

# Brexit, Secession, and Euroscepticism

## A Matter of Perceptions

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**Abstract.** This paper seeks to develop a forecasting tool for movements to separate within the European Union. Using a primarily cultural approach, the attitudes that exist in all EU countries will be looked at and compared to secessionist movements at the sub-state level. Despite the fact that the European Union is not a state, it has taken on many of the functions of one and the movements in states to separate from the EU are similar to sub-state secession movements. Attitudes leading to separation from the EU do differ from those guiding internal secession and these movements have their own term: Euroscepticism. The question guiding the research is: what public perceptions allow Eurosceptic political movements to take hold? The answer supported by this work is that a combination of institutional, cultural and economic perceptions, not economic realities, lead to Eurosceptic tendencies. To support the hypothesis, this paper presents a model that measures Eurosceptic attitudes in order to forecast future secession movements.

### Introduction

In recent years the European Union (EU) has been suffered from a political phenomenon known as Euroscepticism. As the name implies, a Eurosceptic view is one that is highly skeptical of, and in extreme cases advocates for separation from, the European Union. This attitude culminated in 2016 with BREXIT, the referendum in which the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU. While states within the EU are still technically sovereign, the EU has become a massive, and far reaching organization. The EU even has its own elected governing body, the European Parliament. Each of its 28 member states hold elections to fill said parliament. Currently, the power and scope of the EU make it more akin to a super-state. Albeit one with a high degree of political autonomy in the sub-units. So, rather than saying the UK is leaving a trade agreement, or international organization, it is more accurate to say the UK is seceding from the European Union. Secession is a phenomenon that is rarely experienced at the sub-state level. While many secession movements do exist, and some have been successful, not one has ever managed to achieve its goal in an advanced democracy (Sorens, 2005: 319). So what factors made Brexit different? What public perceptions culminated in the UK actually attaining over 50% of the vote to leave? These questions are precursors to the ultimate question: what public perceptions allow Eurosceptic political movements to take hold? The hypothesis is that a combination of institutional, cultural, and economic perceptions, rather than economic realities, lead to Eurosceptic attitudes. Furthermore, anyone of these factors alone are not sufficient to explain secession movements across the EU. By analyzing literature about Euroscepticism, and secession, a model will be created that allows one to forecast the future strength of Eurosceptic movements based on public perception. It is important to note that the reasons these perceptions exist will not be analyzed here. The Brexit campaign has come under scrutiny due to allegations of interference and misinformation. The argument here is that for the use of this model these allegations do not matter. If certain perceptions exist in the public, regardless of the reasons, they can lead to secession.

First, in order to map these perceptions a blend of cultural and rational choice theories will be used. The Cultural approach will be used with rational choice being used to a lesser degree. Then literature about both Euroscepticism and secessionist movements will be addressed with the theories in mind. The model constructed using the theory and literature will then be explained and the data presented. The importance of this data, and how well it maps to actual Eurosceptic movements will be discussed. Finally, the implications of this model for the European Union will be addressed.

### **Cultural Approach**

An issue such as secession can be discussed using any of the three major comparative politics approaches. Explanations can easily be found based on economics, political structure or culture. However, this paper will focus on the cultural approach. The rational choice approach will be evaluated to a lesser degree, as much of the secessionist, and Eurosceptic literature focuses on economic disparities (for example, Hetcher 1992; Molnar 2016; Ritzen et al., 2016; Sorens 2005). While rational choice is more comprehensive than just economic factors, this is the area much of the literature focuses on. Other rational choices lenses, such as mutual defence, are not nearly as prevalent in the literature as economics. The structural approach will not be used, as it does not provide any insight for the forecasting tool. This is because this paper does not seek to explain concrete issues with the structure of the EU but is focused on the perceptions the public holds of the EU. When dealing with perceptions, the cultural approach is particularly useful. In this case, it will be seen if people within each state believe in the overarching idea of the EU. One excellent example of this is the Euro, it does not matter whether or not adopting the Euro actually benefits a state, what matters is if people believe it does (Molnar, 2016: 65). If people in a country strongly believe in the Euro, then the culture in that country is less likely to breed secession. The rational choice approach would be more geared toward economic realities. In this case, if a state is receiving net benefit from adopting the Euro, they are far less likely to secede, as leaving holds no actual benefit. The cost-benefit notion is the major driving force behind the joining of most international institutions, and adoption of their policies. A state will not join if it believes that is not in its best interest, nor will it leave if it believes it will suffer. These approaches are both addressed to demonstrate that the cultural approach better explains why secession movements happen. People cast votes based on perceptions they hold, rather than actual hard data. In terms of secession, especially when it is proven that leaving will make things worse economically, these perceptions are often shaped by fear. There is a great deal of rhetoric coming out of Eurosceptic parties who claim the EU is an evil super state, seeking to dominate members and destroy national identity. While many do not hold views quite this extreme, their perceptions are shaped by hearing this and a general culture of fear can quickly develop. To shape this culture, these Eurosceptic groups use a rational choice narrative when advocating for leaving the EU. For instance, during Brexit it was pointed out how the UK pays more into the EU than it receives. While this is true, it does not account for all the benefits of being a member, such as access to foreign work, increased labour pool, no duties on imports and exports. So, it can clearly be seen that Brexit was shaped far more by a culture of EU fear, than actual rational choices. Since elections are determined by feelings, which are rarely based in pure fact, the cultural approach offers the most insight into secession movements.

## **Tying Secessionist and Eurosceptic Literature**

### ***Understanding Secession***

There is a great deal of literature on secession movements and on Euroscepticism. Yet despite their similarities, there is little literature attempting to link the two. When looking for works discussing the EU and secession, many works focus on how sub-state secession, such as Catalonian independence may affect the EU (for example, Vaubel, 2013; Lehning, 1998). However, these works do not take the extra step of discussing how a movement like Brexit can be compared to a secession. Various works on secession and Euroscepticism will be looked at to compare what underlying principle drives both movements. There have been many successful secession movements in autocratic states but there are no examples in advanced democracies. While some examples of successful secession exist in early democracies, such as Norway from Sweden in 1905, or Iceland from Denmark in 1944 exist, none have ever taken place where suffrage has been present for more than ten years (Sorens, 2005: 319). Despite their lack of success, secession movements are still major political influences (Suesse, 2016; Lehning, 1998: 1). Perhaps only because they are taken seriously do, they never succeed. “The Cross Sectional Determinants of Secessionism in Advanced Democracies” by Jason Sorens (2005) is work that aims to map and forecast possible secession movements at the sub-state level, and there are several valuable theories to be taken from this work. Firstly, the idea of wealth distribution is addressed as “regions that receive more in expenditures than they pay in taxes are poor ground for secessionism, because independence would mean the loss of subsidies” (Sorens, 2005: 310). Sorens goes on to say, “In democracies, redistribution tends to flow from wealthy to poor, and poor regions naturally enjoy the benefits, whereas affluent regions fear tight union” (2005: 310). This is contrasted with autocracies, in which the wealth is typically taken from poor regions to be given to the rich. Therefore, the first piece of the theory is that in advanced democracies, richer regions are more likely to separate as rich regions receive less benefit and fear entrapment. When explaining his model Sorens states “The dependent variable is vote share for secessionist parties in elections to the lower houses of countrywide and provincial legislatures, averaged over all elections of each type” (2005: 315). Survey data concerning secession movements is rarely gathered, except where they have already taken root. Elections however, are often held in advanced democracies and give a good view of what issues are important to the larger public. While secessionist parties are not always single-issue, secession is often the most important part of their platform. It can therefore be assumed that any votes they receive translate well into a desire to secede. Much of the remainder of Sorens’ work focuses on history, and language, and how the presence of differences leads to secession. While this may be true, history and language are ultimately useless when looking at differences within the European Union. Every state within it has a different language and history than any other state. Under Sorens’ theory, every state in the EU is ripe for secession. However, the EU is not quite a state, so traditional secessionist theory’s limitations are easily explained for this case. In the case of the EU, Eurosceptic literature offers alternative explanations.

