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Forum Section

Political Parties, Public Opinion and European Integration in Post-Communist Countries

The State of the Art

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ABSTRACT

The accession of post-Communist states to the European Union has important implications for EU governance and for our understanding of the political dynamics of integration processes. Existing literature, we argue, may be inadequate, primarily because it has assumed basic value consensus at mass and elite levels over market structures and the predominance of instrumental reasoning about integration. Neither of these assumptions, however, is tenable for post-Communist states. We seek, therefore, to develop an alternative theoretical framework for understanding the integration of post-Communist societies and point to promising avenues for future empirical research.

KEY WORDS

- European integration
- instrumental reasoning
- political parties
- political values
- post-Communism
- public opinion

Introduction

The accession of 10 new countries to the European Union (EU) on 1 May 2004 marked the beginning of a new era for Europe. For the eight new members from post-Communist states, accession was the culmination of a monumental transformation barely 15 years after they began to institutionalize market-based democracies following the demise of Communist regimes. In contrast to the euphoria of 1989, the moment of accession itself was characterized by widespread uncertainty in Eastern Europe, lack of enthusiasm, and growing public and elite skepticism about the consequences of EU membership. The central concern of this review article is to investigate whether the current state of the literature is able to explain how publics evaluate integration in the new post-Communist member states.

The inclusion of new states in the European Union is likely to have dramatic consequences for the EU itself. Virtually every aspect of the evolving EU polity must be shaped and reshaped in the years to come, including its market institutions and political system, both at the level of nation-states and at the supranational level. And, crucially, the character of popular opinion and party competition in post-Communist Eastern Europe is likely to have a distinct and new impact on how the EU evolves, and may lead to far greater, and more ideologically divided, policy contestation in EU institutions.

In our view, existing integration scholarship does not provide an adequate theoretical framework to deal with the consequences of eastward expansion. This is because post-Communist societies have characteristics that differentiate them from states that were involved in previous stages of European integration. Indeed, we believe that the inclusion of post-Communist states in the EU may lead us to rethink our understanding of the dynamics and consequences of the integration process as a whole. This article, therefore, lays out what we know about the integration process in the post-Communist region, and where we see the most important gaps.

Our starting point is the surprising results of our analysis on support for the EU and economic integration among citizens and political parties in 13 post-Communist states, undertaken in the first half of the 1990s (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2004, 2006). Even in the early 1990s, we were already encountering a strong kernel of Euroskepticism in a threefold pattern of growing opposition to integration.

First, publics and elites strongly supported the idea of integration with the West and the EU in general, although they were skeptical about specific *integration instruments*, such as the presence of foreign companies in their nations. Second, more often than not, citizens opposed aspects of integration because they disagreed with the *normative premises* of the integration process,



particularly the market values underlying the EU's common market. Third, party political mobilization around integration issues appeared to be more powerful and polarized in states with greater experience of democratic and economic reform processes.

Subsequently, in the second half of the 1990s and increasingly up to the moment of accession, political parties began to channel this growing dissatisfaction into the political arena. The growth of Euroskeptic parties in the region attests to the crumbling consensus among elites about the desirability of EU enlargement (Taggart and Szczerbak, 2004). This combination of public and elite Euroskepticism, based on distinct normative commitments as well as calculations about costs and benefits, is unlikely to disappear. Rather, these particular features of post-Communist politics have now been incorporated into EU governance.

How exactly do citizens and parties in the region frame the debates about accession? What are the dimensions over which integration may be contested and which dimensions are most likely to be activated politically in the post-Communist context?

We next consider how issues of political and economic integration should be conceptualized theoretically. Further, we show how much more progress actually is needed to advance our understanding of how publics and parties evaluate these different integration dimensions.

What shapes the politics of European integration?

How can we explain support for, and growing opposition to, EU enlargement and other supranational economic and political institutions among citizens in post-Communist Eastern Europe? What are the most relevant dimensions on which integration is likely to be contested?

How citizens and parties respond to these questions is clearly affected by their economic, social, institutional, and historical circumstances. Moreover, just as parties take public preferences into account in deciding how to compete, citizens are likely to be shaped in their views and political behavior by the way in which integration issues are taken up by political elites. Surprisingly few studies, however, have systematically investigated citizens' or parties' responses to integration, or how parties frame European integration in domestic political debates. This section considers each of these questions and seeks to develop a broader understanding of the politics of European integration in post-Communist states.

