Transitional Winners and Losers: Attitudes Toward EU Membership in Post-Communist Countries

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We present a model of citizen support for EU membership designed explicitly for post-communist countries. We posit that membership in the EU can function as an implicit guarantee that the economic reforms undertaken since the end of communism will not be reversed. On this basis, we predict that "winners" who have benefited from the transition are more likely to support EU membership for their country than "losers" who have been hurt by the transition. We also predict that supporters of the free market will be more likely to support EU membership than those who oppose the free market. We test these propositions using survey data from ten post-communist countries that have applied for membership in the EU and find strong support for our hypotheses. The article concludes by speculating about the role attitudes towards EU membership may play in the development of partisan preferences.

What accounts for post-communist citizens' support for membership in the European Union? Students of both the European Union (EU) and post-communist politics have examined which factors are likely to influence public opinion on the issue of EU enlargement (Tverdova and Anderson 2000; Cichowski 2000). These initial studies are based largely on the wealth of theories and findings from decades of research on West European citizen attitudes. While the studies parallel each other in many ways, their findings are varied.

We present a model of support for EU membership designed explicitly for post-communist countries and test it using survey data from ten East-European applicant nations. We suggest that, for post-communist citizens, membership in the EU can function as an implicit guarantee that the economic reforms undertaken since the end of communism will not be reversed. We then argue that the unprecedented economic transition across the former communist states has divided societies into "winners" who have benefited from the transition and "losers" who have been hurt by the transition. We predict that winners are more likely to support EU membership, while losers are more likely to oppose it. As the framework suggests that EU membership is the ultimate guarantee of a free market economy in post-communist countries, we also expect that that those who support the free market will be more likely to support EU membership,

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while those who oppose the free market will oppose EU membership.[1]

We begin the article with a brief review of work on determinants of EU support in both advanced industrial democracies and transitional states, followed by a systematic explication of our model, including our assumptions and hypotheses. We then present empirical tests of our hypotheses utilizing survey data from ten East European countries with methods of analysis that are appropriate to the data. We conclude with implications of our findings for future research.

Determinants of EU Support

The previous decade has produced a burgeoning field of research on the relationship between societal characteristics, mass attitudes, and European Union integration in the advanced industrial world (for a range of reviews, see Gabel 2000; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993). One line of reasoning emphasizes the salience of utilitarian factors. Simply put, citizens assess the various costs and benefits associated with membership in the European Union. This argument is grounded largely in economic terms; EU membership represents a specific international economic policy—the liberalizing of the movement of goods, labor, and services among EU member states (Gabel 1998a, 937). A wealth of studies demonstrates that perceptions of favorable national economic conditions and personal financial conditions are positively associated with EU support (Palmer and Whitten 1999; Gabel 1998a; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Anderson and Reichart 1996; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993).

However, the costs associated with membership in the EU are not borne equally among groups in particular societies. In the short run, both workers and owners in specific industries bear the burden of adjustment to capital mobility during integration. Opportunities exist for those skilled enough to compete with other workers in their occupation throughout the market, while unskilled workers will be at a comparative disadvantage (Gabel 1998a, 1998b). Not surprisingly, cognitive skills, education, and occupation type have all been found to affect support for EU integration (Gabel 1998a; Anderson and Reichart 1996; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Janssen 1991).

A second line of argument focuses on the political values of citizens and their impact on EU support. The issue of EU membership as a means of strengthening democratic institutions was raised during the 2nd Enlargement in Greece, Spain, and Portugal (Wallace 1990; Duchene 1982; Tsoukalis 1981). Scholars have further argued that political parties might affect attitudes toward European integration (Anderson 1998; Taggert 1998), or perceptions of the incumbent governments (Hug and Sciarini 2000). In short, citizens rely on attitudes toward familiar political objects to make sense of a complex transnational issue (Anderson 1998).

Both these arguments, developed in the context of Western European countries, have driven contemporary inquiries into determinants of EU support in the transitional post-communist world. Initial studies find some support for both arguments, but findings are mixed across studies and indicators utilized. Tverdova and Anderson's study of six post-communist countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, and Slovakia) found strong relationships between a range of utilitarian indicators and EU support, with the exception of measures of education (2000, 16). By contrast, their results were much less clear for indicators of government support and satisfaction with democracy (2000, 17). Cichowski reported somewhat different findings in her study of five transitional countries (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia). Specifically, she finds that those citizens who are satisfied with democracy, favor the free market, and take cues from political parties are more likely to favor EU membership (2000, 1270). Economic perceptions appear to have little impact (Cichowski 2000, 1267).

What are we to make of this? While the small number of initial studies precludes generalization, the picture of what exactly determines EU support among transitional citizens is far from clear. While the arguments based on the Western experience with integration are valuable, they are but one piece of the puzzle. In the following section, we outline a new model of the determinants of support for EU membership in transition countries that is specifically designed to account for the realities of the post-communist world.

[1]Note the important distinction between this approach and the more traditional "utilitarian" approach used in established democracies. We claim that citizens choose to support EU membership not on the basis of how joining the EU will change their economic position in the future as the utilitarian approach posits, but rather because of how their economic position has changed since the transition from communism. We maintain that the utilitarian approach makes unrealistic assumptions about both the stability of post-communist societies and citizens' understanding of the realities of EU membership. Instead, we posit merely that citizens have a sense of whether they are doing well in this new world and whether they would like the new free market economy to continue in the future.

Support for EU Membership in Post-Communist Countries

We argue that the conditions produced by the economic transition in post-Communist Europe in large part determine attitudes toward EU support among citizens. We begin with three assumptions. First, EU membership might carry with it quite different connotations for citizens of post-communist countries than it does for citizens of western democracies. Cichowski notes that the peculiarities of the economic transition mean that in principle, East Europeans interpret EU cues through the reality of how the transition has affected them (2000, 1248). Joining the EU represents not only a set of specific economic guarantees, but a guarantee that the economic reforms will continue as well. As Cichowski notes, "European integration stands as a further institutionalization of free-market reforms, a prospect not necessarily welcomed by these individuals" (2000, 1248). Such concerns about the impact of EU membership on the reform process have been observed across post-communist societies (Kirka 2000; Tuszynski 1997).

Our second assumption concerns the division of post-communist societies into winners and losers. While there is a rough scholarly consensus that this division exists, there is disagreement and differing emphasis on precisely what it constitutes (Bell and Smeltz 2000). In the wake of free market reforms and economic dislocation, scholars have argued that these divisions are based on skill levels (Mackie 1995), cognitive abilities, and overall living standard levels (Plasser, Ulram, and Waldrauch 1998). Attempts to identify winners and losers have often involved ascribing status as a winner or loser to certain demographic groups: elderly pensioners, state workers, and women are often categorized as losers, while winners tend to include the young, the better educated, and those employed in the private sector. However, in the absence of information clearly denoting the citizens who have benefited or lost from the transition experience, ascribing winner status on the basis of demographic characteristics will remain at best one step removed from individual perceptions and at worst an imprecise and inaccurate system of extrapolation. To avoid these problems, we rely directly upon individuals' self-assessments of their economic progress during the transition. Therefore we assume that the population can be placed along a continuum of winners and losers and that this continuum can best be measured by individual self-assessment.

