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Learned Democracy? Support of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe

ABSTRACT: In this article, the extent of support for democracy is determined for thirteen countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in East Germany. In addition, West Germany, representing an established democracy, is included as a benchmark country. The analysis rests on the assumption, that a democracy can be regarded as consolidated only if it is supported by the majority of its citizens. The empirical analysis is based on comparative surveys conducted in 1998–2001, after a decade of experience with the new democratic structures. The results show that in most countries of Central and Eastern Europe support for democracy is considerably lower than in West Germany. This holds true not only for electoral democracies but also for liberal democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. In five countries, the percentage of respondents who can be classified as nondemocrats is about 50 percent. Thus, the consolidation process in most of the new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe is not yet complete.

Research Question

More than ten years have passed since most Central and Eastern European countries have implemented democratic regimes. In the first years after

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democratic transition, a plethora of studies has addressed the issue of consolidation in these countries. There are several reasons for this. First, history has taught us that newly established democracies do not necessarily persist but rather every wave of democratization is followed by a “reverse wave” (Huntington 1991). Second, this wave of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe differs from previous waves in terms of the “dilemma of simultaneity” (Merkel 1999; Offe 1991). This essentially means, that postcommunist societies are not only confronted with a change of the political regime—from a totalitarian system to a democratic system—but also with an economic transformation, from a planned economy to a free market economy. This results in an extraordinary number of problems that needed to be solved simultaneously. Third, the pressure resulting from these problems cannot be absorbed by an acceptance of democracy, which has grown historically and is deeply rooted in society (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). Hence, these problems could directly affect support of the new political order.

Although these reasons still hold true, the number of studies on consolidation in Central and Eastern European countries has declined lately. This may be due to rapid shifts in scientific issue attention cycles and the fact that many of these Central and East European countries want to join the European Union (EU). Such an accession requires adaptation to EU guidelines, mainly to institutional and judicial rules, that candidate countries and countries that have already joined the EU tried to come up with. This may give the impression that democratic consolidation in these countries follows a directional and irreversible path that is finished once the country joins the EU.

These adaptation constraints do not hold for those Central and East European countries that have not applied for EU membership so far or have never even discussed such a possibility. This is true, above all, for the Slavic countries succeeding the former Soviet Union. These countries will be the future neighbors of the EU once the latest scheduled enlargement rounds have been implemented. Whatever occurs in these countries will have a much stronger effect on the EU than it has today.

First of all, these structural adaptation processes of the new EU accession and candidate countries do not necessarily imply that the citizens of these countries actually accept democracy. Given the difficulties of transformation processes and the lack of a democratic tradition, this is an open question. Once countries where the majority of citizens do not support democracy become members of the EU, a resulting destabilizing effect cannot be excluded.

Based on the assumption that democracies can be regarded as consolidated only if the majority of citizens support democracy, an empirical analysis of support for democracy even more than a decade since its institutionalization in Central and East European countries is vitally important. Following

Rohrschneider (1999) as well as Mishler and Rose (2002), who shaped the phrase “learning democracy,” we raise the question whether in the meantime the citizens of Central and East European countries have learned to support democracy. In the following analysis we differentiate between support for democracy in general and support for democracy in one’s own country. The analysis is conducted for thirteen Central and East European countries and East Germany. As a benchmark, we draw on West Germany, which is both an established democracy and a member of the EU. The analysis is based on representative mass surveys conducted between 1998 and 2001.¹

Theoretical Frame of Reference

The Concept of Democratic Consolidation

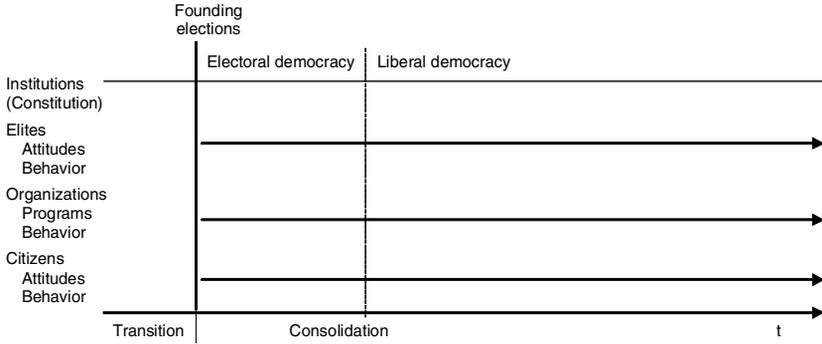
Succeeding liberalization and democratization, consolidation refers to the third stage of the transformation process from autocracy to democracy (Di Palma 1990; O’Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead 1986; similarly, Merkel 1999). By introducing this third stage, it is suggested that the transformation process is not complete with the implementation of democratic institutions and procedures. Beyond this implementation, the democratic regime has to take root in the attitudes and behavior of the political actors so that democracy becomes “the only game in town” (Linz and Stepan 1996).

The opposing view suggests that the transformation process can be regarded as complete once the democratic institutions and procedures have been implemented (O’Donnell 1996; Schedler 1998). In contrast, postulating that democracy will be fully consolidated or persistent only if the attitudes and behavior of the political actors are congruent with the implemented democratic institutions and procedures, reflects a central premise of the political culture concept (Almond 1980; Almond and Verba 1963) as well as of the theory of political systems (Easton 1965). Both approaches are justified theoretically and empirically. Accordingly, most studies of the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe adhere to this consolidation concept.

