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PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE BALTIC STATES:
SEEKING THE REASONS FOR ESTONIAN AND LATVIAN DIVERGENCE

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Abstract. Using arguments drawn from the studies of history, and contemporary studies on public support for the European Union, this paper supplements the mainstream economics and cost-benefit oriented theories in order to explain the dynamics of some of the lowest levels of public support found among the new EU member states. Estonia and Latvia, which are two of the three former Soviet republics to have radically reformed their economies and political systems to reintegrate with the European communities, have consistently shown low levels of support for the EU membership. These levels have differed from those found in the third Baltic country, Lithuania, and also in several other Central and Eastern European countries, which became members of the EU in 2004. Yet, the voter turnouts of the Baltic republics in the 2003 referendums were among the highest ones. This paper uses logistic regression to test whether some specific culturo-historical factors could help explain these irregularities. In addition to a discussion of potentially significant culturo-historical factors, bundled with some findings of other off-mainstream studies, data from the Eurobarometer survey series is used for the analysis. The analysis tests the effects of cultural and historical developments, which have produced issues related to the ethnic mix, different socialization and ideological conditioning of different generations, and the importance of religion, or rather, the emphasized secularism similar to the neighbouring Scandinavian region. The study suggests different systematic interpretations to at least one of the variables – that of age – based on historical arguments. This study differs from the other few regional studies in that it tries to explain the hostility, or low aggregate support levels, as opposed to testing the general theoretical determinants of positivity towards EU membership. The paper finds both old age and membership in the largest minority group to be statistically significant predictors of negativity towards the EU, and suggests that the accuracy of models based on classical socio-economic theories alone can be improved by including culturo-historical arguments in the formulae.

INTRODUCTION

Citizens' support for the European Union (the EU) has become one of the central issues in discussing the development of a democratic Europe. During the initial phases of the development of the EU, according to the commonly held view, there was no need or intention for the elites to take into account the opinions of their nations, as the project was seen progressing independently of this factor (see *e.g.* Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Eichenberg 2003). However, with the increasing concerns and questions raised about the levels of legitimacy of and democracy in the Union, public opinion has become increasingly relevant. Efforts of democratization, such as, for example, the somewhat increased roles of the European Parliament (the EP), can be observed via the latest treaties, or the failed treaty efforts, for that matter. The organization has been democratized to an extent and the citizens have gained a say in the choices of the Union via referendums, the EP, and civic movements. As Kritzinger (2003) states, drawing from Niedermayer (1991), Gabriel (1992), Wessels (1995) Christin and Hug (2002), and Schneider and Weitsman (1996) 'The EU is no longer an "elite plaything"'.

The study of the opinions of the earliest members of the EU has been continuously carried out since the beginning of the 1970's, with the Eurobarometer polls first published in 1974. Much of the aggregate level conclusion-drawing and analysis has concentrated roughly into the last two decades during which several new members have entered the Union. The variety of theories and possible explanations for the changes in support, and the attempts to spot independent variables influencing the outcomes of polls, or more importantly – the

referendums – is manifold. Chierichi (2005) states, in summarizing most of the leading studies to date, that there is no consensus among scholars regarding the accounts of support. Most of the broadly discussed theories draw from certain assumed paths of development, from specific economic conditions, and from several underlying assumptions that can be shown not to fit all of the latest member states of the EU. These assumptions focus foremost on the rational or economical aspects of human behaviour and leave little room for other explanations of variations.

An increasing number of scholars have started paying attention to the unexplained variances in the data regarding the supposedly homogeneous group of what is commonly designated as the ‘Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries’. One of the underlying assumptions of this paper is that even though the countries of the region can be seen sharing some overarching experiences from the aftermath of World War I and World War II to the end of the Cold War, their cultural and historical backgrounds do not necessarily comprehensively overlap beyond that (Stråth 2002; Ehin 2001; Ozolins 2000). Hence, trying to analyze the geopolitical region as one might be an approach that needs to be reassessed. The East-West differentiation can be conveniently used as a shorthand carrying some functional meaning in the most recent historical contexts but it also suggests differentiation based on notions which may or may not apply to various countries in the region.

Simon (1996) states that the typical post-communist citizen can not be so broadly painted, as in reality it is hard to find a typical citizen in the imagined region due to substantial differences between countries. Stråth (2002) stresses that distinctions based on the stereotypical differentiation of ‘Eastern’ vs. ‘Western’ Europe can easily create false assumptions. These assumptions, he claims, have their roots in chauvinism and the fear of the ‘Eastern’ representing otherness and orientalism. Those distinctions, he suggests, have been drawn along the lines of Voltaire who contributed to shifting the earlier North-South (or Empire-Barbarians) axis to the new concept of Christian versus Islam, *i.e.* to defining ‘Us’ as the modern West, and ‘the Others’ as the demarcated East (*Ibid.*).

An example of methodological problems arising from possibly under-analyzed assumptions is the study of Tucker, Pacek, and Berinsky (2002) where data regarding the CEE region from 1996 was used for making extensive conclusions and statements regarding the region as a whole in the year 2002. This could be seen as relatively unproblematic from a statistical exercise point of view; however, the changes in state structures, the rapidly changing economies, and the changing levels of the development of democracy, and other significant dimensions, such a study becomes problematic from the point of the validity of the conclusions compared to reality, as certain criteria and assumptions drawn from the Western experience of stability are by default applied to studying countries undergoing unprecedented transformations.