Our third assumption is that attitudes towards EU membership are not a result of one's political party preference in transitional democracies. While a number of studies treat party support as a measure of EU attitudes in the West European context (Anderson 1998; Taggart 1998), we question the appropriateness of such a technique in the post-communist context. Recent studies have produced evidence of considerable distance between party elite and supporter positions on a host of reform-oriented issues, including European integration (Kitschelt et al. 1999). Moreover, we find it theoretically implausible that on such a fundamental concern as membership in the EU, voters would be likely to take their cue from such new political parties. This dynamic is due both to the presence of so many new parties and the constant fluctuations between parties being in power and being marginalized.[2]

Our predictions can therefore be concisely stated. First, winners who have done well by the transition are likely to support EU membership as it ensures a continuation of the transition process from which they have benefited; losers who have been hurt by the transition will oppose this step. Second, respondents who support the free market will be more likely to support EU membership. Third, these effects will be present even after controlling for demographic effects; in other words, the relationships we predict are not mere proxies for underlying demographic effects. In addition, we consider the possibility that citizens' orientation towards the EU may have an effect on their political party preferences.[3]

Description of Data and Variables

For our analysis, we rely upon data from the 1996 Central and Eastern European Eurobarometer (CEEB) survey (Cunningham 1996).[4] The CEEB data set is not without its drawbacks—most notably it only asks a small number of questions—but it remains attractive due to its cross-national coverage. The 1996 CEEB survey included

[2]While it would be desirable to test this assumption quantitatively, the data available for this project were not sufficiently rich to allow for the necessary models. Therefore, the direction of causality between political party preference and preference over EU membership remains a theoretical question (see below for further discussion). Moreover, we are suspicious of any attempt to use the same survey data to specify the positions of political parties (i.e., hypothesis building) and assess the effects of those positions (i.e., hypothesis testing).

[3]We also considered testing the effect of citizens' proclivity towards democracy as a potential explanatory variable. Unfortunately, the CEEB survey did not contain appropriate measures.

[4]We chose the 1996 survey because it dealt most explicitly with EU issues for post-communist countries (Cunningham 1996). It remains to be seen how time-serial data will affect our findings.

approximately 1000 respondents each from ten post-communist countries considering membership in the EU: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovenia.[5]

For our dependent variable in this analysis, we use the answer to the following question: "If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of (OUR COUNTRY'S) membership, would you personally vote for or against membership?"[6] We grouped respondents into four categories: support EU membership, oppose EU membership, would not vote in such a referendum, and undecided/don't know/no answer.[7] There is a similarly straightforward variable for respondents' attitudes towards the market economy. Respondents were asked "Do you personally feel that the creation of a free market economy, that is one largely free from state control, is right or wrong for (OUR COUNTRY'S) future?" Those who answered yes were coded as a 1; those who said no were coded as a 0.[8]

As noted above, we chose not to ascribe winner or loser status to respondents on the basis of their socioeconomic characteristics, relying instead on self-assessment. To do so, we used traditional measures of economic self-assessment long used in the economic voting literature. Voters in the survey were asked to place their evaluation of their own financial situation over the past twelve months on a five-point scale ranging from "got a lot better" to "got a lot worse." They were also asked to answer this question in terms of their anticipated financial situation over the next twelve months along the same scale. While the two measures were closely correlated (r =.50), they were not identical. Rather than rely on either measure, we combined them in a single measure. Our intuition was that the strongest "winners" were those who both thought their financial situation had improved most over the past twelve months and who thought that it would continue to improve over the next twelve months. Likewise, the biggest losers were those who thought things had gotten a lot worse and would continue to get a lot worse.[9] Technically, the measure was calculated by taking the mean of each voter's score across both categories.[10] For ease of interpretation, we rescaled the variable along a 0–1 continuum (as we did with all of our independent variables). The distribution of this variable is listed in Table 1.

For demographic control variables, we include: gender, education, age, residency, profession, and income. The latter three are included as a series of dummy variables (with one category excluded) so as to not assume any ordinal or linear relationships.[11]

Empirical Findings

As the dependent variable in the analysis is categorical and nonordered, an appropriate model for analysis is Multinomial Logit (MNL). We focus here on substantive quantities of interest, namely the effect that our primary independent variables have on an individual's likelihood of supporting EU membership.[12] To reiterate our predic-

[5]The process of being officially considered for membership in the EU began for Hungary and Poland in 1994, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia in 1995, and the Czech Republic and Slovenia in 1996 (Cichowski 2000).

[6]As a robustness test, we also conducted our analyses using an alternative survey question as the dependent variable that asked respondents "As you might know, fifteen states of 'Western' Europe form together the 'European Union'. Would you say that your impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union are generally positive, neutral, or negative?" The results presented below were robust to using the alternative measure of attitudes towards the EU.

[7]The question actually had five coded responses, with undecided and don't know/no answer as separate categories. Since the two categories are not very distinct substantively, we collapsed them, but the results are robust to rescaling the variable in its five-category format.

[8]Slightly fewer than 18 percent of the respondents were coded as "don't know." We reran our analyses including these respondents using a series of dummy variables for the three responses. The results were robust to this respecification. The only additional insight gained is, not surprisingly, that the respondents that failed to answer this question also tended towards the "don't know/no answer" and the "would not vote" categories of the dependent variable.

[9]Results are robust to respecifying the variable as either retrospective or prospective evaluation. When we use either alone we find the same results, albeit with slightly smaller effects. When we include both measures in the analysis, we again find the same results, although it appears that the prospective variable is doing more of the work; but even in this case we still find the retrospective variable helpful.

[10]Respondents were assigned a value on this scale as long as they answered at least one of the two questions. If they answered both questions (92 percent of respondents), the "winner" value was the mean of the two answers. If they answered only one of the two (7 percent), the "winner" value was the value of the one nonmissing response; only 1 percent refused to answer both questions.

[11]The excluded variables are residence in a village/rural area, "other" occupation, and income in the third quartile. In two of the single country analyses (Bulgaria and Poland), some of the demographic variables predicted categories perfectly, resulting in nonsensical coefficients and standard errors. For these countries, we dropped the variables in question. The key results of interest were robust to these changes.

[12]Predicted probabilities were calculated using stochastic simulation. Demographic variables were held at their mean, and the explanatory variables were set at the various levels noted in the figures. Reported probabilities are the mean of the 1000 simulated predicted probabilities generated by *Clarify* 1.3 (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2000) used in conjunction with *Stata* 6.0.