Conceptualizing integration

First, we consider the range of integration issues facing citizens and political parties in post-Communist Europe. What are the dimensions of the integration process that publics are faced with, and which ones are more or less likely to be politicized and contested?

Our view of the structure of integration issues is presented in Table 1. We distinguish two dimensions: economic versus political; and ideal-typical versus performance. We are guided in making these distinctions by transition research, which indicates the importance of separating politics from economics and the ideal-typical from the actual performance of institutions (Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Fuchs and Klingemann, 2002; Rohrschneider, 2002). Consequently, political and economic integration ideals are distinguished from the existing institutional arrangements of the EU. By keeping these dimensions distinct, we are able to focus theoretically on the various bases on which citizens may make judgments about integration, or on which parties may choose to position themselves. This distinction also helps us understand where Western-based theories fall short in illuminating the likely dynamics in the post-Communist context.

Specifically, we note that the European Union has developed on the basis of a commitment to a set of broad economic and political normative ideals: economically, this means support for liberal markets, which includes migration of workers and of capital; politically, the EU implies transferring (or pooling) sovereignty to a supranational government via new legislative, executive and judicial institutions. Support for the EU should, therefore, reflect attitudes towards these political and economic ideals.

At the same time, the EU involves a set of expectations about outcomes in both the political and economic spheres. In order to create a single economic market, the EU promises to improve economic performance and social welfare. Similarly, its political arrangements, including subsidiarity and supranational regulation of some aspects of domestic policy, promise to improve citizens' sense of the quality of governance.

To understand support for the EU in post-Communist states, therefore, we need to examine what kind of ideals and expectations citizens and parties envisage at the EU level. There is plenty of evidence that citizens are often quite supportive of a new and unknown order, both in the context of markets (Duch, 1993) and in political contexts (Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Whitefield and Evans, 2001). However, when markets and democracies are implemented, the rough-and-tumble of these institutions may create a harsh reality that could lead to a decline in mass support for them. That this dynamic appears to work in the context of supranational regional integration may be consistent with the

Table 1 Conceptualizing integration dimensions

	<i>Economy</i>	<i>Polity</i>
<i>Ideals</i>	Liberal markets	Supranational institutions
<i>Evaluations</i>	Economic benefits	Democratic and institutional performance

growing skepticism about the EU in accession countries. Given this argument, we note that there is a surprising lack of analyses that examine these aspects of the integration process. We could not find any study that systematically conceptualizes citizens’ integration ideals and the factors that might affect their formation.

Public support for integration

Importantly, the distinctions between politics and economics, and between ideals and performance evaluations, help to illuminate why some of the central premises pervading Western-based research may not apply in Eastern Europe. Most studies of support for international integration have focused on Western Europe and North America, where market economies were already in place prior to integration. In Eastern Europe, by contrast, elites and many members of the public saw European integration as a mechanism for the consolidation of new market, democratic and even state structures that continue, in important respects, to be contested by significant sections of public opinion (see Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2006). In our view, this difference of context has important implications for understanding public attitudes and requires a shift away from much of the existing literature developed on the two most prominent cases of international integration – the EU prior to recent post-Communist state accession and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA).

The evolution of the European Union in Western Europe in particular stimulated intense theorizing and debate about the motivations and dynamics involved in how citizens evaluate the supranational framework. Competing schools within this literature explain the drive to integration in different ways: the push of state interests (intergovernmentalism); the need to remove market distortions between sectors at different stages of integration (functionalism);

or the dynamics of interest group pressure, including political parties (neofunctionalism) (George, 1996). Despite differences among these theories, they share the assumption that liberal-democratic and market values underlie the integration process (Hooghe, 2001).

