

# Postfunctionalism across the Atlantic: The “New Politics” in European Integration and US Federalism

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The European Union’s internal market was modeled in part on the United States’ national market, yet public attitudes toward market governance in the two arenas have long been understood through different theoretical lenses. In this article, we apply the postfunctionalist theory of European integration—developed to explain EU citizens’ attitudes toward supranational authority—to American federalism, testing whether cultural identity divides (GAL/TAN) shape public opinion on central market governance in the United States as they do in Europe. Using an original survey of 16,000 respondents across eight EU countries and 4,000 Americans, we find that postfunctionalist dynamics are robust in both contexts, challenging prevailing views that American attitudes toward federalism are driven primarily by Left–Right ideology or material interests. Our findings suggest that identity-based contestation over governance extends beyond the EU’s nation-state politics, requiring a broader theoretical framework to understand the intersection of culture, federalism, and economic integration across advanced democracies.

*Key words:* federalism; postfunctionalism; GAL/TAN; market integration; comparative public opinion.

The United States, with its federal system and vast national market, was the obvious model for the postwar project to build a European Union around a “single market.” That project was ambitious, given the powerful and diverse nation-states it sought to integrate, but by the turn of the millennium it had achieved considerable success. By that point many experts saw the EU as more comparable to a federal government than an international organization, both for its powers and

because those powers were attracting government-like levels of attention from its citizens. Scholars began importing theoretical tools from the study of American politics to analyze aspects of the EU, from interest-group pluralism and lobbying (Coen 1997), to the workings of the European Parliament and inter-institutional bargaining (Tsebelis and Garrett 2000; Kreppel 2002), to delegation and autonomy of EU agencies (Pollack 2002), to jurisprudence (Shapiro and Stone 1994), to broad dynamics of federalism overall (Kelemen 2004, 2011; Fabbrini 2015).

With respect to citizen engagement and public opinion, however, the quasi-federal EU and its multiple national “demoi” remained quite different from nationalized democracy in the United States (Nicolaidis 2013). Scholarly literatures about their mass politics continued to be very separate. In this article we connect those literatures, but reverse the prevailing direction of scholarly travel—testing theories of European integration and political contestation within the context of American federalism. We maximize the plausibility of this move by focusing specifically on federal attitudes that relate to the policy responsibilities that their central institutions most comparably share: governance of large internal markets.

In applying the most successful theory about support for the EU, “postfunctionalism,” to a survey fielded on both continents, we find that it captures substantial dynamics of support and opposition to central regulatory power in the United States as well. This result is likely to surprise scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. To the extent that US experts have converged on a theory as to why Americans support de/centralization, they are precisely the set of arguments that cut against the “new politics” that EU scholars routinely emphasize in explaining support for and against further Europeanization. Americans, so we are told, support or oppose federalism on classic ideological grounds, defined by traditional Left–Right views on government regulation and a two-party system that reifies these perspectives on “big” versus “small” government (Bulman-Pozen 2014; Glaser, Berry, and Schildkraut 2023). This “old” politics animating US federalism contrasts sharply with the “new” politics of European integration, where such material or distributional questions have been largely supplanted by the identity-centered logic of a new “GAL/TAN” cleavage (Green/Alternative/Libertarian vs. Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist; Hooghe and Marks 2009). Indeed, the language of Europe’s emerging cleavage, described as “transnational” (Hooghe and Marks 2018), or as mobilized by “nationalist proclivities” (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002) to defend the “last remains of the Westphalian nation state” (Kuhn and Stoeckel 2014), is more than just a foreign notion to a federation composed of non-sovereign states and a people who share a common culture and language. As typically conceptualized, these nationalist, identity-based arguments would seem to add little value to our understanding of an American political arena shaped by other types of political divides, notably race, and within a two-party system that

bounds political conflict over de/centralization into classic Left–Right politics (Riker 1964; Sundquist 1983; Derthick 2001).

We test postfunctional hypotheses versus ideological and utilitarian alternatives with a survey of 16,000 EU residents in eight member-states and 4,000 US residents fielded in June 2023. It posed more direct questions about internal-market governance than any preceding survey, while also gathering information on economic positioning and a variety of attitudes about the EU or US federal government. We develop a measurement strategy to compare the GAL/TAN cleavage in the EU and the United States and use it to model how such views shape attitudes on appropriate levels of government authority (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002). Taking a broad conceptualization and measurement approach to the alternative set of “functional”/utilitarian and ideological hypotheses, we nevertheless find that GAL/TAN attitudes matter for Americans’ views of internal-market governance and federal power much as they do for Europeans’ support for the EU and its project of market integration.

The results suggest that postfunctionalism has even more explanatory power than its creators would expect. Postfunctionalist theory has portrayed market integration as a “hard case”: the classically low-salience regulatory issues of internal-market rules are less likely to inflame community attachments as much as more active, fiscally consequential issues involving “core state powers.” As such, even in the EU, and certainly in the United States, we might expect either Left–Right ideology or utilitarian concerns to predominate in single-market politics (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Bremer, Genschel, and Jachtenfuchs 2020). In the United States, moreover, we could expect utilitarian concerns to be especially powerful on these issues due to deeper market integration, which means that more citizens are concretely involved in and impacted by internal-market flows. Yet, our findings show that even in this issue-area, debates over centralization in both arenas are as much or more about the clash of cultural identities and values as about the mechanics of governance and economic redistribution.

Since postfunctionalism does not predict its own relevance in either the case of single markets or within the United States, our findings imply a need to extend its theoretical logic to a more generalizable, “post” postfunctionalism. That is, the relevance of GAL/TAN resonance on market-integration issues in the EU and the United States suggests that federalism attitudes are shaped widely by identitarian conflicts that subsume other functionalist-utilitarian concerns. In particular, post-postfunctionalism must recognize that Westphalian nationalist proclivities are not the only roots of identity conflicts that have a spatial dimension and thereby structure multilevel politics. GAL/TAN attitudes in the United States are not based in state-level versions of European nationalisms. Rather, we understand the GAL/TAN cleavage in the American case as deeply intertwined with socio-political divides that transcend the formal political units of American states, manifesting

instead through cultural and value-based conflicts that cut across the entire nation. The debates on the site and scope of market governance in the United States extend beyond views toward “limited government” or an exclusive “state identity” and are instead reflective of emergent political developments that are more cultural than ideological. These conflicts are further animated in a federal context by the growing spatial inequality between places “left behind” and intensifying populist movements that are not so much suspicious of central government power, in general, as much as they are resentful of elites and institutions that have traditionally made claims on the appropriate use of central governmental authority.

### **Public support for federal authority in internal markets: economics, ideology, identity?**

Do people support or oppose central authority and action over their internal market for pocketbook reasons, focusing on how it might affect economic opportunities or risks for them or people like them? Do they do so as a function of ideological views about central government as economically good or bad for them, distinct from their positioning in the economy? Or do people support or oppose central authority over their internal market because it may threaten their political sense of self, interpreting it as an expansion of the higher-level political community that might contradict or dilute the distinct cultural and social norms that define their local community?