Table 1 Distribution of "Winners" Across the Sample by Percentage

Winner Value	Full Sample	Bulg.	Czech Rep.	Slovak.	Esto.	Hun.	Latvia	Lith.	Poland	Rom.	Sloven.
0	8.5	29.7	3.1	6.0	3.5	19.2	7.4	6.6	5.8	1.6	2.3
.125	6.6	10.8	4.4	5.3	3.5	13.3	5.0	3.4	3.5	2.3	2.6
.25	17.4	19.3	13.9	16.7	11.8	24.6	20.7	18.2	14.6	5.9	12.1
.375	16.8	17.3	17.2	16.4	16.4	16.7	17.5	17.3	17.1	12.4	19.7
.5	26.6	14.7	32.0	26.0	28.4	17.7	29.1	33.8	30.5	25.9	36.4
.625	13.0	5.2	15.5	15.8	18.8	5.5	11.2	11.8	14.9	29.6	16.9
.75	8.7	2.6	10.9	11.4	14.6	2.8	8.0	7.9	9.6	17.5	8.3
.875	1.6	0.2	2.2	1.7	1.9	0.1	1.0	0.5	2.3	4.3	1.0
1	0.8	0.3	0.8	0.7	1.2	0.1	0.2	0.5	1.7	0.5	0.6

tions, we expect that individuals who are winners will be more likely to support EU membership than those who are losers. In addition, we predict that individuals who favor a free market economy will be more supportive of EU membership than those who do not.

As a first cut, we consider all respondents simultaneously in a single pooled dataset, with the caveat that these are general effects and may be masking country-by-country variation (which we address below). Coefficients and standard errors for the pooled analysis can be found in the first column of Table 2; predicted probabilities are plotted in Figure 1. Figure 1 clearly demonstrates support for both of the primary hypotheses. Even controlling for demographic effects, moving from being a loser to a winner increases one's likelihood of supporting EU membership (denoted by the line with the square markers). Likewise, support for a free market economy has a large effect on the probability of supporting EU membership, as we can see by the across the board higher probabilities of supporting membership and lower probabilities of opposing membership (triangle markers) in the bottom panel, regardless of winner status. And taken together, the effects are dramatic: an extreme "loser" who opposes the free market only has slightly more than a 30 percent chance of supporting EU membership, while an extreme "winner" who supports the free market has an almost 70 percent chance of supporting EU membership. Conversely, an extreme loser who opposed the free market had an almost 20 percent chance of opposing EU membership, while an extreme winner who supported the free market had less than a 5 percent chance of opposing membership. Moreover, a quick glance at the coefficients and standard errors in Table 2 shows that not only are these effects substantively meaningful, they are also statistically significant. Thus the central point of our analysis is clear: winners and supporters of the free market are more likely to support EU membership.

Figure 1 also gives us an opportunity to observe the effects of winner/loser status and support for the free market on the probability of a respondent declaring that they did not plan to vote (star markers) or that they did not have an opinion on the matter (diamond markers). Interestingly, we see largely the same patterns here as we did for the "oppose EU membership" category. In both cases, the probability of giving this answer decreases as one moves from loser to winner status and as one switches from opposing the free market to supporting the free market. Thus it appears that as the probability of supporting EU membership goes up, the increased support is drawn not just from the ranks of those who opposed EU membership, but also from those who might otherwise not vote or not have an opinion. These results illustrate the advantages of MNL analysis and should also be taken as a warning against merely modeling either of these categories as an intermediary category (e.g., Cichowski 2000).

Although Figure 1 contains no information about demographic effects, Table 2 allows us to make a number of observations. As one might expect, older citizens are less likely to support EU membership, and, in general, residents of rural areas and small towns are less likely than their more urban counterparts to favor membership (although, quite surprisingly, there is no significant difference between residents of capital cities and rural villages). Men seem to be somewhat less likely to support membership than women are. Somewhat surprisingly, after controlling for loser/winner status and support for the free market, more educated people are more likely to oppose EU membership than support it, abstain from voting, or even not have an opinion. It is also interesting to note that almost none of the occupation or income variables seem to have important effects—all have low coefficients and relatively high standard errors. Overall, the demographic picture is murky and seems devoid of clear patterns, standing in marked contrast to the key explanatory variables of the study.

TABLE 2 Country-by-Country MNL Analysis of Preference for EU Membership. Pro-EU Membership Coefficients with Standard Errors in Parentheses

	Pooled	Bulgaria	Czech	Slovakia	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovenia
Winner	1.320***	2.560***	2.847***	.044	1.870***	1.645***	1.974***	2.229***	–.134	2.170**	2.488***
	(.182)	(.961)	(.653)	(.650)	(.539)	(.608)	(.639)	(.771)	(.684)	(1.071)	(.599)
Support Free Market	1.048***	2.007***	1.062***	1.213***	.002	1.475***	1.024***	.461	1.032***	.450	.655***
	(.079)	(.489)	(.257)	(.289)	(.229)	(.242)	(.259)	(.297)	(.303)	(.502)	(.203)
Male	–.234***	–.042	–.578**	–.443	.202	.191	–.191	–.819***	–.848***	–.056	–.223
	(.077)	(.380)	(.244)	(.271)	(.211)	(.230)	(.246)	(.308)	(.293)	(.404)	(.199)
Education	–.346***	.143	–.017	.663	–.722	–.554	.187	–1.549**	–.246	–.041	–.659**
	(.133)	(.720)	(.415)	(.460)	(.446)	(.370)	(.451)	(.666)	(.493)	(.765)	(.329)
Age	–.841**	–4.105***	–.765	–1.694	–1.369	–2.046*	–.973	1.868	–.291	.619	.945
	(.329)	(1.244)	(.969)	(1.136)	(.883)	(1.060)	(.938)	(1.353)	(.883)	(1.830)	(.953)
Capital	.076	.515	.116	–1.585*	.476*	.410	.440	.611	—	1.122	.319
	(.114)	(.765)	(.470)	(.872)	(.276)	(.322)	(.338)	(.429)		(.794)	(.300)
Other Big City	.288***	–.050	.330	–1.208	.889***	–.195	–.516	1.083***	—	.115	.511
	(.104)	(.485)	(.358)	(.768)	(.331)	(.322)	(.355)	(.408)		(.467)	(.327)
Smaller town	.247**	.727	–.006	–.928	.475	–.129	.195	.894**	—	.944	.201
	(.101)	(.521)	(.340)	(.775)	(.307)	(.321)	(.375)	(.425)		(.771)	(.229)
Occ: State-Owned	.286**	—	.373	–.227	.217	–.414	.284	–.006	—	.091	.221
	(.128)		(.378)	(.411)	(.453)	(.479)	(.393)	(.488)		(.579)	(.357)
Occ: Priv. Sector	–.192	—	.049	.332	–.332	–.658	.372	–.517	—	.728	–.151
	(.120)		(.350)	(.448)	(.350)	(.421)	(.389)	(.448)		(.837)	(.343)
Occ: Pensioner	.405***	—	.722	–.037	–.287	.477	.348	.067	—	–.030	.529
	(.156)		(.512)	(.552)	(.523)	(.502)	(.449)	(.712)		(.767)	(.455)
Occ: Unemployed	.168	—	–.440	–.340	–.024	–.384	.207	.378	—	–.406	.072
	(.163)		(.891)	(.545)	(.395)	(.471)	(.453)	(.618)		(.749)	(.424)
Occ: Civil Service	–.053	—	2.002	.658	.025	.433	–.617	.419	—	–.273	–.061
	(.158)		(1.087)	(1.104)	(.395)	(.537)	(.557)	(.607)		(.880)	(.358)
Income 1st Quartile	–.139	—	–.569	–.412	.658*	.203	–.086	.104	–.681	.233	–.403
	(.125)		(.389)	(.457)	(.368)	(.438)	(.434)	(.466)	(.419)	(.635)	(.338)
Income 2nd Quartile	–.082	—	–.245	.249	.266	–.131	.266	.898*	–.663*	.093	–.255
	(.109)		(.368)	(.446)	(.290)	(.307)	(.330)	(.510)	(.390)	(.517)	(.303)
Income 4th Quartile	.162	—	.076	–.696*	–.113	.154	.504	.400	.431	1.099	.149
	(.115)		(.390)	(.412)	(.303)	(.377)	(.365)	(.375)	(.489)	(.696)	(.307)
Income Not Reported	–.050	—	–.250	.152	–.923**	.176	.613	1.292*	.903	–.386	–.448
	(.138)		(.416)	(.462)	(.422)	(.395)	(.554)	(.692)	(1.073)	(.715)	(.319)
Constant	.885***	2.881***	.097	3.096***	.317	.974*	–.172	–.062	2.632***	1.208	–.398
	(.201)	(.921)	(.634)	(1.021)	(.610)	(.579)	(.646)	(.911)	(.715)	(1.110)	(.554)

