

National and European identity in Croatia and Serbia

Abstract

Europe has recently been facing several significant challenges to its identity - terrorist attacks, Brexit, and the current refugee crisis - that might deteriorate European identity. At the same time, the process of expanding the EU continues, mostly through the accession of ex-Yugoslav states. The accession of post-communist, as well as post-conflict states, presents a challenge to the EU due to different political cultures in East and West and rising nationalism in these countries. In this context especially interesting is the difference between Croatia and Serbia that share communist past and post-conflict rise of nationalistic tendencies, but while Croatia became a member of the EU in 2013, Serbia is still an official candidate. Contribution of this study lies in exploring EU membership hypothesis and generational change hypothesis.

The aim of this study was to compare levels of national and European identity on majority group members in Croatia and Serbia, to investigate relationship between both identities and contextual determinants of European and national identity.

Results on 967 citizens of Zagreb and Novi Sad (representative sample regarding education level with equal N of respondents in four age groups) show that European and national identity are orthogonal constructs ($r=.03$, $p=.324$). Respondents score higher on national than on European identity ($t=16.86$, $df=966$, $p=.001$), but average scores are moderate. In line with expectations, Croats show higher level of European identification and lower level of national identification than Serbs. In both countries, older and less educated citizens score higher on national identity and citizen with higher education level score higher on European identity.

Key words: European identity, national identity, EU membership, generational hypothesis