooghe & Marks, 2004, 2005), but was not addressed in this study due to limitations in the available data. To create a more in depth and nuanced understanding of the relationship between national identity and attitudes toward EU integration in the context of the Western Balkan countries, further research should also expand the range of case countries and focus on the different relationships that inclusive and exclusive national identity have with public attitudes toward EU membership in the Western Balkan region.

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Appendix

Overview of Eurobarometer Survey Questions

Table: Overview of Eurobarometer survey questions

Question ID Eurobarometer 84.3 (November 2015)	Variable Name	Eurobarometer Question	Response catagories
D10	Gender	Gender	1- Man 2- Woman
D11	Age	How old are you?	
QA1a_1	Country economic situation	How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? - The situation of the (NATIONAL) economy	1- Very good 2- Rather good 3- Rather Bad 4- Very bad 5- DK
QA1a_4	Personal economic situation	How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? - The financial situation of your household	1- Very good 2- Rather good 3- Rather Bad 4- Very bad 5- DK

QA2a_3		What are your expectations for the next twelve months: will the next twelve months be better, worse or the same, when it comes to...? - The financial situation of your household	1- Better 2- Worse 3- Same 4- DK
	Winner/loser from reform		
D60		During the last twelve months, would you say you had difficulties to pay your bills at the end of the month...?	1-Most of the time 2-From time to time 3-Almost never/never 4-Refusal (SP.)
D8	Education	How old were you when you stopped full-time education?	
D63	Income	Do you see yourself and your household belonging to…?	1- The working class of society 2- The lower middle class of society 3- The middle class of society 4- The upper middle class of society 5- The higher class of society 6- Other (SP.) 7- None (SP.) 8- Refusal (SP.) 9- DK
D15a	Occupation	What is your current occupation?	

QA8a_8	Trust in national institution	I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain media and institutions. For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. - The (NATIONALITY) government	1- Tend to trust 2- Tend not to trust 3- DK
QD1a_2	National identity	Please tell me how attached you feel to...? - (OUR COUNTRY)	1- Very attached 2- Fairly attached 3- Not very attached 4- Not at all attached 5- DK
QA6a	Opinion on EU membership	Generally speaking, do you think that (OUR COUNTRY)'s membership of the EU would be...?	1- A good thing 2- A bad thing 3- Neither good nor bad 4- DK

Note: For all the questions the unanswered questions have not been used. Except for question QA6a which has been used completely.