Note: "Oppose Membership" is the base category

***p < .001, **p<.05, *.p<.01

TABLE 2 *(continued)*

Don't Know / Undecided Coefficients with Standard Errors in Parentheses

	Pooled	Bulgaria	Czech	Slovakia	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovenia
Winner	.584***	1.129	2.502***	.384	.797	1.164*	.924	.357	–.578	–.104	1.427**
	(.194)	(.973)	(.699)	(.677)	(.523)	(.695)	(.636)	(.767)	(.782)	(1.172)	(.665)
Support Free Market	.313***	1.368***	.175	.519*	–.346	1.026***	.653**	.258	–.173	.237	.208
	(.084)	(.498)	(.279)	(.303)	(.221)	(.275)	(.260)	(.299)	(.342)	(.542)	(.226)
Male	–.619***	–.427	–1.118***	–.882***	–.697***	–.282	–.440*	–.896***	–1.28***	–.386	–.442**
	(.082)	(.383)	(.261)	(.281)	(.206)	(.263)	(.246)	(.310)	(.332)	(.443)	(.221)
Education	–.542***	–1.722**	–.370	.013	–1.24***	–.813*	.076	–2.025***	–.805	–1.494*	–.870**
	(.142)	(.726)	(.449)	(.482)	(.432)	(.420)	(.448)	(.670)	(.571)	(.849)	(.365)
Age	–.439	–3.386***	–1.431	–2.143*	–1.606*	.034	.194	.311	–.289	3.326*	–.143
	(.352)	(1.257)	(1.052)	(1.203)	(.868)	(1.175)	(.920)	(1.362)	(1.019)	(2.011)	(1.075)
Capital	–.130	.229	.348	–.957	–.237	–.212	–.167	–.450	—	.245	–.155
	(.123)	(.787)	(.500)	(.935)	(.264)	(.360)	(.338)	(.439)		(.875)	(.341)
Other Big City	.162	.182	.570	–.327	.451	–.688*	–.482	.340	—	–.022	–.283
	(.110)	(.485)	(.383)	(.819)	(.317)	(.377)	(.343)	(.401)		(.523)	(.386)
Smaller town	–.122	.402	–.026	–.291	–.466	–.357	–.224	.231	—	–.430	–.153
	(.108)	(.527)	(.370)	(.827)	(.304)	(.353)	(.370)	(.417)		(.899)	(.253)
Occ: State-Owned	.187	—	.815**	.235	.066	–.771	.399	.071	—	–.499	.537
	(.136)		(.408)	(.433)	(.442)	(.555)	(.397)	(.482)		(.650)	(.395)
Occ: Priv. Sector	–.134	—	.246	.393	–.305	–.706	.333	–.513	—	.071	–.057
	(.130)		(.385)	(.474)	(.333)	(.471)	(.402)	(.446)		(.927)	(.394)
Occ: Pensioner	.141	—	1.424***	.491	–.809	–.081	.365	.288	—	–.493	.635
	(.165)		(.548)	(.583)	(.505)	(.544)	(.441)	(.704)		(.816)	(.513)
Occ: Unemployed	.168	—	.427	–.139	–.493	–.580	.681	.119	—	–.382	–.067
	(.170)		(.933)	(.572)	(.479)	(.532)	(.439)	(.611)		(.868)	(.492)
Occ: Civil Service	–.055	—	2.166*	1.156	–.630	.096	.149	–.077	—	–.785	.431
	(.170)		(1.120)	(1.137)	(.386)	(.596)	(.538)	(.630)		(1.068)	(.397)
Income 1st Quartile	.261**	—	–.475	–.389	.943***	.447	.214	.323	–.624	.511	–.150
	(.132)		(.422)	(.475)	(.357)	(.489)	(.422)	(.454)	(.472)	(.703)	(.377)
Income 2nd Quartile	.046	—	.007	.208	.312	.152	.297	.750	–.732	.130	–.121
	(.118)		(.395)	(.461)	(.285)	(.363)	(.331)	(.512)	(.445)	(.599)	(.339)
Income 4th Quartile	.056	—	.152	–.777*	.058	.348	.462	.134	–.631	1.276	.087
	(.127)		(.423)	(.436)	(.304)	(.449)	(.372)	(.387)	(.594)	(.777)	(.347)
Income Not Reported	.190	—	–.068	.351	–.398	.742*	.178	1.440**	.289	.331	–.158
	(.148)		(.448)	(.475)	(.391)	(.447)	(.584)	(.686)	(1.163)	(.817)	(.357)
Constant	1.170***	3.932***	.205	2.426**	2.734***	.214	.172	2.476***	2.728***	.467	.251
	(.214)	(.929)	(.682)	(1.073)	(.589)	(.652)	(.637)	(.893)	(.803)	(1.230)	(.611)