This paper suggests that deconstructing the concept handling the CEE region as a singular entity could contribute to a better understanding of the social dynamics of those nations; this is motivated by the observation that some of them show unpredicted attitudes towards the EU (the formation of which may be misinterpreted). This study will also suggest that explanations drawing from micro-level economic expectation or utilitarianist models may not be the best tools for understanding the positions of some of the publics in the region. This paper will focus on two of the most deviant countries in terms of EU support indicators among the new member states: the Estonian Republic and the Latvian Republic. Latvia and Estonia had the highest voter turnouts after Malta in the 2003 accession referendums, but showed low support for EU membership with some 33% of the voters opposed (with only Malta and Slovenia having 10% point higher indicators of opposition). Post-accession polls indicate that the support in both nations is still low, the opposition relatively high, and ambivalence dominant. Still, the levels of economic and democratic development are

comparable to other CEE countries, which show higher levels of support. Hence a question arises: what drives the opposition in Latvia and Estonia?

This study acquires some of its practical relevance through the argumentation that although the statistical weight of the Baltic states in terms of their total population¹ compared to the total of the New-10² or EU-25 is relatively small, each one of the countries represents one vote in the unanimity voting procedures of the European Commission, which may make uninterpreted fluctuations in their support for the EU (as the Eurobarometer 64 puts it) quite relevant in the context of country coalition forming processes (Aleskerov *et al.* 2002), and may also influence the general success of the adoption of the Euro (Ehin 2001) in a possibly homogenized Europe. Hence, on the practical level the findings of this study help shed light onto ways to deal with these low levels of support (if one's agenda is pro-EU) or how to further the opposition (if one's agenda is anti-EU).

In broader terms, this paper hypothesizes that two kinds of factors, which are strongly interlinked, can help explain the unprecedented patterns of EU support in the region – those of a cultural and a historical nature. Alas, this study will undertake to test whether the hypothetically significant differences in the culturo-historical build-up of these societies could plug different factors into the formulae of the formation of public support for the EU compared to the classical theories applied to its the earlier members.

The paper aims to determine whether there are some commonly overlooked factors that have shaped and are shaping the negative side of the EU support axis in the region, which could be influenced by the course of the region's volatile geopolitical history and the resulting ethnic mix. The latter suggests paying attention to the influence of the matters of 'compulsory resettlement (deportation)', 'planned migration' and 'state-sponsored Russification' (Budryte 2005), rather than only looking at the individuals' micro-economic interests or utilitarian considerations. Three specific factors will be suggested for testing via logistic regression, namely: secularism, age, and ethnicity, as three more or less distinct features of these societies that could theoretically bring about different social dynamics.

The first is seen as theoretically reflecting a different set of historical values compared to the majority of other EU nations, and as amplifying the lack of support for the Union commonly guaranteed by the Catholic church (as claimed by Nelsen and Guth 2000). The second is linked to the fact that roughly the youngest quartile of the population has been educated and socialized under a democratic regime, unlike their parents and grandparents who have been conditioned under a socialist-communist regime and have had to find ways to cope with issues of unforeseen social mobility, with dramatic changes in social positions and manners of life, and with shifts in value-systems (as also discussed in Ehin 2001). The last suggestion aims to observe the influence of the post-communist-nostalgia and affinity with the Russian Federation or the dissolved Soviet Union amongst ethnic minorities (as often indicated by the local media and non-empirical studies, but rarely tested for significance).

The paper differs from a number of other studies regarding the region in that it tries to explain the hostility, or more mildly put, low aggregate support levels, as opposed to testing

¹ In millions: Estonia 1.34 (Statistical Office of Estonia 2006); Latvia: 2.29 (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia 2006); Lithuania 3.4 (Lithuanian Department of Statistics 2006).

² Where possible, without threatening to distort the conventional meaning, this study will avoid using the distinction of 'Western' and 'Eastern' Europe for the sake of theoretical objectivity. The author suggests a view in line with some of the arguments, put forth by Str ath (2002) and Simon (1996) that distinctions based on the notion of 'Eastern' vs. 'Western' Europe do indeed carry some functional meaning in some contexts but may make objective data analysis more difficult. First, the processes in the New-10 can be seen to represent a relatively new phenomenon not explained by the notions of 'Eastern', and second, the area covered by the notion of CEE can hardly be seen as homogeneous, as illustrated via scholarly arguments used previously. Instead the unbiased, uncharged, more objective self-explanatory notions such as EU-15, New-10, and similar will be used, where appropriate.

the classical theoretical determinants of support for EU membership. Also, the author of the current paper is admmissive to the argument that the distinctions argued in this study may well be irrelevant in various global contexts, but as suggested, given the irregularities and questionabilities in assumptions of homogeneous groupings inside the EU, this approach of analytical partitioning may help better explain the dynamics of public support for the EU in the CEE region.

The first section of this paper will cover the theoretical underpinnings of this study, putting the histories of Estonia and Latvia into a theoretical perspective, and giving a short overview of relevant general theories on public support for the EU. The second main section will cover the methodology and the data used, introducing the hypotheses of the study and providing facts on the operationalization of the variables. The last part of this paper will form conclusions from the findings of the study.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Case-Countries in Culturo-Historical Perspective

Ehin (2001) states similar to and Mikkil and Pridham (2004), that the 'Euroenthusiasm' in the CEE publics has been everything but unanimous over the past years – the average support for EU membership in 1996 was 61 percent, which in fact ranged from 80 in Romania to 29 in Estonia (in 2001). She also finds that the image of the EU has not been stable, being low in the 1990ies but improving since 1996. The claim on improvement can be seen as valid given the currently available data, and, given the fact that the 2004 EU enlargement did take place in spite of the fears of its failure in the two Baltic states. One must take notice that these findings suggest there could be significant differences among the countries in the region as to their determinants of public support for the EU.

