CHAPTER 7

# Determinants of Support for EU Membership in Hungary

Attila Fölsz and Gábor Tóka

## Introduction

This chapter examines public support for the EU in Hungary between 1991 and 2003. Our argument is that support for EU membership is likely to have multiple roots given the complexity of the EU and citizens' limited information about it. Chief among them are individuals' preference for characteristics associated with the Union and its individual member-states to trust in political leaders pursuing integration. We further postulate that popular opinions about complex and multifaceted attitude objects like the European Union are strongly assisted by information shortcuts provided by media coverage, partisanship, ideology, and retrospective as well as prospective performance evaluations.

This chapter develops these themes. We start our exposition with general hypotheses along these lines. Then, where possible, we confront some aspects of these propositions with the available data about levels of EU support over time.

## Possible Sources of Support

Clearly, the EU is a remote, complex, and rather abstract phenomenon. Hence, as Rohrschneider and Whitefield suggest in the introduction, popular opinion about it may be strongly shaped by the cues and

endorsements issued by political parties as well as the media coverage of the accession process and EU affairs in general (hypothesis 1). Of particular noteworthiness is the fact that all major Hungarian political parties, despite otherwise deep ideological conflicts dividing them partly along nationalist versus cosmopolitan lines, supported their country's EU membership throughout the entire period from 1990 to 2003. We would expect that this elite consensus continued to mobilize popular support for EU membership.

Yet other bases of evaluation are also readily available for citizens: after all, EU membership has been associated in the public mind with a wide variety of—more or less likely—consequences that many would come across in their everyday life (see table A10 in the Internet appendix).[1] On the eve of Hungary's referendum on EU membership, some even expected that population decline would stop after accession. A larger proportion thought that social spending would be curtailed and there would be more horror and porn movies around; an apparent plurality thought that regional inequalities would increase, that people would pay less attention to each other, and that national assets would come to be owned by foreigners. An absolute majority apparently expected the accession to bring about greater social inequalities and higher prices alongside such attractive things as higher living standards, better infrastructure, a greater international prestige and influence for Hungary and its culture, more study and work opportunities abroad, as well as a greater choice of consumer goods and medication (see table A10).

Surely many expectations concerned things that can in almost no way be directly influenced by EU membership—for example, health services, Internet access, social expenditure, or the number of suicides and alcoholics. Clearly, the Hungarian public was not particularly knowledgeable about the actual reach of community jurisdiction inside the EU. But they had a powerful—although in some respects misleading—cue that handily substituted knowledge of details about the EU. By and large, table A10 suggests that most Hungarians expected that EU membership would bring their country closer to the stereotypical image that they had about West European countries. Note that this was not merely an instance of wishful thinking, since—apparently because of the same cue—many Hungarians expected the appearance of greater inequalities, more crime, more porn, and more drug addicts from EU membership. These features were, of course, part of the conventional, communist era negative stereotypes of the West, and were rather unlikely to be further promoted by EU membership in a country as far

from the stereotypical image of communist country—poor and puritan, with the virtual absence of drugs, porn, and inequalities—as Hungary already was by 2003.

Hence the public expectations revealed in table A10 clearly witness the strong reliance on stereotypical images of the West in judging the consequences of EU membership. We are tempted to believe that this may be crucial for understanding popular attitudes. The myriads of vivid, credible, and widely available impressions suggesting to Hungarians that the West and North European countries have a better performing economic system, public administration, political democracy, legal system (and so forth) than their own country make it easily understandable why European integration seemed, by and large, desirable to them.

At the same time, table A10 also suggests that at least some Hungarians recognized that EU accession was not to promote all the features associated with Western Europe equally, that is, that the EU has more to do with the promotion of market economy (cf. consumer choice, foreign ownership, income inequalities, and living standards) than with generous social benefits. Hence, public opinion on the EU may have had a rather distinct ideological—or, to put it less pompously, policy—basis too, even though most prior analyses focus on instrumental factors (Cichowski 2000; Tverdova and Anderson 2004). For instance, a recent study of public opinion about integration and foreign ownership found that ideological norms are the strongest predictor of integration in 13 postcommunist nations (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2004a). Along these lines, we expect that opposition to a market economy may have led to disagreement with European integration, and promarket attitudes are expected to be associated with stronger support for accession (hypothesis 2).

Converse's theory of attitude formation submits, however, that most citizens are unlikely to have policy preferences on rather complex and technical issues like European integration (Converse 1964). At least some people will develop political allegiances on the basis of perceived group benefits instead. For instance, even if people are indifferent or ignorant about the EU, they expect people like them to be affected by it, which may impact their attitudes toward that framework. Indeed, the Hungarian public, too, developed views about likely group differences in benefiting from EU accession (see table A11 in the Internet appendix). By and large, young people, residents of urban areas, more highly qualified occupational groups, politicians, and big business were rather unequivocally expected to benefit, whereas a plurality assumed that

small entrepreneurs, the elderly, and people working in agriculture would be unfavorably affected. Consequently, we can expect that support for EU membership varied across social groups in proportion of the expected group benefits (hypothesis 3).