In consolidation research, multidimensional concepts prevail, such as those proposed by Linz and Stepan (1996) and by Diamond (1999). Both concepts systematically differentiate between an institutional dimension and a cultural dimension including the attitudes and behavior of the relevant actors. In Figure 1 the most relevant characteristics of both concepts are integrated.

Regarding the institutional level, the question of the point at which autocracy is abolished and democracy is implemented is a controversial issue. For many authors the threshold is reached with the institutionalization

Figure 1. **Concept of Democratic Consolidation**



of competitive elections, also known as “founding elections.” Diamond (1999) defines such a democracy as “electoral democracy” and considers this a minimalist conception of democracy. According to him, a completed democracy is more than competitive elections. Additionally, the separation of powers, rule of law, and human rights must be guaranteed. This demanding concept of democracy complies with Dahl’s (1989) polyarchy; Diamond refers to it as “liberal democracy.”

Consolidation starts when democracy has been implemented on an institutional level either as “electoral democracy” or “liberal democracy.” It refers to the attitudes and behavior of the relevant actors. Following Diamond (1999), actors are differentiated into elites, organizations and citizens. The concept of democratic consolidation presented in Figure 1 raises two questions. First, when is consolidation completed? Second, are there any differences between the actors as far as their importance to the consolidation process is concerned?

Considering the first question, it is not possible to determine such a threshold theoretically. It is merely possible to offer the following formulation: the more the attitudes and the behavior of political elites, organizations (in this case attitudes have to be replaced by programs), and citizens comply with the normative expectations of democracy, the more democracy is consolidated. Ultimately, this is another conceptualization of the premise of political culture research according to which culture should be congruent with structure. It can be extended from newly implemented democracies to all democracies: The more the attitudes and the behavior of central political actors comply with the normative expectations of democracy the more likely democracy will persist.

The second question concerning the relative importance of the three types of actors also cannot be decided adequately on either a theoretical or an empirical level. Authors such as Przeworski (1991) and Higley and Gunther (1992) emphasize the role of political elites. Due to their powerful positions and the effect their actions have on citizens, these elites play an important role in the functioning of a democracy and for developing a democratic culture. Disregarding the question of formation of democratic attitudes and its resulting behavior, the consolidation and persistence of a democratic regime *ultimately* depends on the acceptance of the citizens: "democratic regimes are especially dependent on public support" (Mishler and Rose 2002: 5). Many empirical and theoretical studies on transformation and consolidation processes in Central and Eastern Europe continue along these lines (Evans and Whitefield 1995; Fuchs and Roller 1998; Gibson, Duch, and Tedin 1992; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1999; Jacobs 2004; Merkel 1999; Mishler and Rose 1996; Plasser, Ulram, and Waldrauch 1997; Rohrschneider 1999; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998; Whitefield and Evans 2001). Our analysis also follows these lines. We concentrate on one dimension of democratic consolidation, namely, attitudes of citizens. In choosing support for democracy, we focus on the theoretically most relevant attitude.

Classification of Countries

Before addressing the concept of support for democracy, we need to explain the classification of the countries that we use. If the stage of consolidation begins with the institutionalization of a liberal democracy (cf. Figure 1), then the political systems that are in front of this threshold were no longer autocracies but they were not democracies either. These hybrid systems are called defect democracies (Diamond 1999; Merkel et al. 2002). Following Diamond, two types of defect democracies can be distinguished. First, (nonliberal) electoral democracies with competitive elections but with deficits in separation of powers, rule of law, and especially the guarantee of human rights. Second, pseudodemocracies, where elections and a multi-party system factually exist but the decisive characteristic of competition is missing. Consequently, a replacement of the ruling governmental party is impossible.

In order to determine whether a liberal democracy exists in a country, the data provided by Freedom House can be used (Diamond 1999). A seven-point scale is applied to establish whether political rights and civil rights are guaranteed. The lowest values indicate "free" and the highest "not free." If the mean for both scale lies between 1 and 2.5 the country is considered "free" by Freedom House. According to Diamond (1999: 12), these countries can be

classified as liberal democracies. In 2000–2001, not only Germany can be classified as a liberal democracy but also all of the Central European countries that are included in our comparative survey: Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the three Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (Freedom House 2001).

Although starting out with positive development, reverse development can be detected in the three East European countries: Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. In Belarus, this reverse development had already begun in 1993–94, in Russia in 1997–98, and in Ukraine in 1999–2000. In 2000–2001, Freedom House could no longer rank them as liberal democracies and we thus rate them as defect democracies.² Using the typology of liberal and defect democracies, we assume that the objective existence of one of the two types of democracy systematically influences the subjective perception of the citizens.

We draw on Germany, an established democracy and a member of the European Union, as a standard of comparison for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the common institutional framework of a liberal democracy, the empirical analysis of the survey data will be conducted separately for East and West Germany. The citizens of East Germany have one thing in common with the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe and they differ in another aspect. The commonality is that both have lived in a communist system for decades and have had similar experiences. The difference is that with the completion of democratic transition the citizens of East Germany were integrated into a functioning democracy and an efficient free market economy. Thus, they were faced with a clearly lower problem load.

The Concept of Support for Democracy

When it comes to conceptualizing “public support for democratic regimes,” there are different assumptions about the capabilities of citizens to differentiate between various dimensions of the attitudinal object “democracy” as well as the relative importance of socialization on the one hand, and experience or performance for the development of support for democracy on the other hand. In both cases, Mishler and Rose (1996; 2002; cf. Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998) present an unequivocal position.