### ***Hard and Soft Euroscepticism***

Firstly, there are two distinct streams of Euroscepticism, hard and soft (Molnar, 2016: 52). Hard Euroscepticism is the stream that is actively anti-EU, highly national, and wants to see an exit or radical change in the system. This type is most similar to secession movements at the sub-state level. Soft Euroscepticism focuses on peeling back the scope of the EU and on increased local

autonomy for certain issues. Many of these soft movements are in fact anti-secession. An example of an anti-secession, soft Eurosceptic party is the Law & Justice party in Poland. This party currently has the most seats in the Polish Parliament and holds a majority government. They are opposed to political integration but are for general economic integration. Based on their policies they have been grouped into the soft Eurosceptic category. Analyzing a party that has no desire to leave the EU does not make sense for the forecasting tool being developed. So, the focus needs to be on the hard stream of Euroscepticism. An example of a party that is hard Eurosceptic is, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). UKIP has always stated that their main goal is to have the UK leave the EU. Due to their exit policy UKIP fits much better into secessionist theory.

### ***Factors Driving Hard Euroscepticism***

Once the hard/soft distinction is understood, the next step is to understand the feelings driving secession and hard Euroscepticism. According to “Euroscepticism, Income Inequality and Financial Expectations” the factors that motivate one to be a Hard Eurosceptic can be grouped into the general categories of: “National Identity, National Institutional Performance, Utilitarian theory” (Ritzen et al., 2016: 542). The first two are relatively self-explanatory, they have to do with the sense of nationalism one feels about their home state, and how effectively one feels the national government is performing, respectively. Utilitarian theory is based purely on economics and is exactly what Sorens put forth. If a state is receiving money it is less likely to exit than if it is giving money. Interestingly, these three factors map well onto the three comparative politics approaches: cultural, structural, and rational choice. “Euroscepticism, Income Inequality and Financial Expectations” took, as indicated by the title, the utilitarian approach and focused on economics. Financial expectations had a strong effect in Western Europe, “but a nonsignificant negative effect on Euroscepticism in the post-communist countries” (Ritzen et al., 2016: 554). This shows that there are different factors leading to Euroscepticism in these areas. It is suggested that the East-West difference is due to the positive association Eastern Europe has with the EU because of the significantly beneficial economic reforms in the post-communist period. While the East-West difference is mentioned, no effort was made to map these positive sentiments and their strength. Euroscepticism was measured by asking the question “Generally speaking, do you think that your country’s membership of the European Union is... (1) a good thing, (2) a bad thing, (3) neither good nor bad, or (4) don’t know” (Ritzen et al., 2016: 551). A single survey question is a weaker approach to analyzing real Eurosceptic strength than election data since there is no way of knowing how those answers transfer into actual secession votes. One might dislike the EU, but another party might have a better platform. Also, reducing feelings about the EU to a binary or even multiple-choice question is ineffective in longer term attitudes and does not address why and on what issues these feelings exist. Instead, by using Sorens’ idea of secessionist vote counting, the strength, not the sentiment, of these movements can be measured. So, by combining the three factors that may lead to Euroscepticism and by using Hard Eurosceptic Vote Share (HEVS), a holistic, full picture of what leads to secession in the EU can hopefully be achieved. These two works have been focused on for the creation of the model but there is a fair deal of secessionist literature that has been consulted.

### *Secession and Rational Choice*

Two other papers on secession, “Causes and Consequences of Secessionist Movements: Lessons from the Soviet Breakup” by Marvin Suesse (2016) and “The Dynamics of Secession” by Micheal Hechter (1992), were consulted to gain a better understanding of how movements form on the state level. Both these works focused heavily on the rational choice approach and how economics affect these movements. Both these works are critical as they show how secessionist movements are major political forces. The Soviet Union was a super-state that inevitably fell to major secessionist pressures, fracturing into multiple independent states. Direct parallels between this case and the case of the EU are difficult to find however. This is due to the democratic nature of the EU and the importance of analyzing election data for the model being constructed. Nevertheless, the breakup of the USSR demonstrates that secessionist movements can be major political forces.

### *Secession and Europe*

Several works did discuss secession within the European Union such as, “Theories of secession: An introduction” by Percy B. Lehning (2005) and “Secession in the European Union” by Roland Vaubel (2012). However, these two works only focused on how movements within states may affect the European Union as an organization, neither of them sought to address Euroscepticism as secession or even the notion that states may separate from the EU. Two works that did address Euroscepticism directly were, “So what’s wrong with the EU? Motivations underlying the Eurosceptic vote in the 2009 European elections” by van Spanje and de Vrees (2011) and “Economic Crisis and Euroscepticism: A Comparative Study of the Hungarian and Italian Case (1990–2013)” by Anna Molnar (2016). These articles addressed Euroscepticism but not as secessionist movements. Any mention of secession in these works was viewed in sub-state terms. The article by Molnar took a rational choice approach, and analyzed how the value of the Euro, and the strength of the European Economy affected Eurosceptic votes. The model made by van Spanje and de Vrees is the most similar model found to the one created here, as it also focused on perceptions. Rather than using three major categories, van Spanje and de Vrees focuses on five: performance, utilitarianism, negative affection, strengthening, and identity. Furthermore, van Spanje and de Vrees’s model analyzed to what degree parties were Eurosceptic under each facet. While this model can be useful for seeing how Eurosceptic attitudes form and on what issues, it does not address the issue of secession directly. Pieces were taken from all of the mentioned works in order to build the final model, which has been built to link Eurosceptic and secessionist literature.

### **Confidence Model**

#### *Data Used*

The “Confidence” model constructed uses over 2000 individual pieces of data but it is simple in its construction. All 28 states in the European Union were used, as it allows a complete data set, seeing as how the model applies only to the EU. The dependent variable is the Hard Eurosceptic Vote Share (HEVS) received in the 2014 European Parliament election. The focus was on Hard Eurosceptic parties, and thus every attempt to use only their vote share was made.

However, distinction in platforms can be difficult and distinguishing between hard and soft Euroscepticism may seem arbitrary. The main distinguishing factor was if a party advocated in a clear way for withdrawal from the EU in their 2014 platform. Since many parties were smaller and platforms change over time, not all this data was easily available. The reason for using European Union Parliament elections is that the elections happen in every state concurrently, which in this case was 2014. Since a survey and election data both exist for 2014, it was much easier, and allowed for more accurate modeling. Also, while Eurosceptic parties often run at the national and sub-national levels, the analysis in this paper focuses on how attitudes translate into action in the EU. To ensure that the model and results could be easily reproduced for other years all the data was taken off the Eurobarometer survey “Special Eurobarometer 415: Europeans in 2014.” These public opinion polls are regularly conducted by the EU, so data is not difficult to access for subsequent uses. The ease of access and high reliability of the source were the main factors in selecting where the data came from.