It is apparent in tables A10 and A11 that some expected direct economic and other benefits, whereas others foresaw painful losses from their country's EU membership, irrespective of the implications of accession for the political, social, and economic structures, policies, and processes. To a degree, the expectations regarding outcomes may themselves have been based on beliefs about the merits of the integrated market plus the policies and spending commitments of the EU. But they may also have been affected by backward-looking, performance-based considerations (Gabel 1998b), like experiences cumulated over the entire postcommunist transition process and its impact upon the country and the personal lives of the people. After all, EU accession was often presented as the instrument of much the same thing—that is, economic and cultural opening, building a market-based economy, consolidation of democracy, establishing the rule of law—as the postcommunist transformation as a whole. In Hungary in particular, all post-1989 governments considered it a key item on their agenda, and something thoroughly consistent with the general direction of their policies anyway. Hence we could expect that generalized evaluations of postcommunist conditions and the way the country was heading also impacted the assessment of EU membership (hypothesis 4).

However, it is probably insufficiently appreciated in the literature on support for European integration in Eastern Europe that strikingly different relationships can emerge between the evaluation of the postcommunist transition and the EU accession processes among different countries, individuals, and indeed within the calculating mind of the very same individual too. Some may consider the two transformations as closely related developments, and their opinion about the EU should then be positively impacted by their views about the postcommunist transition in general. Or, quite to the contrary, negative opinions about how things are going in their country may make them regard the EU as a savior from the present misery and mismanagement. We suspect that the first type of inference became increasingly dominant as the impact of the EU on the status quo became more obvious—that is, with the progress of the given country's accession process. Similarly, the emergence and consolidation of EU compatible economic and political institutions in candidate countries and the comprehensive integration of their national economy in the European market must have left less

and less room for perceiving the EU as a possible savior from domestic troubles, and give more and more reason to judge the merits of EU membership on the basis of how things develop in the given candidate country. In other words, the direction of the relationship between the evaluations of the domestic political and economic status quo and its immediate prospects on the one hand, and opinions about the EU on the other, may well have changed from negative—or nonexistent—to positive over time (hypothesis 5).

We cannot offer here truly compelling tests of these propositions, since the available historical data are full of discontinuities and were, at any rate, obviously not collected specifically to test our hypotheses. What we can do, however, is to test several key implications of this argument to individual level survey data and to discuss their potential for explaining the shifts that occurred in public support for EU membership in Hungary over time.

## Level of Support for EU Membership

Attitudinal support for the European Union and EU membership was always rather high among Hungarians (see table 7.1). Furthermore, the opponents were not only massively outnumbered, but also far less likely to participate in politics than supporters. In the March 2003 poll cited in table 7.1, for instance, opponents were two-and-a-half times more numerous than supporters among those who said that they would surely not vote in the April 12, 2003 referendum on EU membership, but were outnumbered five-and-a-half times among those who were sure that they would vote (data not shown). Taking this into account, it came hardly as a surprise when a month later in the referendum, a whopping 83.7 percent voted yes, on a lackluster turnout of 45.6 percent.

Both the high level of support and the apparent demobilization of opponents are consistent with hypothesis 1, stressing the importance of elite cues. Among the political parties, the administrative, business, and media elite, only some relatively isolated forces—in the early 1990s just the rather small, extra-parliamentary orthodox communist party—offered any overt opposition to accession (Bátory 2001, 2002b). In the referendum campaign itself, only extreme nationalist organizations called for a no vote—and they did so in a poorly coordinated way and with little opportunity to have their voice heard through the mainstream media. The massive dominance of pro accession views in

**Table 7.1** Support for Hungary's EU-accession over time

| *Date* | *Question wording* | *Supporters in percentage of valid responses* |
|---|---|---|
| October 1991 | A | 96 |
| November 1992 | A | 95 |
| May 1994 | B | 89 |
| November 1995 | C | 81 |
| April 1996 | D | 82 |
| November 1996 | C | 75 |
| November 1997 | C | 86 |
| May 1998 | B | 83 |
| April 1999 | D | 89 |
| April 2001 | D | 83 |
| March 2003 | D | 79 |

*Note*: Table entries are the total number of respondents in favor of accession in percentage of valid responses. On question wording, see the appendix.
*Source*: Central and Eastern European Barometers No. 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8; May 1994 and May 1998 CEU-Medián postelection surveys; April 1996, April 1999, April 2001, and March 2003 monthly omnibus surveys of the Medián Public Opinion and Market Research Institute. All samples are clustered random samples of the adult population. The data are weighted so as to correct for the impact of nonsampling error on the demographic composition of the sample.

elite discourse may explain the size of the yes-camp in the public at large, as well as the demobilization of the opponents.