#### **Utilitarian motivations and single markets**

To explain citizens’ attitudes about multilevel government, one starting point is that individuals desire institutional arrangements from which they gain tangible benefits (Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky 2002). The early literature on support for European integration centered on this hypothesis, which followed very plausibly from the unambiguous focus of the early EU project on market integration and the prominence of promised economic benefits in its public justifications. Studies found that support for the EU was indeed affected by wealth and education, which position individuals to benefit more or less from market-integration policies (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel 1998).

Though the main thrust of theorizing about public opinion shifted after the 1990s toward non-utilitarian theories, as summarized below, many studies continue to find significant effects of utilitarian benefits on the EU’s support. Garry and Tilley (2009, 2015) show that perceived economic benefit/loss often leads to stronger support/opposition for integration policies, cutting across other ideological commitments such as support for a robust welfare state. Hakhverdian et al. (2013) highlight that educational attainment has had a slightly increasing impact on Euroscepticism over time, while continuing to interact with identity and

partisan cueing. Foster and Frieden (2021) find consistent patterns of individual occupational effects in surveys from 1995 to 2018, as well as sociotropic feedback from lower national wealth and higher national unemployment that appear to encourage people to adopt exclusive (anti-European) national identities. In other words, they suggest that identitarian differences are partly rooted in utilitarian relationships to market opportunities (see also Hobolt and Tilley 2014; Kuhn and Stoeckel 2014; Nicoli 2019).

Utilitarian hypotheses are also prominent in scholarship on American political behavior. A major tradition theorizes the “economic voter,” with emphasis on retrospective evaluations that punish or reward incumbents for the economy’s overall performance (Fiorina 1981; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008). Utilitarian hypotheses unsurprisingly inform research on public opinion and foreign trade policy, including findings that individuals with sector-specific skills tend to support protectionism (Urbatsch 2013), and that communities with greater exposure to free trade tend to support protectionist policies (Bisbee et al. 2002) and, in the aftermath of trade shocks, are more willing to support non-centrist candidates (Autor et al. 2020). A growing literature on the “macro-economy” has also shown that views toward candidates, parties, and government at the national level depend on both broad economic trends and localized economic realities, where personal and local economic experiences can shape political attitudes within a vast national polity (Reeves and Gimpel 2012; Healy and Malhotra 2013; Margalit 2013).

Despite the existence of a broad literature on American public opinion specifically about federalism, however, these economic-driven hypotheses have not received attention in research the public’s attribution of governmental authority between central and subnational governments. We suspect that this omission reflects the perceived “completeness” of the US national economy and the broad scope of both federal and state authority in regulating the economy; long ago their economy became quite integrated and made its citizens collectively wealthy and powerful. Though many federal and state policies certainly have tangible economic costs and benefits for citizens, the public may find them difficult to connect to federalist views because neither level of government has a narrow economic *raison d’être* like the EU.

Nevertheless there are reasons to suspect that utilitarian hypotheses might have purchase on federalism attitudes in the United States—perhaps even more so than in the EU. The core expectation of the more elite-focused theories that dominate explanations of the rise of the EU (and its single market in particular) is that “underlying trade flows” drive support for central authority in market governance (Moravcsik 1998, 496). That is, businesses and individuals who trade or move across borders provide the key support for building central powers and rules to promote openness (Haas 1958). The same basic liberal-economic theorem informs influential arguments about the growth of American federal authority over time

(Beer 1973; Bensel 2000). These theories all operate through interest-group pluralism, not mass politics, but their mechanism also has implications for citizens. The more people do business or move across jurisdictions in a multilevel arena, the more “outgoing” people encounter any interstate border costs (or appreciate their removal), and the more locally oriented actors encounter “incoming” competition and migrants. US interstate goods trade is roughly twice as dense as that across EU member-states,<sup>1</sup> and much more so in services; American interstate mobility is higher than mobility *inside* most EU countries, and at least ten times greater than mobility across them (Molloy, Smith, and Wozniak 2011). When we also add that many interstate regulatory barriers persist in the United States—as documented in other contributions to this issue—the United States appears to have especially conducive conditions for utility-based support for internal-market openness (and federal action to that end). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H1: Utilitarian:** Individuals who directly benefit from internal-market openness inside the United States or the EU will exhibit more positive attitudes toward market integration and federal-level action to promote it. This effect is expected to be more pronounced in the United States due to the greater degree of economic interdependence among member-states.

### Left–right ideology and the “old” politics of markets

Another scholarly tradition agrees with utilitarian theories that citizens focus mainly on economic benefits when forming attitudes about multilevel governance, but posits that they do so within ideologically framed Left–Right views of economic ideology, not as a direct function of their economic positioning. Though the classic Left–Right debate between pro-market and anti-market ideologies is generally characterized in EU studies as an “old” cleavage with limited power to explain attitudes about European integration today, scholars have always noted likely exceptions for EU policy areas that continue to most directly evoke views of market regulation or redistribution—most obviously single-market integration (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002, 971; Kanthak and Spies 2017). Left–Right attitudes became less predictive of Euroscepticism after the 1980s, as the EU took on major responsibilities beyond its original market-integration mission (Van Elsas and Van Der Brug 2015), further supporting the expectation that Left–Right patterns may linger in views specifically about EU market integration. Europeans with more strongly classic Right attitudes in favor of markets and against regulation or redistribution would, thus, support market integration. Given that pro-market ideology on the European continent usually has some relationship to “ordoliberal” traditions, which see the central state as guarantor of market openness and competition instead of the natural enemy of markets (Hien and Joerges 2017), Right-leaning Europeans will also tend to support EU action to promote market integration.

In the United States, meanwhile, a dominant scholarly expectation is that Americans' attitudes on federalism mainly reflect opportunistic use of each level of government within Left–Right-framed policy battles. Given the two-party structure of national and subnational politics, federalism debates are largely absorbed into ideological conflict in which members of the “out party” favor shifts toward governments where they have clearer control (Jacobs 2021; Doherty, Touchton, and Lyons 2024). Behind multilevel opportunism, however, stand broad Left leanings toward centralization and—even more so—broad Right leanings toward decentralization that are deeply embedded within American political history. Those with “Left” or “liberal” attitudes, or who identify with the Left-leaning party (Democrats), largely favor expansions, not just of government in general, but in particular of the federal government's authority at the expense of the states, especially over civil rights, welfare, and regulation of business. As Martha Derthick (2001) once put it, “egalitarianism is the greater enemy of federalism” (with “federalism” here connoting a federal-state balance). Conservatism in the United States has tended not only to oppose these liberal goals but to posit a deep antagonism between markets and central government, much more than European ordoliberalism (Burgin 2012). It, thus, “encompasses libertarian notions that government is intrinsically oppressive, and importantly, that the devolution of power to smaller units, units ‘closer’ to the individual, is the ideal,” especially as it relates to expert authority (Glaser, Berry, and Schildkraut 2023; also Cole and Kincaid 2000). Additionally, as Rendleman and Rogowski (2024) elaborate, American attitudes toward federalism and decentralization are often interlinked with perceptions of government efficiency and “deeply rooted commitments to federal institutions.” Wolak (2016) finds evidence that ideological conservatives are more likely to support reductions in the size of government as the national government grows larger, while Dinan and Heckleman (2020) show that self-identified conservatives stand out for consistently supporting devolution to the states.

