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**Domestic Facilitators and Impediments to EU Democracy Promotion
in its Eastern Neighbourhood: The Cost-Benefit Balance of Norm Adoption**

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Domestic Facilitators and Impediments to EU Democracy Promotion in its Eastern Neighbourhood: The Cost-Benefit Balance of Norm Adoption

Sergiu Buscaneanu*

Abstract

This paper argues that the balance between the size of EU incentives and the costs of democratic transformation has impeded democratic consolidation in Eastern ENP countries. Whereas the cost-benefit balance of norm adoption appears to be a relevant predictor of regime trajectories in this region, patterns of economic development do not match those of political regimes. Institutional design seems to fit better regime dynamics in Eastern ENP countries, but it is also possible that the nature of main political institutions depends on the regime. The road from institutions to the regime is a two-way road. Finally, the number of parties in power within executives does not say much about regime trajectories. The degree of a pro-European (Western) stance of the governing party or coalition must be incorporated into the analysis. To this end, a coalitional government that had a strong pro-EU identity proved to be a promising facilitator of external democracy promotion efforts.

Keywords

cost-benefit balance, structures, institutions, actors, regimes, Eastern ENP countries

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1. Introduction

Four decades ago, Donald Puchala (1971) was the first political scientist to use the story of the blind men and an elephant as a metaphor for distinct ways of understanding European integration. "Blind men" was a substitution for competing theoretical frames, which were engaged in explaining "the elephant"—European integration—from egoistic viewpoints and therefore had strikingly different interpretations of the way it looked. While we know today how "the elephant" looks like, many scholars have inquired whether this European animal has grown up to fulfil one ideal it stands for: democracy promotion. This strand of scholarship started to evolve as a result of the EU's transformative role in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) in the context of Eastern enlargement (Kubicek ed. 2003, Kelley 2004, Schimmelfennig 2005, Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2010) and has been further expressed in academic efforts that aimed at assessing the democratizing role of the EU in the Western Balkans and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) region (Elbasani ed. 2013, Kochenov 2008, Youngs 2009). Generally speaking, this ever since expanding strand of scholarship considers the "outside-in" effects exerted by the EU on the transformation process in target countries.

The present paper takes a different turn, an "inside-out" look at the domestic facilitators and impediments to EU democracy promotion efforts. The region in focus includes all Eastern neighbours of the EU involved in the ENP: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. The time frame covers the period from 1991-2010. The main research question it seeks to answer is: *Under what domestic conditions are Eastern ENP countries likely to be receptive to EU democracy promotion efforts?* The paper proposes a new approach to assessing the cost-benefit balance of adoption and implementation of democratic norms. In comparison with what was formulated by Schimmelfennig (2005), this new approach may accommodate a more fine-grained variability with regard to both domestic costs and external benefits.

The paper starts with the analytical framework, from which a guiding hypothesis is derived. The main body of the article devotes attention to the domestic facilitators and impediments to EU democracy promotion efforts in Eastern ENP countries. The most relevant findings of the paper are then summarized in the concluding part.

2. Analytical Framework

Theoretical accounts on the external dimension of democratization would not be complete without paying attention to domestic conditions. Pevehouse (2002) observes correctly that any theory that seeks to explain the way external factors influence domestic political processes must contain some link to domestic contexts. Domestic settings mediate the impact of external factors and it is with reference to domestic politics that one should explain local facilitators and impediments to external democratising efforts.

In deriving relevant domestic conditions, this paper builds on two distinct strands of literature. The first focuses primarily on the implications the EU accession process has had for regime trajectories in CEEC. The most prominent contribution to this strand of scholarship was made by Schimmelfennig and his colleagues (Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2003, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, Schimmelfennig 2005). The external incentive model of governance formulated by these authors holds that the main strategy of conditionality used by the EU was positive "reinforcement by reward", and that the membership incentive proved to be the most effective way to ensure compliance with EU democratic standards on the part of CEEC.

