

Good Europeans? How European identity and costs interact to explain politician attitudes towards compliance with European Union law

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Good Europeans? How European identity and costs interact to explain politician attitudes towards compliance with European Union law

A. Burcu Bayram

ABSTRACT Does European identity increase politicians' support for compliance with European Union (EU) law? Adopting a political psychology approach, this study for the first time examines the effect of European identity on politicians' attitudes toward compliance with EU law. I offer a cognitive-interactionist theory and argue that European identity, compliance costs and the interaction between identity and costs shape actors' support for compliance. Using an original survey of German parliamentarians, I show that European identity and the level of compliance costs are both important predictors of compliance attitudes, and European identity moderates the effect of costs on support for compliance. This study facilitates a new research agenda by bringing the individual politician to the study of compliance with EU law, and builds a bridge between instrumental and normative models of compliance.

KEYWORDS Cognitive-interactionism; compliance; European identity; European Union law; political psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Does a sense of European identity increase politicians' support for compliance with European Union (EU) law? Adopting a political psychology approach, this study for the first time examines the effect of European identity on politicians' attitudes toward compliance with EU law, using an original survey of German parliamentarians. To my knowledge, this is the first survey that maps actual politicians' identification with Europe on their legal compliance attitudes.

The impact of European identity on citizens' attitudes toward the Union and European integration has been studied extensively (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2004; Risse 2003, 2005). Scholars have also explored whether pro-European governments are more likely to comply with EU regulations (Hille and Knill 2006; Kaeding 2006; Mbaye 2001; Steunenberg and Rhinard 2010). Some works have examined party and government officials' positions on European integration (Egeberg 1999; Hooghe 2003; Trondal 2002; Wonka and Rittberger 2014). However, there has been no comprehensive

analysis of how European identity influences politicians' postures on compliance with EU law.

The lack of attention to European identity in the EU compliance literature is surprising. Whether it is about financial bail-outs or effective governance, almost all scholarly and popular discussions of Europe evoke European identity (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2007). But we still know very little whether and how European identity is associated with politicians' attitudes toward compliance with EU law.

This contribution systematically examines the identity basis of compliance support among politicians. Existing studies have analyzed how state-level factors explain why and when member states comply or fail to comply with EU law (Beach 2005; Boerzel *et al.* 2010, 2012; Falkner *et al.* 2007; Mastenbroek 2005; Mbaye 2001; Perkins and Neumayer 2007; Sedelmeier 2008; Steunenberg and Toshkov, 2009; Tallberg 2002).¹ These studies, which have great merit, seek to explain cross-country variation in compliance or infringement rates. My focus is different. I am interested in individual politicians' compliance attitudes. A pro-compliance attitude is not the same as compliance behavior (e.g., a vote for compliance). Yet, a substantial body of research has demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between compliance attitudes and behavior (Terry and Hogg 1996; Terry *et al.* 2000; Tyler and Huo 2002).² Therefore, the study of politicians' support for compliance is both interesting in its own right and politically relevant.

Drawing from Herrmann *et al.* (1999), I offer a cognitive-interactionist model. I argue that politicians' compliance attitudes are a function of both their psychological identification with Europe and the specific payoff structure of compliance situations. My core claim is that European identity, compliance costs and the interaction between identity and costs shape actors' support for compliance. The framework I present builds a bridge between instrumental and normative perspectives on EU compliance (Beach 2005; Boerzel *et al.* 2010; Herrmann and Shannon 2001; Trondal 2001), and adds to a growing body of research that takes the role political agents play in international co-operation seriously (Egeberg 1999; Hafner-Burton *et al.* 2014; Schafer 2014; Trondal 2002; Wonka and Rittberger 2014).

I test my argument using new data from a survey of German parliamentarians. I find that European identity and the level of compliance costs are both important predictors of compliance attitudes, and European identity moderates the effect of costs on support for compliance. High European identifiers value compliance with community laws and have a high tolerance for compliance costs. They are the good Europeans. Medium identifiers are good Europeans on the surface. They are most sensitive to payoff structure of compliance. When compliance costs are low, medium identifiers strongly favor compliance. When costs rise, their support for compliance declines dramatically. Low European identifiers have limited support for compliance regardless of costs.