### ***Construction of the Model***

The “Confidence” model was constructed by analyzing and taking parts from previous secessionist and Eurosceptic literature. Where the “Confidence” model strongly differs from the Eurosceptic literature is in how the three factors were built. The literature suggests “National Identity” and “National Institutional Performance” data are gained from surveys on how people feel about the state they live under (Ritzen et al., 2016). The idea is that the trust in the state will map to the trust in the EU. This idea is flawed, as in fact many states seem to trust the EU because they do not trust their own institutions, and this is especially true of poorer regions (Molnar, 2016: 64). Looking at the Eurobarometer, similar questions had very different answers if they were asked about the EU, rather than national governments. Instead, the survey data for how people feel about the EU were used to build two data sets called “Belonging” and “Institutional Trust”, this data can be seen in Tables 1 & 2, respectively. Belonging is the purely cultural aspect, and has to do with identifying as European, knowing one’s rights as a European, wanting to know one’s rights, and so on. Trust has to do with faith in government and institutions, and whether the power of the EU should be increased. Finally, there is the “Utilitarian theory” which in this case has been changed to “Economic Trust”, found in Table 3. The important distinction is that trust is entirely based on perceptions, not actual economics. The metrics here are quality of life in the EU, faith in the EU economy, etc.

### ***Excluded Eurobarometer Data***

Data not taken from the Eurobarometer was: data that had to do with feelings regarding one’s home state and the data where preferences/most important attributes were scored. An example of this is: “What does the EU mean to you”, applicants then had to pick three ranked options, such as economics, culture, sports, etc. This is due to the complexity of analyzing such responses, which stems from analyzing which answers have to do with secession in a meaningful way versus the simple analysis of positive/negative answers. Apart from this, all the survey questions were used and put into one of the three categories, depending on their relevance.

### *Sorting of Questions*

Selecting which section to put each question in was one of the more difficult parts in constructing the model, as it requires a good deal of personal discretion. This was especially true between the “Institutional Trust” and “Belonging” categories. For instance, the question relating to democratic satisfaction could easily be put into the institutional category, as it relates to how those institutions work. Ultimately, questions put into “Belonging” were based on general feelings and perceptions about the European Union, how one fit in, and how one felt others fit in. These are questions that were phrased in a way that presented Europe as a concept or idea. Questions put into “Institutional Trust” were those that framed the EU as an institution or discussed specific pieces of that institution. The question of democratic satisfaction was geared more towards a culture of democracy, rather than any specific system or elections, thus it was placed in the “Belonging” category. The distinction for “Economic Trust” was simpler, as it simply required the question to be related to financial matters.

### *Score Calculation*

Once in a category, each individual question had a sub score found. The formula for a question with four options is seen in (1), referred to as Attitude, or “Att”. For questions with two options (2) was used, this score was called Difference or “Diff”. In all cases, neutral answers or “Don’t Know” answers were discarded.

- (1) (Very Positive) + 0.5(Positive) - 0.5(Negative) – (Very Negative) = Attitude  
 (2) (Positive) – (Negative) = Difference

Each number inside the brackets is the percentage of people who answered that way for the question. Three exceptions to these general rules exist. For the question regarding attitudes towards the formation of a European super state similar to the United States, the answer “Depends” was counted as half a positive vote. That answer shows a willingness to work with the EU and increase their power, which is not secessionist, while not being entirely satisfied. Also, for the questions “would (COUNTRY) fair better outside the EU,” and “Do you believe there is too much government” the negative of the score is taken, as a high score here indicates a lack of trust. After all the questions had scores calculated and were placed in a category, all three categories had their individual question scores added together, then divided by the number of question scores. This is to ensure equal weighting among the three categories, since, for example, Trust had more sub scores than Economic Trust, but they are all considered equally important as overall factors. Next, these categories underwent a simple transformation, as seen in (3), so that they could be represented as percentages.

- (3) (Raw Score + 100)/2

This serves a two-fold purpose: firstly, percentages are easier to understand on their own versus positive/negative integers; secondly, since HEVS is measured in percent, it allows for an easy comparison. Finally, these categories were added together into an aggregate, “Confidence,” which was divided by three to put it into percent. “Confidence” and HEVS, as well as the parties that are counted, can be found in Table 4. All four of these categories, “Belonging,” “Institutional

Trust,” “Economic Trust” and “Confidence” were compared to the dependent variable, HEVS and graphed as seen in Figures 1-4. The strength of these correlations ideally shows how strongly related secession movements are to certain attitudes in the EU.

### *Alternate Explanation*

Another model was built with the aim of dispelling the competing economic explanation for secession. Much of the Brexit campaign centered on the idea that Britain was losing money to the EU. In order to see if, and how, actual economic contributions affected attitudes about the EU, the amount in Euros per capita given to, or received from, the EU was found. This economic data is seen in Table 5. The logic for using Euros per Capita was that it better represents the actual financial strain or benefit a state feels, rather than total contributions in Euros. These numbers were then also graphed against HEVS and financial trust in the EU, as seen in Figures 5-6. If there was a strong correlation in Figure 5 that would demonstrate that giving money to poorer regions increases the secession demand in richer regions, as purported by Sorens. If there was a strong correlation in Figure 6, it could mean that “Economic Trust” is dependent on the flow of money.

### **Data**

All the raw and supporting data can be found in Annex A. The data tables will be seen on pages 128 to 132, and figures from pages 133 to 135. For all survey questions a score was found, using the method previously described in (1) and (2). All survey questions were give a letter, ranging from A-V. Shortened versions of the questions can be found under the relevant graph, with the range of answers in brackets. This was done to ensure each graph would fit on one page. The full questions, and ranges of answers can be found in Annex A. All data for Figures 1-4 was from the “Special Eurobarometer 415: Europeans in 2014”, all data for figure 5 was from the Eurostat website. All election data was found from the European Parliament website, under “Results of the 2014 European Elections”.



**Table 1 – Belonging Data**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
State	Att.	Att.	Diff.	Att.	Att.	Att.	Att.	Att.	Score
Belgium	34.5	0	-48	28.5	-2.5	-35.75	3.25	9.5	51.09
Bulgaria	-12	-21.5	-27	40	-17.5	-37.5	39.25	0.5	50.03
Czech Rep.	8	-7.5	-32	30.5	-40	1.25	2	-3	48.09
Denmark	35	12	-16	40	28	-44	34	12.5	57.44
DE	39	13.5	-10	36	7	-16.5	21	8.5	55.56
Estonia	40	14	-20	35	-42	28.5	-10	17.5	53.88
Ireland	26	3.5	-47	41	-21	-19.5	3.5	10.5	51.28
EL (Greece)	-17	-20.5	6	35.5	-46.5	11.25	35.75	-4	43.25
ES (Spain)	27	-8	-47	33.5	-40	-8.25	-2	-7.5	44.81
France	14	-24	-49	31	-2.5	-61.5	29.25	-9	45.69
HR (Croatia)	0.5	-6.5	-25	50	4	-48	46	9	53.16
Italy	-8.5	-25	-20	17.5	-42	-1.75	11.5	-18	41.78
Cyprus	4	12	-18	82	-52.5	14.5	34.75	19	49.72
Latvia	4	-11.5	-18	32	-48.5	12	10.25	7	46.06
Lithuania	23.5	6	-20	27	-30.5	13	-4.25	10.5	51.59
Luxembourg	65.5	20	-13	37.5	1.5	-6.75	11.75	17.5	57.75
Hungary	16	-14.5	-27	21.5	-31.5	-7.25	6.75	-5	47.34
Malta	42.5	-0.5	-49	62	9.5	-65.5	42.75	-4	56.66
Netherlands	12.5	2	-23	26.5	10.5	-33.25	18.25	6	51.88
Austria	17.5	10.5	-2	14.5	-11	13.25	-2.5	13	52.25
Poland	38	13	-18	32.5	1	-13.25	11	21.5	58.00
Portugal	8	-18	-38	22	-35.5	-12.5	3.25	-	42.13
Romania	17	-5.5	-48	51.5	-20.5	-34.75	22.75	12	52.00
Slovenia	20	3.5	-25	17.5	-25	7.25	-11	8.5	49.06
Slovakia	30.5	-1.5	-14	48	-21.5	-11	31.75	7.5	53.69
Finland	33.5	21.5	-20	3.5	-4.5	14.25	-30.25	8	52.91
Sweden	35	17.5	-19	46	30	-45	34	28	58.34
UK	-5	-16	-50	5.5	-44	0.25	-25.5	-8	41.81