Taking account of longer historical horizons it is possible to envisage analytical frameworks in which the functional concept of the CEE would be neglected and countries would be observed in more homogeneous groupings according to their common historical experiences and development, and/or according to geopolitical locations³.

It has been suggested that the Baltic states could be regarded as a separate group in similar studies also without the deeper culturo-historical perspectives, which this study is suggesting. The uniqueness has been suggested through their experiences of being subjugated directly to the Soviet rule and being hence denied, unlike the rest of the CEE⁴, their own currencies, armies, and proper local governing structures, which had to be built on a *carte blanche* upon regaining independence (Mikkil and Pridham 2004). Additionally, inside the Baltic region, cultural divisions arising from the factors of linguistic differences⁵, combined with somewhat different historical experiences, have been found significant as Ozolins (2000) summarizes drawing from Kirby (1990 and 1995), Thaden (1985), Clemens (1991), Hiden and Salmon (1991), and Lieven (1993). The abovementioned differences can be seen as further suggesting the separation of Lithuania as a historically greater power, and a later member of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, from the other two modern-day countries

³ The latter could be claimed to be already mildly indicated by the re-introduction of the term 'Central Europe' which can be related back to the notion of the *Mitteleuropa*.

⁴ Bieler (2002) stressed that 'Due to the financing of economic reform in the 1970s and 1980s via foreign debts, Poland and Hungary had already been integrated into the global financial market prior to the collapse of the eastern bloc' which further illustrates the entirely different situation of the Baltic nations.

⁵ The Lithuanian and Latvian languages are part of the small separate Baltic sub-branch of the Indo-European language family related to the extinct Old-Prussian, and Estonian is a Finno-Ugric language closely related to Finnish spoken in neighbouring Finland.

commonly indicated by the shorthand of the 'Baltic states' in appropriate analytical contexts.

To develop the argument further, while acquiring support from Smith *et al.* (2002), one can trace the 'European history' of Estonian and Latvian territories back some 800 years. In earlier times, after the Northern or Baltic Crusades, nowadays Estonian and Latvian territories were ruled by the Germans, Swedes, Danes (parts of Estonia) and Poles (parts of Latvia). Later, most of the same territories were mapped as the German province of Old Livonia, except for the northern territory of the Danish Estland and the Polish territory of nowadays south Latvia. Then again, most of the Estonian area was ruled as a Swedish province, and that of Latvia was under the Lithuanian-Polish rule. Finally, after the end of the re-emerged Swedish rule, the territories of Estland and northern parts of Livonia were placed under the *de jure* rule of Imperial Russia, to which the Polish ruled part of Latvia soon followed. The Baltic German nobilities remained in place as principal landowners up to the first decades of the 20th century. German was still being widely used as the dominant language of business, administration and education until the Tsarist government programs of Russification in the Baltic provinces and Finland replaced it with Russian between around 1880 and 1900 (Purs 2001; Vihalemm 2001; Past 2001). The period lasted for some 20-30 years until 1918-1920, when the republics declared and fought for their independence, and instituted their titular ethnies' languages as their state languages.

Another similar illustrative aspect that might help explain some of the expected findings regarding negativism, especially among the elderly, is that until the middle of the 1960ies self-organized guerrilla groups, the so called Forest Brothers or Brethren actively sabotaged the Soviet units in the hope of a Western intervention similarly to the British assistance in the 1918 to 1920 wars for independence, unaware of the agreements of the Yalta Conference, which can be further suggested to have possibly fuelled distrust towards the political intentions of some of the founding nations of the EU. If considered plausible, the previously suggested factors could offer venues for explaining some of the deviance in EU support in the region which is unexplained by economic theories.

There are also significant differences in the importance of religion, relating the predominantly agnostic or atheist Estonia, and to an extent Latvia, to the similarly described Nordic countries around the Baltic Sea (see also Nelsen, Guth and Fraser 2001), and relating Lithuania, again, to her historical counterpart Poland, via Catholicism. Also, in modern times, the ethnic mix, which again is different in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, can be suggested theoretically causing different processes in Latvia and Estonia, and hence, also influencing the indicators of public opinion (Ehin 2001; Mikkel and Pridham 2004). Lithuania is more similar to its neighbouring almost uniethnic Poland with 84% of its population belonging to the titular nation.⁶

One of the pioneering studies using statistical methods on the Baltic region regarding the matter of public opinion of Ehin (2001) confirms that there are some statistical differences between Estonia and Lithuania in support for the EU. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2004) and Mikkel and Pridham (2004) relevantly note that the three Baltic countries had the highest voter turnouts among the New-10, but their level of support for the EU accession shown during the referendums in 2003 can again be divided between Lithuania on one side, with its higher support, and Estonia and Latvia on the other as countries with the lowest share of yes-votes among the whole New-10 group.

Estonia was the first of the former Soviet Republics to begin negotiations with the EU in 1998, and according to Smith (2002), has also been regarded as the 'model pupil' amongst the applicants of the period. However, hand-in-hand with that lurks the fact that the Eurobarometer 64 (European Commission 2005) lists Latvia and Estonia amongst the

⁶ Regarding the relevant minority groups for this study, only 6.3% of the population is made up of ethnic Russians according to the Lithuanian Department of Statistics (2006).

countries within the lowest quartile of support for the EU, and as two of the lowest in the New-10.

In addition to the argumentation regarding the New-10, as discussed in the previous sections, the relevance and importance of restudying the importance of various less observed social factors can also be supported by drawing a parallel to the study of Çarkoğlu (2003) on attitudes towards the EU in Turkey where several of the expected classical predictors of support cease to be significant. The study of Ehin (2001) suggests that using the classical predictors without special consideration in the cases of the New-10 may be 'especially unwarranted', as 'the labour market has gone through profound changes; socialist-era education has lost much of its value, and many people have experienced extreme social mobility, both upwards and downwards.' (*Ibid.*, 37). She also stresses that it is reasonable to assume that due to the generally poor awareness of the impact of accession, studying those countries using the classical theories of expectations of economic gain is not an adequate basis for predictions.