As such, although Left–Right economic ideology is commonly associated with support for market liberalization, we hypothesize that the direction of this relationship is moderated between the two polities as it relates to governmental action. In the European Union, Right-leaning individuals and parties have often favored deeper market integration, seeing it as a way to promote free enterprise across borders. In contrast, in the United States, the ideological Right has increasingly tied market regulation at the federal level to government overreach, making conservatives more skeptical of central intervention in the market. These contrasting logics require disaggregating our expectations by polity. We therefore hypothesize that:

**H2a: Left–Right ideology:** Individuals who hold more conservative ideologies are more likely to support market *integration*, as a general attitude.

**H2b (EU):** In the EU, individuals who place themselves further to the right on the economic Left–Right scale will be more supportive of *central regulation* of the market.

**H2c (US):** In the United States, individuals who place themselves further to the right on the economic Left–Right scale will be less supportive of *central regulation* of the market.

### The “new” politics of postfunctionalism

As the EU expanded its competences beyond market integration to include more politically salient areas such as currency, immigration, and defense, new theories emerged to address the complexities of public opinion about its emergent federal order. A growing body of scholarship highlighted the role of postmaterialist values and identity-based cleavages in shaping public opinion on European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Hobolt and de Vries 2016; De Vries, Hobolt, and Walter 2021). The empirical success of this approach shifted the dominant focus from utilitarian economic concerns or classic Left–Right politics to the cultural and ideological underpinnings of support for EU policies and institutions.

In Hooghe and Marks’ formulation, the demand for certain institutional arrangements is functionalist (or, to use the term we prefer for the same basic logic, utilitarian<sup>2</sup>): it comes from actors who encounter incentives to pursue governance that serves them better. The theory is “post”-functionalist, however, because supply is limited by cultural community attachments. In advanced-industrial societies of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, such attachments evolved with economic and social change into a “postmaterialist” or “new politics” dimension of contestation (Inglehart 1990; Franklin 1992; Kitschelt 1994). The new cleavage eventually coalesced into GAL/TAN debates, pitting those with cosmopolitan “green, alternative, libertarian” views against those with communitarian “traditional, authoritarian, nationalist” views (Marks and Steenbergen 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2018).

Contestation over the construction and powers of the cosmopolitan, supranational EU is widely seen as central to the emergence of this new cleavage. Especially significant has been the continuing rise of the TAN-focused far-right, for which immigration and the EU have been the most direct foils (Hobolt and de Vries 2016; Hooghe and Marks 2018). More generally GAL/TAN has gradually grown in organizing power across issue areas and domestic arenas, eclipsing the structuring role of distributional Left–Right conflict (Gallina 2023). That said, postfunctionalist literature acknowledges variations in the likely kinds of contestation across different issue areas, and suggests that GAL/TAN patterns may be somewhat weaker with respect to internal-market governance. As noted above, market integration connects especially strongly to classic Left–Right debates, so it may still reflect those “old

politics” attitudes (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002, 971). On the other hand, the regulatory nature of internal-market politics generally has low salience in media and party politics, which might dampen citizens’ capacity to formulate distinct views about it, grounded in functionalist concerns. In the absence of salient attention they may heuristically extend overall (presumably GAL/TAN-based) attitudes about the EU to these issues. Moreover, the free movement of persons should be an important exception to any exception for market integration. It directly evokes GAL/TAN themes about cultural tolerance or exclusiveness.

Could similar dynamics exist in the United States? For the last three decades, American politics has displayed strong signs of shifting from Left–Right debates to a cleavage more like cosmopolitan GAL versus traditional-authoritarian TAN (Kaufman and Haggard 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019; Walter 2021). Still, the application of GAL/TAN hypotheses to citizens’ attitudes on American federalism runs into an obvious conceptual obstacle when translating the “N” in TAN. In the EU, identity-based conflict over further integration and EU authority is rooted in perceptions that the national community is threatened by “immigrants, foreign cultural influences, cosmopolitan elites, and international agencies” (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002, 977). At least with respect to politics of the *internal* US market and divisions of sub/national authority, these sources make little sense when “immigrants” to new states are fellow Americans who do not seem to fundamentally challenge a “state culture” (cf. Pears and Sydnor 2022). Furthermore, federal authority over the national economy is longstanding, and none question the sovereignty of the United States as a state. Americans do not identify with their states at very high levels; to be “nationalist” is to support the greater idea of a common American identity (Jedwab and Kincaid 2018).

Were the United States to display a GAL/TAN divide with relevance to federalism attitudes, it could not draw European-style animating force from culturally distinct subunits akin to a nation-state. American experience might, however, provide other cultural resources to connect an attachment to decentralization to an historical sense of community and values, even without roots in exclusive attachment to a territorial subunit, or state. We theorize that the distinctive American narrative of a new people united around individual liberty, localism, and a rejection of central (European-style) state institutions could play this role, making it possible for TAN attitudes to emerge in the United States when framed by a discourse about such conceptions of “American” values and society. This identity may also have special resonance in the context of market integration, when American conceptions of “hard work” are pitted against progressive insurances on “equity”—viewing federal interventions in areas like the economy or social policy not only as materially detrimental, but as threats to a morally just market society (Cramer 2016; Packer 2021). This is a discrete worldview, less grounded in a belief about the appropriate role of government in a market

economy (Left–Right), but instead drawn from cultural narratives about what it means to be an American, the importance of communal self-reliance, and the distinctiveness of different places in the American polity.

A growing scholarly literature further suggests that such attitudes may be particularly pronounced in territorially defined areas where there is a strong sense of communal identity—not necessarily state-based—and where economic livelihoods are closely tied to specific industries that residents feel are overlooked or negatively affected by broader federal priorities. This dynamic echoes the “geography of discontent” where the push and pull between central authority and local autonomy are crucial in defining the politics of “left behind places” in both the United States and EU (Dijkstra, Poelman, and Rodríguez-Poze 2020; Jacobs and Shea 2023; Pike et al. 2024). Altogether, it seems plausible that an American variant of GAL/TAN could effectively frame a variety of economic and political issues in deeply rooted cultural identities, packaging them as fundamental questions about identity and autonomy that could shape political attitudes toward federalism.

As we detail below, our measure of GAL/TAN captures a bundle of postmaterialist versus traditionalist values, including views on cultural change, environmentalism, and solidarity across political subunits. These components may matter differently depending on the policy area. For instance, freedom of movement for workers is more likely to invoke concerns over cultural cohesion and national identity than the free movement of goods, which is often framed as technical or economic. Likewise, support for trade integration may tap into cosmopolitan versus nationalist orientations, while climate policy may intersect more with TAN opposition to supranational governance. Thus, we expect specific components of the GAL/TAN scale—particularly views on migration and cross-border solidarity—to be stronger predictors of attitudes toward labor mobility and trade integration, respectively. From this perspective, we hypothesize:

**H3a: Postfunctionalism:** GAL/TAN attitudes will have greater predictive power for attitudes toward market integration, and especially for EU or federal-level action to promote it, than utilitarian considerations.