Furthermore, Schimmelfennig and his colleagues add that the effect of the membership incentive depends on domestic political *costs* of adaptation to the EU's conditions. If relevant actors in target countries perceive that the benefits proposed by the EU exceed the costs of adaptation, they will comply. That means, rule transfer occurs when the cost-benefit balance is positive. Generally, the more entrenched the authoritarian practices of the target government are, the higher the costs incurred by EU democratic conditionality will be. High costs of compliance with the objectives of the ENP are to be expected on the part of the eastern neighbours of the EU, insofar as they exhibit non-democratic behaviour to various degrees. In order to fully abide by the democratic rules, incumbent governments in some of these countries would have to give up the very instruments and practices on which their authority rests.

Compliance with EU democratic conditions also depends on relevant veto players, whose consent is necessary for any change to the *status quo* (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, Schimmelfennig 2005). Adapting Tsebelis' theory on veto players, Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) contend that compliance with EU democratic conditionality varies with the number of veto players incurring high net adoption costs. The higher the number of relevant

political parties resisting a pro-EU course and democratic reforms, the higher the domestic costs of adhering to the EU's democratic conditionality.

The second strand of literature that allows identifying relevant domestic conditions, which facilitate or impede external democratising efforts is encapsulated in what are widely known as theories of democratisation. The theory most often cited in this broad camp of scholarship is the modernisation paradigm, rooted in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century materialism. Modernisation theorists argue that a higher level of socio-economic development is the primary impetus for democracy (Lipset 1959, Lipset *et al.* 1993). In their view, increased levels of economic development lead to urbanisation, a growing density of communication, higher levels of education, the emergence of a middle class, increased demand for political participation and greater inclusion in the political sphere.

The essence of the theoretical argument put forward by the first generation of modernisation theorists was challenged by Przeworski *et al.* (1997), who argued that affluence does not explain the likelihood of transition to democracy, but only the endurance of democratic regimes once a certain level of economic development is reached. However, Boix and Stokes (2003), extending the analysis to a larger sample of observations that starts in 1850, have endorsed Lipset's original argument that economic development does represent a robust predictor of transition to democracy.

Historical (neo-)institutionalists, though they have less to say about the genesis of democracy, have developed compelling accounts explaining institutional stability and change (Thelen 1999, Pierson 2000). In their view, path-dependence and reproduction mechanisms allow for institutional stability. A given institutional choice creates a "lock in" effect, which narrows down the subsequent choices of players in the political game. At the same time, though there is a significant propensity to institutional *status quo*, critical junctures may offset the institutional stability, open up institutional choices and lead to new institutional equilibriums. Scholars who put great emphasis on the role of institutional design for regime trajectories adhere to this theoretical perspective. In this regard, it is argued that institutions that disperse political and economic power and facilitate the inclusion of various actors in the decision-making process are conducive to democratic consolidation (Fish 1999, Ekiert *et al.* 2007).

Action theorists and transitologists advance arguments that hinge on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rationalism. Considering a different theoretical level, they posit that the

transition to democracy is dependent on the strategic interaction of political actors and is largely a random process (O'Donnell *et al.* eds. 1986, Przeworski 1992). Following a split within the authoritarian regime, the mode of transition was given causal weight to account for different regime outcomes. In Przeworski's (1992) terms, coalition formation between segments of the old ruling elites ("reformers") and new emerging forces ("moderates") was the most promising (random) development for transitions to democracy. What this theoretical framework has heavily emphasized was that power-sharing agreements ("pactos") among different segments of the elites were necessary as the second-best strategy to solve the crises of the old authoritarian regimes. Credible agreements on policy agenda, dispersion of power and participation in decision-making processes were necessary for regime transition, as well as for ensuring a relative stability for these transforming regimes. Pacted transitions occurred more often when the distribution of power between ruling elites and their contenders was relatively equal. Such distribution of power creates uncertainty, which in turn increases the probability that the actors involved will seek a compromise. "Democracy without democrats" results thus not from a collective conviction, but rather as a compromise solution when individual actors cannot maximise their exclusive unrestricted preferences.