General Theories on Public Support for the EU

In broader terms, classical socio-demographic variables such as income, sex, and education have been suggested as some significant predictors of public support for the EU (Muller *et al.* 1987 in Gabel 2003; Carey 2002; Ehin 2001; Inglehart and Rabier 1978 in Anderson 1995), or, of the lack of it⁷ amongst the previous 15 nations. Also, religion and age have been suggested as significant predictors of support, which can not be dealt away by other variables (Nelsen and Guth 2003; Nelsen, Guth and Fraser 2001). Gabel (1998) gives a descriptive summary of the main general approaches to the theoretical explanations of the EU support by grouping them into five theory brackets, which are cognitive mobilization, political values, utilitarian concerns, class partisanship, and support for government. A wide range of studies have debated and studied the influence of the mentioned predictors but no agreement has been found. In addition, the study of Gabel also found there were differences in how well any of the described theories explained support functions in different countries; some explanations could only explain support amongst the original six members, some were able to include members from later accessions as well.

Carey (2002) points out the dominance of the 'economic and rational cost-benefit approach' (*Ibid.*, 389), which is based on the individual level of the citizen but he also points out the alternative studies utilizing the macroeconomic approach, the results of which 'have varied greatly depending on the level of analysis, the use of control variables and the operationalization of the dependent variable' (*Ibid.*). His claims of high variations even in the studies of the older EU-12 or EU-15 countries further support the need to re-observe those processes in the New-10. If one is to combine this with the often less expressed view of Siebert (2002) that there is no European people, and there can hence be no real European public opinion, studying the issue in a more fragmented manner could be argued to be not only justified but even necessary.

Several studies along the lines of the Inglehartian postmaterialist approach have tried to deal with the relationship of the level of information a citizen possesses and her support for the EU. The cognitive mobilization thesis argues that 'rising educational levels of recent decades, coupled with the growing availability of information about the things happening in distant places, is conducive to an increasingly cosmopolitan outlook on the part of Western publics' (Inglehart and Rabier 1978 in Anderson 1995). This combined with the findings that longer exposure to the EU experience among the original six members has changed their

⁷ Gabel 2003, surprised himself, found education to be negatively correlated with support for the European Parliament (EP). However, it may be hasty to rush into identical conclusions about the findings on the EP and the EU in broader terms.

attitudes makes drawing the link to the importance of the time of exposure relevant (Thomassen and Schmitt 1999).

Chierici (2005) differentiates the works on the economical-cultural axis, which is in accordance with Carey's (2002) approach of trying to spot differences in identities and other cultural factors. Also Nelsen, Guth and Fraser (2001) claimed that it is necessary to focus also on cultural matters in addition to the rational ones. This lends some additional support to the culturo-historical arguments based approach taken in this study, by stressing the underestimation of cultural determinants.

There have been diametrically different findings regarding the relationship between the support for the national government and the EU. Ehin (2001) found in her study of the Baltic countries that committed supporters of national governments were more likely to vote pro accession. Also Kritzinger (2003) found evidence to suggest that support for the EU depends on the performance of the nation-state, but the direction in the case of the EU-15 was the opposite. Earlier, it had been found that 'the worse citizens' opinion of national institutions, and the better their opinion of supranational ones, the stronger their support for European integration' (Sánchez-Cuenca 2000, 169), which follows the same path with the findings of Kritzinger (2003) and Anderson (1998) in McLaren (2002), who found the EU as a proxy mediating protest against the situation on national levels, or as something that is evaluated against the success of a nation state. These controversies further strengthen the image of the lack of definitive measures of support. There are a number of theories but there are just as many disputes, and preferences for explanations, giving legitimacy to alternative suggestions and interpretations.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA: THEORIES ADOPTED TO THE REGION

The Hypotheses

Given the goal and the scope of this paper, the study does not attempt to summarize, refute or support all of the studies regarding public support for the EU over the past decades. It represents an attempt to contribute to the un-numerous efforts of trying to make sense of the variance in the EU-related public opinion variables in the geopolitical region of the 'CEE', and more narrowly the 'Baltic states'. The study sees Estonia and Latvia differing from Lithuania in several significant aspects regarding religion, history, languages, and hence, drawing from Smith (1998) or Gellner (1983), also identities. The analysis will hence focus on the former combining their data.

Findings, as to which of those differences, if any, are in fact significant, enable one to construct more confident models for the region in future projects. Also, in case the study would show that some of the more significant fluctuations could be explained by additional variables rather than the classically expected ones, additional support for the theories explaining public support via cultural factors can be advocated; if not, the importance of the cultural and historical differences in determining the public support for the EU in the region can be discounted and further explanations for explaining the low levels of support should be sought.

The assumptions of the analysis will be tailored to the specificities of the cases in focus given their irregularities in certain socio-demographic parameters. As the Baltic countries also show irregularities from the EU-15 members, some factors in addition to the classical ones already observed by Ehin (2001) and Mikkel and Pridham (2004) will be tested in this paper using logistic regression. As indicated, this paper will focus on assessing the importance of secularism (or religiousness), age and ethnicity – all of which can be seen as

having culturo-historical dimensions – in contributing to the negative end of the support scale in the region.