**H3b:** Respondents with more traditional/authoritarian/nationalist (TAN) views will be less supportive of freedom of movement for workers across political subunits.

**H3c:** Respondents with TAN views will be less supportive of centralized trade integration policies, but the effect will be less substantial than for the free movement of workers.

## Data and methods

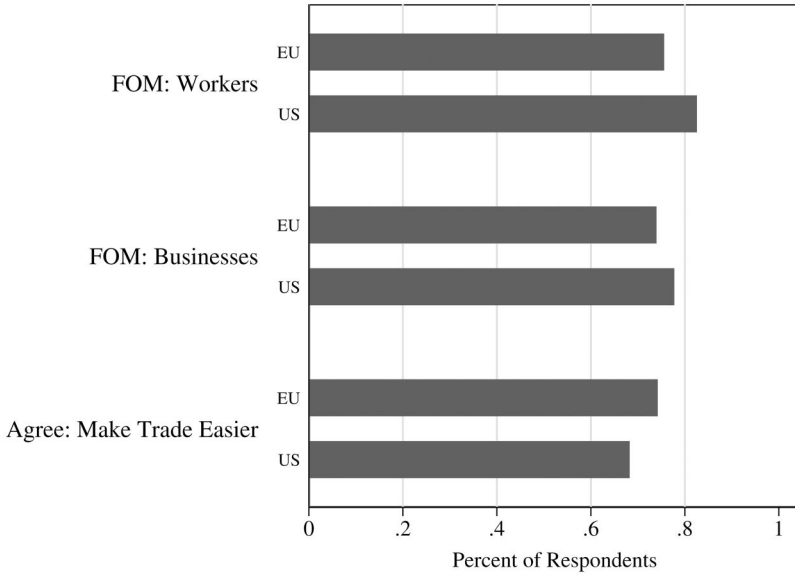
To test these hypotheses, we fielded an original survey in 8 different E.U. countries and the United States in May–June 2023. We contracted with IPSOS to identify 39,572 respondents over the age of 18 across these countries, and established quotas on age and sex (non-interlocked), of which 18,000 adults completed the survey (conversion rate of 45.5 percent). Within the United States, we also established quotas to achieve a geographic distribution across the four census-designated regions (Northeast, Midwest, South, and West). Security screening and data quality features maintained by IPSOS excluded 4 percent of contacted respondents; in addition, we included two attention checks with the instrument—failure of which led to the deletion of the respondent and the resetting of quotas (5 percent of contacted respondents). On average, the survey took 15.4 min to complete among European respondents, and US respondents averaged 18.7 min. The survey instrument was developed in English, translated by native speakers of the target country from our own team, and then additionally verified by IPSOS translators.

Our sampling process ensures that we maximized representativeness of both the EU and the United States in terms of economic positionality. The countries in our EU sample (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Romania, Austria, Ireland) include the original core, new and more peripheral members, and a wide economic range. All US states are represented. We further reweighted respondents to achieve balanced country-level estimates for interlocked age-sex distributions, as provided by Eurostat and US censuses. Composite weights within markets account for the relative distribution of the country's population to the sampled countries' totals within the European Single Market and the United States.

## Dependent variables

Our main dependent variables capture support for deeper single market integration, assessing first the level of agreement with two foundational principles, as well as whether respondents believe the central government should do more to facilitate interjurisdictional commerce.

Maximizing comparability between the domestic and international contexts of the United States and EU, was of paramount concern, with particular attention to ensuring that questions for American respondents emphasized internal economic flows rather than international trade. As such we measured support for the free movement of workers and businesses by assessing levels of dis/agreement with the following two statements, phrased: “To have a thriving economy, people must be allowed to move and work freely across the [European countries/US states];” “To have a thriving economy, companies must be allowed to do business freely across the [European countries/US states].”



**Figure 1.** Dependent variables, support for single market goals/actions.

We also asked respondents whether they believed that “The EU should do more to make trade across Europe easier” or “The federal government should do more to make trade across the US states easier.”

We recode values into a dichotomous scale to capture overall agreement (fig. 1). Such a measurement strategy enables us to model support for market integration. By explicitly focusing on intra-EU trade and the enhancement of interstate commerce in the United States, the survey targets specific economic integrations rather than broader international trade concerns. A limitation of these dependent variables is that they do not assess attitudes about capital movement dynamics, which remains a significant aspect of economic integration discussions.

**Independent variables**

Our utilitarian hypothesis posits that support for federal market integration is primarily driven by perceived personal and economic benefits that such integration facilitates. Specifically, we expect that individuals who see direct advantages from a more integrated market—such as increased job opportunities, greater business efficiencies, and enhanced consumer choice—will be more likely to support policies that further such integration.

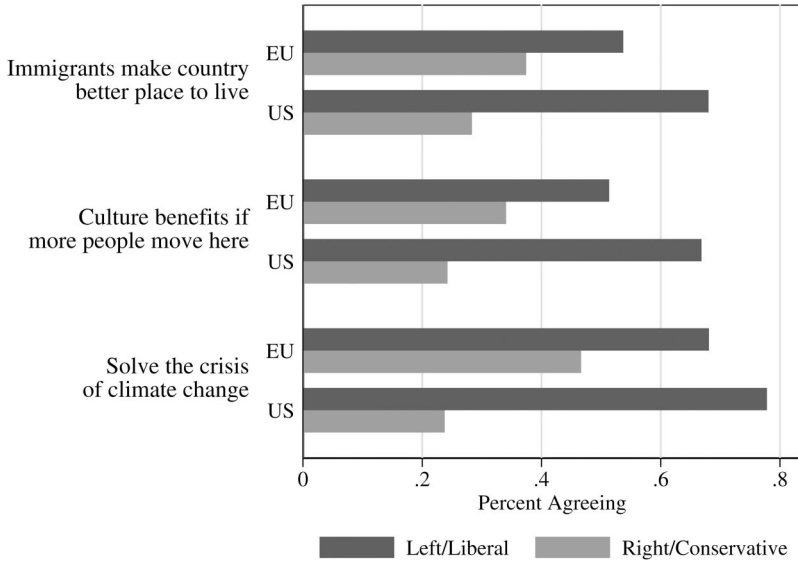
To account for the multiple ways in which perceived economic benefits might manifest, we adopt a multimeasured approach. First, we account for self-reported

household income. We prefer this operationalization over one that asks about occupation, often used in the existing literature (Gabel 1998; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Foster and Frieden 2021) because the correlation between income and occupation may be imprecise. We transform the country-specific scales, which employ different currencies, to a uniform scale of income groups across all countries (scaled one through five). We further assess economic benefits by measuring respondents' educational attainment. Given the wide variety of educational systems in our sample, this scale is country-specific, but generally ranges from "Less than primary school" to "Doctoral degree." As with income, the country-specific scales have been harmonized to facilitate cross-country comparisons.

