

The Path towards Integration:
Public Support for the European Union among the
countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Nichole L. Benolken
DePaul University
nbenolken@yahoo.com

Sincere thanks are due to Dr. Wayne Steger, DePaul University, for the incredible amount of time, patience, and knowledge he contributed to this paper.

European integration is one of the dominant events of post-World War II international affairs. Public opinion plays a major part in the integration process. This has not always been the case. During the early years of the European integration movement, the majority of issues and policies were viewed to be solely the concern of political and economic elites. Questions of market liberalization or trade regulation were considered too complex and abstract for the general public. Indeed, most decisions made in the early years of the movement were not subject to much public debate or scrutiny.¹ It was not until the early 1970s and the creation of the European Community (EC) that public support became a much more central issue in the debate over integration. Public involvement in issues of European integration reached heights previously unseen in the late 1980s and 1990s as the EC underwent drastic changes with the implementation of the Single European Act (SEA) and the Maastricht Treaty.

The policies of the SEA (1987) and Maastricht Treaty (1992), while initiated by the business and government elites, required a more active role by the public than ever before seen in the integration movement. The populations of member-nations became more actively engaged throughout the 1990s as the EC eventually transformed into the European Union (EU) and embarked upon the road of a shared market and currency. Once an issue of concern mostly to the political and economic elites of a nation, membership within the EU now holds consequence for every level of society. Further, the nature of the EU as an institution demands that public support be an essential aspect to every policy or regulation. The EU and the European Parliament lack any significant form of enforcement, and therefore, are completely reliant on voluntary compliance by the citizens of member-nations. As a result, it has become increasingly crucial to understand public opinion on issues of European integration in order to evaluate the potential for the movement's success.

The central role of public opinion in European integration raises a number of important questions. Perhaps foremost of these questions is simply, "Why do citizens support or oppose European integration?" Previous research on this question has generated various explanations to account for public opinion on issues of European integration (e.g., Inglehart, Rabier, and Reif 1991; Janssen 1991; Franklin, Marsh, and Wlezien 1994; Anderson and Reichert 1996; among others). Only recently have there been efforts to assess which of the various theories withstands scrutiny (e.g., Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel 1998a; Gabel 1998b). However, all studies on public support for European integration have focused solely on Western European countries, all of which already hold EU membership. The question of when and how the EU should expand its membership to include its neighbors to the east has been at the head of many discussions over the future of Europe and the European identity. Yet remarkably little consideration has been given to the role of public opinion within the Central and Eastern European countries.

In the past decade, the EU has seen an increase in the number of countries seeking admittance into the union. Most of the countries seeking admittance are former Eastern Bloc countries located in Central and Eastern Europe. While these countries continue to seek membership into the union, it is important for public officials to develop an understanding of the

¹ The roots of European integration appeared in the years following WW II. In the early years most policies dealt with liberalizing trade regulations and tariffs and improving the post-war economy. Cooperation among nations also hoped to ensure stability in a region devastated by war twice in three decades.

factors that influence public support for such membership. Due to the vastly different economic and social circumstances of Central and Eastern European countries, it cannot be assumed that the theories of public support developed in the West will remain valid in the East. Therefore, it is essential that these theories be tested within the borders of Central and Eastern European countries to determine the applicability of the theories and consider necessary revisions. It should be expected that, due to the vastly different economic and social conditions of these countries, the existing theories of support for EU membership will require a level of revision to remain accurate.

Central and Eastern Europe in Transition: The road towards integration

The process of transition that faced the countries of Central and Eastern Europe following the collapse of the socialist system was widely seen to consist of three essential issues. The first was transitioning from a political system that was restrictive, centralized, and even oppressive towards a democratic political system in which the government was elected popularly by the citizens and held responsible to the electorate. The second issue of transition involved transforming the state-controlled, closed markets of the socialist system to open, free-markets more reflective of a capitalist economic system. The third issue of transition, security, became especially apparent after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were forced to search elsewhere for a security balance after observing the once giant power of Russia decline into economic and political shambles.

These three main aims of the transition process were incredibly daunting to the infantile governments of these countries. A study performed by Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield (1995) addresses the issue of public commitment towards democracy in the transitioning countries of Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, and the Ukraine. Throughout their research, the authors consider which factors create a population that is supportive of democracy from two distinct viewpoints: that of 'first generation' theory and that of 'second generation' theory. The first generation theorists declared that states create populations that support democracy through the process of modernization. Modernization demands the raising of living standards, expansion of the private economic sector, and the emergence of a substantial middle class. These mainly economic developments have historically been seen as the main forces that foster democratic norms within a population.² The 'second generation' theorists contend that it is an individual's experiences with the institutions and functioning of democracy that determines whether he/she will develop a strong commitment towards democratic reform.