However, it could also be the case that elite discourse simply reflected the state of the same real-word events and processes that directly influenced public opinion, too. In this alternative account, the 1996–1999 jump in support, which is so visible in table 7.1, could be explained, for instance, by the changing credibility of the accession process. After all, the much-awaited accession talks were finally started in December 1998, but then progressed slower than expected in Hungary—which could explain the next low tide of support that started in 1999. Alternatively, in line with hypothesis 4 about the impact of performance evaluations on support for EU membership, the 1996–1999 jump in the latter may have reflected the strong economic growth and sharp improvement in the mass public's performance evaluations that started in early 1997 and continued for several years afterward. Thus, further empirical tests of hypothesis 1 are necessary. In order to do so below, we review elite discourse on EU membership in Hungary, and then consider longitudinal survey data regarding its possible impact on mass opinion.

## Elite Cues Regarding Accession

In the absence of systematically collected time series data on Hungarian political discourse about accession, we need to rely here on conventional accounts of its overtime development.[2] These accounts stress that in the whole period since the beginning of the postcommunist transformation process, and particularly in its early years, Hungary played a pioneering role in establishing ever-closer ties between Central and Eastern Europe and the EC/EU. As the EC/EU gradually deepened its relations with the region as a whole, higher levels of cooperation were first offered always to a narrower group in which Hungary and Poland were always included, and only then extended to other postcommunist countries as well. Similarly, during the accession negotiations, when the most controversial chapters were on the agenda, the Union often settled the dispute first with Hungary, and the agreed solution then served as a pattern for agreements on the same chapter with other candidate countries.

The Hungarian political elite was always very self-conscious of the country's leadership role on the long road from the collapse of communism to accession, and constantly urged the EU to consider all candidates individually according to their own merits and preparedness. This position received sporadic support from EU leaders as well. As a result, in Hungarian domestic politics accession was regarded as a reaffirmation that Hungary was more advanced than most other former communist countries in creating a functioning modern economic system, somehow more European, more democratic, and so forth. Consequently, opposing integration almost had an unpatriotic air to it.

Although many experts warned that ultimately the EU may have no other choice but to postpone accession till a larger number of East European countries can enter the Union simultaneously, the official Hungarian position—for tactical reasons or otherwise—was always stuck to the illusion of the possibility of fast accession for the most qualified candidates. Thus, it emphasized that each applicant country should advance in the accession process with the appropriate speed; fast-moving countries should not be made to wait for the laggards.

As the accession process unfolded much slower than expected, and the EU did not differentiate too much among the candidates, the Hungarian elite became more and more frustrated and partly critical toward the EU. The unequal treatment of new members on issues like agricultural subsidies or labor mobility just aggravated this. By 2004, when accession finally became a reality, it was judged anything but a

success story as far as the timing and the terms of accession were concerned. This was echoed—and maybe to a small extent even anticipated—by the changing tone of media coverage of accession negotiations and the EU in general.

Already from the mid-1990s, when enlargement seemed to be delayed further and further, justifying the most pessimist expectations, the Hungarian media occasionally questioned the basic commitment of the EU concerning enlargement. Once the accession talks started, the media usually presented them as a zero-sum bargaining between two counterparts with opposite interests. Media commentaries lamented about the prospects of a second-class membership, blaming present members for short-sightedness and lack of generosity. The political and media elite was almost unanimously critical of the final financial package about the amount of subsidies for the first three years. In the meantime, the Hungarian media provided significant publicity to unfounded rumors, like those about the possible ban of poppy seed cakes—a traditional Hungarian delicacy—within the EU.

The media coverage obviously concentrated mostly on the conflict-ridden issues, hence striking a more skeptical tone than the politicians themselves. But independent commentaries also turned increasingly critical toward the EU, occasionally questioning the merits of accession per se. From 2000 on, the EU was increasingly portrayed as an overgrown, undemocratic, and overtly bureaucratized institution with non-transparent procedures and constant bickering about the distribution of costs and benefits among the members, in which new members and small countries start with a handicap. Accession became more often presented not so much a good thing in itself, but something that is necessary because staying out would be even worse, bringing about isolation and increasing backwardness for the country. To be sure, most expert analyses remained firmly optimistic about the overall impact of accession, but the dissenting voices became increasingly louder as the accession date approached (Ellison 2004b).

Though it is certainly plausible that elite discourse on EU accession in Hungary contributed to both the generally high level and the gradual erosion of public support over time, there are serious obstacles to testing this proposition empirically. The first is the possible colinearity between elite discourse and the real-world events influencing how favorable the likely terms of accession for Hungary seemed to be for both expert observers and the lay public. The second is the absence of any hard data on the development of elite discourse over time. Therefore, in testing hypothesis 1, we consider only the impact of party

political discourse on mass opinion. The advantage of this research strategy is that the differences between the rhetoric of different parties regarding the EU, as well as the major turning points in interparty differences, are relatively easy to identify. Thus, by comparing the development of support for EU membership among the supporters of the various parties, we can gauge whether the cues provided by trusted elites may have impacted popular opinion. As a background to this comparison, the following gives an overview of interparty differences regarding support for accession.