Income and education, we argue, capture a number of important personal characteristics. To fully assess the utilitarian hypothesis, we also consider respondents' position within the market. First, we determine whether individuals are engaged in the private, public, or not-for-profit sectors. Among those engaged in the private sector, we ask whether their firm currently sells/operates or desires to sell/operate in a different country (for EU respondents) or state (for US respondents). In line with our theoretical expectations, those who currently engage or plan to engage in interjurisdictional commerce should stand to benefit the most from deeper integration, and thus, support it to a larger degree.

To measure classical Left–Right ideology, we create an equally weighted score based on two Likert-scaled measures. We asked respondents how much they agree with the statements "Government regulation usually does more harm than good" and "Governments should try to reduce economic inequality." The variables are both scaled between 1 ("Strongly disagree") and 5 ("Strongly agree"). We reverse-code the latter scale so that higher values in both cases indicate stronger agreement with a conservative economic approach. This index captures the beliefs about economic inequality and government intervention that is often argued to constitute the core of the Left–Right dimension (Otjes 2018).

Our postfunctional hypothesis tests the relationship between our dependent variables and a set of attitudes related to non-economic issues like multiculturalism, environmentalism and international cooperation. These items capture how one positions oneself on the "new politics" cleavage that separates a broad spectrum of social liberalism (Greens/Alternative/Libertarians) from a similarly broad range of social conservatism (Traditional/Authoritarian/Nationalist; Dassonneville, Hooghe, and Marks 2023; Gallina 2023). While GAL/TAN is often used as a way of measuring party positions in European political contexts ((Hooghe and Marks 2018), we extend its use to measure broader cultural and ideological inclinations that may influence attitudes toward market integration in both the EU and the United States. To operationalize attitudes toward all dimensions of this cleavage, we create an equally weighted index based on



**Figure 2.** Relationship between Left–Right ideology and GAL/TAN measure in the EU and the United States.

agreement with two statements and a question: “[Country/State]’s culture benefits if more people move here”; “Politicians should do more to solve the crisis of climate change, even if it may initially hurt jobs in [Country/State]”; and “Does [Country] become a better or worse place to live when people from other countries move here?” We combine responses to these three measures to create a scale ranging from one to five, with values closer to five suggesting that someone identifies more closely with TAN views than GAL views.

While GAL/TAN is not commonly measured within the United States, we can see that at a basic descriptive level, these attitudes are distinct from conventional measures of ideological self-placement on a Left–Right scale (see [Supplementary Materials](#)) and our attitudinal measure of economic liberalism/conservatism (fig. 2). While there is, indeed, a positive relationship between each of the indicators we have incorporated in the GAL/TAN attitudinal measure, economic Left–Right ideology is not strongly correlated with the additive GAL/TAN score ( $\rho = .31$  in Europe and  $\rho = .52$  in the United States). Those on the economic Left in both the EU and the United States are more likely to agree with each of the “GAL” measures, but sizeable portions of Left-leaning respondents do not. Attitudes toward the climate are most related to traditional Left–Right scales in the United States than the EU, with differences in “green” attitudes surpassing even those of nationalist/immigration measures.

## Control variables

To fully adjudicate between these competing hypotheses, we include a number of control variables that might affect GAL/TAN attitudes or perceived economic benefits from deeper market integration. They include age, gender, and respondents' proximity to a national (EU) or state (border) on a continuous scale: under 30 min (1), 30 min to 1 h (2), 1 to 2 h (3), over 2 h (4). Theoretically, we expect that those closest to a national/state border to understand interjurisdictional trade politics differently than those less proximate, although it is unclear how geographic distance to borders matter for our primary independent variables of interest. Those farthest away from the border *may* be more physically isolated, in general, with potentially lower education/income levels, and such remoteness would offer a different causal pathway for explaining attitudes toward market integration. Similarly, we control for whether a person has ever lived or worked in another EU-country or American state. We know that this would have directly shaped someone's personal experience with the market, and is likely related to one's underlying economic or political interpretations of market integration, though it is less clear whether this would increase or decrease support.

We also include three additional variables that capture general positions toward governmental authority. The first of these controls captures the extent to which individuals believe the federal government (the United States) or the European Union "usually has good intentions, trying to do what is best for" Americans or Europeans. Trust in the intentions of government reflects the degree to which citizens feel that their leaders and institutions are aligned with their interests and welfare, which is a fundamental aspect of governance and public support for federal goals (Bednar 2011; Hetherington and Rudolph 2015).

We also control for partisan dynamics that may shape support for EU and US government goals, irrespective of ideological or economic commitments. In the EU, this control is crucial given the long history of Euroscepticism and the growing organizational opposition which can significantly influence public perceptions and support for EU policies (Leruth, Startin, and Usherwood 2017; De Vries 2018). We asked European respondents how they would vote on a fictionalized referendum to "leave the EU" or "stay in the EU," and use this to construct a dichotomous measure of "leavers," or Eurosceptics. We use this referendum question in lieu of partisan identity, because there are no comparable measure of Euroscepticism in the United States. However, we know that in the United States, partisan identity shapes citizens' support or opposition to federal initiatives and partisan alignment often predicts attitudes toward government actions more strongly than either economic interest or ideological alignment. As the United States parallel to the EU referendum measure, we identify whether American respondents voted for or against Donald Trump in the 2020 US presidential election. In each market, such

alignment not only reflects different ideological preferences than GAL/TAN or Left–Right, but also determines individual positions on wide-ranging federal issues, thus, providing a comparable measure of political orientation and its influence on policy support (Hobolt 2016; Berman 2021; Vachudova 2021).

And finally, we incorporate a measure of relative territorial identity, which has been shown to shape views on multigovernmental authority in Europe (Griffiths 2023) and the United States (Pears and Sydnor 2022). For comparability, we combine two Likert measures that ask about how important being from Europe or the United States is to “who I am.” We scale that alongside responses asking about the importance of each respondent’s country or state, subtracting country/state importance from Europe/US importance so that our measure indicates how much more strongly one feels attached to Europe or the United States. This relative approach takes into account that most people see national and European identities as complementary (Risse 2014). With values ranging from  $-4$  to  $4$ , the mean in each market converges toward zero ( $\mu = -0.25$  in EU, and  $\mu = 0.71$  in the United States). This method of measuring territorial identity is distinct from how we conceptualize and operationalize TAN-style “nationalism” in the EU and the United States, where cultural-geographic identities are neither bounded by formal political units (nation-states or countries) and emphasize exclusionary or oppositional attitudes toward external influences and migration. In including this measure, given the evidence on territorial civic identity in both Europe and the United States, we can more fully specify how different components of geographic identity (civic or cultural) influence attitudes toward government authority and market integration within a federalist political framework.

