Eastern European Attitudes to Integration with Western Europe

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes to membership of the EU and NATO amongst countries in Central and Eastern Europe are analyzed. Analysis of Eurobarometer data suggests that support for membership depends upon both self interest and satisfaction with the free market economy.

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1. Introduction

The countries of central and eastern Europe are in the midst of seeking membership of both the EU and NATO. The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary joined NATO in 1999 and further expansion is scheduled for November 2002 with respect to nine countries including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia. At the same time these countries are at various stages of accession to the EU. There are two reasons why the citizens of these countries should be ready to subordinate some degree of newly won national sovereignty to wider economic and political institutions. First, self-interest, i.e. people believe that they will be better off by membership. Secondly, a form of civic duty (Orviska and Hudson, Forthcoming) whereby individuals feel membership is in the interests of the community.

The loss of sovereignty impacts throughout the country, although more on the capital which is the centre of national decision making. However, the other benefits and costs of EU accession are likely to be spread unevenly throughout the population. Membership can be expected to supplement the transition process to a free market economy and those who have done well in this process, particularly those at the higher end of a widening income scale can be expected to support accession. On the other hand, under the terms of EU accession farmers will not receive the same subsidies as potential competitors in existing members states for several years, and thus farmers and those who live in rural areas are likely to be less in favor of accession than others. EU membership implies greater export opportunities which can affect all the regions, but enhanced inward investment tends to focus more on the capital than

elsewhere, partially compensating for the loss of political power. The self employed may both lose from greater competition and gain from greater opportunities. NATO membership is more connected with the retention of new freedoms and opportunities, rather than their extension, together with greater security from future conflict.. These 'benefits' are more evenly spread throughout the population, although again those who have done well in the transition process will be expected to be most supportive of membership.

Civic duty in part extends to a concern for others, such as the consequences for the poor and the elderly of the erosion of the state and a weakened welfare safety net. But in this case the civic duty element is complicated by the question of civic duty to whom. There is evidence that identification with Europe, or Europeanization, is a factor in determining support for EU/NATO membership (White et al, 2002). Apart from economic factors individuals may also be influenced by requirements to accept the rule of law, respect for human rights, maintain a liberal democratic system and accept the *acquis communitaire*, the entire body of EU law prior to accession.

2. The Data

Insert Table 1 about here.

The data is derived from the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer (CEEB) surveys carried out in 1995, 1996 and 1997[1]. The countries interviewed in the 1997 survey are shown in Table 1, other countries were also interviewed in the earlier studies but the analysis was restricted to

the countries available in 1997. Table 1 shows the proportion in favor of joining the EU and

NATO. Romania, Bulgaria and Poland have consistently high support for membership of both

organizations and Latvia and Estonia have the lowest support. Support is typically greater for

EU membership than NATO. Table 2 indicates that almost a third of the sample lie in off

diagonal positions, e.g. supporting membership of NATO whilst opposing it for the EU *or*

vice versa. This suggests that there are underlying differences in the two attitudes and hence a

desire for Europeanization is not the sole factor in their determination.

Insert Table 2 about here.

   The explanatory variables in the regressions include both socio-economic variables,

attitudes to the freemarket and macroeconomic variables. The socio-economic variables

largely reflect self-interest. Education may also proxy civic duty, but the main variable

representing non-self interest is attitudes to whether the free market *is good for the country*.

Given an individual's socio-economic status any additional effect of such attitudes on

EU/NATO membership reflects the impact of what is perceived as being in the country's

interests upon individual attitudes to membership.

3. Empirical Analysis

The results of the regressions are shown in Table 3. The first three columns relate to attitudes

to EU membership. Column 1 reports the results of using only socio-economic variables

[1] This being the final year the survey was carried out. Further details on the survey can be found in various issues of CEEB, e.g. 1998.

together with time and country dummy variables. Support for accession significantly[2] increases

with the respondent's income and education. It is also greater for students. However, those

who live in villages and those engaged in farming are significantly more hostile to membership.

The result of adding free market attitudes is reported in column 2. It too is significant and its

inclusion does not impact upon the significance of the other variables. The country dummy

variables indicate that the Romanians, Poles and Bulgarians are most positive in support of EU

membership, other things being equal, with the Baltic states being least favourable. In the third

column we replace the country dummy variables with two macroeconomic variables, GNP

per capita and GNP per capita in 1991 at the beginning of the transition process. These are

both significant and indicate that people are more in favor of accession the better the economy

is doing relative to its position at the start of the transition process. The other variables retain

their earlier pattern of significance.