In Hungary there has always been a consensus among the main political actors that "joining Europe has no alternative." According to the domestic political jargon, there used to be a "national consensus" on foreign policy in general and over EU accession in particular. At the beginning of the 1990s, only the orthodox communist Workers' Party argued against EU accession, on an anticapitalist ground. This party, however, never gained parliamentary representation and was largely ignored in the public discourse. The major preoccupation of the chief successor of the ancien régime, that is, the reformed Socialist Party (MSZP) was to prove its prodemocratic and pro-Western credentials. Hence it could not stop outbidding in Euroenthusiasm the five major nonsocialists parties that then dominated the political scene. Among the non-socialist parties, the moderately nationalist right—represented by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), and the Independent Smallholders' Party (FKGP), that is, the government parties of the 1990–1994 period—was initially as supportive of EU integration as the market liberal Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz).

Please expand

When the radically nationalist Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP) emerged in 1993–1994, it was the first on the right to articulate EU criticism. When in 1994–1998 a socialist–liberal coalition was in power, Euroskeptical remarks slowly gained currency in the discourse of the center–right too. This received particularly widespread attention because it demonstrated the more general ideological shift from a liberal party to a conservative formation that took place in Fidesz-Hungarian Smallholders' Party (MPP) (Tóka 2004).[3]

The bulk of the negotiations about EU accession took place between 1998 and 2002, while Fidesz-MPP—in coalition with smaller center–right formations—was the major governing party. This factor probably slowed down the articulation of ideological divides regarding Europe among the major parties of the left and the right. Nonetheless, by the time of the 2003 referendum, when a socialist–liberal coalition was in power again, the public perceived fairly sizeable differences between the positions

**Table 7.2** Positions attributed to the four parliamentary parties regarding EU membership, March 2003

| *How characteristic do you think it is for . . . [PARTY] that it supports EU membership?* | *Fidesz-MPP* | *MDF* | *MSzP* | *SzDSz* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not at all supportive | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| A little bit supportive | 19 | 13 | 2 | 3 |
| More or less supportive | 49 | 60 | 19 | 37 |
| Very supportive | 25 | 26 | 79 | 60 |

*Note*: Poll by the Medián Public Opinion and Market Research Institute with an $N = 1{,}200$ clustered random route sample of the adult population, interviewed on March 6–10, 2003. The data are weighted so as to correct for the impact of nonsampling error on the demographic composition of the sample.
*Source*: Table entries are column percentages that sum up to 100 percent except for rounding errors.

of the four parliamentary parties regarding EU accession.[4] Table 7.2 documents this sizeable gap between the distinctly Euroenthusiastic positions attributed to the socialist MSZP and the liberal SzDSz on the one hand, and the less sanguine but still definitely pro-European stance attributed to the center–right Fidesz-MPP and MDF on the other.

Bozóki and Karácsony (2003) argued that the ebb and flow of party politics can also explain most of a 10 percent drop in support for EU membership in the latter half of 2002—note that this decline is obscured in table 7.1 by the impact of a reversal of short-term changes in early 2003. However, their evidence is not entirely convincing even with respect to the latter half of 2002, as they found nearly as much decline in EU support among the supporters of the left-liberal government parties as among the supporters of Fidesz-MPP, which indeed shifted to a more Euroskeptic tone at the time.

## Testing the Elite Cues Hypothesis against the Alternatives

It remains an open question whether real-world developments regarding the terms of accession impacted public opinion more or less directly or through the cues provided by party elites. We try to answer this question through a series of logistic regression analyses of the dependence of EU support (a variable dichotomized to yes–no alternatives) on various cues in 10 different survey datasets collected between 1991 and 2003 (for technical details on these surveys and question wording, see the appendix at the end of this chapter). If elite cues played an important

role (as hypothesis 1 predicts), then, at least in the first half of the 1990s, supporters of the major left-, liberal, and right-wing had to be more supportive of EU accession than other citizens. This last referent group consisted partly of the supporters of the less visible parties, but mainly of that roughly 40 percent of all survey respondents in Hungary in the 1990s who had no party preference at all. Over time, the positive effect of left and liberal party allegiance must have remained steady or even increased, whereas center–right party allegiance had to receive an increasingly ambiguous role, probably failing to exercise any positive effect on EU support at the mass level by 2002. Similarly, we would expect that supporters of the extreme parties—that is, the communist Hungarian Workers' Party (MMP) and, after its emergence, the radical nationalist MIÉP—were less likely than others to support accession throughout the whole period. Consequently, we include three dummy variables among the independent variables in our regression analyses: CENTER–RIGHT PARTY PREFERENCE, LEFT OR LIBERAL PARTY PREFERENCE, and EXTREMIST PARTY PREFERENCE.