### Model estimation

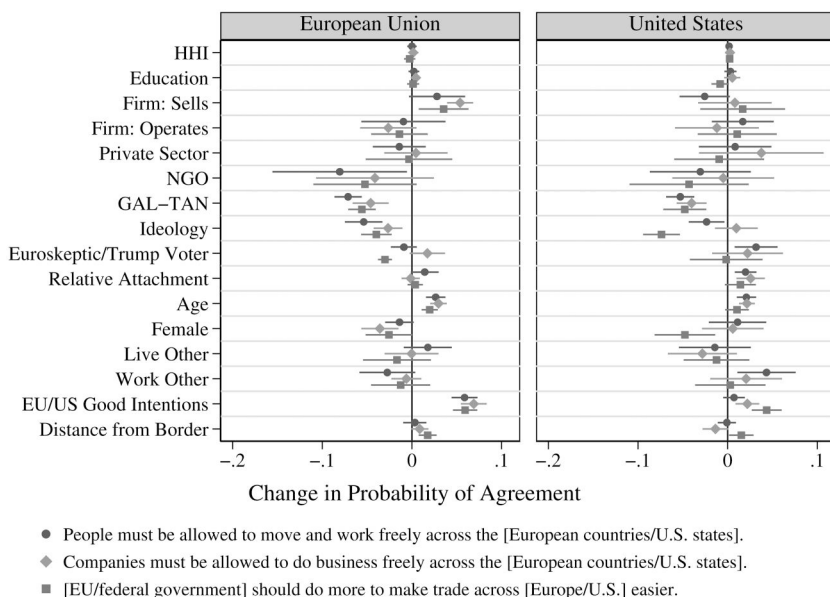
We use logistic regression to model average support for each of our primary indicators of single market support. We develop separate models for European and US respondents to adopt country/state level fixed effects in each market, which controls for time-invariant variables like differences in national/state welfare systems and the history of EU membership, thereby reducing omitted variable bias. To account for the nested structure of the data, with individuals within countries/states, we use country-clustered standard errors in the EU and state-clustered standard errors in the US. Employment in the private, nonprofit, and governmental sectors is treated as an interval variable, where marginal effects are in comparison to public-sector employment. Moreover, given our expectations that economic ideology functions differently across polities, we estimate separate models for the United States and EU subsamples to better visualize and test the distinct patterns predicted in H2b and H2c.

Given the degree of correlation between classic Left–Right ideology and GAL/TAN attitudes, previous work showing their interdependency in Europe (De Vries

and Van Kersbergen 2007), and our theoretical expectations for their potential convergence in America's two-party system, we model an interaction between GAL/TAN attitudes and classical Left-Right ideology. To quantify and interpret this interaction, we first present the marginal effects of each variable in the three models, averaging GAL/TAN and Left-Right attitudes. Following the average marginal effects analysis, we plot the predicted probabilities of their interactive relationship to visually demonstrate the substantive differences in support for single market integration as a function of GAL/TAN attitudes across the ideological spectrum. An alternative specification in which we square the Left-Right term to capture expected curvilinearity in ideological positioning and support for market integration—the “U-Curve” hypothesized as especially pertinent in the EU literature (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002)—is presented in the [Supplementary Materials](#); no substantial differences result between these model specifications.

## Results

We first turn our attention to the relationship between the functional/utilitarian hypothesis (the set of attitudes we have conceptualized along the classical Left-Right spectrum) and the new politics of GAL/TAN. We can confirm or reject the utilitarian hypothesis without calculating the marginal change in support across



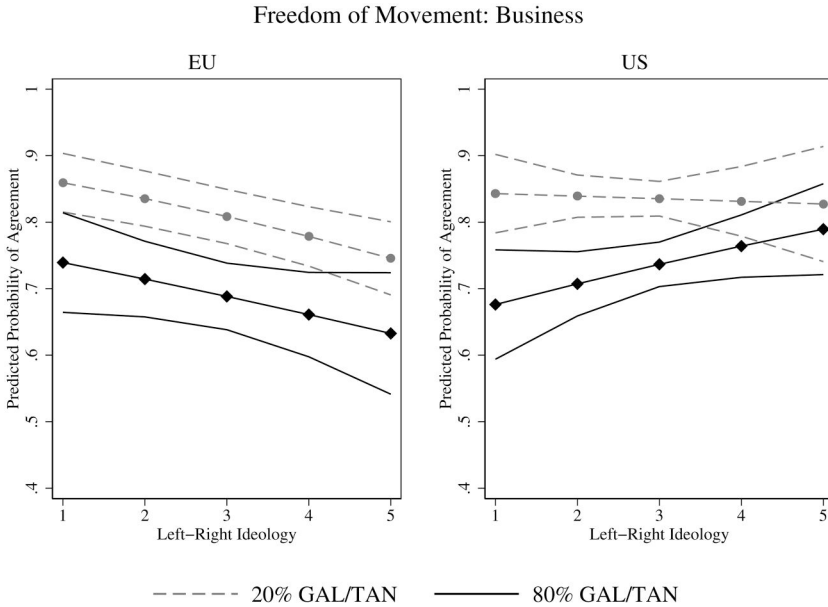
**Figure 3.** Average marginal change in support of market integration, EU and the United States.

different levels of ideology or GAL/TAN beliefs, and so present the average marginal relationship for each of the three measures in [figure 3](#).

Whether asking about the free movement of workers or business or whether the EU/US government should have more authority to make trade easier, European and American respondents generally share a similar set of motivations and political priors. Utilitarian considerations are weak and lack substantive predictive power. Politics dominates, and in the expected directions. Only in the EU, and only in the case of individuals who work at firms selling or seeking to sell goods outside of their country, do we identify a strong utilitarian calculation for supporting internal market integration. Education and income levels are statistically negligible. Across a number of different outcome measures and an array of possible functionalist explanations, support for internal market integration diverges sharply from traditional economic models of political behavior, where personal and immediate economic benefits are primary motivators. Instead, our findings point toward the complex nature of public attitudes, which may be influenced more by ideological alignment, cultural values, and identity than by direct economic gain.

To be sure, on average, GAL/TAN and Left–Right ideology both have strong predictive power. Substantively, a one-point change on both scales (1–5) is associated with about a five-point change in the probability of agreement on those measures. While there is visible evidence that the level of prediction varies between the two, both Left–Right ideology and GAL/TAN have statistical and substantive significance in structuring support for single market integration. One does not clearly matter more or less than the other overall, but their interactions display some interesting relationships.