Note: "Oppose Membership" is the base category

***p < .001, **p<.05, *.p<.01

TABLE 2 *(continued)*

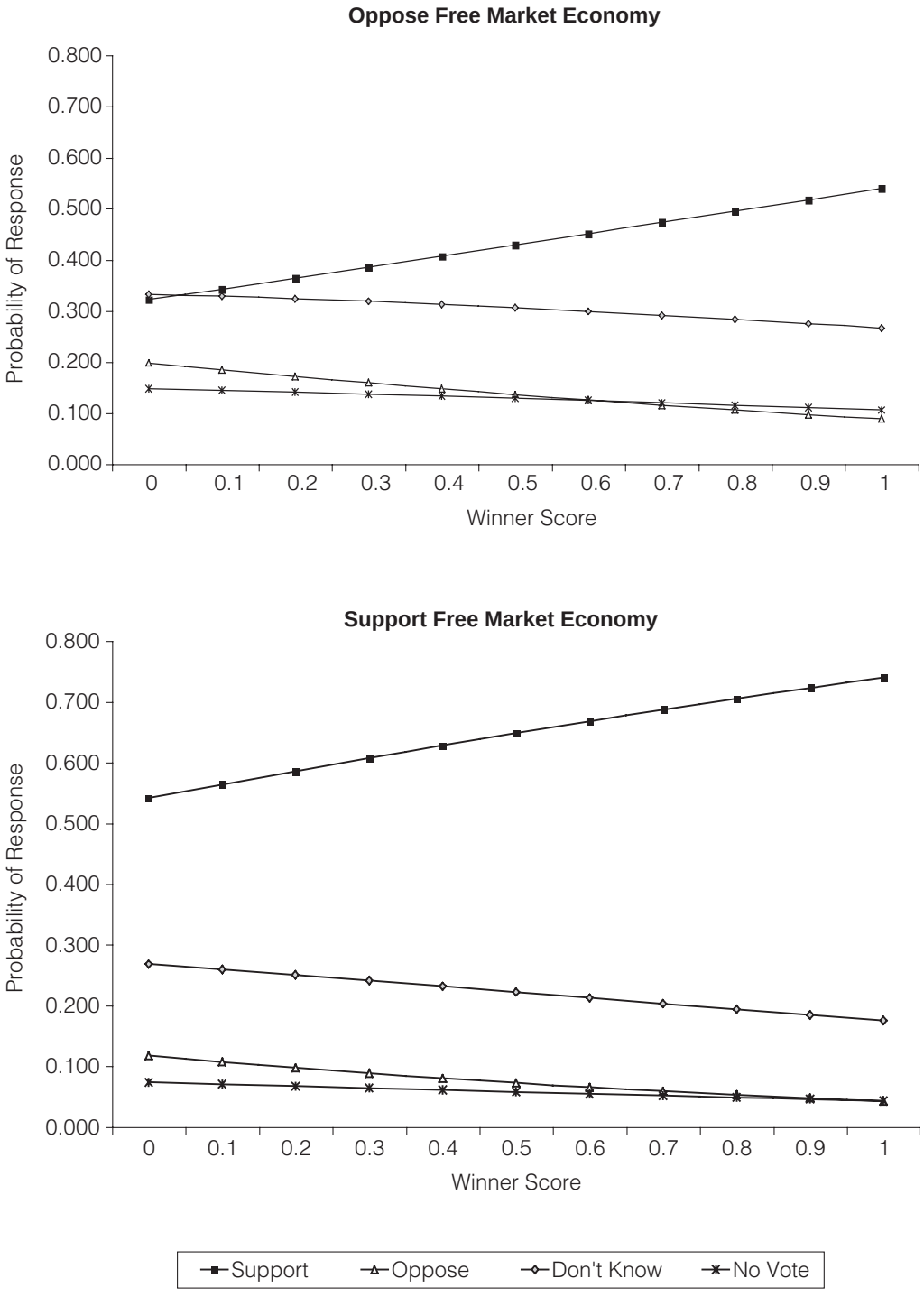
Would Not Vote Coefficients with Standard Errors in Parentheses

	Pooled	Bulgaria	Czech	Slovakia	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovenia
Winner	.472**	1.120	1.528**	.047	.045	−.543	.711	−.485	.283	1.746	1.607*
	(.239)	(1.125)	(.766)	(.758)	(.641)	(1.054)	(.827)	(.864)	(1.199)	(1.532)	(.907)
Support Free Market	−.171	.849	.136	.299	−.586**	.514	−.338	−.384	−.703	−1.003	−.207
	(.105)	(.565)	(.310)	(.339)	(.267)	(.401)	(.353)	(.340)	(.526)	(.674)	(.311)
Male	−.429***	−.081	−.822***	−.619**	−.217	.023	−.076	−.967***	−1.020**	−.625	−.576*
	(.101)	(.447)	(.287)	(.312)	(.253)	(.383)	(.321)	(.344)	(.501)	(.585)	(.299)
Education	−1.028***	−2.908***	−1.326**	−.778	−1.354***	−1.886**	.175	−2.439***	−.955	−.587	−1.577***
	(.175)	(.872)	(.514)	(.547)	(.514)	(.643)	(.584)	(.749)	(.900)	(1.138)	(.485)
Age	−1.255***	−2.100	−1.842	−2.535*	−2.451**	2.245	−1.106	−1.854	−.856	2.138	−1.350
	(.437)	(1.435)	(1.164)	(1.347)	(1.107)	(1.693)	(1.272)	(1.561)	(1.618)	(2.511)	(1.470)
Capital	−.067	2.255**	−.555	−.518	−.048	.519	−.487	−1.201**	—	.245	−.935*
	(.159)	(.894)	(.608)	(1.097)	(.334)	(.509)	(.430)	(.557)		(1.337)	(.551)
Other Big City	.343**	1.011*	.085	−.021	.704*	.388	−.917**	.142	—	.396	−2.208**
	(.134)	(.598)	(.416)	(.951)	(.374)	(.516)	(.462)	(.444)		(.699)	(1.056)
Smaller town	.143	1.385**	−.176	.201	−.195	−.205	−.428	−.001	—	−.168	−.280
	(.132)	(.622)	(.400)	(.958)	(.381)	(.562)	(.457)	(.460)		(1.307)	(.325)
Occ: State-Owned	.119	—	.312	.015	−.013	−.658	.249	−.112	—	−1.217	.305
	(.172)		(.462)	(.489)	(.548)	(.989)	(.536)	(.569)		(1.014)	(.525)
Occ: Priv. Sector	.048	—	.503	.572	−.429	.382	.446	−.314	—	.029	−.414
	(.161)		(.416)	(.515)	(.420)	(.724)	(.533)	(.520)		(1.187)	(.582)
Occ: Pensioner	.309	—	.858	.205	.085	−.388	.526	1.201	—	−.985	.905
	(.205)		(.612)	(.661)	(.618)	(.809)	(.595)	(.776)		(1.000)	(.684)
Occ: Unemployed	.122	—	.821	.080	−.185	.002	.314	.273	—	−.279	−.333
	(.207)		(.891)	(.611)	(.561)	(.828)	(.552)	(.671)		(1.049)	(.685)
Occ: Civil Service	−.000	—	1.767	.623	−.521	.459	.097	.719	—	.117	.387
	(.221)		(1.227)	(1.313)	(.492)	(.918)	(.733)	(.698)		(1.239)	(.543)
Income 1st Quartile	.482***	—	.499	−.280	.863**	−.168	.828	−.072	−.806	1.225	.530
	(.160)		(.481)	(.523)	(.421)	(.688)	(.527)	(.501)	(.712)	(.908)	(.509)
Income 2nd Quartile	−.002	—	.405	.180	.109	−.176	.359	.255	−1.400*	−1.664	.328
	(.150)		(.473)	(.505)	(.359)	(.501)	(.441)	(.557)	(.752)	(1.247)	(.479)
Income 4th Quartile	−.014	—	.516	−.928*	−.084	−.618	.081	−.367	.390	.958	.271
	(.165)		(.501)	(.502)	(.405)	(.758)	(.528)	(.465)	(.759)	(1.004)	(.519)
Income Not Reported	.232	—	.406	.294	−.350	.111	.098	.610	.261	.207	.064
	(.183)		(.521)	(.517)	(2.101)	(.641)	(.816)	(.762)	(1.524)	(1.139)	(.522)
Constant	.656**	1.707	.458	1.983	2.101***	−1.490	−.146	3.796***	1.180	−.795	.037
	(.262)	(1.086)	(.759)	(1.211)	(.719)	(1.012)	(.833)	(.985)	(1.198)	(1.636)	(.821)