Though the "fourth wave" of regime change in East Europe and Eurasia stressed the fundamental role of actors, it is observed that successful democratic transitions in the post-communist world did not follow the pacted path, as had usually happened during the third wave (Fish 1999, McFaul 2002). McFaul suggests instead that it was the (a)symmetry of the balance of power and ideological commitment on which different outcomes depended. In cases of asymmetric balance of power, stable democracies or autocracies emerged, depending on whether the balance was tipped in favour of democratic or autocratic forces. In the remainder of cases, where the balance of power was relatively equal, unstable hybrid regimes were the outcome. In the former cases a revolutionary and confrontational transformation, as opposed to the evolutionary process witnessed during the third wave, took the form of a zero-sum game in which dominant actors crafted either democratic or autocratic institutions to their exclusive advantage (McFaul 2002).

In light of the theoretical frameworks discussed, the hypothesis to be tested may be formulated as follows: *The regime moves towards democratisation in those target countries where the promised rewards by the EU are perceived as exceeding the domestic costs of transformation,*

and where domestic pre-requisites (socioeconomic structures, institutions and actors) are favourable. The next section turns to the operationalization of this hypothesis.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Question, Cases and Time Frame

The research question to be answered by this paper is: *Under what domestic conditions are Eastern ENP countries likely to be receptive to EU democracy promotion efforts?*

Cases for which the above specified question is addressed are all Eastern neighbours of the EU involved in the ENP: *Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova* and *Ukraine*. The time frame to be covered is: *1991-2010*.

3.2. Variables and Indicators

The outcome variable of interest is *regime*, as measured by: (a) Political Rights (PR) ratings of Freedom House (FH) in the *Freedom in the World* survey and (b) polity scores of Polity IV Project.[1] *Domestic factors* represent the broad explanatory variable this paper is concerned with, which is related to four intervening variables: *cost-benefit balance*, *structures*, *institutions* and *actors*.

One way to approximate the domestic costs of adaptation to EU democratic conditionality is to consider the ideological outlook of the constellation of political parties (Schimmelfennig 2005). Costs would vary from low to high depending on whether a given party constellation is liberal, mixed or anti-liberal. Schimmelfennig (2005) suggests that compliance depends rather on the size of the domestic political costs than on variation in international rewards. In this way, he departs from his initial claims that cost-benefit assessments are paramount for target governments' decisions on the normative domestic *status quo*. It is, however, the net gain or loss resulting from a (subjective) assessment of costs and benefits against each other that motivates the course of their action.

To account for the *cost-benefit balance*, this paper takes an aggregated measure of incentives provided by the EU and subtracts from it a calibrated estimation of costs, which vary

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[1] Freedom House, *Freedom in the World*; Marshall and Jaggers, *Polity IV Project*.

depending on regime dynamics in Eastern ENP countries. The main EU incentives provided to Eastern ENP countries in the period from 1991-2010 are: (a) assistance, (b) trade preferences (commercial regime) and (c) visa facilitations (visa regime). The data across these three indicators is standardized into the interval 0-1. Next, the aggregated measure of EU incentives is determined after averaging across these indicators. On the other side, the two measures of domestic costs are approximated using the annual estimations of regime parameters by FH and Polity IV. Each estimation of domestic costs with FH and Polity IV data takes into consideration the difference from the theoretical value at which a given regime would be qualified as democratic to its actual current state, as evaluated by FH and Polity IV. After the inversion of FH's scale, so that higher values indicate a higher level of democratic development, the theoretical expectation with FH data is that at a value of 6 for PR a given regime could be qualified as democratic. Correspondingly, after shifting the Polity IV scale ten units to the right on the x-axis in order to get rid of negative values, the theoretical expectation with Polity data is that at a value of 16 a given regime could be considered as democratic. The next step involves the calculation of differences between the annual scores of FH and Polity IV, and the two corresponding theoretical expectations at which a regime would attain democracy (6 and 16). Next, the obtained two time series of differences are standardized into the 0-1 interval. Finally, each standardized measure of costs with FH and Polity IV data is subtracted from the aggregate measure of EU incentives. The resulting differences (balance), with FH and Polity IV data, approximate the net gain or loss of norm adoption for each Eastern ENP country.