To fully assess the second (ideological) and third (GAL/TAN) set of hypotheses, we compute the predicted probability of agreement with each of those three dependent variables across different levels of Left–Right ideology and GAL/TAN. This includes H3a–H3c: that GAL/TAN attitudes will have greater predictive power than utilitarian considerations (H3a), that TAN attitudes will especially reduce support for free movement of workers (H3b), and that they will also reduce support for centralized trade integration, though less strongly (H3c). The following three figures ([figs. 4–6](#)) plot the probability of agreement for those who are at the 20th percentile on our GAL/TAN spectrum, representing those individuals with “GAL” attitudes (with gray, dashed lines), and those at the 80th percentile, who predominately have “TAN” beliefs, at different points across the Left–Right ideological spectrum (with black, solid lines). Both ideology and GAL/TAN are modeled as continuous measures. For interpretation, we compare individuals at the same level of Left–Right ideology ( $x$ -axis) across different levels of GAL/TAN (two different lines at the same point on the  $x$ -axis). A flat line means that these respondents’ views reflect their GAL or TAN attitudes no matter how they answer Left–Right questions; their position on the  $x$ -axis is inconsequential. A sloped line

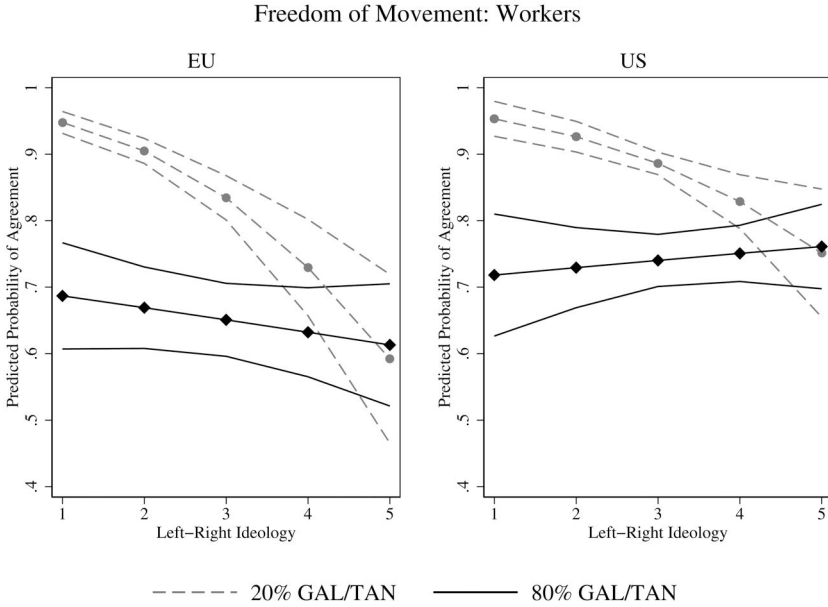


**Figure 4.** Predicted probability of support for the free movement of business in the EU and the United States.

means their views vary with Left–Right ideology, while the gap between those two lines account for the interactive relationship among ideology and postfunctionalist beliefs. Narrower or wider lines of 95 percent confidence indicate stronger or weaker relationships.

In Europe, figure 4 shows that support for the free movement of business substantially reflects GAL/TAN attitudes. The gap between the lines shows that those predisposed to TAN-beliefs are more likely to oppose this single market goal regardless of economic-ideological orientation. Among those that are also fairly economically conservative (at four on a five-point scale), GAL-oriented Europeans are 13 percent more likely to support free movement than similarly conservative TAN-individuals. The GAL/TAN gap between the groups is larger than either group’s variation across the whole Left–Right spectrum, and more Right-leaning views actually make respondents less supportive of openness for business, not more.

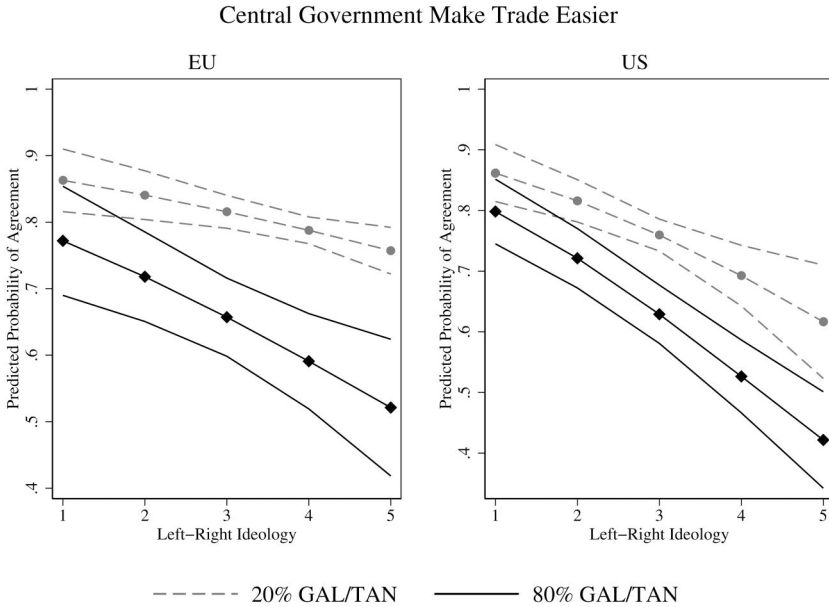
GAL/TAN attitudes also matter in American support for free movement of business across the states, but interact somewhat differently with Left–Right ideology. People with socially cosmopolitan GAL beliefs are the most likely to support free movement of business, whether they are economically liberal or conservative—hovering around 84 percent. Those most likely to reject free movement for business are those who have culturally protectionist TAN views and



**Figure 5.** Predicted probability of support for the free movement of workers in the EU and the United States.

are supportive of government interventions in the economy. Unlike in Europe, TAN-oriented Americans become more supportive of business openness as they become more economically conservative. They converge with GAL-oriented respondents, such that the most economically conservative people are indistinguishable from one another on the GAL/TAN spectrum. This may indicate that Americans with conservative attitudes on our measures have more robust and consistent pro-market views than analogous Europeans.

Figure 5 shows that GAL/TAN beliefs also matter in both contexts for attitudes about the free movement of workers, but interact in different ways with Left–Right beliefs on the GAL end of the spectrum. In both the EU and the United States, those with TAN orientations are consistently more skeptical, especially so in Europe. As the TAN-oriented become more economically conservative, they become slightly more opposed to worker openness in Europe but slightly less so in the United States. Among those on the socially liberal GAL side, they are very highly supportive of worker movement when they also hold Left views on regulation and redistribution, but as socially liberal GAL views combine with more conservative anti-interventionist economic ideology, attitudes become much less positive. These respondents could be labeled “libertarians,” though they are not very liberal on free movement of workers—converging fully in both contexts with their TAN-oriented compatriots. Given that Left–Right ideology and GAL/TAN



**Figure 6.** Predicted probability of support for central government action to make trade easier in the EU and the United States.

positionality are correlated to some extent, our confidence intervals widen along these lines because there are fewer respondents who combine GAL and fiscal-conservative views (and thus, comparatively imprecise estimates).

Figure 6 plots the final set of probabilities about support for action by the EU or US federal government to facilitate internal trade. Once again GAL/TAN attitudes are significant in both arenas, but in a less dominant way, with stronger effects of Left–Right ideology on both sides.

In the EU, those with TAN beliefs are systematically less supportive of EU action for market integration, and those with GAL beliefs show very high support for such EU action even when on the far economic Left. As GAL/TAN beliefs combine with more economically conservative views, though, support for EU-led market integration falls slightly among the socially liberal GAL-oriented and more steeply among those with TAN beliefs. In relationship to figures 4 and 5, note that at the right extreme of conservative/TAN views, support for EU action on internal openness is more than ten points below the same respondents' support for free movement for business or workers, suggesting that conservative economic ideology has a distinct negative effect regarding EU action per se. This qualifies the power of both postfunctionalist and ideological hypotheses, even if both find support in figure 6 overall. Postfunctionalism would generally expect GAL/TAN attitudes to matter more on a question that directly invokes EU or federal authority than on those about market integration goals. To the

extent that Left–Right economic ideology matters distinctively from GAL/TAN in the continental European context—where conservatives traditionally see less antagonism between the state and markets than in Anglo-Saxon polities—we would expect conservative views generally to increase rather than decrease support for central-institutional action to “make trade easier.”