Evans and Whitefield (1995) attempt to resolve this issue by testing each theory empirically using survey data collected in 1993 and 1994. From this data they use multivariate regression analysis to create a number of models. If the theory of the 'first generation' is accurate, it would be expected that the model which prioritizes market liberalization would possess the most predictive power and validity. Conversely, if the 'second generation' model were to be supported, then the model that focuses on democratic and political evaluations would

² This theory was developed while looking at the emergence of democracy in Western Europe and the U.S. Recent questions have been raised as to whether this theory still remains valid in these states. As democracy has developed past the initial stages, it has become more common for sectors of the population to embrace the pure liberal rights and values of democracy and liberty while rejecting the capitalist institutions such as those named above.

prove to be the strongest. The authors also create a model that examines the potential influence of both market and democratic perceptions and experiences together on commitment to democratic reform.

Evans and Whitefield (1995) find that the model examining the significance of democratic variables proves to be much stronger than the model including only economic variables.³ The model increases in predictive power when combining both, though only minutely. This analysis suggests that people support democratic reforms mainly if they are seen to work efficiently and meet their expectations for an ideal political system (measured by their experience with democracy and their overall evaluation of the political system). In Central and Eastern Europe it seems that citizens place a great deal of value on the creation of stable democratic institutions and a government that is responsive to the needs of the population. It is through this governmental structure that citizens believe they can then voice concern over the drawbacks or challenges of further economic or political reform.

Clearly a coherent and organized system of political and economic reform within the countries of Central and Eastern Europe may produce a population that is largely committed to such reforms, as proven in Evans and Whitefield's study. Yet, the pace and extremity with which the decline of socialism and the reform process began in this region betrays such a simplistic formula for success. As George Kolankiewicz (1994) discusses, there is much discontent among both the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as those already possessing EU membership as to the process, rate, and extent to which the Central and Eastern states should be encouraged to integrate with the West. The newly formed governments face the challenge of balancing domestic interests with the interests of the Western powers, a juggling act that is never easy. Indeed, some nations among the EU members oppose Eastern expansion, mainly due to the enormous costs of incorporating the much poorer Eastern countries into the Union.⁴

Kolankiewicz (1994) also examines the issue of security and stability within this historically volatile region. In the chaotic aftermath of the collapse of socialism, the governments of Central and Eastern Europe were so consumed with the concerns of reform that foreign policy matters were often secondary. Instead of creating a coherent foreign policy, many nations simply resorted to a plethora of treaties among their neighbors (Kolankiewicz 1994, 491). The lack of clear and apparent violence within or among nations was equated with stability and good regional relations. Yet, Kolankiewicz argues that this is indeed not the case (as has become apparent in the unrest within various regions of Russia as well as among the Balkan countries) and that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should pursue admission into NATO concurrently with admission into the EU, hence increasing the likelihood of eventual economic, political, and regional stability. It thus becomes apparent that Western Europe has a clear role to play in providing the foundation and support for economic and political reforms in Central and Eastern Europe.

The issues and challenges facing the member-states of the EU and their neighbors to the east seem almost infinite. Alasdair Smith and Helen Wallace (1994) discuss the need for serious

³ The R-squared value for Model #2 (market evaluation) was 0.09, while the R-squared value for Model #3 (democratic evaluation) was 0.14. For both models the number of cases was 14,808.

⁴ In 1994, some EU members claimed that an Eastern enlargement would result in a 60% increase in the budget contributions made by the member-states towards the development of the region (Kolankiewicz, 477).

dialogue among member-states of the EU and the governments of Central and Eastern Europe. The authors argue that the Union has reached a critical juncture in which it must reconsider its policy towards the nations of Central and Eastern Europe.⁵ Though progressing, the successful transition towards democracy and market economies is not at all guaranteed in Central and Eastern Europe. The region has experienced economic and political reforms at an incredible pace and, in many ways, remains unstable. To promote further stability in the region, the pace of economic and political reforms must be carefully monitored. Closer relations with the member-nations of the EU would provide Central and Eastern European countries with a framework and foundation as they struggle to create market-economy and democratic infrastructures of their own (Smith and Wallace 1994, 439).

At this time the countries of Central and Eastern Europe face potentially growing polarization among the public. Central and Eastern Europe has both pro-democratic/market liberalization elites and public supporters, and those who promote and support insulation and nationalism (Smith and Wallace 1994, 430). If public debate is allowed to rage without any visible action by the EU to encourage membership or the Central and Eastern European governments to promote reforms and integration, the polarization may continue, thus stymieing further progress. Both the governments of Central and Eastern European countries and the leadership of the EU must realize the importance of appearing proactive and committed towards the issue of integration. It cannot be assumed that European integration will continue to have positive resonance in Central and Eastern Europe as an incentive for continued economic and political transformation (Smith and Wallace 1994, 430).

The citizens of applicant countries need to be persuaded of the net benefits of membership (Smith and Wallace 1994, 432). The idea of net benefit may have two distinct references for people. At the macro-level, people can conceive of whether their country will be better or worse off in an integrated Europe (Rose and Michler 1994, 159-160). If people perceive that their country is going to lose more than it gains from economic integration, then those people may be more inclined to oppose integration. Those who perceive a net benefit to their country may be more inclined to support integration. At the micro-level, citizens can consider whether and how much they personally will benefit or lose from economic integration (Rose and Michler 1994). An individual who stands to personally benefit economically or politically will be more inclined to realize the virtues of EU membership, and thus will offer more support for the process of integration. Conversely, an individual who feels threatened by the eventual liberalization of the market and the creation of supranational institutions will likely hold reservations regarding the steps towards integration.