A – You feel you are a citizen of the EU (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

B – You know what your rights are as a citizen of the EU (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

C – When you get together with friends or relatives, would you say you discuss the EU? (Frequently, Occasionally, Never)

D – You would like to know more about your rights as a citizen of the EU (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

E – My voice counts in the EU (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

F – Are you satisfied the way democracy works in the EU (Very Satisfied – Not at all satisfied)

G – In terms of shared values, are EU Member States (Very Close – Very Distant)

H – I understand how the EU works (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

**Table 2 – Institutional Trust**

	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	
State	Diff.	Att	Att	Att	Att	Att	Att	Att	Diff.	Diff.	Score
Belgium	0	33.5	19.5	-19.5	55	6.5	14	33.5	-1	7	50.73
Bulgaria	24	30	14.5	10.5	40	35	22	6.5	36	28	58.68
Czech Rep.	-22	4.5	-3	-25	32.5	-1	1	65	-5	-21	44.35
Denmark	-3	38	-43	-24	33	-56	17	24	10	17	44.45
DE (Germany)	-28	36	-21	-17.5	47.5	14	13	18	2	-15	47.05
Estonia	25	41	-17	-14.5	40.5	-15.5	19	-5	31	22	52.73
Ireland	-19	34.5	-20	-11.5	42	-6.5	21.5	36	13	-15	46.70
EL (Greece)	-63	10	-12	-35.5	34	0.5	-22.5	68.5	-48	-49	36.30
ES (Spain)	-43	28.5	35.5	-30.5	65	17.5	7	54	-16	-42	45.55
France	-35	23	7	-23.5	53	-3.5	-9	25	-35	-24	44.10
HR (Croatia)	-14	8.5	0.5	-7.5	29.5	15.5	21	50	22	-4	50.23
Italy	-50	6.5	3.5	-27	20	21	-8	32	-30	-37	42.70
Cyprus	-52	-8	-6	-20.5	39.5	5	-14	58.5	-30	-27	42.23
Latvia	-13	13.5	-6	-23.5	24	-1	7	8.5	15	-10	48.53
Lithuania	16	38	12	-6.5	46.5	13	22	7.5	29	17	55.18
Luxembourg	-3	43	21.5	-12.5	73	-15.5	20	9.5	8	12	52.55
Hungary	2	20.5	8.5	-17	16	8.5	1.5	34	16	9	49.50
Malta	17	31	-2.5	-2	62	7	30.5	6	31	18	56.20
Netherlands	-9	42	-17.5	-27	41	-30	14.5	18.5	14	-6	45.98
Austria	-17	7	-24.5	-31.5	19.5	11	-0.5	29.5	-17	-11	44.63
Poland	-1	15.5	11	-3	50	7	26.5	22	19	7	53.95
Portugal	-44	12	27.5	-35.5	53	15	-8	58	-9	-37	44.60
Romania	24	30	22.5	10.5	51	40.5	37	14	28	24	59.68
Slovenia	-20	4.5	15.5	-17	30	22.5	10.5	66	9	-18	48.10
Slovakia	-8	23.5	1	-22	41	7	7.5	44.5	-4	-2	47.63
Finland	6	28.5	-37	-25.5	30.5	-58.5	13	-2.5	-9	18	45.58
Sweden	-8	21.5	-41.5	-15	48.5	-55	13	-6	2	10	46.93
UK	-44	-7	-33.5	-27	17.5	-36	-5	32.5	-14	-42	39.53

I – You trust in the European Union (Tend to trust or Tend not to Trust)

J – (COUNTRY) could better face the future outside the EU (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

K – More decisions should be taken at EU level (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

L – What image does the EU conjure up for you (Very positive – Very Negative)

M – We need a united Europe in today's world (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

N – Some people talk of the idea of forming a "United States of Europe" putting together the Member States of the EU, is this a good idea? (Good Idea, Depends, or Bad Idea)

O – Are you optimistic about the future of the EU (Very Optimistic – Very Pessimistic)

P – The state intervenes too much in our lives (Totally Agree – Totally Disagree)

Q – Would you say that things are going in the right direction or wrong direction in the EU (Right or Wrong)

R – You trust in the European Parliament (Tend to trust or Tend not to Trust)

**Table 3 – Economic Trust**

	S	T	U	V	
State	Att.	Diff.	Att.	Diff.	Score
Belgium	-17.5	52	22	-2	56.81
Bulgaria	22.5	0	37.5	29	61.13
Czech Rep.	-13	-46	23	-8	44.50
Denmark	-13	-32	22	14	48.88
DE (Germany)	-7.5	41	17	-12	54.81
Estonia	15	57	31.5	14	64.69
Ireland*	-23	43	22.5	13	56.94
EL (Greece)	-26	20	6	-17	47.88
ES (Spain)	-29	23	13.5	22	53.69
France*	-37.5	24	7	-3	48.81
HR (Croatia)	-0.5	12	16	19	55.81
Italy	-45.5	-5	-17.5	-6	40.75
Cyprus	-34	-1	6	-3	46.00
Latvia*	8	8	30	11	57.13
Lithuania	21	-22	34.5	14	55.94
Luxembourg	-21.5	50	14.5	-26	52.13
Hungary	4	10	23	12	56.13
Malta	10.5	44	31	25	63.81
Netherlands	-6.5	51	32.5	17	61.75
Austria	-15.5	37	25.5	-5	55.25
Poland	16	-38	36	2	52.00
Portugal	-41.5	-6	-4	-11	42.19
Romania	12.5	32	24.5	25	61.75
Slovenia	-15	52	7.5	14	57.31
Slovakia	-16	58	20	5	58.38
Finland	-8	60	32	-5	59.88
Sweden	-22	-32	21	7	46.75
UK	-25	-54	13	5	42.38

S – Your feelings on the situation of the European economy (Very Good –Very Bad)

T – You support the Euro (For or Against)

U – Your quality of life in the EU (Very Good – Very Bad)

V – Your expectations of the economic situation in the EU in 12 months (Better or Worse)