Nevertheless, the normative premises of the integration process have seldom been questioned. It is widely assumed that citizens and parties both share commitment to market *norms*, and it is consequently argued that citizens' attitude towards integration depends on market *benefits*. Instrumental reasoning, in these contexts, has dominated the scholarship, with the success of European integration being seen as having resulted from the excess of (perceived) winners over losers. Although some analysts in the West have pointed to the role of party elites in generating public resistance to integration (Anderson, 1998; Franklin and McLaren, 1994), postmaterial values and left-right ideology (Inglehart, 1977), or the quality of national institutions (Rohrschneider, 2002; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2000), none of these examines how normative commitments to market and liberal-democratic ideals affect how citizens perceive integration.

The literature on integration and enlargement in Eastern Europe to date has usually followed the standard West European/North American model. This instrumentalist approach assumes that EU enlargement to Eastern Europe would be relatively easily achieved politically because it was based on strong elite and mass commitment to market values and, even more so, on *favorable economic calculations*, at least for the potential entrants. We note that there exist differences within the existing Western literature regarding how winners and losers from integration should be theorized – some analysts point to the importance of individual economic attributes such as education and the employment sector (Scheve, 2000; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001), while others, arguing from a trade theoretical perspective, have focused on the importance of national skill levels for trade integration (Rogowski, 1989). The latter perspective might suggest that greater advantages from integration accrue to the less developed post-Communist economies of the former Soviet Union, but little direct testing of this proposition has been undertaken for East European economies. In practice, most analyses of EU support in Eastern Europe have focused on economic winners and losers from integration (Tucker et al., 2002) and this has led to the conclusion that the less developed states are regarded as the most problematic for the European project, both because market values are thought to be weakly embedded and because individual economic calculations are considered to be less favorable. These parts of post-Communist Eastern Europe have been correspondingly discounted as potential integration partners. Although some analysts allude to the role of political values in driving support for integration, their reliance

on the Central Candidate Barometers surveys precludes them from systematically testing instrumental and value-based explanations (Christin, 2005; Cichowski, 2000).¹

Our own research, however, suggests that these 'instrumental' views of integration do not apply well to post-Communist publics (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2004). The practice of democratic politics in Eastern Europe shows that this neat picture is difficult to support. In particular, we find that East Europeans are much more likely to make judgments about integration based on their underlying economic values than on expected material payoffs. This does not mean that instrumental factors are of no importance but they are of comparatively little importance. For example, employment sector and even direct personal experiences and future expectations about economic performance are of limited significance, as are country-level economic factors such as trade integration and foreign direct investment levels. Moreover, our analysis does not find the sort of differences between developed and less developed economies in either direction that the two instrumentalist perspectives lead us to expect.

Rather, we find that economic and political values are of greater importance to how citizens across post-Communist Eastern Europe judge integration. This result is particularly significant given that transition research informs us that citizens' economic and political values in Eastern Europe, unlike in the West, are often incompatible with markets and, to some degree, with liberal democratic values.² However, because of the prevailing consensus in Western-based scholarship, value-based predictors of integration are, with few exceptions, largely ignored by this research (Inglehart, 1990; Wessels, 1995).³ It is therefore possible, indeed likely, that public opinion in the post-Communist context about integration is driven by factors that were irrelevant in the context of Western Europe's stable democracies and affluence. To be clear, we are not arguing that instrumental variables are entirely irrelevant. We do note, however, that a near-exclusive focus on trade theory or other instrumentalist approaches likely misses an important element – perhaps the central one – in modeling EU support in post-Communist countries.

There thus is a clear need to broaden the range of possible factors that may account for how the public responds. In the post-Communist context where system-level transition is at stake, these would include not just economic benefits but also regime ideals, both economic and political. Moreover, in Eastern Europe, where in many cases state structures are themselves relatively new and contested both internally and externally, views about national independence may also be important determinants.⁴ We therefore consider a range of possible influences on public opinion and we argue that citizens' individual economic experiences *as well as* their ideological

values (of various sorts) affect public views about integration in the post-Communist context.