The special interest if the opposition among the older people is higher, and whether the support amongst the younger people is higher than amongst the older, is based on the reasons below. Most of the younger generation has been educated and socialized outside the socialist education system after the collapse of the Soviet Union, or during it, whereas the older generations had formed their lifestyles and models based on a socialist system and a communist worldview (which may, or may not have changed by today). This paper proposes that looking for possible differences between the orientations of the younger and the older people can be of special interest. Additionally, the studies of Nelsen, Guth and Fraser (2001), and Nelsen and Guth (2003) found independently of the more cultural hypothesis suggested above, that age, specifically youth, is a good predictor of support for the EU in Western Europe. The latter however poses the dilemma of interpretation of the results in making a final conclusion as to whether the clash between the support of the youth and the older generations is universal, or is it more specific and differently motivated in the New-10 countries.

The first hypothesis (H1) of this paper is that the elderly people will be most opposed to the EU. This paper seeks to support the claim that this phenomenon surfaces due to the regime-change. One could suggest, that the aforementioned findings regarding age acquire explanatory support from the cognitive mobilization theories of exposure and increasing awareness, but in the Baltic case the cognitive mobilization argumentation could be hard to sustain, as exposure to the issues of the topics regarding the EU has barely started, and that of educational background and ideological upbringing might offer a better explanation for support. The interpretation of the age variable can be twofold, but in this study it will be focused on based on the culturo-historical assumptions. As the Inglehartian cognitive mobilization argument can be claimed to be hard to apply to the region so far, the differences in the opinions of the youth and those of the older people could be interpreted as indirectly suggesting the influence of socialization and state order under which one has lived most of her conscious life. Additionally, it can be expected, based on the theoretical argumentation, that the youngest age group will have a higher support for the EU than other groups.

The second point of interest is the issue of a unique ethnic mix which has resulted from the centrally planned deportations of the members of the titular ethnic groups during the 1940's and the import of mostly Russian-speaking workers during the Soviet era. These processes have created a demographic situation where the ratio of the titular nations in Latvia and Estonia has fallen to some 60% and 70% respectively. The most sizeable minorities are made up of ethnic Russians. Members of other ethnic groups, such as Ukrainians or Belarusians, have somewhat merged with the local Russian diaspora, and are often designated as 'Russian speakers' in official reports. The described ethnic divisions could be seen as potential sources of low support for the EU as representatives of the largest minority group have often expressed their identification with the Russian Federation or the ceased Soviet Union rather than with the Republics of Latvia or Estonia. Ehin (2001) suggests that the restrictive minority policies, especially that in Latvia, may have contributed to the polarization of the attitudes towards the EU. Under different theoretical assumptions, and focusing on somewhat different aspects, Ehin found that minority *attitudes* and *evaluations* towards ethnic tensions had a minor effect on EU support in Latvia but no significant findings were determined for Lithuania or Estonia. This paper, however, seeks to explain the core reasons for the big scale deviations found in Latvia and Estonia and will hence look at the associations between the support of the titular groups contrasted with the support expressed by the Russian minority groups in order to test the validity of the suggestion that the ethnic mix itself contributes to the low levels of support, independently of the related aspects observed by Ehin (2001). The second hypothesis (H2) of this paper is that expressed

negativity is the more dominant position among the sizeable Russian minority, suggesting again that some of the negative attitudes could be explained by the historical influences of the discussed planned migrations and deportation programs.

The third hypothesis (H3) of this study is that secularity is a good predictor of opposition to the EU. This hypothesis is of a theoretical nature and draws from the earlier discussed findings of the studies of Nelsen and Guth (2000), Nelsen, Guth and Fraser (2001) and Nelsen and Guth (2003) that religiousness, especially Catholicism, is a good predictor of support. As this study seeks to explain clear patterns of opposition, the finding of these studies has been reversed. It will be tested for significance given that the countries in focus belong to the group of the most secular nations in the New-10 group with up to half of the population (in Estonia, or over a third in Latvia) not considering themselves affiliated with any denominations.

The Data and Operationalization

In order to test these hypotheses the data from the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer (CCEB) 2004.1 is used. The reasons for this choice are as follows. The initial intention of the author was to use the latest publicly available Standard Eurobarometer data, *i.e.* data from the EB 62.0 as the latest Standard Eurobarometer studies also include the newer members of the Union. However, the data provided in the EB 62.0 does not enable a clear measurement of the nationality/ethnicity and the religiousness aspects theoretically suggested. Likewise, the first ever Standard EB study to have included the new member states, the EB 61.0 – the polling times of which coincided with the CCEB 2004.1 and hence could have been expected to have been identical to the latter – lacks the variables needed to test the hypotheses of this study. The CCEB 2004.1, however, used variables for determining the respondents' nationality (EB 62.0 included the language of the interview as a possibly comparable variable) and for determining the denomination of the respondents (there was no equivalent in the EB study). Hence, the CCEB study in focus provides the latest available and reasonably up to date information which includes all variables required for testing the suggested hypotheses.

In order to build models for testing the significance of the aspects suggested, the regression models will be run both without and with the inclusion of the broadest classical predictors suggested (as also used in a similar study of Ehin 2001), using the Enter method (as a test to proposed theoretical assumptions is sought) via SPSS. A combined model will be evaluated using the Forward method to test if a better fitting model could be achieved combining the hypothesized and the classical predictors. This will enable the rough evaluation of the theoretical suggestions separately, but also in contrast to the existing theories.