**Table 4 – Final Score & Vote Share**

State	EU Confidence	Vote Share	Parties Used
Belgium	52.88	4.26	Vlaams Belang
Bulgaria	56.61	6.01	NSFB, Attack
Czech Republic	45.65	11.67	ODS, Free Citizens' Party
Denmark	50.25	8.1	People's Movement against the EU
DE (Germany)	52.48	7.1	Alternative For Germany
Estonia	57.10	0.2	Estonian Independence Party
Ireland	51.64	1.8	Socialist Party
EL (Greece)	42.48	21.69	GD, KKE, ANEL, Orthodox Rally
ES (Spain)	48.02	4	Republican Left for Catalonia
France	46.20	24.85	National Front
HR (Croatia)	53.06	2.89	A-HSP, HCSP, HSP, Human Shield
Italy	41.74	27.4	M5S, Lega Nord
Cyprus	45.98	2.7	ELAM
Latvia	50.57	0.24	Eurosceptic party of action
Lithuania	54.24	14.25	Order and Justice
Luxembourg	54.14	0	N/A
Hungary	50.99	14.6	Jobbik
Malta	58.89	0	N/A
Netherlands	53.20	13.32	Party for Freedom
Austria	50.71	23.66	FPO, REKOS, EUStop
Poland	54.65	8.55	KNP, RN
Portugal	42.97	17.72	PNR, Left Bloc, PCP
Romania	57.81	2.7	PRM
Slovenia	51.49	7.7	SNS, United Left
Slovakia	53.23	1.73	Our Slovakia
Finland	52.79	12.9	Finnis Party
Sweden	50.67	15.97	Left Party, SD
UK	41.24	28.59	UKIP, BNP

**Table 5 – Rational Choice/Contributions to EU**

State	Contributions to EU (millions of Euros)	Expenditure (millions of Euros)	Difference (millions of Euros)	Population	Contribution per capita
Belgium	5232.7	7044.3	-1811.6	1180840	-1534.16
Bulgaria	460.5	2255.4	-1794.9	7245677	-247.72
Czech Republic	1506.7	4377.2	-2870.5	10512419	-273.06
Denmark	2507.6	1511.7	995.9	5627235	176.98
DE (Germany)	29143	11484.5	17658.5	80767463	218.63
Estonia	200.4	667.6	-467.2	1315819	-355.06
Ireland	1650.6	1563.1	87.5	4637852	18.87
EL (Greece)	1949.8	7095	-5145.2	10926807	-470.88
ES (Spain)	11111	11538.5	-427.5	46512199	-9.19
France	20967.7	13479.1	7488.6	65942267	113.56
HR (Croatia)	429.8	584.3	-154.5	4246809	-36.38
Italy	15888.6	10695.2	5193.4	60782668	85.44
Cyprus	160.6	272.9	-112.3	858000	-130.89
Latvia	270	1062.2	-792.2	2001468	-395.81
Lithuania	384.7	1885.9	-1501.2	2943472	-510.01
Luxembourg	246.2	1713.9	-1467.7	549680	-2670.10
Hungary	995.8	6620.2	-5624.4	9877365	-569.42
Malta	76.1	254.9	-178.8	429424	-416.37
Netherlands	8372.7	2014.4	6358.3	16829289	377.81
Austria	2869.5	1572.6	1296.9	8507786	152.44
Poland	3954.6	17436.1	-13481.5	38017856	-354.61
Portugal	1747.9	4943	-3195.1	10427301	-306.42
Romania	1458.9	5943.9	-4485	19947311	-224.84
Slovenia	385	1142.5	-757.5	2061085	-367.52
Slovakia	720.2	1668.8	-948.6	5415949	-175.15
Finland	1904.1	1061.9	842.2	5451270	154.50
Sweden	4294.3	1691	2603.3	9644864	269.92
UK	14072.3	6984.7	7087.6	64351155	110.14