In the discussion that follows, I first review the literature on European identity and compliance. I then develop my theoretical argument and derive testable

hypotheses. The third section introduces the dataset and outlines the research design. Section four presents the results. I conclude by discussing the contributions of my findings and making suggestions for future research.

EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND COMPLIANCE

Because identification with a community leads to ‘diffuse support’ for its political system (Easton 1965), collective identity is thought to be a crucial driver of compliance with community rules, even when compliance fails to offer material benefits. This is why the importance of ‘shifting loyalties’ (Haas 1958: 16) or a ‘we-feeling’ (Deutsch 1957: 36) among the masses has long been recognized as an integral component of European integration. Yet, the relationship between European identity and compliance has thus far been overlooked in the compliance literature.

Instrumental models emphasize utility-based compliance. Member states comply with EU law when compliance serves their interests or when they fear enforcement (Downs *et al.* 1996; Goldsmith and Posner 2005; Tallberg 2002; Zuern 2005). Violation of laws is most likely when compliance is costly, demanding extensive changes in member states’ existing policies or when the risk of credible enforcement is low. The analog of instrumental models in psychology is resource- or exchange-based compliance (Blau 1964). In the EU compliance literature, scholars have identified several factors that can affect member states’ calculations of interests, ranging from political constraints to misfit (see Toshkov [2010] for a review). The underlying assumption of utility models is that such ideational factors as European identity have little bearing on political élites’ compliance attitudes. Existing empirical record reveals mixed results; some works found a positive relationship (Zubek and Staronova 2010), but others found no association (Hille and Knill 2007; Steunenberg and Rhinard 2010) between European-ness and compliance. In all studies, however, European-ness was measured at the government or mass level, not at the politician level.

Scholars have also characterized compliance as a normative decision based on a sense of obligation (Checkel 2001; Franck 1990; March and Olsen 1998). Member states comply with EU law because they perceive the laws of the Union as legitimate and feel a sense of obligation to comply. Important works have explored the dynamics of normative compliance (Beach 2005; Falkner *et al.* 2007; Perkins and Neumayer 2007; Risse 2003; Sedelmeier 2008). Of course, European identity is not the only path to normative compliance; however, it is an important one. Whether it is through exposure to community institutions (Checkel 2005) or changing understandings of national identity (Zuern and Checkel 2005), socialization into a European identity is generally understood to be a critical motivator of normative compliance. This view is consonant with theories emphasizing the importance of identities for compliance, which I discuss below.

Finally, the management approach posits that non-compliance is often involuntary. According to this perspective, the causes of non-compliance are lack of capacity, ambiguous treaty language and ambitious implementation timetables (Chayes and Chayes 1995; Tallberg 2002). To improve compliance, this approach stresses capacity building, transparency and assistance with rule interpretation. Because it privileges a problem-solving strategy to address non-compliance, however, the management approach has given insufficient consideration to how European identity might engender a pro-compliance orientation.

In short, we either find relatively incompatible views on the relationship between European identity and compliance in the existing literature or observe that this relationship has thus far been overlooked. In the next section, I propose a theoretical framework for explaining the link between European identity and compliance.

A COGNITIVE-INTERACTIONIST FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Rooted in social psychology, cognitive-interactionism posits that individual decisions are a function of individual (micro) factors such as identities, as well as situational (macro) factors such as material costs (Mischel and Shoda 1995). I argue that politicians 'combine dispositional and situational cues' when forming policy positions on compliance (Herrmann *et al.* 1999: 555). The cognitive-interactionist model I propose rests on three arguments. I hypothesize that European identity, the costs of compliance and the interaction between identity and costs affect politicians' compliance orientations.