Regime ideals

Our analysis of support for foreign ownership and the EU suggests that ideological values matter enormously in evaluating aspects of the integration process. An account of mass views that takes values seriously would start from the premise that ideological values define individuals' ideal-typical orders and reflect the preferred procedures through which these ideals ought to be accomplished (Almond and Verba, 1963). As such, they are likely to be of greatest relevance in the circumstances of revolutionary political and economic transformation experienced in Eastern Europe. Importantly, ideological values also help individuals to evaluate issues in situations where information is not readily available, experience is limited, and societal phenomena are transient (Sniderman et al., 1993). We would suggest that it is precisely the East European context that creates a situation in which values should become most relevant to citizens. Publics in these highly volatile contexts in all likelihood lack information and experience in evaluating market-based issues purely on the basis of their costs and benefits. Instead, in new and transient environments, citizens are likely to resort to their long-term predispositions in sorting out the pros and cons of supranational markets and political regimes.

From this perspective, it is noteworthy that citizens in post-Communist societies continue to endorse economically socialist ideals (Fuchs and Roller, 1998; Miller et al., 1995). Thus, citizens may apply their views about the domestic economy, which to a considerable degree represent socialist views, in appraising various aspects of the emerging international markets. If socialist values matter, they may well reduce public support for economic integration. For, if one rejects the idea of a market economy, one is not likely to endorse economic integration that is justified by a desire to strengthen market relationships. Socialist ideals (e.g. in favor of an egalitarian society) may also reduce support for a future, Europe-wide polity if it does not secure egalitarian outcomes. Conversely, those who support market reforms may welcome the involvement of international corporations in the domestic economy. Thus, one crucial arena that needs to be examined is the extent to which ideological values influence mass evaluations of the EU.

Regime performance

This set of predictors focuses on citizens' experience with new democracies and markets in Eastern Europe. The expectations here are premised on the

idea that evaluation of the EU will in part be influenced by how well national markets and democratic regimes are perceived to work. Transition research indicates that public evaluations of national market institutions and democratic regimes are heavily shaped by their current performance (Evans and Whitefield, 1995; Hofferbert and Klingemann, 1999; Mishler and Rose, 2001). Prior research also informs us that publics compare the current regime with the performance of the collapsed Communist regime (Mishler and Rose, 1997). Given this insight from transition research, we expect mass support for integration to depend, in part, on how well national regimes work.

Surprisingly, few analyses in the literature consider how post-Communist publics view a second transition within their lifespan. Consider that integration entails that national institutions will be partly replaced with a supranational framework. That is, a little over a decade after Communist regimes were replaced with markets and liberal democracies, publics now face another transition. In turn, we expect that the performance of national regimes influences views about the EU. The better national systems perform, the more reluctant citizens will be to abandon national institutions for the EU. Ironically, this expectation may magnify the degree of opposition to integration in accession countries since these are also the ones that are the most democratic and the most successful in implementing market reforms. The extent to which citizens compare the current regime with the potential gains from the EU beyond economic benefits is an area largely ignored by integration research in the area. We consider this a promising and important area for future research.⁵

Economic experience

We argued above that the literature to date on this subject has emphasized the economically instrumental character of reasoning about these questions. Support is presumed to be generated from the expected gains from developing markets or, once the integration process has begun, from redressing the advantages accorded to lead sectors. Public support and, obviously, opposition from the losers in the process, are expressed via interest groups and through political parties.

A broad version of this sort of explanation (Anderson, 1998; Christin, 2005; Eichenberg and Dalton, 1993; Gabel, 1998) suggests that citizens make decisions about economic policy based on an extrapolation from past economic conditions to what the future may bring. In principal, the logic here is straightforward. When citizens evaluate economies positively, the idea of integration is more appealing than when market reforms are assessed negatively. If citizens also blame (or credit) the incumbent government for economic conditions, they react accordingly. This process is not limited to

national governments. When citizens believe that the common market brings about affluence, support for the EU increases because, as Eichenberg and Dalton put it, 'if the EC has promised anything, it has promised the enhancement of member states' economic welfare' (1993: 510).

Another micro-level model favored by the political economy literature emphasizes (a) the individual capacity of citizens to engage with the international economy, which is particularly influenced by age and education levels, and (b) the sectoral locations of citizens (Gabel, 1998; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). Age and education matter because of the relative flexibility that each is expected to impart to individuals in adapting to new working and labor market conditions. Education also matters because of the cognitive skills it implies – not only greater knowledge of global markets but also language and technical skills.