To conclude, existing literature on the issues of European integration and potential EU membership for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe shed light on the many various challenges facing these transitioning states. Evans and Whitefield (1995) discuss the forces that, at an individual level, promote the development of a commitment to democracy, emphasizing the political and economic experience and perception. Kolankiewicz (1994) examines the difficulties of fostering cooperation both between EU member-states and the countries of Central

⁵ In the spring of 2003, 10 nations signed an agreement at a conference in Greece that provides a timeline for eventual EU membership. By May 1st, 2004, it is expected that most of these nations will be eligible for full membership. With such a short deadline looming, it is essential that the EU carefully consider its model of expansion to ensure that the economic, political, and social requirements are a reflection of the nature of Central and Eastern Europe.

and Eastern Europe as well as within the transitioning region itself. He also argues that an efficient process for Central and Eastern European countries to move towards membership both in the EU and in NATO will encourage political, economic, and regional stability. Alasdair Smith and Helen Wallace argue the necessity of an enlarged EU and an integrated east. They also explore the ways in which the populations of these states may view potential integration and EU membership, be it from a macro or micro viewpoint (focusing on the benefit of the country or the benefit of the individual). Yet in all this research the significance of public support for the integration movement and EU membership is never explicitly discussed.

Existing Theories of Public Support for Integration within Western Europe

Interest in public opinion on European integration has emerged only relatively recently. During the early years of the European integration movement, the majority of issues and policies were viewed to be solely the concern of the political and economic elites. That began to change in the early 1970s with the creation of the European Community (EC). Throughout the 1970s various countries held general referenda regarding potential membership into the EC, including Ireland, Norway, Britain, and Denmark. In 1979 the European Parliament was created and membership was selected by direct election. These changes were followed later by the implementation of the Single European Act (SEA) and the Maastricht Treaty. The SEA (1986) outlined the necessary steps towards a common internal market that allowed for the unrestricted movement of capital and persons within the borders of the member nations. The Maastricht Treaty (1991) established a timeline in which the EC would move towards an open market and a common currency.

Clearly the issue of public support for the EU has played an important role in the development of the union and its unprecedented policies and institutions. This significance has lead many researchers to question which factors influence levels of public support for the EU. One notable study by Matthew Gabel (1998b) analyzes five theories explaining public support. These theories, as developed by various scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, provide explanations of public support for integration that often compete with one another. Gabel attempts to resolve the contradictions among the theories by examining each through a rigorous empirical test.

Gabel (1998b) looks to the 1978-1992 Eurobarometer surveys to evaluate the five different theories of public support for the European integration movement.⁶ He selects appropriate questions from the Eurobarometer surveys that measure the central concepts of these theories. Gabel then constructs a dependent variable that measures support for integration by looking at the results of questions that pertain to first, an individual's views of European unification and, second, the membership of his or her own country. By combining the results of these two questions, Gabel contends that he has a more reliable dependent variable than had been used in past research.

⁶ The Eurobarometer surveys were commissioned by the EC (and later the EU) to act as a yearly gauge of public sentiments for the policies of European integration. Gabel selected these surveys for two main reasons. First, the Eurobarometer surveys were those most frequently cited in previous research, which ensures that Gabel's data is comparable with that of his predecessors. Second, the data set is incredibly large and contains information across both countries and over time. This flexibility helps ensure the validity and reliability of Gabel's model as a test of hypotheses generated by the earlier theories.

The statistical model used by Gabel to analyze the results of the Eurobarometer readings is a least squares regression of pooled cross-sectional data. In addition to the variables of interest, Gabel (1998b) includes a number of variables in the model to control for effects of respondents in different countries and across time. Gabel also divides the citizens of the countries surveyed into two groups, the first comprising of original member-states and the second comprising of states that joined the Union at a later date.⁷ By creating the two groups he is then able to consider whether factors of public support vary depending on duration of membership or upon the time in which membership was being sought.

The first model, **cognitive mobilization**, holds that individuals with greater cognitive abilities will be more likely to understand the complex issues of integration and therefore are more likely to support the EU movement (Inglehart 1970). People with well-developed cognitive skills are better able to understand the complex information and issues involved in European integration (Gabel 1998b). Inglehart also argued that all information about integration leads people to support integration (Gabel 1998b, 335). As such, the more informed a person becomes, the more likely they are to support integration (Inglehart, Rabier, and Reif 1991; Janssen 1991). Gabel finds limited support for the cognitive mobilization model. This variable had the greatest impact in original member-states, with no significance among later members.