This new evaluation of cost-benefit balance is based on two premises. First, the higher the external incentives provided, the higher the probability that they will offset the domestic costs of adaptation. Second, the more entrenched authoritarian practices are in a given country, the higher the costs of adopting and implementing democratic norms will be. Therefore, more external incentives and lower costs would contribute most to Eastern ENP countries being receptive to EU democracy promotion efforts. The advantage of this measure over that of Schimmelfennig (2005) is that it accommodates more variability with regard to both costs and incentives, and it is more attuned to cases across which a given political party constellation is largely absent, as found in countries under scrutiny.

GDP per capita and *economic growth* are core indicators that students of democratization have used to account for a relationship between economic development and democracy (Lipset

1959, Lipset *et al.* 1993, Przeworski *et al.* 1997, Boix and Stokes 2003, Geddes 2003). These are supplemented by a third indicator, which takes into account the extent of *employment in agriculture*. This indicator builds partly on Moore's (1966) thesis that the advent of non-repressive commercialisation of agriculture has led to democratic development. Together they approximate structural determinants of political regimes.

Institutionalists have controlled for the effects *system of government* (presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentary) and *electoral system* (SMD, mixed and proportional) have on regime dynamics. Given their purported explanatory power, these indicators are employed to account for the potential role played by institutions in locking in particular regime trajectories.

Power sharing and *strength of opposition* account for the balance of power of political actors within executives and legislatures and for the micro-level dimension of national arenas. They also indicate the distribution of veto rights among relevant political actors. Literature on democratization suggests that *power sharing* may favour democratic rule because it ensures that the political power is distributed among political actors and that no individual actor achieves its unrestricted preferences (Gleditsch and Ward 2006). The power-sharing indicator is identified here relative to the extent of power distribution within the executive body. Relatedly, a combination of power-sharing agreements at the executive level with the *pro-EU identity* of such governments needs to be taken into account in order to obtain a more complete picture of domestic facilitators and impediments to EU democracy promotion efforts in Eastern ENP countries.

Because the presence of opposition is a necessary ingredient for democratization, the *strength of opposition* figures as an important indicator in some well-known measures of democracy. For the sake of simplicity, I follow Geddes (2003) and evaluate the strength of opposition relative to the opposition parties' legislative seat share.

4. Cost-Benefit Balance of Norm Adoption

The external incentive model of governance suggests that the domestic costs of complying with EU democratic conditionality should have high explanatory power. The costs of adopting democratic rules are higher the more entrenched authoritarian practices are. At the same time, the higher the EU incentives are, the more likely it is that they will offset the size of domestic costs. Therefore, what is of crucial interest here is whether the cost-benefit balance is positive (and facilitates the adoption of democratic norms) or negative (and impedes this process). The extent to

which this balance is positive or negative is calculated by taking an aggregated measure of incentives provided by the EU and subtracting from it a standardized estimation of domestic costs, which vary with particular regime parameters. Not surprisingly, the data in *Figure 1a* reveals that this balance is negative for the period from 1991-2010. The estimates of the cost-benefit balance of norm adoption in *Figure 1b* with Polity IV data are substantially negative in the case of Azerbaijan and slightly positive in the other cases. This difference in estimation emerges because Polity IV uses a less demanding definition of democracy and therefore it tends to assign higher country ratings than FH. The estimation of cost-benefit balance with Polity IV data confirms once more that there are good reasons to consider Polity IV assessments of regime characteristics with great care.

Figure 1: Cost-Benefit Balance of Norm Adoption (1991-2010)
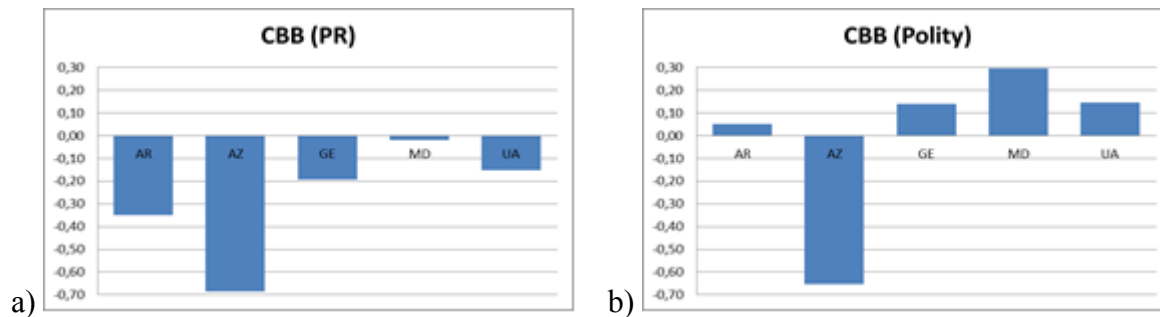
With the reservation about Polity IV data in mind, *Figure 1* suggests that the balance between costs of democratic transformation and the size of EU incentives has impeded democratic consolidation in Eastern ENP countries. According to both FH and Polity IV data, Moldova appears to be the most favoured and Azerbaijan the least favoured case in terms of the cost-benefit balance of norm adoption. Equally, with both sets of data the variation of cases on this parameter largely reflects the long-term characteristics of their regimes.