A final variant in this group emphasizes how the vulnerability of individuals' attitudes towards economic fluctuations affects their views about economic structures. The more one expects to benefit (suffer) from changes in economic systems, the more likely one is to support (oppose) such changes. As one EU analyst puts it, 'EU membership provides significant economic gains and losses to skilled and unskilled workers depending on their position in the EU labor market' (Gabel, 1998: 938). Likewise, workers in industries adversely affected by NAFTA are less inclined to support the free trade zone in North America (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). This area is probably best understood based on the research conducted in Western Europe, though it remains unclear to what extent instrumental considerations play the same role in post-Communist countries.

Nationalism and ethnicity

Two other social and attitudinal factors may also be expected to play an important role in Eastern Europe. Save for one recent analysis (Hooghe and Marks, 2005), nationalism and ethnicity are rarely considered as independent factors motivating support for the EU in Western Europe (for example, they are not even mentioned in the indexes of two important contributions to EU analyses – George, 1996; Moravcsik, 1998), yet there are reasons to believe that their effects are more powerful in Eastern Europe (Zielonka, 2002).

First, by comparison with Western Europe, post-Communist states are characterized by high ethnic diversity. All accession countries, except Hungary, Poland and Slovenia, have significant minorities. This may induce a shift away from economic concerns to a focus on the ways in which supranational bodies might support minorities' political aspirations – which will therefore also produce consequences for the politics of majorities.

The second factor concerns the recent history of supranational rules in states in the region. All accession countries except Slovenia – which was in any case, arguably, subordinate within Yugoslavia – were formally part of the Soviet bloc or the Soviet Union itself, and were more or less (Czechoslovakia and Romania) dominated by it politically and economically. Political mobilization against Communist power in every state was to a significant degree nationalist in character, though the form of nationalism varied in terms of the push to inclusion in broader international economic and especially political structures, including the EU and NATO. We may therefore expect support for nationalism to have a complex and possibly independent relationship to EU enlargement and integration. In some cases, integration may be seen as a means of consolidating national independence (Whitefield et al., 2006). In other cases, particularly in Russia, Moldova and Ukraine, the integration of neighboring states in the EU or NATO may be seen as threatening to national independence (Whitefield, 2006). The effects of nationalism and ethnic division, therefore, need to be considered separately.

The role of political parties

We noted earlier that the literature on economic and political integration in post-Communist states has paid little systematic analytical attention to the effects of party competition on public support. Even in the context of Western Europe, this question has only recently emerged within the literature (see Carrubba, 2001; Ray, 2003; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). This lacuna is surprising given the theory and evidence of party effects in other areas, such as globalization (Garrett, 1998), the cleavage literature and the considerable literature on party identification (Dalton et al., 1984; Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000; Franklin, 1992). The lack of attention to party effects is perhaps more surprising given that one of the most developed studies of post-Communist parties is to be found in an analysis of the impact of national context on the varying issue bases of politics in Eastern Europe (Kitschelt et al., 1999). We therefore consider a variety of ways in which the structure of party competition and the characteristics of parties themselves may have an impact on how integration issues are framed for citizens.

First, the comparative literature points to the existence of distinctive party ‘families’ (Duverger, 1954; Mair and Mudde, 1998), which divide socially and ideologically – social-democratic, Communist, liberal, agrarian, religious, nationalist, etc. – in ways that may have consequences for how integration matters to voters. Supporters of a particular party family, regardless of country, may be expected to relate integration issues to the ideological and social characteristics of the party (Hix, 2002; Marks et al., 2002). On the other

hand, and in line with our reasoning above about the importance of country context, the relationship of party family (as well as other party characteristics) to citizens' attitudes towards EU integration may depend on, and interact with, national economic and social conditions. For example, some evidence from West European politics indicates that national factor endowments and 'varieties of capitalism' have a significant impact on individual support for European integration. Therefore, the extent to which the EU is seen as desirable to parties and their voters may partly depend on whether the EU is to the left or right of the national status quo (Brinegar and Jolly, 2005; Ray, 2004). The relationship of national economic and social circumstances to how party families frame integration issues in post-Communist states is clearly a subject worthy of further research, particularly given evidence of the importance of parties in shaping welfare strategies (Lipsmeyer, 2002).