Note: "Oppose Membership" is the base category

***p < .001, **p<.05, *.p<.01

FIGURE 1 Pooled Analysis of Attitudes Toward EU Membership



Next, we analyzed the data for each country separately. We first ran ten MNL analyses—one for each country—and then computed the predicted probabilities for each country separately. The coefficients and standard errors are found in Table 2. The substantive results of these analyses are summarized in Figure 2. In an effort to keep the figure readable, we plot only the predicted probabilities of supporting EU membership.[13]

[13]Readers interested in the predicted probabilities for the other categories of the dependent variable can find additional figures at http://www.wws.princeton.edu/~jtucker/pubs.html.

FIGURE 2 Probability of Supporting EU Membership by Country

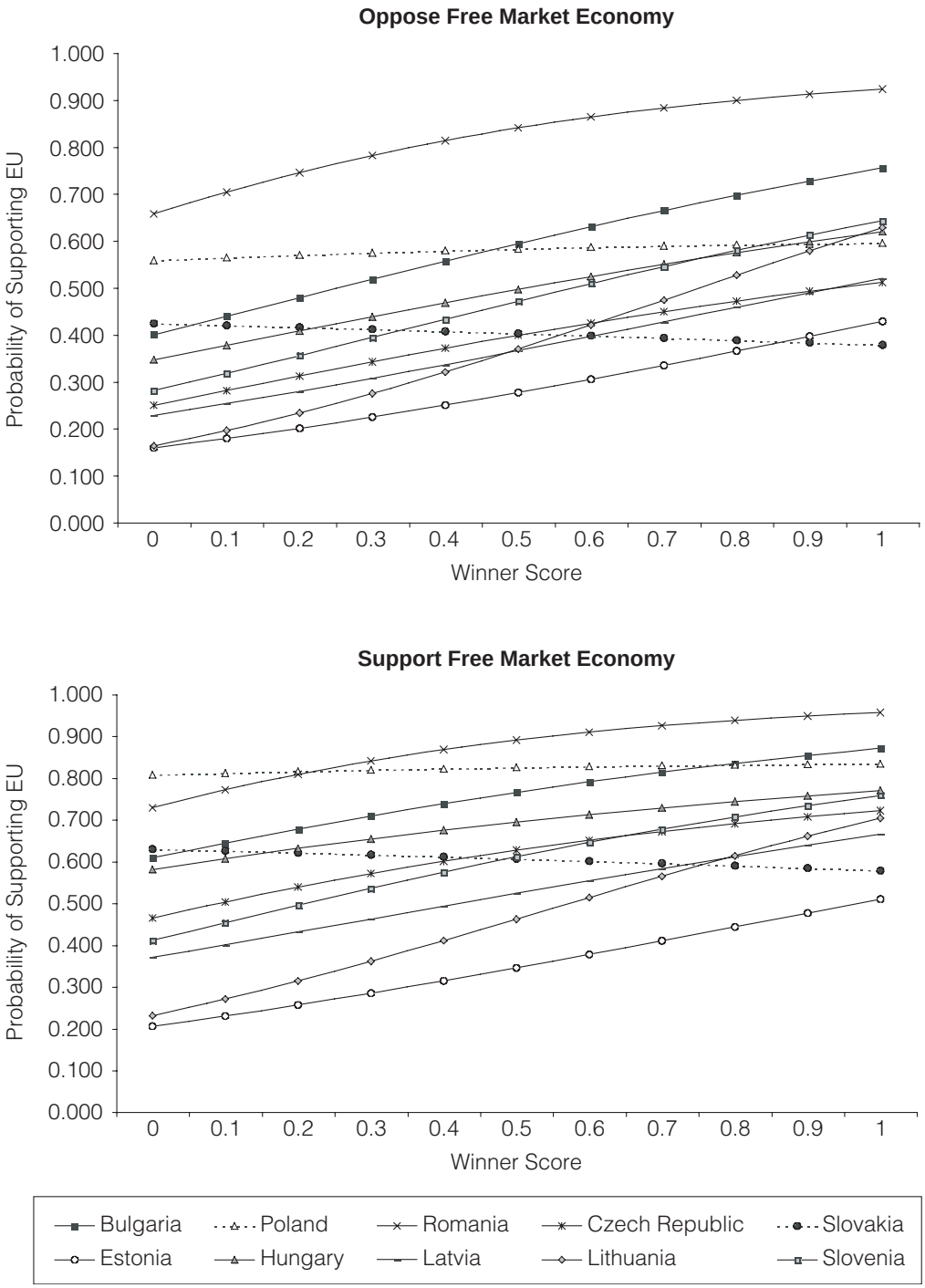


Figure 2 provides strong additional support for both of our central hypotheses. Consider first winner status. Regardless of whether or not one supports the free market, moving from being a loser to a winner has a substantively meaningful effect on the likelihood of supporting the EU in eight out of the ten countries; Table 2 illustrates that these effects are statistically significant as well. Indeed, across these eight countries, the average increase in the likelihood of supporting EU membership as one moves from being a loser to a winner is 29.5 percent for those who support the free market and 31.8 percent for those who oppose the free market. In some cases, the increase is significantly larger: Lithuanian winners who support the free market are 47.3 percent more likely to

support EU membership than Lithuanian losers who support the free market.