Presuming a “limited history of new regimes,” Mishler and Rose (1996: 557) draw two conclusions. In this situation, on the one hand, deeply rooted democratic value orientations cannot be generated by socialization processes. Thus, such orientations cannot function as an effective basis for the legitimacy of the new regime. Instead, the evaluation of a new regime will be based on experience with the performance of the regime in comparison with

that of the former communist system. The resulting support is called “popular support for competing regimes” (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998: 91). On the other hand, Mishler and Rose doubt whether the differentiation between the various objects of a political system, which political scientists propose, are also made by the citizens: “Citizens in Central and Eastern Europe are not political scientists. They lack the experiences and knowledge to distinguish government and regime” (Mishler and Rose 1996: 557). Their theory on the perception and evaluation of the new regime on the part of citizens can be summarized as “holistic and experiential” (Mishler and Rose 1996: 558). They use this theory as a device for conducting their empirical studies. Mishler and Rose’s concept of political support is clearly formulated and can be regarded as plausible. However, for several reasons, our analysis relies on a more complex concept that will be described in the following.

A couple of major theoretical reasons can be given for the differentiation of various objects of a political system and the corresponding types of support. According to Easton’s (1965) theory, which was later integrated into the political culture concept by Almond (1980, 1990), the persistence of a regime depends on the diffuse support of the regime by the citizens. This premise is linked to another one, namely, that citizens can distinguish between government and regime. This is the prerequisite for three consequences that are crucial to the question of persistence: only then can perceived deficits of performance be absorbed by replacing the ruling party with the opposing party; only then can an immediate translation of political dissatisfaction at the level of authorities into dissatisfaction at the regime level be prevented or at least reduced; only then can a regime be supported “for its own sake” (Easton 1965).

Nevertheless, *theoretically* the question remains unanswered: how citizens of Central and East European countries develop discrete attitudes toward democracy that do not result from an experience-based comparison of the performance of the contemporary regime with the previous communist regime. Mishler and Rose preclude this possibility. They assume that the formation of evaluations can only be based either on socialization or on direct personal experience. Thus, they neglect *information* as a source of evaluation. However, particularly modern mass media and communication techniques fostered a diffusion of information about Western democracies into communist societies of Eastern Europe. This led to a comparison between the communist and the democratic systems, which was one of the reasons for the collapse of the communist system. Weil (1993) described this diffusion of information from the West as a “demonstration effect” and Roller (1994) described it as a “system external learning,” which is distinguished from

“system internal learning” (similar lines of argumentation can be found in Dalton 1994; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Fuchs 1999; Gibson, Duch, and Tedin 1992). Consequently, at the end of the communist regime and at the beginning of the democratic regime in Central and Eastern Europe the situation cannot be described as a *tabula rasa*, and, furthermore, the complete “relearning” of support for democracy (Mishler and Rose 2002) was not required.

Even according to this theory of system external learning, one can speak of “popular support for competing regimes” (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). Yet, it does not involve a dyadic comparison between the contemporary regime and the former communist one, but rather a triadic comparison between the contemporary regime, the former communist regime, and Western democratic regimes. A democratic regime is therefore not a more or less contingent entity that is mainly characterized by the fact of not being a communist regime (Mishler and Rose 1996: 557f.). Due to the competition between the systems and the information diffusion, the perceived negative features of the communist regime are systematically related to the perceived positive features of the democratic regime. Competitive elections that enable true political participation as well as human rights are examples for such particular positive characteristics. They constitute not only attributes of really existing political systems but, at the same time, criteria of the theoretical concept of democracy (Dahl 1989; Diamond 1999). Thus, our approach is by no means an “idealistic approach” (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998: 27).

As a result of the triadic comparison, the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe have an idea of what democracy is and what it should be. Consequently, they can judge whether their new regime is democratic or not and thus they can distinguish regime and government. The following analysis is based on this distinction of attitudes toward democracy and the new regime into the three already mentioned objects: democracy in general, democracy in one’s own country, and the national government (Fuchs 1999, 2002).

Empirical Analysis

Measuring Support for Democracy

Democracy constitutes the core object of our attitudinal analysis. We assume that citizens of Central and Eastern Europe possess enough information about democracy that cognitively it is not a difficult object. Hence, it is adequate to directly measure the attitudes toward democracy and that means to ask directly for democracy. Two objections have been raised against this measurement

technique (Mishler and Rose 1996; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998). First, the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe associate a broad range of different ideas with democracy, so that an appropriate meaning of democracy cannot be taken for granted. Second, by doing this, the comparison between “competing regimes” is not taken into account and thus the results of the measurement will be too idealistic. On the basis of our data, the meaning of democracy can be checked empirically using two different techniques—an open-ended and a closed-ended question.

In the case of the closed-ended question, the respondents were provided with a list of twelve possible meanings of democracy: political liberties such as freedom of speech and freedom of association; greater social equality; decentralization of political decisions; less corruption; freedom in moral and sexual matters; equal justice before the law; governmental control of banks and large private enterprises; equal rights for women; more jobs, less unemployment; improvement of economic conditions; multiparty system; and citizens’ right to participate. Each item should be rated in terms of how much it has to do with democracy: “a lot, something, not that much, or nothing.”