More generally, party systems as a whole differ in the extent to which they focus on economic, social, ethnic, or other issues. These differences need not result exclusively from public preferences, but may arise from characteristics of the mode of transition (Kitschelt et al., 1999) that become institutionalized in the parties. Parties may also choose to highlight issues in order to avoid competing on questions of central concern to sections of the electorate (McLean, 2001).

The effect of party presentation, however, may be to change the ways in which integration and enlargement issues are packaged with other ideological dimensions. Where economic issues dominate party competition, for example, integration is likely to be principally an economic question. Where nationalist issues dominate, integration and enlargement will to a greater extent take on these ideological clothes. Because the post-Communist public is divided on economic values, however, when economic issues dominate party competition and structure discussion of integration and enlargement, the activation of economic values is likely to be more pronounced.

Similarly, parties (and party systems) differ in the extent to which they are based at all on ideological appeals, as opposed to clientelistic or charismatic relations with the electorate (Kitschelt et al., 1999). The causes of such differences are not well established, but their consequences for the structure of public support are likely to be distinct and independent of the precise forms of programmatic competition. Because programmatic party competition of any sort (economic, social, nationalist) involves justification of policy in terms of collective benefits, it is likely to produce a greater focus on structured issue division. Clientelistic competition, by contrast, operates through the distribution of particular benefits and is thus less ideological, and charismatic competition, at the extreme, implies wholly personalized non-issue-based politics. This is not at all to say that clientelistic or charismatic forms of

competition have no impact on party stances and party divisions on important integration issues; indeed, some recent literature suggests that these forms of party competition are likely to have a systematic impact on trade policy (Grossman and Helpman, 1994). Rather, we suggest, parties (and party systems) with programmatic competition are more likely to be based on values. As a consequence, parties are more likely to polarize on integration and enlargement, with the result that support for integration and enlargement is likely to be lower and values more mobilized than is the case in patronage-based or charismatic conditions.

Secondly, parties may be differentiated by organizational type, based on the relationships between members, activists and leaders (Duverger, 1954; Kitschelt, 1989). Such organizational differences in the level of membership involvement are likely to affect the breadth of a party's appeal, with catch-all parties appealing more broadly and ideologically to the electorate than parties appealing to narrower and particularized sets of constituents. As a result, differences are to be expected in the extent to which integration issues are connected to other attitude dimensions and in levels of polarization and consequently in support.

Third, research in many contexts has shown that party identifiers are more likely, by comparison with others, to adapt their position to that taken by their party leadership. We note in this regard that partisan identification among many East European electorates is now similar to that found in more established democracies – where identification has fallen (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). We should therefore expect to find significant differences between party identifiers and others in the ways in which they view integration issues, whether in the salience attached to issues, the extent of overall structure in their attitudes derived from greater awareness of party stances, or the direction of their support. Thus, a fourth promising arena for future research is to examine party positions on European integration in post-Communist Europe – and how party positions affect the way citizens think about integration.

A cost-mobilization model

The points made above about the dimensions of the integration issues facing post-Communist Eastern Europe, the sources of citizens' support and opposition, the impact of parties and the party system on the framing of integration, and the effects of national context and conditions come together in what we call a 'cost-mobilization' model of the politicization of European integration.

The premise of the cost-mobilization model is that integration issues may be affected by the ways in which citizens become acquainted with the respective policy via the democratic process – and, in line with the discussion above,

how this interacts with their underlying values. In Eastern Europe, this may entail political entrepreneurs who oppose market reforms mobilizing mass sentiment against integration, especially during elections; supporters will mobilize their camp. EU opponents may mobilize opposition to accession criteria that include deepening of the integration process. These debates, in turn, may mean that citizens are exposed to competing elite cues about such issues as foreign ownership, free migration of workers, or the degree to which nation-states yield decision-making authority to the EU.

In turn, elite competition often mobilizes mass sentiments on both sides of an issue (McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Zaller, 1992) and may increase uncertainty about the benefits of the policy and therefore reduce support for it (Marks et al., 2006; Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2006). We are not suggesting that party competition entirely determines how citizens think about the EU. Obviously, economic experiences and ideological predispositions in part affect how parties frame the issue in the first place. But we would argue that the specific manifestation that party systems give to latent societal conflicts influences how much weight citizens attach to various experiences and predispositions. Consequently, party competition may directly affect how publics evaluate the EU, and may mediate the salience of individual-level factors in how citizens view the EU.