For a finer cross-temporal comparison, in *Figure 2* both FH and Polity IV data show that since the launch of the ENP in 2004, the cost-benefit balance of norm adoption improved in the cases of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, while it remained at the same level for Azerbaijan. As shown in *Figure 2a* and *b*, the data for Armenia is ambivalent. The cost-benefit balance of norm adoption takes on lower negative values with FH data and improves slightly with Polity IV data.

Figure 2: Trends of the Cost-Benefit Balance of Norm Adoption (1991-2010)

a)   b)
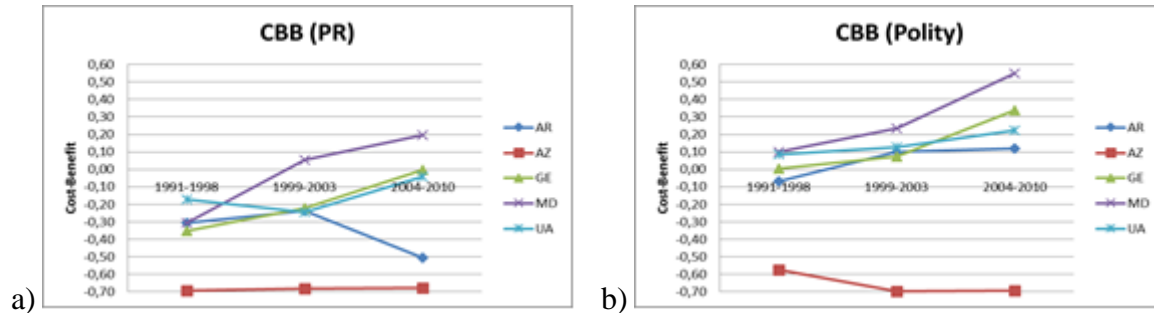
For Georgia and Ukraine this improvement was a result of both lower domestic costs of adaptation, given the ideological outlook of the new governments installed after "colour revolutions" in 2003 and 2004, and increased EU incentives. In the Moldovan case, the change in the cost-benefit balance of norm adoption was only a result of higher EU incentives. The fall of the balance with FH data in the case of Armenia was due to a rise in costs, while the minor rise with Polity IV data was due to an increase in EU incentives. The cost-benefit balance did not change in the case of Azerbaijan, as the insignificant increase in EU incentives did not offset the stable prohibitive costs of domestic transformation.

In sum, the cost-benefit balance resulting from the domestic costs of complying with EU democratic conditionality weighted by the size of EU incentives appears to be a relevant predictor of regime trajectories in Eastern ENP countries. Lower costs of norm adoption and higher benefits from the EU have encouraged a more democracy-abiding behaviour. The next sections of this paper approach regime trajectories in this region in light of alternative theoretical frameworks.

5. Structural Determinants

Modernisation theorists have put forward structural arguments, which have long dominated the debate about the democratization process (Lipset 1959). Modernists' core proposition holds that socio-economic development fosters democratization. The modernisation paradigm only began to cede space to competing explanations after the advent of the third wave of democratization in Latin America and southeast Europe. However, shortly after it was qualified anew and reconfirmed (Lipset *et al.* 1993, Boix and Stokes 2003).

Available data on cases under consideration does not fit well into the theoretical expectations framed by modernists, granting credit to other authors who have found non-confirming cases (Levitsky and Way 2010). *Figure 3* shows evidence that patterns of economic development do not match those of political regimes.