European identity is a particular type of social identity defined as 'that part of the individual's self-concept, which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel 1981: 255). Psychologists have convincingly demonstrated that individuals who identify with a social group are more likely to respect group rules and authorities because they believe in the legitimacy of these institutions (Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Terry *et al.* 2000; Tyler and Blader 2003; Wenzel and Jobling 2006). The legitimacy of laws and norms is intimately linked to the broader normative culture of a group (Tyler 2006). Those who identify with a social group believe that group rules have legitimacy because they take the group as their reference category and define themselves in terms of the prescriptive and constitutive norms of the group (Turner 2005). As a result, social identification moves individuals to accept the authority of group rules as legitimate, leading them to favor compliance.

Accordingly, we should expect politicians who identify with Europe to take Europe as their reference category and believe that the authority of EU law is legitimate. This belief should in turn generate a willingness to support

compliance. Therefore, the agent-level hypothesis of the interactionist framework can be stated as:

H1: The higher a politician's identification with Europe, the stronger his or her support for compliance with EU law.

Few will disagree that costs reduce the expected utility of compliance. Whether it is owing to preference reversals or limited administrative capacity, the larger the cost of compliance with a particular legislation for a country, the lower the likelihood of compliance (Boerzel *et al.* 2010; Heritier *et al.* 2001; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2003). While state power might attenuate the importance of costs in members' cost–benefit calculations, compliance costs generally decrease a country's propensity to comply. As such, we should expect actors to be disinclined to favor compliance when it is costly. Therefore, the situational hypothesis is:

H2: The higher the cost of compliance, the weaker a politician's support for compliance with EU law.

The third component of the cognitive-interactionist model explores the interaction between European identity and compliance costs. It is highly plausible that politicians' subjective assessments of the burden of compliance costs vary as a function of their sense of European identity. Just like paying taxes is more upsetting to some people than it is to others, it is possible that compliance costs are more worrisome for some politicians than they are for others. If a stronger sense of identification with Europe is associated with a higher degree of support for compliance, as I hypothesize, then high European identifiers should be less sensitive to compliance costs. The interaction hypothesis, therefore, is:

H3: The higher a politician's identification with Europe, the lower his or her sensitivity to compliance costs.

DATA AND VARIABLES

The data I use to test my argument come from a survey of German parliamentarians. The survey instrument was composed in German and mailed to all members of the 17th Bundestag. The size of the sample used in the analysis is 68. The overall response rate is about 11 per cent. While small, this sample offers a useful starting point to evaluate my hypotheses.³ As is well-known, surveying politicians is extremely difficult. This is why scholars sometimes draw inferences from samples of undergraduate students or the mass public and then make claims about political élites. In the survey I use, the participants are actual politicians.

A sizable body of work in the literature speaks to the importance of national parliaments when parliamentary transposition of EU law is required at the domestic level (Ciavarini 2000; Dimitrakopoulos 2001; Falkner *et al.* 2005; Sprungk 2013; Steunenberg 2006; Versluis, 2004). Surveying parliamentarians is also

Table 1 Distribution of the respondents in the sample by parliamentary group compared to the composition of the German Parliament (17th Bundestag)

Sample	Population
CDU/CSU 28 %	CDU/CSU –239 seats –38 %
SPD 31 %	SPD C146 seats –24 %
FDP 22 %	FDP –93 seats –15 %
Alliance 90/The Greens 7 %	Alliance 90/The Greens –68 seats –11 %
Left Party 7 %	Left Party –76 seats –12 %

valuable because in parliamentary systems decision-makers are drawn from the legislatures and a sample of parliamentarians offers diversity of political opinion.

The distribution of the respondents in the sample in terms of party affiliation is shown in Table 1.⁴ Roughly matching of the population, this sample provides a valuable opportunity to examine compliance attitudes across a diverse array of political views and domestic interests. I am cautious about making aggregate claims about the entire population of parliamentarians. My goal in this study is to examine the causal relationship between European identity and compliance attitudes. The sample is suitable for this purpose because there is no obvious theoretical reason to think that the process linking European identity to compliance attitudes would be different among those actors who did not participate in the survey (Druckman and Kam 2011; Shadish *et al.* 2008; Rubin 1974).