Only two countries provide exceptions to the pattern. In Slovakia, the effects are positive but are neither substantively interesting nor statistically significant. In Poland, the effect is in the incorrect direction, but it does not even approach statistical significance. Why these two countries do not follow the same patterns as the other eight is an interesting question for future research, but for the time being we leave this as an interesting puzzle and evidence that there is nothing inherent in our analysis that prevents results that falsify our hypotheses.

Turning to support for the free market, the evidence is even stronger. Across all ten countries, and every single possible value for loser winner/status in all ten countries, the probability of supporting EU membership is always higher when the respondent supports a free market economy. This effect ranges from a fairly insignificant 3.3 percent increase in the likelihood of supporting EU membership for an extreme Romanian winner (winner = 1) to a 24.9 percent increase for an extreme Polish loser (winner = 0).[14] The average value of the effect across all possible combinations was a 15.2 percent increase in the likelihood of supporting EU membership. While the magnitude of this effect is not as large as for loser/winner status, it is striking that the effect is in the correctly predicted direction in every case.

While Figure 2 again does not tell us anything about the effects of demographic variables, a quick glance at Table 2 reveals a fairly inconsistent pattern. An overwhelming majority of the coefficients are nowhere close to being statistically meaningful. In addition, the signs of coefficients switch frequently from country to country, indicating a lack of cross-national consistency in the effects of these variables. Moreover, the findings from the pooled results regarding demographic variables largely disappear. For example, we only have confidence in three out of ten countries (Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic) that men are more likely to oppose than prefer EU membership, two countries (Bulgaria and Hungary) for older people, and two countries (Lithuania and Slovenia) for more educated people (see Table 2). In the other countries, not only are the effects not statistically significant, they are also sometimes in the opposite direction. This stands in marked contrast to the two variables used to test our hypotheses, which are in the correct direction in the first panel (comparing pro-EU to oppose EU) of Table 2 in nineteen out of twenty cases and statistically significant ($p<.05$) in fifteen of those cases.

[14]The low value for the effect in Romania is no doubt due in part to the fact that Romanians had the highest overall support for EU membership, with over 82 percent supporting membership.

In short, we find extremely strong support for our hypotheses' predictions, even controlling for demographic variables. Furthermore, the effects are much more consistently significant and important than the demographic variables.

Speculation on the Effects of EU Membership

The hypotheses tested above were based on an assumption that attitudes towards EU membership are not a function of one's political party preference. Instead, we suggested that attitudes towards joining the EU could have an effect upon the types of parties that voters are likely to prefer. In this section, we develop this line of reasoning further and present some initial speculative evidence in this regard.

If attitudes towards the EU are a function of a fundamental belief on the part of citizens about the ultimate outcome of the transition to a market economy, then it is likely that such attitudes could help structure other political preferences. One possibility is that attitudes concerning EU membership serve to direct citizens toward particular policies and the parties that market them. Like citizens, political parties are faced with the host of issues, benefits, and consequences that EU membership provides. Political parties that direct programmatic appeals to either transitional winners or losers certainly weigh the benefits and costs of EU membership to their respective constituents (Andor 2001; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000). Both the economic and national identity issues that shape attitudes toward the EU are often reflected in the positions of parties on EU membership. Szczerbiak and Taggart note that some parties are predisposed toward "policy Euroskepticism" in large part over economic issues, while "national identity Euroskepticism" involves standing up for the perceived national interest (2000, 3).

To this end, we would expect that voters who support EU membership would gravitate towards pro-EU political parties, while those who oppose EU membership would favor "Euroskeptic" parties. As an initial exploration of this contention, we attempted to see if such patterns could be found in two countries: Slovakia and Hungary. We chose these two countries because both had elections two years prior to the survey (1994) and both would go on to have elections two years after the survey (1998). In this manner, we hoped to hold constant the salience of political competition in the minds of the electorate. Unfortunately, our decision to examine only a

subsection of countries was also dictated by the fact that the data on party preferences in some of the other countries were corrupted in the version of the survey that we received from the ICPSR.[15] Therefore, we advise readers to take the results presented below as merely suggestive of interesting grounds for future research.

To test this contention, we classified parties in our sample according to whether they support EU membership, or express various concerns or objections on the parties' official programs or election manifestos based on the programs made available on each party's website.[16] If the party in question appears to give more or less unqualified support for EU membership, we classified that party as pro-EU. If the particular party expresses outright opposition to or serious reservations about EU membership, then we classified the party as Euroskeptic.[17]

Our dependent variable in this analysis was straightforward; we relied on the following survey question: "If there were a general election tomorrow, which party or block would you vote for, or might you be inclined to vote for?" Because our hypothesis predicts that citizens who support EU membership will gravitate towards EU parties but says nothing about *which* of the pro-EU parties they are likely to support, we coded the dependent variable as a dichotomous variable: either citizens prefer a pro-EU party (dependent variable = 1) or a Euroskeptic party (dependent variable = 0). As independent variables we included dummy variables for each of the four options for the respondent's position on EU membership (omitting the necessary one category, here opposing EU membership). We also included all of the demographic control variables used in the previous section. As the dependent variable is dichotomous, we used binomial logit analysis; the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 suggests that an individual's attitude towards EU membership can have explanatory power for assessing whether an individual is likely to support a pro-EU or Euroskeptic political party. In both cases, the coefficient for the support EU membership dummy variable is positive and statistically significant, meaning we are confident that those who support the EU are more likely to support pro-EU parties than those who oppose EU membership, even after controlling for a range of demographic effects. While it is of course possible that the introduction of other attitudinal variables could reduce these effects, our results support the hypothesis that general feelings about the transition drive the desirability of joining the EU, which in turn drives support for certain types of political parties.

As further evidence in this regard, consider the recently completed 2001 Polish parliamentary election. In this election, two previously insignificant parties, the Self-Defense Party and the Polish Family League, received approximately 17 percent of the vote between them, compared to less than 0.1 percent for Self-Defense in the previous election; the Polish Family League did not even compete in the previous election. While it is too early to present quantitative analysis of survey data from this election, there is a strong consensus in the press that the anti-EU (or Euroskeptic) views of these parties played in an immeasurable role in their electoral success. The Self-Defense party leader, Andrzej Lepper, was best known "for organizing road blockades and violent protests against Poland's pro-European policies" (Maksymiuk 2001), while the Polish Family League "damned the EU as a 'civilisation of death' for what it takes to be the EU's views on abortion and euthanasia" (Economist 2001). As part of their campaign strategy, the League blamed EU accession talks for much of Poland's unemployment; in its platform it promised that "We will abolish the association agreement with the European Union because this agreement causes the Polish economy losses of 20 billion dollars (21.7 billion euros) a year." (Agence France Press 2001). Both parties were routinely labeled—using the very term applied here—as Euroskeptics. While there are undoubtedly many reasons that voters turned to these parties, the fact that their pre-election identity was so closely tied to their concern over Poland's path towards EU membership

[15]After careful investigation, we are confident that the data for the Hungarian and Slovak cases are correct. The only exception is that there was some confusion on the survey concerning the coding of supporters of the Alliance of Free Democrats in Hungary. For this reason, the model was run both including and excluding supporters of the party. The results were practically the same, and we report the version including the party. We found no evidence of data corruption in other areas of the survey.