Figure 3: Structural Determinants (1991-2010)


a)

b)

c)
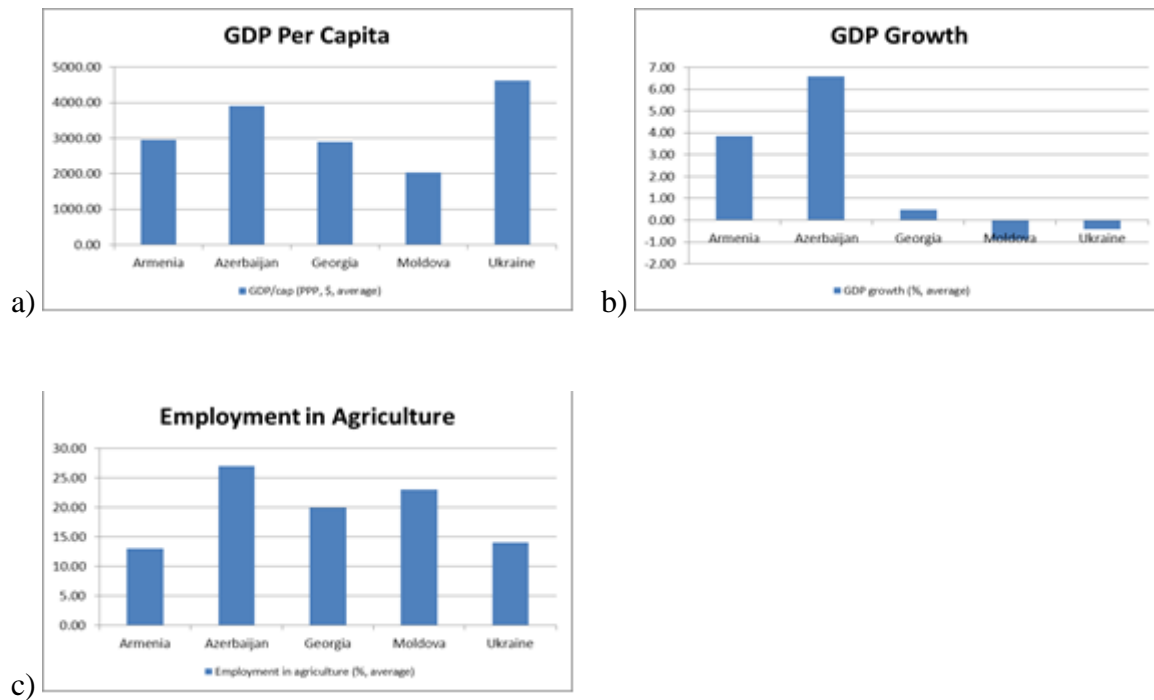
Azerbaijan, the case with the most entrenched authoritarian practices under the Aliyev dynasty, on average had the second-highest GDP per capita (*Figure 3a*) and the highest GDP growth rate (*Figure 3b*) in the region over the period from 1991-2010. In fact, from 2005-2007 the Azerbaijani economy was the fastest-growing economy in the world, with growth rates of 26.4%, 34.5% and 25.1%. Given the sector generating this performance, one may well argue that Azerbaijan's economic performance could not foster democratization. The extraordinary rise in GDP per capita from 1508 USD in 1995 to 9943 USD in 2010, and the high average GDP growth rate of 17% from 2004-2010, were due to a more intense exploitation and export of oil reserves. The total oil production in Azerbaijan has increased from about 222 thousand bbl/day in 1992 to 1050 thousand bbl/day in 2010. At the same time, the net export of oil has increased from 20