The results in column 4 show that attitudes to NATO accession are determined by

different factors to those for the EU. Firstly, neither education nor the dummy variables for

those who live in villages or work on farms are significant. However, the self employed and

men are now significantly in favor of membership, with those who live in capital cities

significantly more likely to be opposed. Both income and the dummy variable for students

retain their earlier signs and significance. The remaining two columns show that, similar to the

earlier results for the EU, people opposed to the free market are significantly less likely to

support NATO membership and favorable movements in the impact of trends in GNP per

capita also impact positively on attitudes to membership[3]. The pattern of country dummy

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[2] Throughout we use a 1% level of significance.
[3] However, the regression results indicate that such trends are not sufficient to fully explain inter country differences reflected by the dummy variables.

variables suggests that Romania is again most enthusiastic in support of membership, with Slovakia being least favorable. The Baltic states no longer form such a noticeable set of outliers.

Insert Table 3 about here.

4. Conclusions

The significance of attitudes to the free market, the greater likelihood of students to support both forms of accession, and even perhaps the significance of GNP per capita and the country dummy variables point to the significance of factors other than self-interest in determining attitudes to accession. However, the varying significance of the remaining variables point to the importance of self interest. These include the increase in support for EU membership with education and the greater hostility from farmers and those living in rural areas. The self employed are, as expected, not significantly different in their attitudes to EU membership, but they unambiguously support NATO membership. Equally as interesting perhaps is the greater preference of men to join NATO, which may reflect that in any conflict it is they who are at greatest risk. Finally the greater aversity of those living in capital cities to NATO, but not EU, accession may also reflect a sophisticated calculation of self, or at least civic interest[4].

Thus for political and economic unions, and this may apply equally to existing as well as prospective ones, popular support appears to at least partly depend upon a calculation of self interest. Politicians may speak of 'the tide of history' and the 'noble task of reuniting Europe'[5]

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[4] Where this is based on the immediate locality rather than the country.
[5] The President of the Commission, Romano Prodi when addressing the Spaak Foundation in October 2000.

and appeals to some sort of shared ideal based on a sense of civic duty may help cement

support, but unless people actually benefit from the union such appeals are unlikely to be

successful

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Data Appendix: Variable Definitions

Dependent Variables

Join EU/NATO   Responses to how they would vote in a referendum on EU/NATO membership, coded: 0 vote for, 1 undecided and 2 vote against.

Independent Variables

SEX   Takes a 1 if the respondent is female, otherwise 0.

EDUCN   The highest level of education achieved, ranges from a 1 (up to elementary) to 4 (higher education).

LAGE   Log of Age in years

LINCOME   Log of household income prior to tax using an increasing scale of 1 to 16

UNEMP/SELFE/   Takes a 1 if the respondent is unemployed/self employed/a farmer/student,
FARM/STUDENT   otherwise 0.

CITY/CAPITAL/   Takes a 1 if the respondent lives in a non-capital city/ capital city/village,
VILLAGE   otherwise 0.

FREEMKT   Responses to a question which 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 "right" were coded 0. The alternative includes 'dont knows', but not those who declined to answer.

DUM9X,   Dummy variables operative if the questionnaire was carried out in 199X.

GNPPC   GNP per capita (constant 1995 US$) in the year current to the survey time

GNPPC91[a]   GNP per capita (constant 1995 US$) in 1991 at the beginning of the transition process

[a]Except for Slovenia were data was not available for 1991 and 1992 was used instead..

Table 1: Support[a] (%) for membership of EU and NATO

	Bulgaria	Czech	Slovak	Estonia	Hungary	Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Romania	Slovenia
EU										
1995	71.86 [3]	56.79 [9]	65.78 [5]	51.89 [10]	64.67 [6]	58.11 [8]	62.65 [7]	78.48 [2]	86.25 [1]	66.10 [4]
1996	71.70 [3]	58.50 [7]	59.16 [6]	37.88 [10]	59.97 [4]	49.69 [9]	53.60 [8]	79.54 [2]	89.70 [1]	59.27 [5]
1997	74.90 [3]	62.42 [7]	73.38[4]	43.08 [10]	68.89 [6]	49.23 [9]	52.41 [8]	76.24 [2]	83.32 [1]	70.72 [5]
NATO										
1995	44.08 [6]	42.54 [8]	42.38 [9]	45.36 [5]	43.64 [7]	41.42 [10]	58.97 [3]	80.25 [2]	82.00 [1]	58.53 [4]
1996	45.15 [5]	39.53 [7]	35.39 [8]	33.65 [10]	43.31 [6]	34.10 [9]	46.94 [4]	78.18 [2]	88.35 [1]	53.96 [3]
1997	52.11 [5]	45.88 [6]	38.18 [8]	34.64 [10]	59.37 [3]	36.38 [9]	42.44 [7]	75.36 [2]	76.36 [1]	56.99 [4]

[a]Proportion of those repsonding who supported membership, alternative includes dont know, [.] denotes an ordering of support.