The question used for measuring the respondents support for the EU membership is that numbered Q8: 'Generally speaking, do you think that (COUNTRY)'s membership of the European Union will be...?' with responses 'a good thing' 'a bad thing' and 'neither good nor bad'. It is important to point out already in advance that the amount of undecided respondents in the region is quite high (which is in general true for most of the New-10 countries), and hence this paper is facing the same problem faced by other similar studies – to include the undecided responses or to exclude them. These responses do not indicate clear polarization, hence they do not provide clear cut answers. In the current case, however, their exclusion will also leave around 40% of the valid data in Estonia and Latvia combined out of the focus. As the very large group of undecided respondents can be assigned different theoretical significance, and as this is a uniform problem in the whole New-10 group (unlike that of the low support in the two Baltic states, which provides the ground for this paper), the crucial question for this study is what could be feeding the negativism in the Baltic region more forcefully compared to the rest of the New-10 countries, some of which even show lower levels of development in terms of economic parameters or democratization. In her study on

the determinants of support Ehin (2001) merged the ambivalent answers together with the negative responses. However, the previous studies regarding the region have not specifically dealt with the possible explanations for the low levels of support, as this study proposes. Hence, grouping the ambivalent answers together with the negative ones could be seen as defining an axis of support vs. scepticism, which is not the prime interest of this study. This paper suggests that for clear primary testing of the hypotheses proposed it is reasonable to use the two clearly polarized answers, as it would be difficult to argue for the ambivalent responses to be grouped together with the positive responses as an expression of some sort of support (which would be possible in the opposite case of support vs. no support axis, as discussed above). This choice leaves the researcher with a reasonable sample, which is slightly below 1000.

For the binary logistic regression conducted, the ‘Bad thing’ answers will be coded as ‘1’, and the ‘Good thing’ will be coded as ‘0’. For the measuring of the age argument the common divisions used in previous CCEB studies (*i.e.* 15-24, 25-39, 40-54, 55+) are used, as the data obtained from the database of the Central Archive for Empirical Social Research of the University of Cologne only included the exact age stated by the respondent, and the study is not interested in the general impact of the age variable as a whole but of the impact of specific age groups. To rule out the bias in forming the age groups in a deliberately manipulative manner, the models will be also tested for significance with age as a continuous variable. For the testing of the ethnicity argument only the titular groups and the largest clearly defined minority that fits the assumptions of the argument (*i.e.* have theoretical cultural or other ties with the Russian Federation or the deceased Soviet Union) will be included. This directly implies the noticeably sizeable Russian minorities. In the religiousness-secularism test no initial adjustments will be made as the category used for measuring secularism (the respondent does not affiliate with any denominations) is clearly defined by default. The classical variables, gender and education will be used as reported in the CCEB data, and that of income will be recoded into quartiles instead of the reported 12 groups for the purposes parsimony and clarity keeping in mind the initial focus of this study.

DISCUSSION

Below, all the findings illustrating or refuting the assumptions of this study will be presented side by side with the findings regarding the hypotheses proposed. The discussion will first provide a general overview of the regression results for the initial hypothetical three-factor model proposed, after which each hypothesis will be independently discussed.

Findings

The relatively simple model derived via the theoretical assumptions of this paper did indeed significantly improve the prediction of the negative attitudes towards one’s country’s membership in the European Union compared to the intercept only model. It must be noted, however, that the category of secularism did not directly feed the negative – the crosstabulations and univariate regression outputs indicate the exact opposite, with high significance. The significance of all the religious variables and the secularism category wore off in controlling for other variables. Yet, the model with only the hypothetical predictors (*i.e.* without the classical-theory predictors) performed better with the religion variable included compared to when it was removed, with the improvement measured by the difference of the two models’ -2 Log likelihood statistics being statistically significant at $p < .001$.

Also, it is noteworthy that while the model with classical predictors alone performed somewhat poorly in classifying the cases for the purposes of this research (given the low pseudo R^2 values, the low prediction accuracy, and high -2 Log likelihood statistic values),

and especially, as it did not perform well in predicting opposition, the model with the hypothesized variables did indeed better in predicting the negative attitudes. Still, the best prediction (with $p < .001$ for the improvement) for the negative attitudes could eventually be achieved by combining the two basic models – including both the classical variables and the findings regarding the hypothesized variables (including significant model improvements and excluding insignificant variables from both with the assistance of the Forward method in addition to the initial Enter one).

Despite the lack of a common R^2 value for logistic regression it might be interesting to note that while none of the pseudo R^2 values⁸ of the variations of the main models were above 0.241, all main predictor combinations compared offered a higher value compared to that reported by Ehin (2001) ('pseudo R-square 0.12') in testing her more complex model via binary logistic regression. And even though her study reports higher predictions for the non-support variable, these findings cannot be directly compared as her study merged clearly negative attitudes with the ambivalent ones (the high levels of which could be suggested as a focus of a full-scale separate study). However, the current study offers better predictions for the support variable (which was operationalized similarly to that of Ehin). It also offers a better overall prediction (both in terms of cases classified correctly and pseudo R^2 values, which are the two comparable parameters reported in her study) even though its assumptions are simpler, and are drawn from historical arguments rather than from the current EU support studies paradigm.

Table 1 reports the regression results and displays the logistic regression coefficient, Wald test, significance, and odds ratio for each of the predictors in the model consisting of the three hypothesized variables. The model performed comparatively well classifying 71.2% of the cases correctly, compared to the 62.7 in the model with intercept only, which was a significant improvement ($p < .001$). It is interesting to note that the model does better in predicting support, classifying 84.8% correctly, while predicting only 48.5% of the opposition correctly. Yet, when holding all other variables constant, the hypothetical predictors that were significant had relatively high odds ratios reaching values of at least 2.04 and up to 4.82 (as in the case of the Russian minority dummy variable).