thousand bbl/day in 1992 to 912 thousand bbl/day in 2009. The export of mineral fuels and oil accounted, on average, for 87.57% of all Azerbaijani exports in the period 2001-2010. Hence, Azerbaijan represents a relevant case for the oil-impedes-democracy claim. Ross (2001) underscores that in cases where economic development is driven by oil rents or exploitation of other mineral resources, governments may use low tax rates and spending on patronage (the "rentier effect") to relieve social demand for more accountability and representation. In Azerbaijan this effect took the form of a pyramidal patron-client network with the president at the top, allowing clients to obtain rents in exchange for their loyalty (Gahramanova 2009). In this way, the regime has also managed to use different incentives to recruit potential opposition challengers (Sasse 2013). Usually, the patron turns a blind eye on loyalists' use of official posts for private gains. However, when loyalists dare to challenge the authority of their patron, law enforcement institutions are used to silence them with charges of embezzling state funds, abusing power, corruption, etc. Such a situation occurred in October 2005, when within a week sixteen former ministers, heads of departments, and other high-ranking officials were fired or arrested because they were suspected of plotting against Aliyev Jr. (Valiyev 2006). Second, control over oil rents was used to build and maintain powerful police and security forces able to repress ("repression effect") opposition dissent (Way 2008). Azerbaijan has spent an average of 143 USD per capita on armed forces every year in the period from 1991-2010, compared with Armenia's 88 USD, Ukraine's 73 USD, Georgia's 57 USD and Moldova's 7 USD. Third, the structure of economic growth ("modernisation effect") was not well suited to fostering social changes that tend to promote the democratic process (Ross 2001). Although the number of employees in agriculture decreased from 32% in 1991 to 22.76% in 2010, Azerbaijan still had the highest rate of employment in this sector among cases considered (*Figure 3c*).[2] To these, one can add a fourth "strategic effect" through which the Azerbaijani establishment uses the benefit of access to its energy resources and transit routes to discourage Western democratizing pressure (Gahramanova 2009, Ioffe 2013). As long as significant oil rents will continue to be obtained and used to the ends of the above specified effects, the autocratic regime in Azerbaijan will tend to be sustainable (Smith 2004).

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[2] The corresponding figures in 2010 were 15.06% for Georgia, 14.90% for Moldova, 10.34% for Ukraine and 9.39% for Armenia.

If one excludes the oil sector's contribution, the average GDP per capita in Azerbaijan over the period from 1991-2010 would fall to the second-lowest level among considered countries. The resulting cross-country variation in *Figure 4* becomes somewhat more in line with the credo of modernisation theory, but data for Moldova still does not fit neatly into the frame.

Figure 4: Non-Oil GDP per Capita (1991-2010)
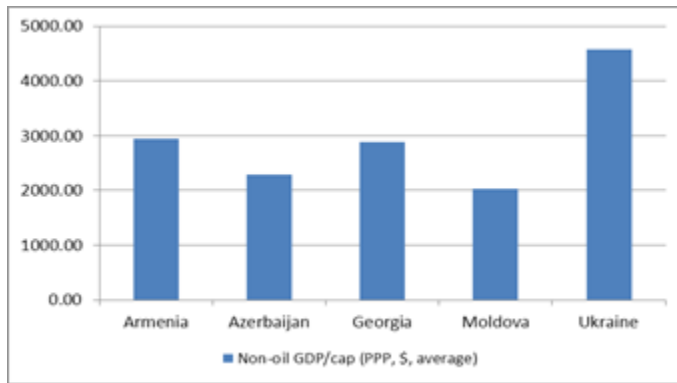
With the highest democratic standards among considered countries over the entire period from 1991-2010, Moldova is an obvious outlier with the lowest GDP per capita (*Figures 3a, 5*), the lowest GDP growth rate (*Figure 3b*) and the second-largest agricultural sector (*Figure 3c*). Moreover, of the six regime changes in the region, four saw the transfer of power to more democratic governments with both positive (Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004) and negative (Moldova in 1998, 2009) GDP growth rates. The remaining two, where power transferred to more authoritarian governments, took place under conditions of both positive (Moldova in 2001) and negative (Ukraine in 2010) GDP growth rates, as well. Hence, positive and negative GDP growth rates have stimulated transitions in a democratic direction, as well as accompanied the transfer of power to more authoritarian governments.

In short, this section shows that patterns of economic development do not fit well with the regime trajectories in Eastern ENP countries. This, however, does not exclude the causal role of some structural determinants (e.g., effects of oil rents in Azerbaijan), but it underscores that structural determinants are not sufficient to account for cross-country variation in terms of regime dynamics. An institutional turn here might prove a useful addition to a more complex causation story.