Even if the above expectations about the statistical effects of these variables are confirmed, it is still possible that elite cues were not important for attitude formation—maybe it was merely that most parties attracted supporters who shared their views in the first place. However, if the above expectations are not confirmed by the data, then it will be hard to believe that party elites had any hold over the swings of public opinion about EU membership.

Hypothesis 2 holds that support for accession had a policy basis. A critical test for this hypothesis is whether attitudes toward the market economy predict EU support. Since the creation of a common market is a—and for some the—fundamental objective of European integration, we would expect that supporters of free market policies were more likely to endorse EU nmembership than opponents of such policies. We would also expect that this effect became stronger over time as citizens—presumably—became more knowledgeable about the meaning of EU accession. Note that in the analysis of the 10 surveys we had to rely on 3 different indicators of promarket attitudes; therefore, the interpretation of changes in the impact of our POLICY OPINION variable will require some attention to these changes in measurement over time. Though these changes limit our ability to examine changes over time, we are still able to determine the relative predictive power of policy opinions within each survey.

Hypothesis 3 posits that expectations about group benefits impact public opinion about EU membership. As table A11 showed, young

people, more highly qualified occupational groups, politicians, and big business were rather unequivocally expected to benefit, whereas a plurality assumed that small entrepreneurs, the elderly, and people working in agriculture would be unfavorably affected by accession. Because of the negligible size of some of these groups in the citizen population and limits of data availability, we incorporate in our analyses just five dummy variables referring to the possible impact of expected group benefits. Two of these identify the 18–35 years old cohort and the pensioner-aged among the respondents, respectively; two distinguish between groups in terms of educational qualifications; and a third identifies the tiny group of people living from agriculture.

Hypothesis 4 holds that citizens, seeing EU membership as a logical continuation of postcommunist regime transformation, judge its likely benefits on the basis of how they evaluate the performance of the current regime. Hypothesis 5 submitted, however, that at least at the beginning of the 1990s, EU membership could also be seen by many as a possible savior from current troubles and mismanagement by the national government and political elite. These hypotheses will be tested through a look at the effects of the PERFORMANCE 1 and PERFORMANCE 2 variables in our regression analyses. Each of these two variables is based on a single questionnaire item about generalized evaluations of regime performance, which appeared with identical phrasing in a sufficiently large number of surveys.

## Findings

Table 7.3 displays the results of our multivariate analysis regarding the possible dependence of support for accession on the various cues discussed above. All observed effects of policy opinions and performance evaluations are in the expected—given the coding of the variables, positive—direction, and quite a few of them are statistically significant. Hence both hypotheses 3 and 4 receive support from the empirical analysis. In contrast, while table 7.3 does not rule out the possibility of some increase over time in the impact of performance evaluations, it fails to give any explicit support to hypothesis 5. In fact, the finding that evaluations of regime performance had a positive effect on EU support already in 1991–1992 directly contradicts this hypothesis, and hence we reject it.

We notice, however, an upward trend over time in the impact of POLICY OPINION on EU support. Though this increase is statistically not

significant, it may deserve some attention as a sign of some learning effects taking place over time. At first sight the seemingly large effects of POLICY OPINION in some of the later datasets may seem to be due to the rather powerful and sophisticated measures of promarket opinions employed in those surveys. However, POLICY OPINION tends to have a larger and more consistently significant effect than performance evaluations even in the Eurobarometer surveys (see the 1991, 1992, November 1995, November 1996, and November 1997 data), where the former was measured through a similarly simple dichotomous item as the one that the PERFORMANCE 1 variable is based on. Similarly, the apparent increase over time in the effect of POLICY OPINION cannot be blamed entirely on improved measurement. The 1994 and 1998 surveys relied on the same measures, yet they show an increase over time—albeit a statistically insignificant one. Exactly the same is the case when we make a comparison across the Eurobarometer datasets only, or across the April 1996, April 2001, or March 2003 datasets.

As table 7.3 shows, party preferences and sociodemographic characteristics rarely registered statistically significant direct effects on support for EU membership in surveys taken over the 1991–2003 period, and even when they did, the effect was not always in the expected direction. Although the young and the highly educated almost always showed above average EU enthusiasm (data on bivariate relationships not shown), the direct effects of age and education tend to be insignificant in our model. Therefore, we conclude that group benefits/losses occurring to relatively large groups—like the young, the old, the poorly or highly educated—were unlikely to influence support for EU membership in the egoistic way presumed by hypothesis 3.[5] The expected losses of the agricultural sector were probably more likely to have such an influence, since, despite the very low number of relevant respondents in the samples, working in agriculture had the expected negative direct effects on EU support for most of the time, and these negative effects were statistically significant in the 1992 and 2001 datasets. However, the evidence is somewhat inconclusive on this point, since the observed effect is positive in three out of the nine datasets.