My case selection is guided by three considerations. Germany is a key player in the Union. Analyzing how European identity affects German parliamentarians' compliance postures is interesting in its own right. Second, Germany is not an inherently easy case in which to examine compliance. Although Germany exerts a great deal of influence on the creation of laws, data compiled by the European Commission show that Germany is in the second tier of compliers along with Spain and France. It is not one of the most compliant member states.⁵ Since Germany has a mixed record of compliance, we could expect to find variation in politicians' compliance postures. Finally, the case of Germany does not necessarily favor my argument. If Germany's domestic legal culture of respect for the rule of law makes actors more deferential towards EU law (Falkner *et al.* 2005), then politicians' European identity should have little bearing on their attitudes toward compliance.

Dependent variable: support for compliance

To measure support for compliance, I use an index composed of four questions. The first is an attitude strength question (Overall Support) that asked participants how strongly they believe that member states should comply with EU law. Response options range from 'Extremely strongly (coded 5)' to 'Not strongly at all (coded 1)'. The second question highlights a trade-off between

interests and compliance (Interest Conflict). Its wording was: 'How strongly do you personally agree that member states should obey EU laws even if it goes against their interests?' Responses are measured on a five-point scale identical to the one described above. The third question seeks to measure commitment to compliance when compliance is costly (Escape). I told respondents that compliance with EU law could sometimes become difficult and in such cases member states may opt for non-compliance, especially if they could avoid punishment. I then asked: 'Imagine a situation where it is difficult for Germany to comply with a given EU law and it could get away with non-compliance without risking sanctions or social criticism. How likely are you to support compliance with this law?' Response options range from 'Extremely likely (coded 5)' to 'Not likely at all (coded 1).'

These three questions are particularly useful measures because they help address the potential problem of selection bias in the empirical study of compliance (Von Stein 2005). If a country complies with EU law because it is in its self-interest to do so, we cannot attribute compliance to the independent effect of the law. By pitting self-interest against compliance, these measures help us infer commitment to EU law *qua* law. The last item (Court) asked parliamentarians how strongly they feel that Germany must comply with the decisions of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Response options range from 'Extremely strongly (coded 5)' to 'Not strongly at all (coded 1)'. The index of compliance support (Compliance Support) used in the empirical analysis is the average of all compliance items. These items are strongly correlated with each other, indicating that the index is highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.85$).⁶

Independent variables

European identity

I measure European identity by borrowing from the Eurobarometer survey and from Herrmann *et al.*'s (2009) identity index.⁷ The first question (Self-categorization) asked respondents to compare their sense of national and European identities. Responses are measured on a five-point scale with response options 'Only German (coded 1)', 'More German than European (coded 2)', 'Equally as German as European (coded 3)', 'More European than German (coded 4)' and 'Only European (coded 5)'. The next items tap the importance of being European to actors' self-understanding and their perceptions of interdependence with Europe. The first asked how much being European has to do with how they feel about themselves (Self-concept). If being European is an important component of one's self-concept, we could infer that they have a meaningful identification with Europe as a social group. Responses are measured on a five-point scale, ranging from 'A tremendous amount (coded 5)' to 'None at all (coded 1)'. The second item explored interdependence with the group through perceptions of common fate, and asked: 'When someone says something bad about Europe, how strongly do you feel it is if they said something bad about you?' If respondents believe that their fate is

linked to Europe, we can deduce that they see themselves as European. The measurement scale is anchored by 'Extremely strongly (coded 5)' and 'Not strongly at all (coded 1).' The overall score for identification with Europe is the average of self-categorization, self-concept and common fate scores. As indicated by the strong correlation between the identity measures, the European identity index (European Identity) is highly reliable ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Compliance costs

To test for the effect of compliance costs, I employ a survey experiment that manipulates the costs of compliance in a hypothetical situation. An experiment is a tremendously valuable method to detect the causal effect of an independent variable on the outcome variable (McDermott 2002; Morton and Williams 2010). I created two versions of a costly compliance scenario and randomly assigned respondents to high- and low-cost conditions. I held all other aspects of the compliance situation structure constant.