Table 2: The Pattern of Support for EU and NATO membership

EU Membership	NATO membership		
	Favor	DK	Against
Favor	47.5%	9.4%	8.3%
Don't Know (DK)	7.0%	13.8%	2.8%
Against	4.0%	1.2%	6.2%

Table 3: Ordered Probit Regression Results

	In Favour of Joining:					
	Join EU	Join EU	Join EU	Join NATO	Join NATO	Join NATO
Constant	-0.038	-0.0242	-0.697	0.0873	0.142	-0.0897
	(0.30)	(1.19)	(5.92)	(0.71)	(1.15)	(0.80)
SEX	0.0224	0.0186	0.0321	0.104	0.101	0.108
	(1.25)	(1.04)	(1.82)	(6.04)	(5.89)	(6.39)
EDUCN	-0.0836	-0.0804	-0.0797	-0.0233	-0.0199	-0.0342
	(8.03)	(7.73)	(7.95)	(2.32)	(1.98)	(3.57)
LAGE	0.0290	0.0229	0.0432	-0.00383	-0.00977	-0.0306
	(1.10)	(0.87)	(1.66)	(0.15)	(0.39)	(1.21)
LINCOME	-0.0992	-0.0951	-0.0518	-0.0669	-0.0630	-0.0749
	(5.42)	(5.20)	(3.14)	(3.81)	(3.59)	(4.73)
SELFE	-0.0782	-0.0756	-0.0713	-0.127	-0.124	-0.118
	(1.95)	(1.87)	(1.77)	(3.27)	(3.18)	(3.05)
CITY	-0.0367	-0.0347	-0.0207	0.0408	0.0420	0.0478
	(1.44)	(1.35)	(0.82)	(1.68)	(1.73)	(2.03)
CAPITAL	-0.0352	-0.0326	0.0283	0.0865	0.0883	0.103
	(1.25)	(1.15)	(1.06)	(3.21)	(3.27)	(4.00)
VILLAGE	0.124	0.124 0.109	0.0373	0.0367	-0.0149	
	(5.21)	(5.21)	(4.70)	(1.63)	(1.60)	(0.67)
DUM95	-0.0298	0.00862	-0.0766	-0.0169	0.0221	-0.0522
	(1.40)	(0.40)	(3.55)	(0.84)	(1.07)	(2.55)
DUM96	0.0820	0.124	0.0756	-0.0165	0.0249	-0.0244
	(3.82)	(5.73)	(3.55)	(0.78)	(1.16)	(1.16)
BULGAR	-0.365	-0.367		0.144 0.144		
	(8.45)	(8.48)		(3.64)	(3.63)	
CZECH	0.0721	0.0769		0.268 0.273		
	(1.88)	(2.00)		(7.22)	(.7.35)	
SLOVAK	-0.195	-0.191		0.317 0.322		
	(5.19)	(5.08)		(8.80)	(8.98)	
ESTONIA	0.358 0.363			0.241 0.245		
	(9.62)	(9.75)		(6.45)	(6.56)	
HUNGARY	-0.174	-0.175		0.0236	0.0257	
	(4.27)	(4.30)		(0.61)	(0.66)	
LATVIA	0.163 0.163			0.236 0.237		
	(3.93)	(3.92)		(5.67)	(5.70)	
LITHUAN	0.147	0.144		0.00560	0.0347	
	(3.72)	(3.65)		(0.14)	(0.09)	
POLE	-0.513	-0.503		-0.734	-0.724	
	(13.26)	(12.98)		(18.77)	(18.51)	
ROMANIA	-0.878	-0.577		-0.877	-0.859	
	(21.41)	(20.85)		(22.90)	(22.40)	
FARM	0.160 0.158	0.203 0.0685		0.0672	0.0352	
	(3.39)	(3.36)	(4.42)	(1.42)	(1.40)	(0.75)
STUDENT	-0.202	-0.198	-0.165	-0.156	-0.153	-0.145
	(4.85)	(4.75)	(4.05)	(3.85)	(3.79)	(3.64)
UNEMP	-0.0153	-0.0201	-0.00726	-0.00758	-0.0138	-0.0142
	(0.43)	(0.56)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.40)	(0.42)
FREEMKT		-0.163	-0.175		-0.149	-0.173
		(9.17)	(9.95)		(8.54)	(10.19)
GNPPC			-0.295			-0.240
			(20.65)			(17.00)
GNPPC91			0.436		0.359	
			(24.25)			(20.44)
N	20718	20718	20718	19935	19935	19935
Log Liklhd	-16792.2	-16752.2	-17145.1	-18831.2	-18795.9	-19587.7
R Log Liklhd	-17700.2	-17700.2	-17700.2	-20020.1	-20020.1	-20020.1
X^2	1816.05	1896.07	1110.3	2377.9	2448.5	864.9

The equations were estimated by ordered probit. See the appendix for definitions of the data. (.) denotes t statistics. X^2 relates to the log-likelihood ratio.