The **political value theory** states that the value orientation of an individual regarding economics and politics will influence their support of the integration movement (Inglehart, Rabier and Reif 1991). By political values Gabel (1998b) is referring to the attitudes individuals possess towards issues of society, politics or the economy, which are greatly influenced by the socioeconomic conditions in which that individual was raised. Gabel takes his cue from earlier literature in identifying two different value systems. The first system, "materialist," is primarily concerned with economic and physical security. The second value system, "post-materialist," promotes intellectual fulfillment and self-actualization (Gabel 1998b, 336). The political value theory contends that European integration and the EU represent a less nationalistic, more egalitarian social structure that is more likely to be understood by those who identify with "post-materialist" values. Upon testing this hypothesis with the Eurobarometer surveys, Gabel found a similar result to that found with the cognitive mobilization model. Respondents among the original member-states were more likely to support the integration movement if they identified with "post-materialist" values. However, the results were exactly the opposite in the later member-nations. Those with "post-materialist" values were in fact less likely to support integration than those respondents identified as "materialist."

The third theory, **utilitarian appraisals**, analyzes the different socioeconomic costs and benefits of integration as perceived by the individual and uses that information to determine the level of support by the individual (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel 1998b). The basic argument is that people who have different socioeconomic circumstances are affected differently by economic integration. People who would benefit economically from integration are more likely to support economic integration while those whose livelihood might be adversely affected are less supportive of integration. Gabel and Palmer (1995) found that a person's income, education, and occupation had significant relations to their support for integration. Gabel and Palmer (1995) also argued that a person's proximity to EU markets would create greater opportunities, which should create a greater tendency to support integration.

⁷ The original member-states of the EC and later the EU are France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg. The later member-states include Ireland, Britain, Denmark, Greece, Portugal, and Spain.

Gabel (1998b) focused on the interaction between income and occupation as central factors in predicting support for integration. Gabel (1998b) found different effects within occupational categories (manual labor, professional, and executive) that relate to income. People engaged in manual labor were less supportive as their incomes rose, since integration was most threatening to their welfare. The opposite effect occurs for people in executive or professional occupations, where support for integration relates positively to income. Those who are most in a position to take advantage of the opportunities of integration are more supportive of it.

The fourth theory, that of **class partisanship**, is a commonly cited theory that has been discussed by many scholars. Central to this model is the role that the political party plays on influencing the opinions of citizens regarding integration. The theory argues that, holding all other characteristics equal (such as occupation or income), an individual will support the view of integration that is promoted by the political party he/she identifies with. The model goes on to elaborate that parties to the political Left have been historically less supportive of integration or the EU, as it is viewed as a largely capitalistic venture. In the Eurobarometer surveys conducted between 1973-89 the hypothesis that respondents who expressed support for Left parties would hold less favorable views of the integration process proved accurate. Gabel's research considered the party a respondent voiced support for in a hypothetical election to consider this theory. His results support the class partisanship model, even after controlling for other possible explanatory factors.

The final theory is that of **support for the government**, which states that citizens will project their level of support for the government of their nation-state onto the idea of European integration. This model argues that citizens will view the process of integration as a function performed by the current government. Therefore, if a respondent voices support for the ruling government (or leader, more specifically), then he/she is more likely to support the integration movement. This theory also found support in Gabel's research, with the sole exception being original member-states responding after 1986. Overall, respondents who reported support for the current Prime Minister or President were more likely to also display support for integration and the EU.

Gabel's (1998b) model provided mixed support for the different theories. While he found at least limited support for all of the theories, he found that the utilitarian theory had the most support. The class partisanship theory was also supported by Gabel's results, but was not as substantively powerful as variables measuring utilitarian effects. The cognitive mobilization and political values theories were valid only for citizens of the original EU member-states. The support for government theory was supported by Gabel's model except for citizens in the original EU member-states in the years after the Single European Act (SEA). Gabel (1998b) concluded that economic benefits and costs are the primary determinants of public support for European integration.

It is important to note that the theories being discussed in this research were developed and tested using only information from western European countries. The economic and social conditions in the countries that were tested were such that any reforms required for EU membership were relatively small. The economic and social structures of central and eastern European countries are strikingly different from those of their western neighbors. After decades of socialist rule, the reforms required to make these countries eligible for EU membership are

significantly more demanding. Throughout the 1990s, the citizens of these countries experienced a great deal of economic, political, and social change. As a result of such drastic changes, it is possible that different factors influence Eastern Europeans support for EU membership. Therefore, it can be expected that the theories developed to predict public support for the EU in western European countries will need to be carefully tested with data from central and eastern countries and possibly revised to reflect such differences.

Measurement and Methodology

Gabel's (1998a, 1998b) research design provides a convenient blueprint to test various theories of public support among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This study applies Gabel's model to Central and Eastern Europe, but includes some differences to reflect differences between the Eastern and Western circumstances. Gabel's model is not expected to apply completely because the people of Central and Eastern Europe have very different political socializations and experiences, so the lens through which they view and interpret events will likely differ.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the beginning of economic and political reforms within these nations, the EC commissioned public opinion surveys similar to those of the Eurobarometer. The Central and Eastern Eurobarometer surveys (CEEB) were conducted between 1990-1997. While the two data sets attempt to measure similar aspects of public support, there is a great deal of variance between the questions of the Eurobarometer and CEEB surveys. These variations require the use of different (yet similar) questions when testing the theories analyzed by Gabel.