The wording of the experimental vignette was: 'Imagine that the EU passed a new law on taxation that Germany opposed. Compliance with this law will result in a reduction in government revenues by [20% OR 5%]. How likely are you to support compliance with this law?' Responses are measured on a five-point scale ranging from 'Extremely likely (coded 5)' to 'Not likely at all (coded 1)'. A 20 per cent reduction corresponds to high and a 5 per cent to low compliance costs. If I find systematic differences in parliamentarians' support for compliance between high and low cost conditions, we can infer that the degree of compliance costs has a significant effect on compliance attitudes.

One might question the mundane realism of the cost treatment. Mundane realism is about whether a treatment can be found in the real world. Experimental realism is about whether the experiment induces the psychological states of interest regardless of its similarity to real world events (Aronson *et al.* 1985). As McDermott (2011: 59) observes, '[e]xperimental realism remains more important than mundane realism in maximizing prospects for internal validity because it is more likely to elicit the critical dynamic under investigation'. Mundane realism on the surface is unproductive if the experiment fails to represent 'the intended essence of the theoretical variables' (Kruglanski 1975: 106; Druckman and Kam 2011). As will be discussed in detail in the results section, we have reason to believe that the experiment drew on the 'intended essence' of compliance costs, and thus has experimental realism.

Control variables

The survey instrument also includes a series of political and demographic control variables. The political control variables are support for European integration, attitudes towards sanctions, political party affiliation and ideology. Other controls are gender, age and education. The measurement of the control variables is discussed in the Online Appendix.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The result section consists of four parts. I start with discussing the distribution of the dependent variable and then show the relationship between European identity and support for compliance. In the third section, I turn to the experiment and demonstrate the interaction between European identity and compliance costs.

Support for compliance

As Table 2 shows, parliamentarians vary in their support for compliance with EU law. About 25 per cent of the respondents express strong and about 19 per cent express weak support for compliance; while over 55 per cent of the respondents indicate moderate support. Even though responses largely cluster around the moderate support category, it is instructive to observe that there is significant variation in compliance support. Degree of support for compliance also varies across political party lines. This indicates that party discipline does not singlehandedly determine the postures of actors on compliance.⁸

European identity and support for compliance

The agent-level hypothesis predicts that high European identifiers will be more likely to support compliance with EU law. The results strongly support this claim. First, European identity is strongly and positively associated with support for compliance ($r = 0.859$, $p = 0.000$). Second, if we group the European identity variable into low, medium and high identifiers,⁹ we observe that there is a highly statistically significant difference in compliance support across different levels of European identity ($\chi^2 (2, N = 68) = 45.78$, $p = 0.0001$). When European identity is high, parliamentarians are considerably more likely to articulate strong support for compliance. The percentages of low, medium and high identifiers who expresses weak, moderate, and strong support for compliance can be found in Table A1 in the Online Appendix.

Table 3 shows that there are highly statistically significant differences in compliance support across levels of European identity. The first row focuses on the global compliance index, while the other rows address the individual measures of compliance explained in the data and variables section. As can be seen, higher

Table 2 Parliamentarians vary in their support for compliance with EU law (%)

Degree of support for compliance	Full sample	CDU	SPD	FDP	Greens	Left Party
Weak support	19.12	42.11	4.76	13.33	0.00	25.00
Moderate support	55.88	42.11	66.67	46.67	60.00	75.00
Strong support	25.00	15.79	28.57	40.00	40.00	0.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3 There are high statistically significant differences in compliance support across low, medium, and high European identifiers

<i>Degree of support for compliance</i>	<i>Low identifiers</i>		<i>Medium identifiers</i>		<i>High identifiers</i>		<i>Difference test statistic</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Sd.</i>	χ^2	<i>P-Value</i>
Total	2.028	0.364	3.221	0.635	4.042	0.535	45.78	0.0001
General support	3.047	0.384	3.42	0.835	4.68	0.749	24.11	0.0001
Interest conflict	1.619	0.589	3.071	0.939	3.63	0.955	32.50	0.0001
Escape	1.618	0.669	3.035	0.792	3.473	0.964	29.75	0.0001
Court	2.142	0.654	3.678	0.945	4.631	0.830	36.70	0.0001