There is only slightly more support in the findings regarding the impact of cues provided by party elites. As explained above, the test regarding this hypothesis is rather tenuous, since the impact of EU attitudes on party support could also generate the same findings as those anticipated by hypothesis 1. Yet, even such seemingly supportive findings are few and far between, which raises doubts about the validity of

**Table 7.3** Dependence of support for EU membership in 10 different surveys on available cues: Sociodemographic group membership, policy and performance evaluations, and party preference

| | *Nov. 1991* | *Nov. 1992* | *May 1994* | *Nov. 1995* | *April 1996* | *Nov. 1996* | *Nov. 1997* | *May 1998* | *April 2001* | *March 2003* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Socio economic characteristics | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18–35 years old | .28 | −.02 | **.58** | .10 | −.12 | **.66** | **−.54** | .31 | .46 | .25 |
| 60+ years old | −.44 | **−1.05** | −.25 | **1.17** | **−.52** | .11 | .36 | −.18 | −.28 | .03 |
| Education high | −.13 | −.28 | −.19 | .15 | −.38 | .19 | **2.02** | −.05 | −.33 | .41 |
| Education low | .98 | −.01 | −.28 | **−.88** | −.17 | .42 | −.45 | −.11 | −.09 | −.25 |
| Agriculture | — | **−3.56** | .10 | −.42 | −.78 | −.08 | 6.96 | −.54 | **−1.13** | .12 |
| Attitudes | | | | | | | | | | |
| Policy opinion | **1.34** | .48 | **1.35** | **1.00** | **4.50** | **1.50** | **1.78** | **1.89** | **5.77** | **4.86** |
| Performance 1 | .59 | .41 | — | .08 | **. 89** | .40 | .04 | — | **. 83** | **. 94** |
| Performance 2 | .79 | .43 | .51 | **1.86** | — | **1.55** | .40 | **1.20** | — | — |
| Party preference | | | | | | | | | | |
| Center right | −.56 | .92 | .13 | .09 | −.02 | −.06 | −.47 | .21 | .36 | .22 |
| Liberal & left | .05 | −.23 | .15 | .03 | −.04 | .50 | **. 90** | **. 67** | . 02 | **. 58** |
| Extremists | **−2.24** | — | −.60 | **−1.46** | **−1.39** | −.36 | **−1.61** | −.50 | **−.84** | −.23 |
| Model fit and unweighted number of cases in the analysis | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$ | .12 | .08 | .06 | .21 | .24 | .20 | .23 | .13 | .34 | .36 |
| Number of cases | 843 | 757 | 1775 | 590 | 967 | 639 | 717 | 1332 | 1062 | 1042 |

*Note*: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients and the number of cases and model fit for each equation. Constants are not shown. Coefficients significant at the $p < .05$ level are printed in bold.

*Source*: Central and Eastern European Barometers No. 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8; May 1994 and May 1998 CEU-Medián postelection surveys; April 1996, April 2001, and March 2003 monthly omnibus surveys of the Medián Public Opinion and Market Research Institute. All samples are clustered random samples of the adult population. The data are weighted so as to correct for the impact of nonsampling error on the demographic composition of the sample.

hypothesis 1—as well as about a possible impact of EU support on party preferences.

To begin with, allegiance to an extremist party does show the expected negative direct effect in all the surveys. Although the effect fails to reach conventional significance levels in half the datasets, this could be blamed on the relatively small number of extreme party supporters in the datasets. Given the centrality of an anti-Western, anti-market, and—in the case of MIÉP—radical nationalist stance for the identity of these parties, however, it is quite possible that the causation goes from attitudes toward the EU to party allegiance, rather than the other way round.[6]

Similarly, it is consistent with hypothesis 1 that center–left or liberal party preference shows the expected significant positive effects for most of the time. Yet, if opinion leadership by parties sways public opinion, then it is a bit hard to understand why it took so many years until this effect became, from late 1996 on, consistent in direction from one survey to the other, and statistically significant in strength. Yet, the most serious blow to hypothesis 1 is the consistently insignificant effect of CENTER RIGHT PARTY PREFERENCE on EU support. This cannot be blamed on an unfortunate combination of small sample size with an objectively small—albeit real—causal effect because the sign of the effect shows trendless fluctuation between positive and negative values over time, whereas the parties concerned gradually shifted from a distinctively pro-EU position to a less enthusiastic but still clearly pro-EU stance.[7] Yet, their supporters seemed no more pro-EU than nonaligned citizens—not even in the early 1990s, under the conservative government that signed the Europa Agreement.

## Conclusion

We argued above that the Hungarian public judged the possible impact of EU membership largely through the inference that accession will make their country more like a Western European country. Deviations from this rule occurred only where widely available information suggested otherwise, as it probably was the case with respect to the greater emphasis on market integration than developing a common social policy within the EU, or with respect to the low probability that the agricultural producers of new and old member-states may receive the same subsidies.