This study analyzes public support for the European Integration between 1995 and 1997. One reason for this time frame is that Central and Eastern European countries experienced substantial instability and uncertainty during the early years of the political and economic transitions from centralized socialist economies and political systems. Further, the European Community transitioned to the European Union in 1994. Both factors may create immeasurable biases in data that cross that time frame. Perhaps reflecting these changes is the fact that the CEEB surveys differ *within* this time frame, with different sets of questions asked between 1991 and 1993 and 1994 and later. As a practical matter, it not possible to analyze Central and Eastern European public support for integration across the pre- and post- 1994 periods with any consistency. By focusing on the CEEB data from 1995-1997, this study explores the most recent data available to test, and eventually amend, theories of public support for integration.

The dependent variable is public support for integration in Central and Eastern Europe countries. Unfortunately, there is no data available that precisely measures this concept. The CEEB surveys include two questions that address this concept, in a similar manner to the Eurobarometer surveys for Western Europe. Fortunately there is a solution to this problem. Gabel (1998a, 1998b) merges two questions to create an index of public support for integration. I do the same thing for the CEEB surveys, adding the responses to the following questions.

EUImpression: *As you might know, 15 states of "Western" Europe formed together the "European Union." Would you say that your impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union are generally ... (positive, neutral, negative options)?*

I scaled negative, neutral, and positive responses as a 0, 1, or 2, respectively. Responses for the “don’t know” category were coded as system missing and dropped from the analysis.

***EUreferendum:** If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of (our country’s) membership of the European Union, would you personally vote for or against membership (vote for, vote against, undecided, would not vote, don’t know options).*

I scaled vote against, undecided, and vote for responses as a 0, 1, or 2, respectively. Responses for the “would not vote” and “no answer” categories were coded as system missing and dropped from the analysis.

Neither question fully captures the idea of support for integration, but together provide a measure of the consistency of support for concepts related to European integration. Responses to these two questions correlate well, with $r = .53$, $p < .01$. The combined variable, which I call **Support**, ranges from 0 in cases of negative responses to both questions to 4 in cases of positive responses to both questions. If respondents indicated support for one question and opposition for the other, then **Support** is coded as a 1. If respondents were neutral to both questions, or indicated support to one question and opposition to the other question, then **Support** is coded as a 2. This category reflects undecided and mixed opinion. If respondents indicated support to one question and were neutral on the other, then **Support** is coded as a 3. Thus the variable captures a fuller range of, and an indication of the consistency of, support for integration. Table 1 includes a cross tabulation of the responses to these two questions.

Table 1. Cross-tabulation of EUimpression and EUreferendum, 1995-1997 CEEB surveys.

EU Referendum	EU Impression		
	Oppose	Neutral	Support
Oppose	61.2%	13.2%	3.2%
Neutral/Undecided	17.3%	39.5%	8.7%
Support	21.5%	47.3%	88.2%
N	1743	8465	12179

Source: CEEB surveys, 1995-1997.

The independent or predictor variables fall into several categories, which correspond to attitudes about aggregate or country-level effects, attitudes about individual effects, and demographic characteristics.

The first independent variable is **FreeMarket**, which reflects support for the transition to a free market within a respondent's country. Free Market is measured as responses to the question:

“Do you personally feel that creation of the free-market economy, that is one largely free from state control, is right or wrong for (our country's) future?” (right/wrong options).

I scaled wrong responses as a 0 and right responses as a 1. As noted above, support for market liberalization is expected to correlate positively with **Support**.

The second independent variable is **Democratization**, which reflects support for the transition to a free market within a respondent's country. Democratization is measured as responses to the question:

“On a whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is developing in (our country)?”

I scaled these responses from not at all satisfied (0) to very satisfied (3). Don't know and no answer responses were excluded from the analysis since they were not options offered to respondents. As noted above, support for democratization is expected to correlate positively with **Support**.

According to Smith and Wallace (1994, 432), the citizens of applicant countries need to be persuaded of the net benefits of membership. The third independent variable is **WhoBenefits**, which measures people's perceptions of whether the EU or their country benefits more from interactions. **WhoBenefits** is measured as responses to the question:

“Who do you think benefits the most out of the relationship between (our country) and the European Union? (options: our country, both equally benefit, the European Union).”

I scaled these responses from the European Union (coded as a 1) to our country (coded as a 3) with both equally benefit coded as a 2. **WhoBenefits** is expected to correlate positively with support for integration.

Given that Eastern Europe has gone through a period of transition, it seems reasonable to presume that people who believe their country is moving in the right direction would be more likely to support integration, and vice versa for people believing their country is moving in the wrong direction. This variable reflects a more diffuse, non-specific opinion on events around them, and so can be thought of as reflecting a broader variety of factors in Central and Eastern European countries. **Rtwrgdirection** is measured as responses to the question:

“In general, do you feel things in (our country) are going in the right or in the wrong direction? (right/wrong options).”

I coded the responses of wrong direction as 0 and the responses of right direction as a 1. It is expected that respondents who view the general, over-all condition of the country in a positive way will be more likely to support the aims and impressions of the EU and the potential

membership of their country. Negative views on the general conditions of the country are expected to correlate negatively with the dependent variable **Support**.