Notes: χ^2 , df. N= 68.

identification with Europe is related to increased support for compliance across the board. For example, average support for compliance with the rulings of the ECJ is considerably higher among high European identifiers (mean 4.63 standard deviation [SD]. 0.80) than it is among medium (mean 3.68 SD 0.9) and among low identifiers (mean 2.14 SD 0.65). Similarly, while low European identifiers (mean 1.61 SD 0.58) express only a limited degree of support for upholding EU law when compliance conflicts with Germany's material interests, high identifiers (mean 3.63 SD 0.96) articulate greater support in the same situation.

To increase our confidence in these results, I estimate a series of linear models regressing support for compliance with EU law onto European identity and the control variables. These models can be found in Table A2 in the Online Appendix. In all estimations, I find that European identity is positively associated with support for compliance, with a very high level of statistical significance.

Compliance costs and support for compliance

How do costs influence actors' compliance attitudes? To address this question, I turn to the compliance experiment. As explained previously, the dependent variable is support for costly compliance. The independent variables are the cost treatment (high vs low) and European identity.

The situational hypothesis predicts that the higher the costs of compliance, the lower a politician's support for compliance. The results support this expectation. An analysis of variance test (ANOVA) shows that there is a significant main effect for compliance costs ($F(1, 62) = 33.70, p < 0.001$). Those assigned to the high cost condition are significantly less supportive of compliance than those in the low cost condition. About 20 per cent of the variance in attitudes among participants is accounted for by costs ($\eta^2 = 0.20$). When

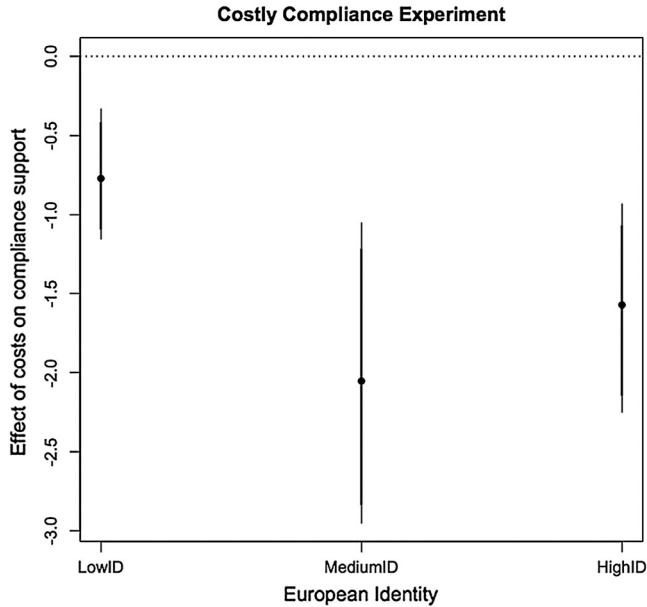


Figure 1 Average treatment effects: the average causal effect of the cost treatment across levels of European identity with 95 per cent bootstrapped confidence intervals using 1500 simulations

compliance is costly, expected to result in a large decrease in Germany's overall tax revenues, about 65 per cent of the parliamentarians are not supportive of compliance. In contrast, when compliance costs are low, about 41 per cent of the parliamentarians are highly and about 18 per cent are somewhat in favor of compliance. These findings not only point to the experimental realism of the treatments, but they clearly indicate that compliance costs decrease politicians' willingness to uphold EU law.¹⁰

Interaction between European identity and compliance costs

Does cost sensitivity vary across levels of European identity? Results of the compliance experiment show that it does. There is a statistically significant interaction between European identity and costs ($F(2, 62) = 3.14$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.04$), supporting the interaction hypothesis. Figure 1 plots the average causal effect of the cost treatment across levels of European identity with 95 per cent bootstrapped confidence intervals using 1,500 simulations. Table A3 in the Online Appendix complements this figure by reporting the statistical significance of pairwise group mean differences. The results indicate that even though costs decrease all parliamentarians' support for compliance, the size of this decline is partly conditional upon the strength of European identity. All parliamentarians are swayed by compliance costs, yet