Table 1 presents only five of the twelve characteristics: political liberties, multiparty system, participation rights of citizens, equal justice before the law, and equal rights for women. These five characteristics are considered to “have a lot to do with democracy” by at least 50 percent of the respondents in all countries. In our opinion, this is a remarkable result: all five meanings constitute theoretically relevant criteria of liberal democracy (Dahl 1989; Diamond 1999). The criteria are: political liberty and equality on the one hand, and multiparty system and participation of citizens on the other hand. Since these percentages are based on the exclusion of missing values (don’t know, no answer) they could present a biased picture of the population’s definition of democracy. On average, for all Central and East European countries—excluding both parts of Germany—the missing values add up to only 10 percent. *Vis-à-vis* other comparative studies, this is not a very large value. It is also not higher than the values calculated for most of the other questions asked in our survey.

In open-ended questions without any predefined response categories, usually the central meaning of an object is overemphasized. It is the easiest to recall from semantic memory. When the respondents were asked “what is the meaning of democracy for you?” the first answer for an average of 49 percent of the citizens in Central and Eastern Europe was “liberty and basic rights.” This is also a central characteristic of the concept of liberal democracy (Diamond 1999). If one takes into account that the citizens have had experience with communist regimes and compare these with Western regimes, this result is not be astonishing. Congruent with the “logic” of the open-

Table 1

Meaning of Democracy (%)

	Political liberties	Multiparty system	Participation rights of citizens	Equal justice before the law	Equal rights for women	Average
West Germany	86	80	78	72	67	77
East Germany	83	79	78	72	71	77
Central and Eastern Europe: Liberal democracies (LD)						
Hungary	66	73	70	71	62	68
Bulgaria	63	68	65	62	61	64
Estonia	70	62	59	69	52	62
Lithuania	61	56	62	66	50	59
Romania	60	67	62	46	54	58
Latvia	68	59	62	57	40	57
Poland	65	58	53	46	53	55
Czech Republic	73	61	51	44	40	54
Slovakia	66	56	50	45	38	51
Slovenia	44	48	48	45	44	46
Average: LD	64	61	58	55	49	57
Central and Eastern Europe: Defect democracies (DD)						
Belarus	75	66	71	77	61	70
Ukraine	74	64	66	74	62	68
Russia	62	47	52	72	56	58
Average: DD	70	59	63	74	60	65
Average: all	68	63	62	61	54	62

Question: "People associate democracy with diverse meanings such as those on this card. For each of them, please tell me whether, for you, it has a lot, something, not much, or, nothing to do with democracy." Percentage of respondents agreeing for each characteristic that "it has a lot to do with democracy."

ended questions described above, the number of further associations is lower than in the case of closed-ended questions. Regarding only the first of multiple responses, three further characteristics obtain more than 10 percent: social justice and economic welfare (12 percent), political participation (11 percent), and rule of law and equality before the law (11 percent). Summing up the first responses, all four of these characteristics cover 83 percent of the semantic space. With respect to open-ended questions, this represents a striking homogenous and focused meaning of democracy.

This empirical analysis of the meaning of democracy reveals two important results. First, the meaning of democracy on the part of citizens in Central and Eastern Europe turned out to be very homogenous. It is certainly not “frayed” and disintegrated into a plethora of associations. Second, the meaning of democracy comes close to the theoretical concept of democracy. Consequentially, questions asking directly for an evaluation of democracy can be regarded as valid and, actually, as reasonable measurement instruments.³

According to our explicated concept of support for democracy, we assume that citizens have differentiated attitudes toward democracy and the regime of their country. With regard to democracy, two objects are distinguished: democracy in general (or democracy as a value) and democracy in one’s own country. Governments, operating within the national institutional framework, can be added as a third object. Support for *democracy in general*⁴ is measured by the following question: “Do you believe that democracy is the best form of government or is another form of government better?” Hence attitudes toward democracy are measured not “without any contextual or institutional reference” (Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer 1998: 9) but in comparison with “other forms of government that are better.”

The advantage of this measurement lies in the fact that these “other forms of government” can refer either to the past communist regime or to other regimes characterized by strong presidents ruling largely without parliament and parties. This latter is a kind of autocratic regime. In the case of dissatisfaction with the current regime of one’s own country, it cannot be excluded that such an autocratic regime is favored over the discredited past communist regime. Consequently, by using this question wording, democratic government will be confronted with “stronger” alternatives than would be the case if only the past communist regime is mentioned.

Support for *democracy in one’s own country* is measured in two ways. First, the respondents are asked whether democracy in their own country is the best form of government or whether another form of government is better. This question wording is along the lines of that referring to democracy in general. However, in contrast to the general question on democracy, this question establishes a relationship to the specific type of democracy in one’s own country. Second, another question focuses less on the institutional structure and more on the reality or performance of democracy in one’s country. It is the established indicator taken from the Eurobarometer, asking about satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one’s own country.

In suggesting these indicators, the principal investigators followed the idea that the democratic regime of one’s own country can be evaluated from two perspectives. Asking about the form of government of one’s own country aims at the institutional structure of this democracy. Assuming that there are

different types of institutionalizations of democracy, this indicator allows support for democracy in general but not the type of democracy that exists in the respondents' country (Fuchs 1999). We shall return to this possibility later in our empirical analysis. The second indicator referring to the reality of democracy in one's own country is aiming at citizens' experience. The judgments can be based on experience with the effectiveness of institutional mechanisms, such as exchange between government and the opposition, or experience with the factual guarantee of democratic norms such as liberal freedoms.

According to both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe can distinguish between the theoretically postulated attitudes.⁵ Against the background of their ability to differentiate, we can empirically determine the level of different types of support for democracy.