Gabel and others have argued that an individual's own economic situation will affect their opinions toward integration. **Net Monthly Income** is measured as responses to the question:

“Using this card, tell me what is the monthly net income of all the members of your household, including any extra money. For confidentiality you may just read out the letter of the alphabet next to the appropriate amount.”

Because of differences in monetary values of income in each country, the CEEB measure of net monthly income is not directly comparable across countries (because of different standards of living, exchange rates, and/or inflation). To compensate, I followed Gabel in recoding responses into in three categories—low, middle, and high-income groups within each country. This way, each individual's response is measured relative to the income distribution of their country—placing them in low, middle, and upper income groups. Low-net monthly income in each country includes all response categories in the bottom quartile of incomes in that country (including the income category in the 25th percentile). Middle-net monthly income in each country includes all response categories between the upper limit of the low income categories to the 75th income category (inclusive of the income category including the 75th percentile). High-net monthly income in each country includes all responses above the middle income category. This creates something of a standardized income distribution across countries.

Although the proportion of individuals in each category varies across countries and over time, this coding rule almost always creates a low income group between 25 and 33% of the individuals in a country, a middle income group with between 50 and 55% of the individuals in the country, and a high income group with between 15 and 23% of the individuals in a country. These three categories were then merged into a single variable **Net Monthly Income**, which is scaled with low monthly income group coded as a 1, middle monthly income coded as a 2, and high monthly income coded as a 3. Following Gabel (1998a, 1998b), **Net Monthly Income** is expected to correlate positively with support for integration.

A respondent's level of education is expected to correspond with the amount of support he/she feels for integration and EU membership. This relationship should be positively correlated as the level of education rises, indicating that the respondent has a greater cognitive capacity for acquiring and understanding information regarding integration and EU membership. The CEEB surveys determine the **Level of Education** by presenting the respondent with the following options:

What is the highest level of education that you have received? (options: up to elementary, some secondary but not completed, secondary graduated and higher education).

For the purpose of my research, the responses were coded as a 1 for 'up to elementary' through 4 for 'higher education.' This variable is expected to correlate positively with **Support**.

Female is coded as respondent's gender, with males coded as a 0 and females coded as a 1. Previous research, including Gabel's, has found female to correlate negatively with support for integration. **Age** is measured as respondent's age. I include age mainly as a control variable.

The CEEB surveys present all respondents with nine options regarding the nature of his/her main occupation. It is important to consider occupation when discussing public support for integration and EU membership because the integration process will affect various sectors of the economy differently. Having experienced half a decade of economic reform, it is expected that the respondent will be more supportive of integration and EU membership if his/her occupation sector experienced positive benefits from market liberalization and reform. The respondents are asked of his/her **Occupation** in the following question:

“What is your main present occupation?” (options: Civil servant, State-owned enterprise, Private sector owner/ self-employed, Private sector employee, All agriculture, Other paid work, Pensioner, Housewife (not otherwise employed), Students (all respondents still in education) and Temporarily not working (unemployed)).

I combine the first two options (civil servant and state-owned enterprise) into one variable, **Government/state employee**. This combined variable provides a more encompassing view of the level of support held by those directly involved with the government/state sector. Each of the response options is then created into a (0,1) dummy variable. I exclude **Other paid work** to avoid creating a collective constant.⁸

As Gabel (1998b) notes, pooled cross-sectional data often have a number of methodological problems. As with the Eurobarometer data used by Gabel, however, the CEEB surveys include independent samples of individuals, which avoids the problems associated with pooling aggregate level data or panel studies. Still, there are two types of bias that might emerge because individual respondents in the data set are pooled by country and year. Respondents in a given country may have experiences and attitudes that differentiate them from other respondents in other countries. Respondents in a given year may have experiences and attitudes that differentiate them from respondents in surveys in other years. The similarities among respondents of a given country or year need to be controlled for in a statistical model. Following Gabel, I include dummy variables for the Central and Eastern European countries (excluding Slovenia to avoid making these variables a collective constant). I include dummy variables for each year in the model to control for any variance that might be associated with a year (excluding 1997 to avoid making these variables a collective constant).

Respondents for whom data are missing (i.e., no response to a given question) or who answered “don't know” (when that is not an option in the question) are excluded from the analysis. This reduces the number of individuals in the model from about 31,570 to 15,648. Given that this study examines nine countries, this reduction in number of cases may draw some questions about the validity of the model. Unfortunately there is no way to analyze these responses.

⁸The nature of this option allows for a large amount of variation among the experiences of the respondents, thus reducing its predictive value.

Results

Table 2 presents the results of an ordinary least squares estimation of the model. The model explains almost 26% of the variance in the dependent variable (adjusted $R^2 = .256$). While seemingly low, this is substantially higher than models of Western European public support for integration (e.g., Gabel 1998a; 1998b). The Durbin Watson statistic indicates no significant autocorrelation in the model. The f statistic is significant at $p < .001$, so we may reject the null hypothesis that all the coefficients aside from the intercept are equal to zero. Standard checks indicated no serious multicollinearity among the variables in the model.