Table 4 European identity moderates the negative effect of costs on support for compliance with EU law

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>
Costs	−3.061*** (0.62)	−6.170** (2.18)	−7.05** (2.32)	−11.60 (3.05)***	−12.77*** (0.46)
European Identity	2.261*** (0.34)	1.830*** (0.39)	1.577*** (0.41)	0.401 (0.53)	0.468 (0.56)
Costs X European Identity		0.974* (0.62)	1.235* (0.66)	2.432** (0.86)	2.664** (0.93)
Integration			0.805** (0.27)	0.987** (0.353)	1.034*** (0.30)
Enforcement			0.409 (0.52)	1.030* (0.55)	1.297* (0.67)
CDU/CSU ^a				−0.171 (1.14)	−4.08 (1.67)
SPD				2.576* (1.37)	2.432* (1.38)
FDP				2.12 (1.44)	−0.66 (1.57)
Greens				3.87** (1.39)	3.18** (1.47)
Ideology					1.07 (0.38)
Education					−0.036 (0.31)
Age					−0.05* (0.03)
Female ^a					0.301 (0.65)
Wald χ^2	45.32	36.25	45.59	49.30	61.09
Log Likelihood	−73.279561	−72.181332	−67.045864	−60.58712	−53.745346
Pseudo R-Squared	0.28	0.30	0.34	0.41	0.47

Notes: *** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; * $p \leq 0.1$ N=68.

Parliamentary groups are dummy variables with the Left Party as the reference group. Female is a dummy variable with male as the reference group. Reported values are ordered logit regression coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses. All models are statistically significant at $p \leq 0.001$

not to the same degree. The degree of cost sensitivity is affected by the strength of European identity.

As can be seen in [Figure 1](#), high identifiers resist the temptation to violate EU law even when compliance is costly. They express strong support for compliance in low- and high-cost conditions alike. Costs affect low identifiers little because they are largely skeptical of compliance in the first place. Medium identifiers seem to play a strategic game. In the low-cost condition, medium identifiers' support for compliance is almost as high as that of high identifiers. Yet, when costs increase, medium identifiers turn into instrumentalists, quickly choosing self-interest over the law. In the high-cost condition, medium identifiers are as unwilling as low identifiers are to tolerate compliance costs. In sum, political actors' sensitivity to compliance costs depends on how much they identify with Europe.

As a robustness check, I estimate a series of ordinal logistic regression models, pooling the data across the experimental conditions. Again, the dependent variable captures a parliamentarian's likelihood of supporting compliance with a law that imposes costs on Germany and the main independent variables of interest are the cost treatment and the index of European identity. Model 1 regresses parliamentarians' responses onto costs and their sense of European identity, Model 2 adds an interaction term between costs and identity, Model 3 integrates the variables tapping support for European integration and attitudes towards sanctions, Model 4 includes the political party dummies, and Model 5 adds the ideology, gender, age and education variables into the analysis. As can be seen in [Table 4](#), the results are robust to alternative model specifications and support my hypotheses.

Examining the predicted probabilities in the low- and high-cost conditions at different values of European identity obtained from Model 5 reveals the substantive importance of the cost–identity interaction (Wald test result χ^2 (1, $N = 68$) = 8.10, $p = 0.0044$). For example, in the high-cost condition, the predicted probability of expressing moderate support for compliance is 27 per cent for a high European identifier, 2 per cent for a medium identifier and almost zero for a low identifier.¹¹ In the same vein, when costs are high, the predicted probability of categorically opposing compliance is only 3 per cent for a high European identifier, while it is 48 per cent for a medium identifier and over 90 per cent for a low identifier. Replicating my earlier findings, these results reveal that importance of costs in parliamentarians' compliance calculus varies as a function of the strength of their European identity.¹²