If so, then the extensive, repeatedly reinforced experiences of the Hungarian public about East–West differences can easily explain the rather high level of support for membership. The ready and extensive availability of beliefs about these differences may also explain why, as our analysis suggested, the public made relatively little use of elite guidance to develop firmly held attitudes on the matter. It is less clear why, as our analysis suggests, expectations about group-specific benefits failed to shape support. It may be that the link between possible benefits and losses, on the one hand, and group membership, on the other, was not seen particularly tight except in the case of fairly small groups like agricultural producers. But it may also be the case that public evaluations of EU membership followed a sociotropic, rather than egocentric logic, which would not be surprising in light of most previous findings regarding the economic determinants of political support (Norpoth 1996).

At the same time, we should think that popular beliefs about East–West differences remained probably fairly stable over the 1991–2003 period. Thus, even if we had data about its variation over time, it would probably not take us very far in explaining the dynamics of public opinion in Hungary. Temporal variation in support for policies associated with the EU, or evaluations of the performance of the current regime—which was, supposedly, taking steps to bring the country closer to the West—may give a better explanation for the sizeable drop of support between 1991 and 1996, and the partial recovery of support afterward (see table 7.1). Indeed, in the 1991–1997 Eurobarometer time series, we find that support for the free market economy declined till 1995, and remained steady from then on, whereas performance evaluations kept turning ever more negative until November 1996, only to become more positive afterward (data not shown). Regarding the 1997–2003 period, our data reveal little parallel between trends in EU support with temporal changes either in performance evaluations or in policy opinions. As our discussion of elite discourse already suggested, the ups and downs of support for accession in this period may be explained by other real-world cues, like information about the progress of the accession negotiations.

Given the limits of the available survey, we cannot go any further than these rather tentative propositions regarding the factors that moved the dynamics of support over time at the aggregate level. However, our individual level analysis of the same data certainly suggest that direct personal evaluation of real-world cues—about East–West differences, regime performance, and policies believed to be promoted by the

EU—were most probably more important determinants of public opinion than the endorsement of membership by the political elite.

## Appendix I

*The Wording of Questions Used for Table 7.1 and as the Dependent Variables in the Regression Analyses Reported in Table 7.3*

A: "If Hungary were to join the European Community in the future, would you feel strongly in favor, somewhat in favor, somewhat opposed, or strongly opposed?" The responses were recoded as 1 = strongly or somewhat in favor, 0 = strongly or somewhat opposed.

B: "Which of the following statements support your own views: (1) Hungary should join the European Union as soon as possible; (2) Hungary should stay out of the European Union?" The responses were recoded as 1 = join, 0 = stay out.

C: "If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of Hungary's membership of the European Union, would you personally vote for or against membership?" The responses were recoded as 1 = for, 0 = against.

D: "If there were a referendum next weekend about whether Hungary should join the European Union, would you vote in favor of entering the EU or against entering the EU?" The responses were recoded as 1 = in favor, 0 = against.

## Appendix II

*Independent Variables and Their Coding in the Regression Analyses Reported in Table 7.3*

18–35 YEARS OLD: All respondents aged 18–35 were coded 1, and everyone else 0.

60+ YEARS OLD: All respondents aged 60 and above were coded 1, and everyone else 0.

EDUCATION HIGH: All respondents with a completed university level education were coded 1, and everyone else 0.

EDUCATION LOW: All respondents with maximum elementary education were coded 1, and everyone else 0.

AGRICULTURE: All respondents currently employed in agriculture—including farmers—were coded 1, and everyone else 0.

POLICY OPINION: This variable measured promarket attitudes and was scaled between 1 (maximal support for market) and 0 (minimal support market).

In the 1991, 1992, 1995, November 1996, and 1997 (i.e., Central and Eastern Eurobarometer) datasets, the respective question was worded as "Do you personally feel that the creation of a free market economy, that is one largely free from state control, is right or wrong?" The responses were recoded for the present analysis as 0 = wrong, 1 = right, 0.5 = do not know, no answer.

In the May 1994 and May 1998 datasets, a multiple-item scale was constructed by summing responses to the following questions: "Nowadays, there is a lot of talk about the fact that foreign companies and citizens buy up Hungarian companies. What do you think would be the right thing, that (A) foreigners should be excluded from buying up Hungarian companies; (B) foreigners would only be able to buy up unprofitable companies; or (C) foreigners would be able to buy up any Hungarian company if they offer the highest price?" (Responses to this item were recoded as A = 0, B or C = 1, no answer or do not know = 0.5.) "Do you agree or disagree that the government should provide work for those who want to work?" (Responses to this item were recoded as 0 = completely agree, 0.33 = rather agree, 0.5 = do not know or no answer, 0.66 = rather disagree, 1 = completely disagree.) "Do you agree or disagree that privatization will help a lot to solve the country's economic problems?" (Responses to this item were recoded as 1 = completely agree, 0.66 = rather agree, 0.5 = do not know or no answer, 0.33 = rather disagree, 0 = completely disagree.) Responses to these items were summed up and divided by three.