The Level of Support for Democracy

The empirical analysis on the degree of support for democracy in Central and East European countries is based on the previously explained theoretical assumptions. In the following we formalize them as far as possible and deduce some hypotheses. We begin with democracy in general and turn to democracy in one's own country.

According to our theoretical assumptions, at the point in time of the abolishment of the communist regime and the establishment of a democratic regime (t_0) support for democracy as a form of government (SD) is the result of a comparison between experience with the communist regime and information on Western regimes (RC). Such a rational comparison between the advantages and disadvantages of two opposing and competing types of regimes does not come into effect without any preconditions.

We assume that the level as well as the sustainability of support for democracy also depend on the long-term, historically grown cultural tradition (CT) of the particular country. This tradition goes back far beyond the establishment of the communist regime that was imposed in most Central and East European countries. This cultural tradition brings about dispositions toward commitment to democratic values such as the political participation of citizens or political tolerance. Empirical evidence on the relevance of cultural traditions for the development of democratic attitudes has been provided recently (Fuchs and Klingemann 2002). Both explicated assumptions can be formalized by the following equation:

$$SD_{t_0} = b_1 RC + b_2 CT.$$

According to this equation, initial support for democracy is, in principal,

the result of rational calculation (the rational choice approach) as well as of value orientation (the political culture approach). Initial support for democracy can be described as a reservoir or credit that can be either stabilized or eroded by various factors describing the reality of the new democracy.

The stabilizing or eroding effects are caused, first, by citizens' experience with the functioning of democracy in their country. This *experience* refers to the functioning of *institutional mechanisms* (EI) as well as to the *performance* of democracy in one's own country (EP). At any point in time after the "zero-point situation" at the beginning (t_1) a retrospective evaluation of these experiences covering the respective time period is made. It results in more or less stronger *support* for the *functioning* of democracy in one's own country (SF_{t_1}). The corresponding equation is:

$$SF_{t_1} = b_1 EI_{t_1} + b_2 EP_{t_1}$$

Second, the stabilizing or eroding effects are caused by the success of primary and secondary *socialization efforts* (SE_{t_1}), which come into effect after the implementation of the new regime. The success of the primary socialization of adolescents depends on major socialization agents (parents, teachers) and their strength of commitment to democratic values. In turn, the success of the secondary socialization of adults depends on the consensus of the political elites and the absence of antidemocratic parties. Support for democracy in general at a given time point t_1 can be formalized as follows:

$$SD_{t_1} = b_1 SD_{t_0} + b_2 SF_{t_1} + b_3 SE_{t_1}$$

Thus far, we have not examined *support* for democracy in one's own country regarding its institutional *structure* (SS_{t_1}). Theoretically, it is affected by two factors (Easton 1965): first, whether the institutional structure is perceived as democracy and is legitimized in that. This perception can be conceived as an overflow of general *support* for *democracy* onto the democracy of one's own country. The second factor is the generalization of experience with the functioning of democracy in one's own country on the evaluation of its type or its institutional structure. Using a notion of a hierarchy of objects one can talk of a "top-down" effect (overflow effect) and a "bottom-up" effect (generalization effect). We thus obtain the following equation:

$$SS_{t_1} = b_1 SD_{t_1} + b_2 SF_{t_1}$$

Based on these formalizations of our theoretical assumptions we can formulate some expectations. The first expectation refers to all countries included

in the survey; it is based on two premises. According to the first premise, democracy has proved itself superior in the competition between political systems. The international public sphere looks at democracy as the only legitimate political order. According to the second premise, citizens always have negative experiences with the reality of democracy in their own countries. This leads us to the first hypothesis:

H1: In all countries support for democracy in general is stronger than support for democracy in one's own country.

The following expectations refer to the four categories of countries: West Germany, East Germany, liberal democracies, and defect democracies in Central and Eastern Europe. According to many studies, the development of the Federal Republic of Germany toward a consolidated democracy can be considered a success story (among others, Baker, Dalton, and Hildebrandt 1981; Conrardt 1980; Fuchs 1989). Due to the lasting economic boom and successful socialization efforts, by the mid-1970s, democracy became just as accepted in the Federal Republic of Germany as in other traditional Western democracies.

Two additional factors account for this development. The first is the fact that Germany was a front state during the Cold War and thus was affected by system competition in a unique way. The second refers to the fact that Germany already had experience with democracy before the era of National Socialism—during the era of the Weimar Republic. Thus, West Germany was able to recruit political elites distinguished by democratic expertise generated during this period. Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H2: In West Germany, democracy in general as well as democracy of the country are supported by a vast majority of citizens and this support is stronger than in Central and East European countries.

We have already mentioned the special situation of the citizens in East Germany. For decades they have lived under a communist regime, just as the citizens of Central and East European countries. Yet, there are two far-reaching distinctive features. On the one hand, the diffusion of information from the West through mass media and family visits was comparatively strong. This made the comparison between the two competing systems easier. On the other hand, due to German unification, East Germany did not need to establish a functioning democracy and free market economy on its own. Together with the problems connected with system transformation were decisively reduced unlike in other Central and East European countries.