CONCLUSION

This study presents and tests a psychologically informed framework for explaining politicians' support for compliance with EU. My findings indicate that politicians' support for compliance systematically vary as a function of the strength of European identity and the level of compliance costs. Support for compliance has a dispositional basis grounded in European identity. Identification with

Europe reinforces support for compliance. However, compliance costs reduce politicians' willingness to uphold EU law. Even the good Europeans become unenthusiastic about compliance when costs rise. Yet, actors' cost sensitivity depends on the strength of European identity. A strong sense of European identity moderates the negative effect of compliance costs. This finding indicates that European identity at the politician level is a critical path to improve the implementation of EU law.

This study makes three important contributions. Ample evidence suggests that politicians facing similar strategic situations, such as domestic constituency constraints or implementation challenges, reason differently about supranational co-operation. By examining why and how individual politicians approach legal co-operation differently, this contribution addresses this heterogeneity.

Second, this research complements state-centric studies on compliance. Politicians who value compliance are more likely to push for overcoming administrative hurdles that inhibit timely compliance or addressing the European Commission's concerns over implementation. By uncovering the extent to which European identity generates a commitment to compliance, this study adds to existing quantitative and qualitative findings on compliance with EU law. Finally, this study contributes to the literature on European identity. The results show that European identity matters most when it is strong. Good Europeans are the high identifiers.

To be sure, additional research is needed to examine the relationship between compliance attitudes and behavior, as well as to expand the scope of analysis to a wider range of political actors. Opportunities to survey a larger number of politicians from different levels of government and member states will offer additional tests of the hypotheses derived from the cognitive-interactionist framework and increase the generalizability of the findings presented here. Because it represents the first systematic effort to examine the link between European identity and compliance attitudes among politicians, this study helps establish a research agenda that takes the variation in individual politicians' compliance preferences seriously.

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SUPPLEMENTAL DATA AND RESEARCH MATERIALS

Supplemental data for this article can be accessed on the author's website at burcubayram.net.

NOTES

- 1 The literature on compliance is too large to cite here in full.
- 2 On general relationship between attitudes and behavior, see Ajzen and Fishbein (2005).
- 3 Note that surveys of legislators or executives generally rely on relatively smaller samples (e.g., Damgaard 1980; Dionne 2010; Zoco 2006).
- 4 Other studies (e.g., Deupas) also reply on party affiliation to capture political representativeness. <http://www.change-centre.net/foundation/> (accessed 10 October 2014). Information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents can be found in the online appendix. <https://www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80140000.pdf> (accessed 10 October 2014).
- 5 Twenty-ninth annual report on monitoring the application of EU law [COM(2012) 714] at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1280_en.htm (accessed 10 October 2014).
- 6 Cronbach's α is a measure of a scale's reliability that ranges from 0 to 1. The closer the α value to 1, the more reliable the index.
- 7 http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm (accessed 10 October 2013).
- 8 Historically, Social Democrats and Liberals have generally been supportive of European integration, the Greens have gone back and forth and the Left Party has opposed the capitalist economic model underlying the free trade area.
- 9 The thresholds for grouping participants into low, medium and high identifiers are based on percentiles. The European identity variable is slightly skewed to the right. Therefore, combined scores on the European identity index are separated as Low < 50 per cent; Medium < 75 per cent; High 75–100 per cent. If I group responses using 33, 66 and 100 percentiles, results largely remain stable. The main substantive change occurs in the size of the difference in mean support for compliance between low and medium identifiers, which is still statistically significant.
- 10 If the treatments had not been taken seriously because of their hypothetical nature, there would not be a statistically significant effect for costs. Additionally, support for compliance in the presence of costs is about 24 per cent lower than the average support for compliance measured prior to the presentation of the experimental treatment in the dispositional part of the survey instrument with the global compliance index.
- 11 All other variables are held constant at their means or specified values. Predicted probabilities are calculated using Stata's margins command (Long and Freese 2006).
- 12 More information on the models can be found in the Online Appendix.

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