Figure 1

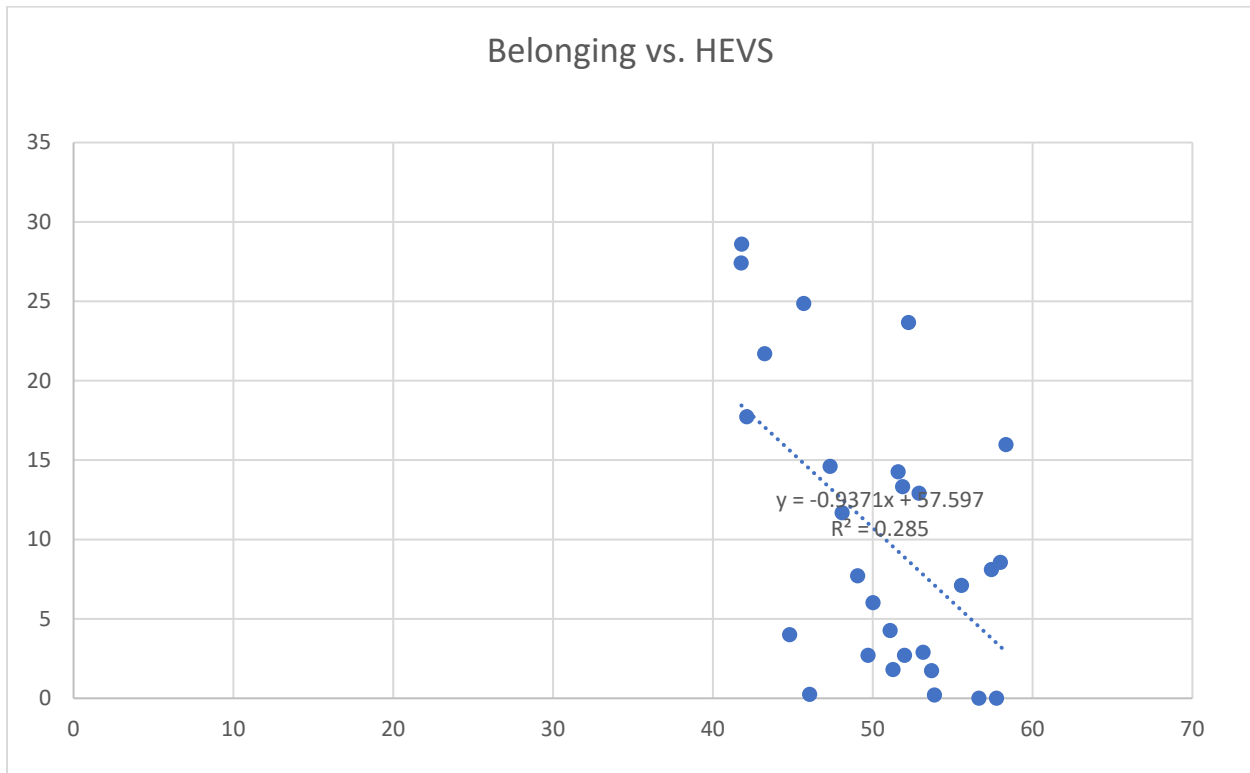


Figure 2

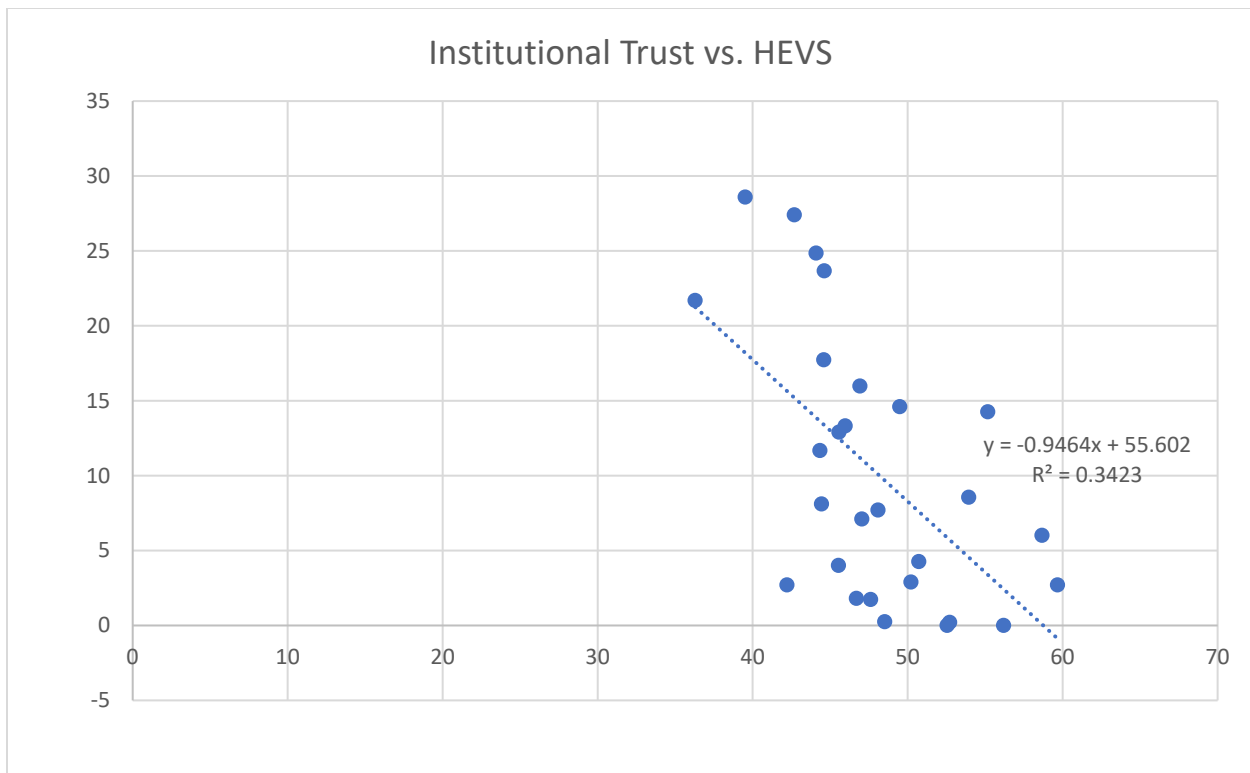


Figure 3

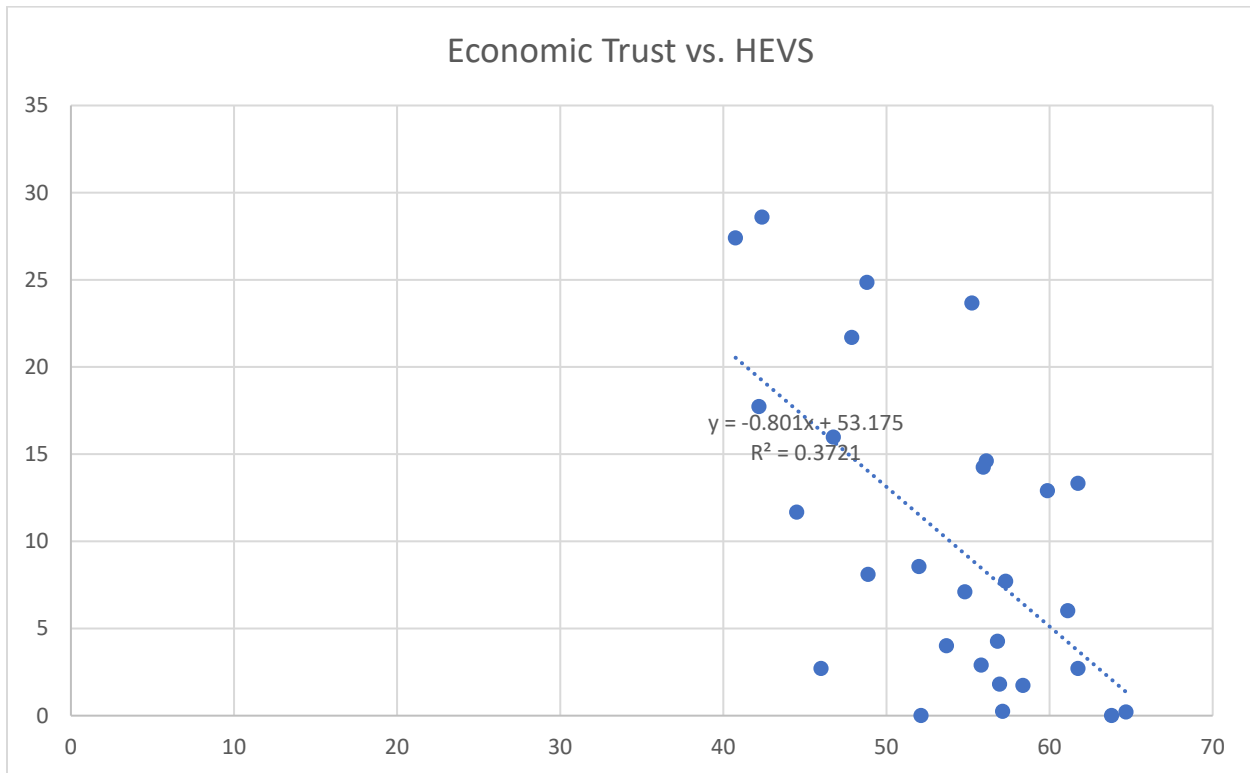


Figure 4

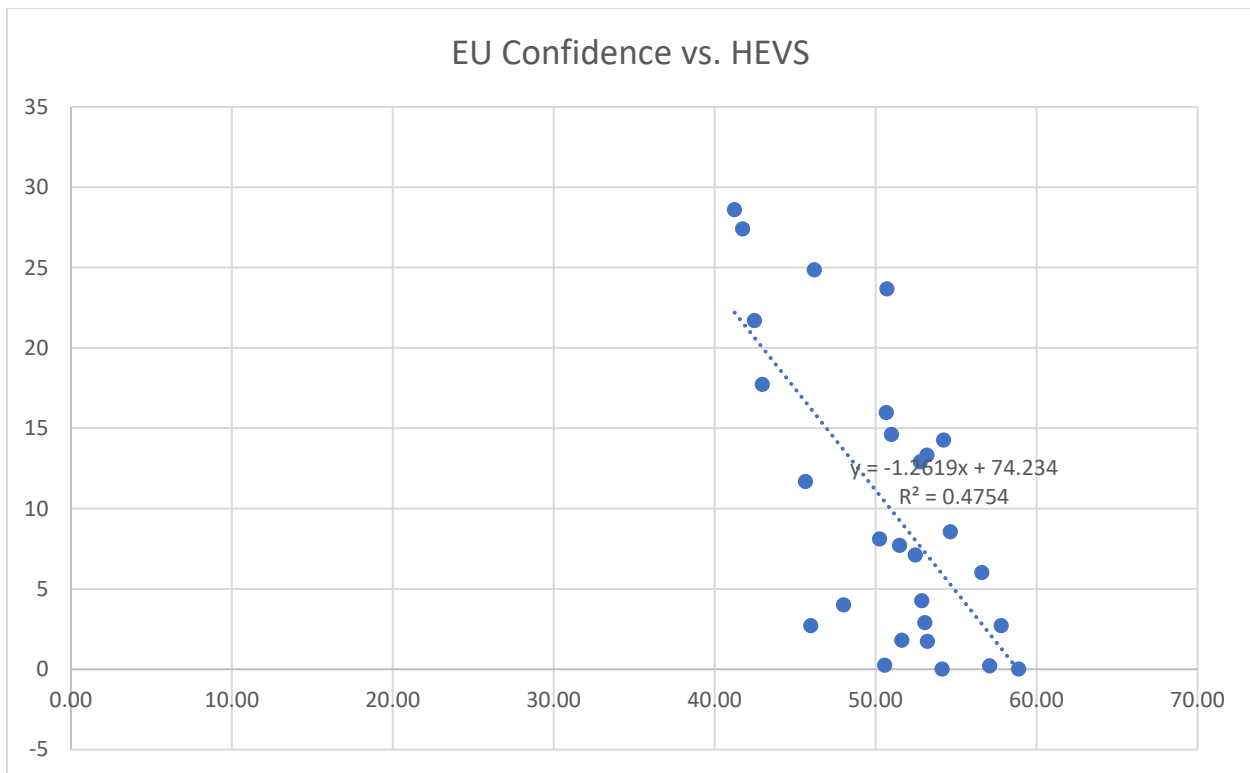


Figure 5

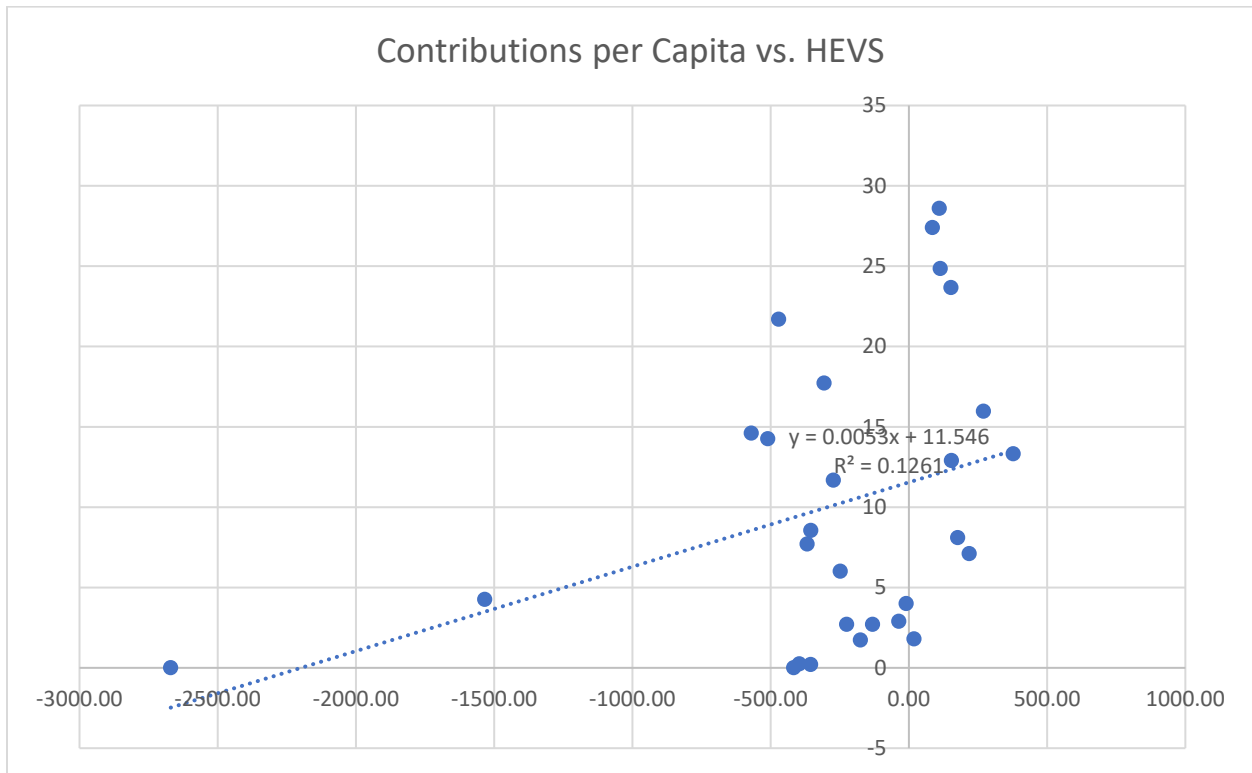
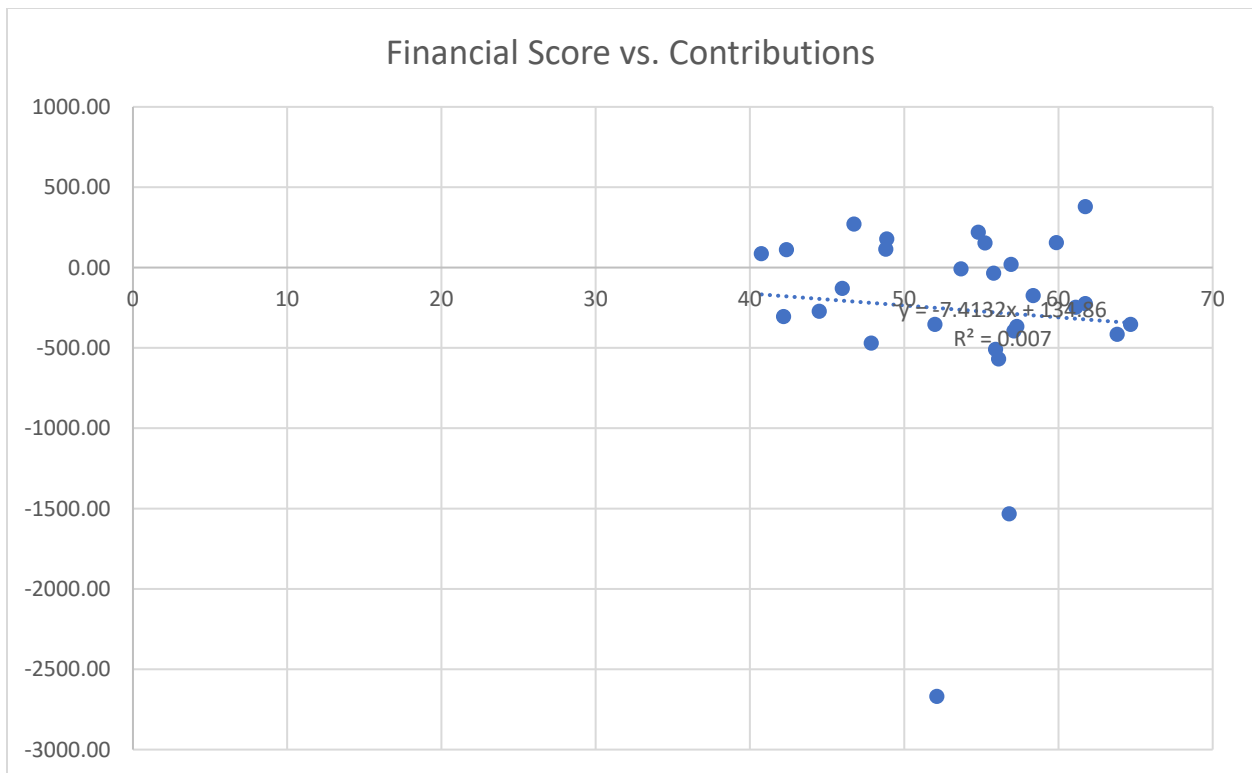


Figure 6





## Findings

The findings were, generally speaking, that states with lower overall confidence in the EU had a higher HEVS. The correlations for each individual category were fair, ranging between -0.593 and -0.533, showing some trend, as seen in figures 1-3. When combined and put into the “Confidence,” however, the correlation of -0.690 was far stronger, as seen in figure 4. This means the “Confidence” model explains HEVS well. The findings based on the economic contributions of each country to the EU showed virtually no relation to HEVS or “Economic Trust”, as seen in figures 5 and 6. The failure of economic realities to affect HEVS suggests that secession movements are more affected by general perceptions and culture, than financial realities, as previously predicted. Scores in each category ranged from 40 – 60, this tight grouping suggests that smaller issues can manifest greatly in secessionist votes.