Generally, Central and Eastern European attitudes toward the EU are consistent with attitudes toward political and economic transition in their own country. Individuals who have a favorable view of economic liberalization in their own country are significantly more likely to express support for the aims and activities of the EU and would support joining the EU in a referendum. Individuals who have an unfavorable view of economic liberalization in their own country are less likely to express support for the aims and activities of the EU and would oppose joining the EU in a referendum. These results are also consistent with the view that economic integration with the EU is an extension of people's views toward economic liberalization in their own country. Individuals who have a favorable view of how democratization is progressing in their own country are significantly more likely to express support for the aims and activities of the EU and would support joining the EU in a referendum. Individuals who have an unfavorable view of how democratization is progressing in their own country are more likely to oppose the activities of the EU and would oppose joining the EU in a referendum. These results are consistent with Smith and Wallace (1994, 430) who argue that public opinion in Eastern Europe is polarized into a pro-democratization/liberalization group and those who oppose democratization and market liberalization.

The independent variable with the greatest substantive effect on support for the EU is respondent's view of whether their country or the EU will benefit more from integration. Individuals who responded their own country would benefit more are substantially more likely to express support for the aims and activities of the EU and to support joining the EU in a referendum. Individuals who responded the EU would benefit more from economic integration were less supportive of the aims and activities of the EU and more likely to oppose joining the EU in a referendum. This result is consistent with Smith and Wallace (1994), who argue that people must be persuaded that their country will benefit in order for them to support economic integration with Western Europe.

Respondents who perceived that their country is headed in the right direction were significantly more likely to support the aims and activities of the EU and to support joining the EU in a referendum. Conversely, those who viewed the country to be headed in the wrong direction were less likely to support the aims and activities of the EU and generally more likely to oppose EU membership. This is consistent with the arguments above that people who have a favorable view of broader socioeconomic and political conditions are more likely to support market liberalization and integration.

Table 2. Public support for European Integration in Central and Eastern European Countries, 1995-1997.

	Coefficient	Standard error
Constant	1.11 **	.074
Support free market transition	.271 **	.019
Support democratization	.135 **	.012
Country benefits more	.551 **	.011
Country is moving in right direction	.131 **	.019
Net monthly income (low, med.,high)	.040 **	.012
Level of education	.055 **	.009
Female	- .027 #	.016
Age	.002 **	.001
Government/state employee	.046	.043
Private business owner	.100 #	.051
Private business employee	.031	.045
Employment in agriculture	- .111 #	.058
Student	.181 **	.051
Pensioner	.062	.048
Housewife	.004	.057
Unemployed	.081	.050
Bulgaria	.382 **	.037
Czech Republic	.036	.036
Estonia	- .452 **	.034
Hungary	.131 **	.037
Latvia	- .180 **	.036
Lithuania	- .211 **	.038
Poland	.394 **	.036
Romania	.450 **	.032
Slovakia	.251 **	.034
1995 dummy variable	.005	.021
1996 dummy variable	- .071 **	.02
Adjusted R ²	.256	
Durbin Watson	1.87	
F statistic	201.73	
Number of cases	15732	

All data are based on CEEB survey data.

- * denotes that coefficient is significant at $p < .05$ level,
- ** denotes that coefficient is significant at $p < .01$,
- # denotes coefficient is significant at $p < .1$ level.

In addition to respondent's attitudes toward country-level variables, the model includes independent variables that measure an individual's own demographic and economic characteristics. Central and Eastern European's net monthly income correlates positively with support for European integration, all else being equal. People with low net monthly incomes tend to have less favorable views of the aims and activities of the European Union and tend to indicate opposition to voting for integration in a referendum. As net monthly income rises in Central and Eastern European countries, individuals tend to have more favorable views of the aims and activities of the European Union and to support voting for integration in a referendum. This result is consistent with Palmer and Gabel (1995) and Gabel's (1998b) utilitarian argument that individuals' support for integration is a function of their personal economic situation.

Respondent's education level (low, middle-low, middle-high, and high) is also positively correlated with support for the EU and joining the EU in a referendum. This is consistent with Palmer and Gabel (1995) and Gabel's (1998b) utilitarian argument for individuals' support for economic integration. To the extent that education also is indicative of a person's cognitive mobilization, this result also supports Inglehart's (1970, 1991) theory about public support for economic integration.

Women in Central and Eastern Europe were significantly more opposed to the aims and activities of the EU and would oppose joining the EU in a referendum. This female bias against the EU is consistent with Gable (1998a, 1998b) and Gabel and Whitten (1997), who find that females in various Western European countries expressed opposition to integration and the EU. Further research is required to determine the cause of this consistent result.

Older respondents in Central and Eastern Europe were more supportive of the aims and activities of the EU and of supporting the EU in a referendum, though the significance of this variable is rather low. This is also consistent with Gabel et al. (1997, 1998a, 1998b), who found a similar pattern for age in Western European countries.