Regarding the experience of East Germans in unified Germany, two opposite trends follow from this favorable situation. First, East Germans show relative deprivation; they compare their living conditions with those of the West

Germans and feel deprived. West Germany rather than the countries in Central and Eastern Europe serves as a reference point. Second, there is a cultural heritage: many East Germans interpret the extensive welfare state of the former GDR as a positive experience (Roller 1999). Thus, a lasting standard has been established. It has been used in the past and is still being used to critically assess democracy in unified Germany. This causes many citizens of East Germany to support democracy in general but not the democracy of their own country (Fuchs, Roller, and Wessels 1997; Fuchs 1999). Against the background of these arguments we establish two further hypotheses:

H3.1 In East Germany, democracy in general is supported by a vast majority of citizens and this support is stronger than in Central and East European countries.

H3.2 In East Germany, support for democracy in one's own country is (a) significantly weaker than in West Germany and (b) stronger than in Central and Eastern Europe.

We assume that at the time of regime change, democracy was the preferred type of government in all Central and East European countries. Furthermore, based on two arguments, we assume a higher degree of democratic support in countries that we have classified as "liberal democracies" than in countries that belong to the group of "defect democracies." First, because the communist regimes were externally imposed on the countries that are now considered liberal democracies. Second, in the countries currently referred to as defect democracies, cultural traditions are at work that hamper the evolution of democratic culture (Fuchs and Klingemann 2002; Huntington 1996).

After regime change, the explicated "dilemma of simultaneity" should result in negative experiences with the performance of democracy in one's own country. This should lead to a more or less strong decline in the initial support of democracy. In the three Slavic countries—Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus—a degenerative process toward a defect democracy has to be added. Inevitably, this process should have affected the evaluation of national democracy. These considerations can be summarized in a fourth hypothesis:

H4: Support for both democracy in general and democracy in one's own country is significantly lower in countries with defect democracy than in countries with liberal democracy.

For the most part, the four hypotheses can be confirmed by the data compiled in Table 2. Relying on the percentage of respondents judging democracy in general and democracy in one's own country as the best type of

government, support for democracy in general is stronger than support for democracy in one's own country—and this is true for all countries (H1).

In West Germany, the level of support for both types of democracy is significantly higher than in all other countries (H2): 92 percent of all West Germans judge democracy as the best type of government and still 81 percent believe the same for their country's democracy. In East Germany as well, a clear majority (78 percent) considers democracy in general as the best type of government (H3.1). This value is lower than in West Germany, but it is nonetheless higher than the average proportion of liberal democracies (65 percent) and defect democracies (47 percent) in Central and Eastern Europe (H3.1). A clear East–West axis can be established in terms of support for democracy in general.

In contrast to this, democracy in one's own country is viewed more skeptically by East Germans. Only 49 percent consider it the best form of government and the corresponding difference compared with West Germany is 32 percentage points (H3.2). In comparison with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe these percentage points rank lower than Hungary (76 percent) and Romania (52 percent). In the case of Hungary, it must be taken into account that the response category “undecided” was not provided in the survey; thus, the value might be overrated. In Romania, the share of respondents favoring another type of government than the one in their own country is much higher than that in East Germany (40 percent versus 27 percent). All in all, in East Germany as well, the level of support for democracy in one's own country is higher than in Central and East European countries (H3.2), even if the gap with some countries is not always very large.

The differences between liberal and defect democracies in Central and Eastern Europe have already been mentioned. Support for both democracy in general and democracy in one's own country is significantly lower in defect democracies (H4). The average share for defect democracies totals 47 percent for democracy in general (as opposed to 65 percent in liberal democracies) and 12 percent for the country's democracy (as opposed to 37 percent). The proportion of citizens favoring another form of government is remarkable. In defect democracies it reaches 69 percent on average. Also in six out of ten liberal democracies the shares of respondents who prefer another form of government prevail. This is also indicated by *support index C* (*SI-C*), which subtracts the percentage of citizens who prefer another form of government from the percentage of those who consider their country's form of government the best possible type.

Using this index, which takes into account support for another form of government, a stricter criterion for the acceptance of democracy is generated and applied. According to this index, only in West Germany and Hungary

	Central and Eastern Europe: Defect democracies (DD)						
Belarus	54	30	24	16	69	-53	18
Ukraine	51	33	18	7	80	-73	3
Russia	37	36	1	13	59	-46	6
Average: DD	47	33	14	12	69	-57	9
Average: all	64	20	44	36	46	-10	16

Questions: 1. "Do you believe that democracy is the best form of government or is another form of government better?" 1—democracy is the best form of government; 2—another form of government is better; 3—undecided.

2. "Do you believe that the democracy that we have in (country) is the best form of government or is another form of government better?" 1—the democracy that we have in (country) is the best form of government; 2—another form of government is better; 3—undecided.

3. "Are you completely satisfied or completely dissatisfied with the way democracy is working in (country)?" 1—completely dissatisfied . . . 10—completely satisfied.

^aIn all countries, except Hungary, the category "undecided" was provided.

^bSupport index *D* (democracy); Support index *C* (democracy of one's own country); difference "the best"—"others better."

^cPoints of scale: 7–10.

does a vast majority support the democracy of their own country. Only six of the fifteen countries examined—West Germany, East Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovenia—reveal a positive sign. The average for liberal democracies is negative and amounts to -8 percent, and it is much higher in defect democracies at -57 percent.