In the April 1996, April 2001, and March 2003 datasets, a multiple-item scale was constructed by summing up responses to the following questions (with all responses recoded as 1 = completely support, 0.66 = rather support, 0.5 = do not know or no answer, 0.33 = rather oppose, 0 = completely oppose) and dividing the sum by five: "Would you support or oppose it: (A) if the Hungarian forint would cease to exist in a few years time and a common European currency were introduced in Hungary instead? (B) If any citizen of the member-states of

the European Union could freely to take up employment in Hungary? (C) If any citizen of the member-states of the European Union could freely buy real estate and agricultural land in Hungary? (D) If Hungarian companies had to compete on the Hungarian market with high-quality West European products? (E) If Hungarian companies had to comply with strict EU norms regarding food products, which even set a maximum fat content for meat products?"

PERFORMANCE 1: This variable is based on a single item: "In general, do you feel things in Hungary are going in the right or in the wrong direction?" The responses were recoded for the present analysis as 0 = wrong direction, 1 = right direction, 0.5 = do not know, no answer.

PERFORMANCE 2: This variable is based on a single item: "On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy is developing in Hungary?" The responses were recoded for the present analysis as 0 = not at all satisfied, 0.33 = not very satisfied, 0.66 = fairly satisfied, 1 = very satisfied, 0.5 = do not know, no answer.

CENTER-RIGHT PARTY PREFERENCE: The item is based on responses to a question about "Which party would you vote for if there were elections to Parliament next weekend?" Responses mentioning MDF, KDNP, FKGP, and—from 1995 on—Fidesz-MPP were coded as 1, and all other responses as 0.

LEFT OR LIBERAL PARTY PREFERENCE: The item is based on responses to a question about "Which party would you vote for if there were elections to Parliament next weekend?" Responses mentioning Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP), SZDSZ, and—before 1995—FIDESZ were coded as 1, and all other responses as 0.

EXTREMIST PARTY PREFERENCE: The item is based on responses to a question about "Which party would you vote for if there were elections to Parliament next weekend?" Responses mentioning the MMP or MIÉP were coded as 1, and all other responses as 0.

## Notes

1. The Internet appendix can be found at http://www.indiana.edu/~iupolsci/rrohrsch/PalgraveTables+Figures.pdf
2. Some accounts focus on the presentation of the EU and the accession process in the Hungarian media (Hegedüs 2001, 2003; Sükösd 2003; Szilágyi-Gál 2003; Terestyéni 2001), whereas others concern the development of

Hungarian elite and expert opinion over time (Ellison 2004a), or the evolution of party positions on integration (Bátory 2001, 2002b; Bozóki and Karácsony 2003; Kopecký and Mudde 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2001, 2002).

3. Recent works on party-based Euroskepticism in accession countries present controversial findings. Bátory (2001, 2002b) and Szczerbiak and Taggart (2001) label Fidesz, the major center–right party after 1997, as a "national-interest soft Eurosceptic" party, whereas Kopecký and Mudde (2002) label the party "Euro-enthusiast." Indeed, the record of Fidesz-MPP allows such conflicting judgments. It never does anything spectacular that might question its commitment to the EU, but it likes to send ambiguous messages that are not straightforward enough to alienate pro-EU centrist voters, but at the same time hard enough to attract nationalist anti-EU voters. This strategy of the party may be responsible for the significant fall in public support for EU membership in the latter half of 2002, when partisan sentiments went high.
4. The 2003 survey data available to us about party positions only covers these four parties because the far-left MMP never gained parliamentary representation, whereas the far-right MIÉP lost all its seats in 2002.
5. Some may counter that expected group benefits may have influenced support indirectly, through policy and performance evaluations, or in an altruistic way, that is, by old people supporting accession because they thought it will benefit the young. With the data at hand, we cannot test this last possibility. Regarding the possible indirect effects, it is true that when support for accession is regressed merely on the five sociodemographic variables, low education and young age record statistically significant effects of the expected direction—that is, negative for the first and positive for the second—in a little more than half the surveys in question (data not shown). However, the wording of the questions on performance evaluations and policy opinions makes it unlikely that responses to these items were influenced by the expected group benefits of EU accession—especially when they failed to have such a direct effect on support for EU membership itself. Rather, we think that most of the observed indirect effects of education and age on EU support via other attitudes were due to the fact that policy opinions and performance evaluations differed by age and education for reasons unrelated to the expected group benefits of EU accession.
6. The fact that the impact of the EXTREMIST PARTY PREFERENCE variable seems to have declined over time (see table 7.3) also contradicts the notion that the anti-EU discourse of these parties could have instilled like-minded attitudes among their supporters.
7. A careful observer may notice that the effect in question was usually—albeit not always—positive under right-wing governments (i.e., from 1990 till May 1994, and then again from spring 1998 to spring 2002), and negative under the left-liberal governments in 1994–1998 and after summer 2002.