Conclusion

The study of political and economic integration is one of the most important issues facing contemporary political science. As a scholarly field, however, integration studies have been understandably linked with particular experiences, especially that of the development of the European Union to the end of the Cold War. Our argument is that this framework needs to be rethought and new research questions addressed if an adequate understanding of the dynamics of integration involving post-Communist states – and arguably of many other integration contexts – is to be achieved.

Against expectations from Western experience as applied to post-Communist circumstances, we find that instrumental assessments of international market institutions are not the main basis on which integration is judged by publics in Eastern Europe. Rather, to understand post-Communist societies it is essential to explore the values underlying citizens' assessment of the EU, for example their commitment to market norms or certain forms of democratic structures.

The factors we highlight for post-Communist EU integration raise important questions about the character and stability of East European and

EU politics. Values, by definition, tend to be sticky and, though updated occasionally in light of evidence, also operate as prisms through which people interpret the world and define their economic interests. This framing may strengthen support for integrationist policies and diminish the effect of the costs of adjustment to such policies. On the other hand, the corollary to this may be the intractability of opposition to EU integration. Given the endogeneity of economic interests in this context, opponents of the policy may well even consider instrumentalist claims for the EU to be part of an ideological package that they reject. Thus, the 'technocratic' basis on which membership was sold may become a further source of antipathy to the integration project (Grzymala-Busse and Innes, 2003). Even if the project goes well economically, the economic integration of Eastern Europe is likely to be politically contested for the foreseeable future in ideological rather than 'normal' distributional terms. In short, scholars ought to account for both instrumental and value-based explanations in future analyses of EU support in post-communist countries.

Our analysis also raises questions about economic integration and democracy that are increasingly familiar in a range of contexts. In noting that democratic political opportunities and integration experience foster mobilization against economic integration, we clearly do not wish to make a case against democracy. But the evidence does point to its tensions. Studies of the relationship between democracy and economic reform in Eastern Europe have produced ambiguous conclusions in part because of the difficulties of disentangling the syndrome of associated characteristics in economically successful and unsuccessful states (Frye and Mansfield, 2003; Hellman, 1998). Our analysis does not show that less democratic states are more likely to pursue integrationist economic policies; but it does show that party competition in democracies may make integration more difficult politically because democratic environments allow for controversies that, at least in the short term, may turn out to be particularly challenging to economic liberals and supporters of international markets.

The final practical point concerns the implications of our analysis for the European Union itself. Democratic mobilization against integration is high in countries that were initially in the first wave of EU accession; and the image of the EU is the least favorable in these nations. The European Union is therefore likely to be a source of polarization of politics in Eastern Europe. Moreover, politicians able to tap into opposition to European accession may win increasing support as the realities of EU membership become more tangible. Although the ideal of EU membership may have been widely shared by many publics, the reality of accession may increasingly bring into sharper relief the tension between the market-based premise of integration and the

economically socialist values of many citizens in these states. How citizens respond to integration and how elites frame the benefits and downsides of integration may thus become more contentious than is so often presumed and may significantly complicate the already complex and contested nature of EU governance.

Notes

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- 1 Both analyses recognize that values may affect how citizens evaluate the integration process. Neither study, however, is able to include value indicators in the analyses because the surveys lack measures for citizens' normative commitments.
- 2 A consistent pattern in transition research is that, although publics in post-Communist systems support liberal-democratic rights in the abstract, citizens also hold societal ideals that are to some degree incompatible with liberal democracies. See, among others, Fuchs and Roller (1998) and Gibson (1993).
- 3 Given that a 'value-based' approach to integration has not been tested in Western Europe, it remains an open question how adequate the 'instrumentalist' account is even in these circumstances.
- 4 For a discussion of the importance of nationalism in some post-Communist states for European and international integration, see Whitefield et al. (2006) and Whitefield (2006).
- 5 Evidence from the Baltic states suggests that evaluations of the performance of national institutions were consistently the most important predictor of stances towards European integration. See Whitefield et al. (2006).

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