The hierarchically lowest level of attitudes toward democracy refers to the reality of democracy in one's own country. This dimension can be examined using the question on satisfaction with democracy in the particular country. A ten-point scale (1 = completely dissatisfied . . . 10 = completely satisfied) is used. Table 2 presents the distribution of satisfied respondents based on the recoded categories 7–10. Respondents choosing the middle categories (5 or 6) are classified as undecided. Usually, respondents who cannot opt for either of the poles of the scale choose these middle categories. Due to different scales the calculated percentages are not directly comparable with those for support of the form of democracy in one's own country. However, it becomes obvious that in all countries, with the exception of only West Germany, a large majority of respondents is dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy in their country. The dissatisfaction is strongest in Ukraine (only 3 percent are satisfied) and Russia (only 6 percent are satisfied). It can be assumed that such dissatisfaction with the reality of democracy in a country will have spillover effects on more fundamental attitudes toward democracy.

In all countries, support for democracy in one's own country is lower than support for democracy in general. This pattern was to be expected. What is remarkable, however, is the level of difference between the two dimensions of support for the four types of countries. Considering only the rate of respondents who chose the category "best type of government," in West Germany the degree of support for democracy in one's own country is eleven percentage points lower than support for democracy in general. The figure is twenty-nine percentage points in East Germany, twenty-eight percentage points in liberal democracies, and thirty-five percentage points in defect democracies. The discrepancy is far more striking if we consider the difference between both support indexes SI-D and SI-C that take into account the respondents who believe that another form of government is better. These amount to -17 in West Germany, -49 in East Germany, -54 in liberal democracies, and, finally, -71 in defect democracies.

In light of these differences between support for democracy in general and democracy in one's own country, we have constructed an index combining both dimensions (Klingemann 1999). The purpose of this index is to measure the potential for democratic consolidation on the one hand and for regime change on the other. Three types of respondents can be distinguished (Table 3). Those respondents who support democracy in general and democ-

Table 3

Types of Attitudes Toward Democracy (%)

	Strong democrats	Critical democrats	Nondemocrats
West Germany	81	12	7
East Germany	50	28	22
Central and East Germany: Liberal democracies (LD)			
Hungary	70	5	25
Romania	52	24	24
Lithuania	48	26	26
Czech Republic	39	31	30
Slovenia	39	21	40
Slovakia	28	31	41
Estonia	25	38	37
Latvia	23	43	34
Bulgaria	20	35	45
Poland	18	34	48
Average: LD	36	29	35
Central and Eastern Europe: Defect democracies (DD)			
Belarus	13	41	46
Russia	12	24	64
Ukraine	9	41	50
Average: DD	11	35	53
Average: all	35	29	36

Note: Construction of the typology: (1) Dichotomizing both variables “democracy is the best type of government (D)” and “democracy in one’s own country is the best type of government (C)”; 1—the best; 0—undecided, others better. (2) Combining the values of both variables: strong democrats = D1 and C1; critical democrats = D1 and C0; nondemocrats = D0 and C1, D0 and C0.

racy in their country are considered to be “strong democrats.” Those who support democracy in general but not in their country are “critical democrats.” The type “nondemocrats” includes two classes of respondents: those who do not support democracy in general or in their country and those who support democracy in their country but not democracy in general. For the latter class it is suggested that the positive evaluation of the country’s regime is not based on the fact that it is a democracy but on other reasons.

Since this typology is constructed in order to determine the level of democratic consolidation it is based on the proportion of respondents who explicitly

prefer democracy. Consequently, the categories “undecided” and “another form of government is better” are collapsed. The resulting category includes not only antidemocrats but also indifferent respondents (yet antidemocrats are usually the vast majority in most countries), therefore, it is denoted “nondemocrats.”

The proportion of “nondemocrats” indicates the potential that can be mobilized by elite groups and political parties, which partially or entirely want to abolish democracy. At the same time, this proportion is a criterion for the degree to which consolidation of democracy has not yet succeeded. In seven of thirteen Central and East European countries these “nondemocrats” constitute the mode of the distribution, which means that they reveal the highest values for the three types. These seven countries are Slovenia (40 percent nondemocrats), Slovakia (41 percent), Bulgaria (45 percent), Belarus (46 percent), Poland (48 percent), Ukraine (50 percent), and Russia (64 percent). For the three defect democracies we could have expected such a result, but not for the other four liberal democracies. Most surprisingly, the proportion of nondemocrats in Poland is the highest within the group of liberal democracies; it even exceeds the rate of nondemocrats in Belarus. Usually, the Western public considers Poland a country that is relatively close to Western Europe and that is characterized by a cultural tradition that emphasizes values such as freedom and individualism much more than do most other Central and East European countries. It is possible that the Polish sample of the survey is heterogeneous, consisting of two groups with fundamentally different value orientations: the urban population on the one hand and the rural population on the other hand. However, this may also be the case in other Central and East European countries.

Counterparts to “nondemocrats” are all “democrats” who include “critical democrats” and “strong democrats.” In eleven of the thirteen countries of Central and Eastern Europe, at least a majority of respondents can be classified as democrats, even if in some countries this majority is a narrow one. The proportion of “critical democrats” reaches the highest values in two Baltic countries: Estonia and Latvia. Accordingly, these countries exhibit the highest potential of citizens that can be mobilized to establish another type of democracy than the current one in their country. The “strong democrats” are predominantly represented in four countries: the Czech Republic (39 percent), Lithuania (48 percent), Romania (52 percent), and Hungary (70 percent).

Summary and Discussion

The question of our study referred to the consolidation of democracy in Central and East European countries. We have limited our analysis to the one dimension of democratic consolidation on which, ultimately, the persistence

of a democracy depends: support for democracy by citizens or the demos as the ultimate sovereign. Based on representative mass surveys we empirically analyzed the degree of democratic support in thirteen Central and East European countries about a decade after implementing democracy. Over this time span, which has been characterized by fundamental problems of transformation, the citizens of these countries have already had different experiences with democracy. It is an open question how these experiences have affected the initial high support for democracy and what the state of democratic consolidation is a decade after democratic transition.