Among the occupational categories, students were the most supportive of the EU and joining the EU. The coefficient is significant at the $p < .01$ level. Vaclav Havel and others have written that students were on the vanguard of creating civil society and opposing the state socialist regimes of Eastern Europe. By the mid-1990s students continued to support liberalization of the economy. The only other two occupational categories that come close to being significant (significant at $p < .10$) are owners of private businesses and people who make their living entirely in agriculture. Private business owners were significantly more supportive of the EU and joining the EU. Farmers were significantly more likely to oppose the aims and goals of the EU and eventual EU membership. The result for agricultural occupation is consistent with Gabel's (1998b) model for farmers in the original EU countries, but inconsistent with his results for farmers in countries that joined the EU more recently. The coefficients for the other occupational groups were not significant.

There are differences across countries of Central and Eastern Europe. All of the countries bordering Western European countries were significantly more supportive of the EU and of joining the EU, except for the Czech Republic (the coefficient is positive but not significant). Bulgaria and Romania also were significantly more supportive of the EU and of joining the EU. The three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), however, were significantly more opposed to the aims and activities of the EU and less supportive of joining the

EU. The Baltic states differ from other Central and Eastern European countries in the study in at least two key respects. First, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are the only states in the sample that were former republics of the Soviet Union. The differences in individual respondent's experiences stemming from this fact may give rise to different attitudes toward European integration.⁹ Second, all three of the Baltic states have relatively close relations with Finland, Sweden, and Norway, which have not been as accepting of the EC/EU as have other Western countries. Economic interactions with the Nordic countries could lessen Baltic peoples' support for European integration.

Finally, the controls for the year dummy variables indicate that 1996 had significantly lower support for the EU and for joining the EU. I also estimated a model including variables for 1996 and 1997 and found the same result. The coefficients in the models were not significant for 1995 or 1997, but were significant and negative for 1996. Apparently support for the EU in Central and Eastern Europe dipped in that year.

Conclusions

A number of interesting conclusions can be drawn from the results of the model in Table 2. Generally, the analysis of individual factors (demographics, occupation, and so forth) proves consistent with the results found by Gabel (1998b). Individuals with a higher level of education and a greater net monthly salary are more likely to support the aims of integration and EU membership. On the other hand, lower-paid citizens with lower levels of education appear to hold more reservations regarding integration and EU membership. Therefore, if the governments of Central and Eastern Europe wish to promote integration and increase the level of support for EU membership, two tasks must be undertaken. First, the governments must work to provide the public with sufficient levels of information regarding the process of integration and the expected consequences the citizens will experience. While this will not increase the overall education levels of the population, it may foster a better understanding among those people unsure of the ramifications of EU membership and integration, thus possibly reducing their reservations. A second burden that must be approached by the governments of Central and Eastern Europe is to reassure those members of society that may be adversely affected by integration and EU membership (i.e. lower-paid workers or those in the agriculture field) of the potential benefits of such integration. As noted by Smith and Wallace (1994), it is very likely that the process of integration within Central and Eastern Europe will produce both 'winners' and 'losers' among the population. Essential in this case is the creation of compensation mechanisms that would work towards protecting those sectors of society most likely to end up 'losers' (436). By exhibiting a clear understanding of the potential pitfalls of EU membership and working to address such concerns, the governments of Central and Eastern Europe may help to allay fear and trepidation among the population.

The variables that proved most significant in predicting variant levels of support for integration and EU membership did not address individual level factors specifically, but rather the more encompassing views of democracy, market liberalization, and general reform held by the respondents.¹⁰ Unlike the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the citizens of those in the West were not experiencing the same astronomical levels of reform and change while

⁹ I would like to express my thanks to Richard Farkas for his helpful insight into this issue.

¹⁰ These significant variables are Free Market, Democratization, Who benefits, and Right/wrong direction.

working towards integration. Therefore, questions regarding overall satisfaction with the economic or political systems may not play a significant role in a Western European individual's level of support for the EU. However, because those countries in Central and Eastern Europe were undergoing vast changes at all levels of society and embarking on the road towards integration at completely different levels than those of the West, these questions prove to be significant.

As the most important factor contributing to an individual's support for integration and EU membership is his/her perception of whether the country or the Union would garner the most benefit from potential membership, it is important that the public perceive the EU as an organization in which the country as a whole will benefit through participation. The government should therefore ensure that information regarding the EU be as clear as possible and present the positive aspects of membership that the country will enjoy through membership (open trading among all member nations and the wealth of capital and resources that would become available being two such benefits).

An individual's perception of the general workings of democracy and market liberalization are also important characteristics influencing the level of integration and EU support. These factors bring to mind the article by Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield that analyzes the factors that promote commitment to democracy within the population. According to Smith and Wallace's research, the major factor that promotes a commitment to democratic norms is an individual's experience with and impressions of the political structure of the country. Therefore, if a government wishes to successfully garner support for integration and EU membership within the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a coherent, well-organized political structure is necessary. The public must believe that the government is responsive to their needs and aware of the challenges facing them. As that is achieved, it can then be expected that a commitment to democratic values will develop. Such a commitment, as exhibited by this research, may then increase the level of support felt for integration and potential EU membership.

This result also implies that an individual's impressions of integration and support for EU membership are not static opinions. Rather, it seems possible that, as economic and political structures within the state improve, and the individual perceives these improvements, his/her experience with democracy and market liberalization will become more positive. This change in perception will, as proven in this model, lead to an increase in support for integration and EU membership.

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