Looking at the 2014 data, the United Kingdom has the lowest trust in the EU, with a score of 41.24%. These feelings culminated two years later with Brexit. Italy was a close second to the UK with a score of 41.74%. In the 2018 general election for Italy, the Lega Nord and Five Star Movement were the two parties with the highest percentage of the vote, 37.0% and 32.7%, respectively. Both these parties have at various times declared either a desire to reform or exit the EU. The Five Star Movement was even part of the same coalition as UKIP in the European Parliament. While neither has made any concrete promises, both have brought up the possibility of an EU referendum, meaning Italy is currently the state most likely to exit the EU. Greece scored third with 42.48%. There has been a mounting concern about a possible Grexit, even prior to Brexit, in 2015. In the 2015 Greek general elections many hard and soft Eurosceptic parties took power, accounting for over 50% of the vote. The only reason Greece has not made significant moves to leave the EU is because of the massive debts they owe and their inability to recover economically. Rational choice is what is guiding the Greek government, as unlike Britain they do not have the resources to survive an exit. These three examples are perhaps the best evidence of the potential effectiveness of this forecasting tool. Brexit took place just two years after in 2016, Italy had general elections in May 2018 with Eurosceptic parties gaining ground, and Greece is currently ruled by a Eurosceptic party. While the exact vote share Eurosceptic parties received was off, the three states rife with Eurosceptic movements were accurately predicted by the model.

Spain was the largest outlier among all the states, with only 4% Hard Eurosceptic vote share, and a “Confidence” score of 48.02. Other states with similar scores ranged from 15-25% Eurosceptic vote. The party that won the 4% vote in the European parliament was the Republican Left for Catalonia, itself a party pushing for secession within Spain as well. This helps to explain the disproportionately low vote share in Spain. When a state is forced to deal with a strong internal secession movement, they are less likely to unify for higher level movements. This is especially true in this case, as the populations in other parts of Spain are unlikely to vote for a Catalonian independence party. This specific case opens up further research in the field, observing how secession movements at the sub-national and national level affect each other.

## Discussion

The goal of creating a forecasting tool to see how certain perceptions affect the Eurosceptic vote share has been moderately successful. While there are no hard answers as to what score a state needs to initiate secession, the model does show Britain in 2014 as the state most likely to leave the EU due to certain public attitudes. Furthermore, states that have seen a surge in

secessionist movements have also scored low for Trust on the model. The states where post-Brexit secession movements were a real risk, France, Greece, and Italy all scored below 50 on the Trust. This model is successful overall as it achieves two purposes. First, it allows one to see if there is a risk of secession from the EU based on a state's score. Second, it allows one to see why that risk exists, and how it can be mitigated. For instance, if a state has low trust but high belonging, the focus should be on strengthening institutions, rather than cultural inclusion. If a state is in a position like Britain pre-Brexit, with comparatively low scores throughout, then the risk is high and more drastic measures could be taken pre-emptively. This model does not account for every single factor that can lead to secession movements and their strength. As previously stated, internal movements like the Catalan independence movement in Spain can affect the actual outcomes.

Further complications can arise when looking at Eastern Europe where the threat of Russia would likely outweigh any secession desires. However, even in both these cases an extremely low score would likely still lead to secession. There is some validity to the Eurosceptic and secessionist literature on the relationship between rational choice and HEVS. Economic perceptions have the strongest correlation to HEVS, showing the importance of economic views. However, these were people's feelings about the economy, meaning that they could have been different from reality. While "Economic Trust" has a fairly strong correlation to secessionist movements, it is made stronger when combined with the other two categories into "Confidence". The data demonstrates that in order for a secession movement to take place, relative dissatisfaction in all three facets or complete dissatisfaction in one could push a state toward secession. The fact that the combined model is stronger significantly advances the hypothesis that all three factors must be present.

The rational choice model, used to dispel the rational approach, was heavily oversimplified but this was done deliberately. The biggest complaint of Eurosceptic parties in the richer countries, such as UKIP, was that they pay more in taxes than they receive. Since UKIP's economic arguments rested largely on the flow of taxes, which is in line with secessionist literature, the simplified model offers answers. The rational choice model showed that contributions did not translate into HEVS or Economic Trust in any meaningful way. This furthers the idea that perceptions must be analyzed, or the rational choice model must be further developed. Unfortunately, this is difficult as there many factors in a system as complex as the EU that affect a state's economy, such as trade and employment. Even then, culture is more applicable as voters need not heed these facts and may vote despite them. The reason rational choice may not be a significant factor is that the states of the EU do not have the same language or a shared history. So, problems that would normally be small in a conventional state are severely aggravated in this highly diverse area. This fits well with secessionist literature and the idea put forth here: that an increased sense of belonging is critical to quelling these movements.

## Conclusion

Post-Brexit many other secession movements have gained traction and the EU could be facing an existential crisis if key states leave the Union. Some of these movements, such as those in France and the Netherlands, have been quelled for the time being. Others, such as those in Italy are still a grave concern. By modelling attitudes, and analyzing how they affect secessionist strength, issues could be better addressed before a crisis like Brexit. A forecasting tool such as the one developed here could be beneficial when developing future policy in the EU. If a state is determined to be at risk, the factors causing that risk can then be analyzed and worked on. For instance, if the cultural integration is low due to people not knowing or not wanting to know their

rights, a simple solution would be to run advertisements which give information or say where to get it. Most issues with the EU are significantly more complex than this example, as are any tentative solutions, but that simply underlines the importance of early identification. As seen with Brexit, perceptions carry more weight than facts in a referendum. It therefore stands to reason that those perceptions must be concretely addressed in order to achieve a positive outcome. Rationally, a deal may be perfectly beneficial and profitable to all involved. Realistically, this deal will never be accepted if people do not realize that. Hard Eurosceptic movements have been extremely effective at tapping into fear in order to alter perceptions. Those in support of the EU have had difficulty combatting this. The main fear exploited by Eurosceptic is entrapment both economically and politically. As Sorens points out, different cultures and languages significantly increase the strength of secession movements. The Eurosceptic have tapped into this, latching on to nationalism in each state they operate in, creating fear that a united Europe will destroy individual cultures. By modelling the individual components of this overall fear, it will allow future EU policy makers to more effectively decide which areas to focus on.

Further avenues to improve this model would require looking at factors in the individual countries that cause discrepancies. For instance, how do internal secession movements effect Euroscepticism? Brexit only happened after the referendum for Scotland and Spain has a relatively low amount of Euroscepticism. Another key area for development is how do external fears, such as those caused by Russia felt in Eastern Europe affect secession? Both these were considered as potential avenues of research here, but the decision was made to create a simple model that could be more widely applied. A major avenue of future research also not explored here is how the three factors affect each other or their temporal effects. It may be that “Belonging” is stronger in the long term and is a predictor for general trends. A state with a high score there would be less likely to go with the tide of Euroscepticism as they feel a strong sense of attachment. For this model, every question that could be directly related to the EU from the Eurobarometer was taken in order to not skew data or justify exclusions. Further iterations of the model could exclude or include different questions in order to develop a more accurate model. As further Eurosceptic movements develop, and more polls are taken, this model can be effectively re-used, and re-evaluated in the future. Ideally, the issues each country’s population has with the European Union can be addressed more effectively and they would be less susceptible to Eurosceptic rhetoric. This would lead to a more inclusive, effective, and unified European Union.

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