In answering these questions a rather difficult problem emerges. On the institutional level, a binary decision needs to be made: a regime will be consolidated if the essential criteria of liberal democracy are implemented constitutionally and are guaranteed factually. Such unambiguous criteria and a clearly defined threshold are not at hand for the cultural level of consolidation. If one does not want to restrict oneself to the hypothesis: the more the attitudes and the behavior of political elites, organizations, and citizens comply with the normative expectations of democracy, the more democracy is consolidated, then other criteria need to be taken into account. One is comparison with a doubtlessly consolidated democracy. Our comparative survey data include (West) Germany as consolidated democracy. Another criterion could be use of the principle of majority. According to a weaker variant, a simple majority of citizens in a country prefers democracy over other forms of government. In the case of a more rigid variant it needs to be a qualified majority, defined as a two-thirds majority for example. Depending on which variant is applied, the empirical findings have to be assessed differently.

In twelve of the thirteen Central and East European countries, more than 50 percent of the citizens prefer democracy over other forms of government. Russia is an exception, with only 37 percent of the citizenry preferring democracy. However, in only five countries—Romania, Lithuania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Latvia—more than 66 percent of the citizens prefer democracy over another form of government. Yet, in comparison with West Germany the degree of support for democracy is still rather low in these countries. This is even more valid for a number of other countries. In these countries, no majority or only a narrow majority prefers democracy as a form of government. Besides the three defect democracies—Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus—this is also the case in Poland and Bulgaria.

An entirely different empirical finding results from support for democracy in one's own country. In nine of the thirteen countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the number of citizens who prefer another form of government to the one in their own country constitutes a majority. Furthermore, only in three of the four other countries is the majority in favor of the type of

government in one's own country marginal. This preference for another system is particularly striking in the three defect democracies: Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Overall, we find a remarkable potential for change of the country's regime in all Central and East European countries.

However, the preference for another form of government can mean either another form of democracy or a nondemocratic form of government. The empirical information on the preferred form of government can be measured by the proportion of "nondemocrats." In two countries, Russia and Ukraine, this proportion amounts to 50 percent and more. In three additional countries—Belarus, Poland, and Bulgaria—the nondemocrats almost reach the 50 percent margin. According to these data, these five countries cannot be classified as consolidated democracies. A remarkable number of nondemocrats also exists in four liberal democracies. In Slovenia and Slovakia they amount to approximately 40 percent. In Latvia and Estonia they constitute about 35 percent of the citizenry. To summarize, in the three defect democracies as well as in six of ten liberal democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, a noteworthy proportion of citizens considered "nondemocrats" exists.

According to the empirical findings, the consolidation of democracy is an unfinished process in most Central and East European countries. This applies in particular to the form of democracy that is institutionalized in one's own country. The level of support for democracy in general is also not so clear that, without any doubt, we can regard democracy as "the only game in town."

Further consolidation will depend on three factors. First, concrete experience with the performance of democracy in one's own country. Here economic development and the dimension of human rights are decisive factors. This experience will likely be generalized to attitudes toward democracy in the country and to democracy in general, albeit to a smaller extent. Besides this experience, the general acceptance of democracy is also determined by a historically grown cultural tradition that, likewise, can only be changed in the long run. A third factor refers to primary and, due to the short history of regime change, secondary socialization by major socialization agents. The major agents of secondary socialization are political parties and governments with their privileged function in terms of agenda setting in the mass media.

We furthermore assume a strong asymmetrical relationship between the EU and the candidate countries. Following rational considerations, the candidate countries not only implemented democratic structures but also started a "manipulation of European identity" (Schimmelpfennig 2000: 132). This means that long-term closeness to Europe and to its values and norms has been a pretense. While in fact existing to different degrees, this closeness was also postulated for strategic reasons. Once these countries join the EU,

the incentives to pretend closeness and the resulting socialization effects of citizens will no longer exist. Thus, it cannot be excluded that the proportion of nondemocrats already existing before EU accession will increase in some countries. Hence, by the accession of these countries, a destabilizing element is implanted in the EU. Presumably, the degree of these destabilizing effects will depend on general economic development and on the rewards experienced as a result of EU membership.

Notes

1. Data were collected within the research project "Consolidating Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe 1998–2001: A Fifteen-Country Study" (Continuation of the 1990–92 Post-Communist Publics Study in Eleven Countries). This project was coordinated by Edeltraud Roller, Dieter Fuchs, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Bernhard Wessels (WZB-Social Science Research Center Berlin), and János Simon (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest). The empirical analysis is based only on the second wave data. Indicators measuring a broad range of different support dimensions were missing in the questionnaire for the first wave.

2. According to further information from Freedom House, Ukraine and Russia can be classified as (nonliberal) electoral democracies. According to Diamond (1999: 280), Belarus can be classified as a pseudodemocracy at the end of 1997—shortly before the survey.

3. We assume that citizens have a broader and more heterogeneous understanding of the alternative stimulus object "governmental system" as compared with "democracy."

4. While Evans and Whitefield (1995) refer to such attitudes as "normative commitment to democracy," however, they measured it with another indicator.

5. The corresponding analyses are not presented here; they are part of another analysis conducted by the authors.

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