[16]We are indebted to Leonard Pacek and Suzanne Gyzsely for their assistance in translating party programs. The programs, platforms, and manifestos cover the period from the mid to late 1990s. This raises the question of shifts in party positions on EU membership from the time of the 1996 CEEB surveys used in our analysis. The contention that party programs change over time is not disputed here (see Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987). However, we assume that parties are not likely to change dramatically in such a short period of time on such salient issues.

[17]Our analysis is of course restricted to those parties included in the survey. For Hungary, pro-EU parties include Alliance of Young Democrats, Christian Democratic People's Party, Hungarian Democratic Forum, Hungarian Socialist Party, and Alliance of Free Democrats; parties coded as Euroskeptics are Agrarian Alliance, Independent Smallholders Party, Party of Hungarian Justice and Life, and the Workers Party. For Slovakia, Party of the Democratic Left, Christian Democratic Movement, Coexistence, Slovak Social Democratic Party, Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement, Democratic Party and the Democratic Union are coded as Pro-EU, while the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, Slovak National Party, Association of Workers of Slovakia, and the Green Party of Slovakia are coded as Euroskeptics. We exclude those respondents who did not express a party preference in the hypothetical election.

Table 3 Logit Analysis of Support for Pro-EU Parties in Slovakia and Hungary Coefficients with Standard Errors in Parentheses

	Slovakia	Hungary
Support EU	1.457***	.568*
	(.331)	(.291)
Don't know/Undecided on EU	.498	–.108
	(.353)	(.331)
Wouldn't Vote on EU	.692*	.118
	(.413)	(.522)
Male	–.097	–.512**
	(.192)	(.223)
Education	.947***	1.382***
	(.358)	(.372)
Age	2.457***	–.033
	(.888)	(.987)
Capital	.583	.260
	(.568)	(.312)
Other Big City	.040	.174
	(.436)	(.305)
Smaller Town	–.167	.588*
	(.433)	(.309)
Occ: State-Owned	–.312	.393
	(.327)	(.513)
Occ: Priv. Sector	.090	.237
	(.327)	(.420)
Occ: Pensioner	–.334	.460
	(.409)	(.465)
Occ: Unemployed	–.213	–.469
	(.437)	(.436)
Occ: Civil Service	.104	.055
	(.533)	(.494)
Income 1st Quartile	–.014	–.432
	(.327)	(.395)
Income 2nd Quartile	–.545*	–.041
	(.286)	(.310)
Income 4th Quartile	–.188	–.166
	(.295)	(.368)
Income Not Reported	–.158	–.722*
	(.341)	(.395)
Constant	–1.886**	.024
	(.757)	(.594)

***p < .001, **p<.05, *.p<.01

suggests that this concern must have played a nontrivial role in attracting supporters; it would be extremely surprising if future survey analysis did not bare out this conclusion. If so, then it provides clear anecdotal evidence of a case where party support was in fact driven by voters' attitudes towards the EU.

Discussion and Implications

How citizens form opinions regarding potential EU membership is a question of interest to both policy makers and scholars alike. The vast majority of the empirical work on this topic has examined evidence from Western Europe. Forays into the post-communist context are limited, and have largely consisted of applying a series of hypotheses generated from the West European studies to a subsample of the post-communist cases with mixed findings (Tverdova and Anderson 2000; Cichowski 2000). Our contribution to this literature, therefore, is threefold. First, we have presented a theoretical model designed explicitly for the post-communist context. Second, we have expanded the analysis of this model to include ten post-communist applicant nations. Finally, we have reported a series of remarkably consistent empirical findings. Regardless of demographic characteristics, post-communist citizens that support the free market economy and are transitional "winners" are more likely to support membership in the EU. Demographic characteristics, in turn, prove to have weak and inconsistent effects cross-nationally. In addition, we move the debate forward by considering not only the causes of attitudes towards EU membership, but by speculating on the effects of attitudes towards EU membership on partisan preferences as well.

The results of our analysis provide strong evidence that the extent of support for membership in the European Union among post-communist citizens is in large part a function of the effects of the economic transition during the previous decade. Those who have benefited—as well as those who have lost—form opinions in a manner that is consistent with our theoretical proposition that citizens in transition countries view EU membership as a continuation of free market reforms, and thus support or oppose membership accordingly. Moreover, attitudes about EU membership may help citizens make sense of political information during elections in an environment of volatility and uncertainty. These findings have critical implications for an understanding of how post-communist citizens evaluate information, political economy, and the future of post-communist countries in an integrated Europe.

First, our findings enable us to understand the extent to which processes in East Central and Southeast Europe mirror those in the West. While similarities abound in the general factors that shape mass attitudes in both West and East Europe, crucial differences exist as well. There is no West European equivalent to the enormous social and economic shifts underway across the former communist world, and thus no equivalent to their effects on citizens as well. In forming opinions on critical issues such as EU membership, post-communist citizens face greater

uncertainty than their western counterparts. While it would be foolish to suggest that we ignore the rich theoretical contribution of studies focused on the advanced industrial democracies, it behooves us to consider the particulars of the post-communist experience as well.

Second, our focus on the societal division of winners and losers links our study to several other topics of inquiry in the field of post-communist politics. The impact of this division has been observed with respect to support for parties (Tucker 2001; Fidrmuc 2000; Gibson and Cielecka 1995; Evans and Whitefield 1993; Kitschelt 1992), electoral participation (Bohrer, Pacek, and Radcliff 2000), and support for incumbent post-communist governments (Powers and Cox 1997). Our study complements these previous works by demonstrating that one's status in the wake of the transition is a powerful determinant of support for a critical issue.

Third, our findings highlight the effect that attitudes toward the EU have in different areas. Previous studies have argued that post-communist voters use their party attachment as a proxy in answering questions about EU membership (Cichowski 2000; Anderson 1998). We suggest an alternate theoretical approach; post-communist citizens use their opinions about EU membership to direct their support toward particular political parties. Positions on such critical issues can help citizens sift through uncertain information in choosing new governments.

Finally, our analysis sheds light on the extent to which domestic and international factors are closely intertwined in the post-communist context. For citizens of East Central and Southeast Europe, membership in the EU is more than simply an international issue. Rather, it closely parallels the ongoing reform process and its consequences throughout the region. This in turn implies that shifts in perceptions about the reform process have concomitant effects on support for the EU. Whether or not the EU plays a critical role in promulgating the reforms underway in East Central and Southeast Europe, it will certainly be affected by the consequences of those reforms across the region.

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