That said, economic conservatism makes considerably less of a difference in European views of such central action than it does among Americans, confirming the relatively anti-statist nature of American conservatism, and offering considerable support for H2b and H2c. In the United States, GAL/TAN views create a significant gap in levels of support for central action for market integration, but economic ideology drives substantial variation. Economically conservative Americans are vastly more likely to oppose the idea of centralized authority than economically liberal Americans, regardless of where they fall on the GAL/TAN spectrum. Still, the more TAN-leaning the respondent, the greater this effect, with little difference between GAL or TAN subgroups among the most economically liberal individuals, but more than a twenty-point gap among GAL- or TAN-oriented subgroups of strong economic conservatives. In comparison, among just GAL respondents, those that are economically “liberal” are about 86 percent likely to support central government action, while GAL-economic conservatives are about 61 percent likely to support the action. Overall, both “new” and “old” notions of political conflict are powerfully shaping American views toward the regulation of interstate commerce.

## Discussion and conclusion: more post, less functional

The empirical evidence points to two conclusions. First, while postfunctionalism is widely known to orient individuals’ broad views toward further Europeanization and the expansion of EU authority, our survey confirms that positioning on the GAL/TAN spectrum also matters for support for deeper market integration. This extends the theory to policy terrain where, presumably, individuals’ functional relationship to market gains or losses should be unusually clear and where classic debates over Left–Right ideological conflict should predominate. Second, we find quite similar patterns of support and opposition in the United States. Even more than in Europe, the presence of GAL/TAN dynamics in an American single market with more widespread utilitarian incentives (from higher interstate trade and mobility) and less obvious identity lines (from shared culture) attests to the generalizability of postfunctionalism. Both findings further emphasize its “post” elements over “functionalism,” suggesting that identitarian concerns prevail quite widely over functional-utilitarian considerations. The relevance of a postfunctional cleavage to American politics, where a strong national identity would seemingly temper identity-based struggles over state and central authority, also suggests that GAL/TAN-oriented conflict in federations can draw on a variety of sources.

To be sure, we find strong patterns of ideological, Left–Right support and opposition in both single markets. We confirm that “interest- and identity-based explanations capture different sides of the same coin” (De Vries and Van Kersbergen 2007; also Bremer, Genschel, and Jachtenfuchs 2020), in that the politics of market integration animates both identity-based and economic-ideological perceptions of status loss or threat. The mix of the two varies somewhat across these arenas, with the “old” politics of economic ideology more pronounced in the United States than the EU, especially among those most skeptical of government regulation and egalitarianism, and especially with respect to federal action for market integration (not market integration itself). In a proximate sense, the stronger European correlation between support for market integration and support for central action to promote it maps onto obvious contextual differences with the United States. The project for a single market remains an active core element of the construction of a united Europe, encouraging public attitudes about it to reflect broader sentiments toward European integration and federalism. The United States is a long-established federal system, with more stable delineations of state and federal powers, a settled national identity, and little widespread sense of a need for government action to promote integration in a nationalized economy. At a deeper level, however, these different perceptions of public problems in market integration are themselves the product of political attitudes—not just straightforward reactions to broad institutional and historical contexts. As other contributions to this special issue showcase, a surprising number of regulatory barriers persist between American states, and its high internal flows, robust federal institutions, shared identity, and pro-market culture could be seen as more favorable conditions to support removal of internal barriers than those in still-fragmented Europe. Like with Europeans, Americans’ attitudes about internal-market governance are non-obvious and reflect their particular mix of identity- and ideologically based views.

Our finding that postfunctional identity-based political cleavages shape the politics of US federalism raises a set of theoretical tensions that we can only open and explore, not resolve, in a single article. We are confident that these patterns are not artificial measurement constructs, and expect that further study will show that they extend beyond internal-market issues. Indeed, GAL/TAN attitudes relate very plausibly to emerging frameworks for understanding developments in American politics, particularly those that are most likely to shape understand of federal and state authority, because they are deeply rooted in territorial or place-based dimensions of political conflict. After all, federalism is inherently about geography.

Centering our understanding of GAL/TAN on broader concepts of political geography, which include but are not exclusive to systems of Westphalian nation-states, we think it possible to extend GAL/TAN’s components into more generalizable themes of conflict in federal systems. The traditionalism of TAN views is often rooted in traditions of a nation-state, but may also emerge in federal contexts where identity

is less clearly demarcated by the formal boundaries of heritage or language. Views toward the distribution of government authority may be “traditional” insofar as localized narratives of government neglect and failure deepen skepticism among a group of territorially bounded people who see government policy and “expert authority” as undermining a way of life. This has played out in both Europe and the United States as socio-economic divides between rural and urban areas have grown (Hyland, Mascherini, and Lamont 2024; Huijsmans and Rodden 2025). In rural contexts perceptions of such divides are tied less to rural deprivation than to a sense of “shared destiny” within the community that hardens resistance to outsiders who seemingly work to advantage others (urbanites) over their own (Jacobs and Shea 2023). Likewise, these territorially structured views may manifest as “authoritarian” as such local communities come to see a strong leader as the only way to redress their marginalization in an increasingly polarized broader polity. In the United States, this perceived marginalization is rooted more in a political identity than economic disadvantage. For example, recent research shows that those that are the most deeply engaged in politics and perceive the deepest amount of *cultural* division between “red” and “blue” states are the most likely to favor secession (Jacobs 2024).

Like European nationalisms, these attitudes resonate with GAL/TAN themes because both are defensive stances against larger forces of homogenization and the erasure of local ways of life. In the American context, these internal defensive identities can sometimes attach to state political bodies—standing up for Texas against “the feds”—but more generally they focus on preserving a distinct cultural heritage and localized way of life that residents believe to be under threat from centralized institutions and “elites” who do not respect their unique circumstances (Cramer 2016; Lunz Trujillo 2022).

We see exciting opportunities for future work to theorize a more general and “post” postfunctionalism and to explore these similarities and differences empirically across federal polities. Though the supranational EU will remain an unusual case within comparative federalism, scholarship developed to understand it has the potential to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of similarities and variations in multilevel governance overall.

## Supplementary material

Supplementary data can be found at [www.publius.oxfordjournals.org](http://www.publius.oxfordjournals.org)

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*Conflicts of interest.* None declared.

## Notes

1. Thanks to economist Keith Head for calculating this rough estimate on the basis of figures in [Head and Mayer \(2021\)](#).
2. Hooghe and Marks follow a great deal of scholarship in using this term. But as Jon Elster explains (1983) functionalism is simply invalid as a logic to explain political change; it offers no plausible mechanism for why collectivities do or do not adopt more functional arrangements (and empirically, many do not!). Utilitarianism provides a valid mechanism for the same kind of expectation: more efficient governance arises when sufficient coalitions of actors have the incentives and power to engineer it.

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