H1 was confirmed in that when holding other variables constant the oldest age group was 3.4 times more likely to express negative attitudes towards the EU than the youngest age group. Also, the age variable remained a significant predictor when controlling for other all variables, including the classical ones. As stated earlier, the models were also run using the age predictor as a continuous variable, but as the hypothesis suggests a categorical approach and as this double-check confirmed the significance of the variable, the results have been reported using the four categories. Close observation of the data reveals that there is indeed a trend that the older a person the more likely she is to oppose. There were nevertheless more supporting responses in all groups compared to negative responses, with nearly 80% the youngest people finding the EU membership a good thing, and with the two oldest age groups being closer to being split in the middle (with roughly 53% supportive and 47% opposed in both the 40-54 and the 55+ age groups).

H2 found strong support. Being a member of the minority group significantly increased the odds of having negative attitudes towards the EU – the odds increased 4.8 times. Univariate analysis indicated that while only 26% of the members of the titular groups were opposed to the EU, some 61% of the members of the Russian minority group had negative attitudes towards the EU, suggesting the assumptions of affiliations with a state, past or present, other than one's country of residence may hold true (as the sensed ethnic tension

⁸ The exact choice and method of calculating the pseudo R^2 was not specified in Ehin's study, hence the author of this study is making reference to both of the pseudo R^2 values reported by SPSS - both Cox & Snell and Nagelkerke R^2 values.

variables, suggesting other socio-economic explanations, were questioned in the study of Ehin (2001)).

The secularism component underlying H3 was not found to be a statistically significant predictor when other variables were controlled for. Hence, the theoretical hypothesis can only be supported indirectly relying on theoretical assumptions of the importance of religion found in other studies and by contrasting this with the fact of its relatively low importance in the region. The secularism variable became an insignificant predictor already in the hypothetical model. This can be explained by testing for correlations and illustrating the nature of the data via univariate analysis, which shows that while 83% of the secularist group is made up of the members of the titular nations, the Orthodox religion group is almost entirely made up of the members of the Russian minority group who account for 93% of its membership. Correlation analysis confirmed the significance of these associations. However, in order to allow for the theoretical assumption to be tested and discussed, it was still included in the initial model. Hence, in future studies, while the influence of secularism remains interesting, as it indicates the lack of the claimed support of mostly the Catholic Church, it should be discounted for the region and possibly excluded as its dynamics are well described by the ethnicity-nationality variables. Even in univariate analysis, only the Orthodox denomination group had a significant pattern, and as discussed above, this coincided with the minority variable, which was a highly significant predictor in the models.

Table 1

Predictor	Coefficient	Wald	P	Odds Ratio
Secularism	0.17	1.26	.262	1.19
Age ⁹		36.38	<.001	
Age 25 – 39	0.71	9.26	.002	2.04
Age 40 - 54	1.17	25.24	<.001	3.21
Age 55+	1.23	31.15	<.001	3.42
Russian Minority	1.57	102.95	<.001	4.82
Constant	-2.04	88.67	<.001	0.13
% predicted correctly	71.2			
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.20			

.05 criterion of statistical significance employed.

After testing the proposed theoretical predictors the findings were combined with the classical predictors, which on their own provided a poor model and low accuracy, as described earlier. The hypothesized model remained comparable with the combined model, which excluded the religion variable and introduced the classical predictors, of which the gender and the income variables were rendered insignificant, leaving only the education variable in the improved model. Table 2 presents the results of the combined model similarly to Table 1. The new model predicted 70.3 % of all the cases correctly, but improved the prediction on the opposing cases, increasing it by 5 percent points compared to the hypothesized-factors-only model (to 53.5%). Comparing the -2 Log likelihood statistic of the hypothetical model to that of the new model showed a strongly significant ($p < .001$) change in favour of the new model.

⁹ The youngest age group 15-24 was used as the reference category. The models were also run using age as a continuous variable for testing purposes, which reported similar levels of significance, but for the purposes of this study the common age groups used in the Eurobarometer studies carry more comprehensive information.

Table 2

<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Age ⁹		20.98	<.001	
Age 25 – 39	0.72	3.23	.072	2.05
Age 40 - 54	1.58	15.06	<.001	4.85
Age 55+	1.49	14.62	<.001	4.44
Russian Minority	1.58	42.77	<.001	4.84
Education ¹⁰		18.68	.002	
Less than primary	0.91	3.80	.051	2.47
Primary or incompl. secondary	1.32	9.28	.002	3.72
Vocational school w/o secondary	2.22	13.47	<.001	9.22
Vocational school w. secondary	0.78	5.76	.016	2.18
Secondary	0.88	6.50	.011	2.42
Constant	-2.86	38.75	<.001	0.06
% predicted correctly	70.3			
Pseudo R ² (Nagelkerke)	0.24			

.05 criterion of statistical significance employed.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to contribute to explaining what could be feeding the low support levels in Latvia and Estonia despite levels of economic and democratic development comparable with the whole New-10 group. Given that the problem of ambivalence is present in the whole New-10 group, this paper has proposed that it would be reasonable to directly focus on the factors influencing negative attitudes rather than positive ones (thus often merging the negative responses with the large portion of ambivalent responses, which lack indication of their causes and polarization). The study has suggested that in explaining the deviance it could be useful to include culturo-historical factors in the analysis. Further support for this approach was acquired from other studies suggesting that using only classical micro-level economic gain and utilitarian arguments is less useful in a region that has undergone and is experiencing unprecedented socio-economic transformations, and where the associations of income and social status with other parameters may differ from those commonly observed in developed countries. To illustrate the point, being educated could be hypothesised to become insignificant in some of the New-10 countries, as a person's education, which was obtained during the socialist era, may have been marginalized under the new systems, and it is often sufficient to be young with moderate experiences to negotiate a higher salary, hence age or other more detailed variables could provide real explanations.

The findings suggest that the theoretical assumptions underlying this paper can not be ignored even though tested through relatively uncomplex regression models. The contribution of this study lay, first, in that it is the first attempt to theoretize and explain negativism rather than measure positively expressed support in the region; and second, in that it offers a test to some of the theoretical explanations encountered in non-empirical studies and occasionally in the local media.

The rough observation of the data offered some additional support to the theoretical separation of Estonia and Latvia from Lithuania, which has been found differing also in other studies. Lithuania, which is usually also designated by the term 'Baltic state', similarly to its

¹⁰ The group with higher education was used as the reference category.

neighbour and historical counterpart Poland, expresses higher support levels and lower opposition. Also, Lithuania has a larger portion of Roman Catholics, a group which is among the most minor denominations in Estonia, and relatively minor in Latvia, and is more similar to Poland, where Catholicism is the dominant religion. Hence, given the parameters taken as assumptions for analyzing the opposition found in two of its neighbouring countries, Lithuania, first of all, does not represent the same problem, and second, leaving that evident fact aside, would not share the socio-demographic characteristics required for the test.

This study designed its argumentation regarding the choice of the predicting variables independently of the current dominant paradigms, suggesting alternative explanations to some of the cause and effect relationships. The matter of the first hypothesis – age – is not entirely new in the discussions regarding support for the EU. Yet, this study sought to test it as a result of a different argumentation and, hence, saw it as possibly representing different or at least additional phenomena: as a variable helping to operationalize varying epochs of socialization over time. This combined with the confirmed hypotheses could be seen as suggesting that the interpretation of the seemingly identical New-10 region is largely dependent on the assumptions underlying the studies, echoing the concerns expressed in other studies that the interpretations of the imaginary uniform ‘Western’ support variables might not operate under the same rules in the imaginably homogeneous ‘East’.

It would be possible to criticize the findings regarding the second hypothesis – that of minorities – by saying that the finding in itself is not surprising and that other related studies regarding the region have also stated similar suggestions. It should be stressed, however, that first, the commonplace object of the previous studies has been that of support – of positive attitudes – and not that of opposition, which has sometimes been hidden under the noise of neutrality. Second, most of the few studies regarding the region have made those claims on an assumptional basis without empirical reference to either content analysis of newspapers to back the claims, or to statistical test, thus basing the claims on the common sense arguments. Third, this aspect, to the knowledge of the author, has not been directly operationalized as a variable of its own standing in academic studies regarding the and has been dismissed or hidden into different arguments as it may seem too simplistic or evident. In that respect the contribution of the current study is twofold: it suggests turning the question around and seeking the factors of opposition rather than focusing only on those of support, and it tests the arguments empirically, and hence, combining the results with the reverse question, contributes to the solidification of arguments used in discussing the EU support in the region.

The third hypothesis – that of secularism and religiousness – was not based on original interpretations on the effects of the variables as in the other two cases, but was of a theoretical nature acquiring relevance from other off-main-discourse studies by providing a test of one of at least two distinctive social features of the countries in focus. On close observation of the data it is not overly surprising to conclude that the secularism hypothesis was not statistically confirmed. First, the secularism variable does not have a clear profile of value systems or world-views to rely on, and second, the Russian minorities in both countries are dominantly religious and predominantly Orthodox. Therefore, the initial seemingly positive effect of secularism is probably carried by the titular groups’ stronger support for the EU and by other socio-demographic parameters, some of which may not have been touched upon in this study given its focus.

The theoretical implications of the study are at least three-fold. First, the culturo-historical factors in focus should be included in the models predicting support or opposition in the region in addition to other variables, such as those of individual level economic gain or cognitive mobilization, for example. Second, it seems reasonable to try to regroup countries inside the EU for empirical political studies based on cultural and historical factors, if this distinction can be expected to provide less generalized and less omissive results. This

suggests, for example, that rather than studying the ‘Eastern and Central European’ countries as one group, the latter could be observed together with those ‘Western’ countries sharing similar historical or cultural traits, which in turn requires dismissing some of the stereotypes regarding the CEE region. This would probably be yet complicated in studies regarding economic factors due to varying levels of economic development, but can be suggested relevant in studying the effects of historical or cultural factors, *i.e.* those of religion, of ethno-linguistic mixing, or of strong regions with distinct identities. For example, in studying the effects of the lack of religious mobilization, it would theoretically seem to provide a wider basis for the argument if the two Baltic countries were analyzed together with the Scandic ones, and the Catholic countries separately of the Protestant ones *etc.* Third, deconstructing the assumptions behind explanatory variables and allowing for new explanations could allow for a better understanding of the dynamics underlying the formation of support for the EU in the New-10 countries.

On the practical policy side, the fatalist implications about to be suggested can possibly be worrying for the enthusiasts of integration, and can be to the liking of the opponents. In case the relatively simple theoretical assumptions of this paper hold true, and the demographic parameters, such as age or nationality – as reflections of the socialist-communist past – have a strong influence on the levels of support the EU may enjoy, there is probably little to be done to give room for the ‘classical’ dynamics observed in the EU-15 to become fully operable. The two suggestions of this paper are continuously providing well aimed information¹¹ to the appropriate social groups in order to enable those in the ‘gray’ zone to choose a side; and *waiting* for a renewed social and demographic situation in terms of the change of generations and the locally hoped-for marginalization of nationality-based social cleavages – issues, both of which can mostly, and given the good will of the counterparts involved probably only, be solved by Time itself.

¹¹ In line with the findings of Bruter (2003) that exposure to positive or negative news and symbols, *i.e.* information, can change people’s attitudes towards the EU.

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