6. Institutional Determinants

Institutionalists have paid much attention to the role played by political institutions for locking in particular paths that reinforce and reproduce regime stability. Constitutional arrangements that establish institutional paths resilient to change garner the most interest. Among them, the system of government and the electoral system have attracted much of the scholarly attention.

Scholars largely agree that presidential, semi-presidential and parliamentarian systems that vary in the degree to which they disperse power across core political institutions, contribute to the development of stable party systems and encourage democratization (Shugart 1998, Fish 1999, 2006, Ekiert *et al.* 2007, Protsyk 2011). In this regard, forms of presidential and parliamentary systems are on different ends of a continuum from high to low concentration of power residing with particular political institutions. A broadly embraced finding is that the parliamentarian system outruns other institutional alternatives in its ability to diffuse power across poles of executive and legislative powers, strengthen political parties and foster democratization. In presidential systems, the presidents have often concentrated power by (ab)use of executive decrees in order to streamline the effect of public policies and to avoid the collective action problem inherent in legislative bodies (Protsyk 2011). Since in such systems the real power resides with presidents, relevant political and economic actors have a strong motive to seek to influence presidential offices and fewer incentives to invest into political parties. Moreover, presidential systems undermine horizontal and vertical accountability through limited checks on the executive power and impediments to the establishment of strong political parties, which would structure and intermediate the relationship between people and elected officials.

The first constitutions of Armenia (1995), Moldova (1994) and Ukraine (1996) have created semi-presidential systems, while those of Azerbaijan (1995) and Georgia (1995) have institutionalized systems that afforded their presidents large prerogatives. Among the first group, Moldova underwent a constitutional reform that instituted parliamentarianism in 2000, while from the second group Georgia switched to a semi-presidential system in 2004 as a result of the "Rose revolution". Armenia and Ukraine also underwent constitutional amendments that altered presidential powers in 2005 and 2006, but their systems remain, in essence, semi-presidential.

Figure 5 approximates the extent to which the systems of government in Eastern ENP countries might have contributed to the dispersion of authority across branches of power in the period 1991-2010.

Figure 5: System of Government: Expected Effects on Power Dispersion (1991-2010)
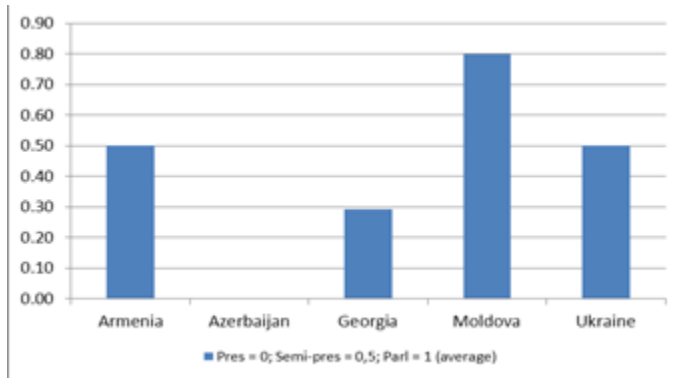
Moldova is the case with the highest power dispersion, while Azerbaijan under the Aliyev dynasty is where presidential patronage structures are strongest and political power is most concentrated. To be sure, the zero value for power dispersion in Azerbaijan does not mean that power is exclusively held by the president. While Milli Majlis does have some power in the Azerbaijani political system (Fish and Kroenig 2009), what *Figure 5* shows is that in comparative terms the legislative power in Azerbaijan is the lowest. Armenia and Ukraine are in-between cases, whereas in Georgia power was very much concentrated in the hands of its Presidents, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. Though the post of prime minister was introduced in 2004, Saakashvili could also draw on extensive prerogatives and high concentration of power in the years following. The patterns in *Figure 5* align somewhat with theoretical predictions. Among considered cases, parliamentary Moldova was the most democratic country and presidential Azerbaijan the most autocratic country over the period from 1991-2010. Interestingly, all other former Soviet Union countries with strong presidents, such as Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were autocratic as well.

However, constitutional set-up does not always reflect the *de facto* balance of power between executive and legislative branches. A striking example is Moldova, where, though reformed into a parliamentary system in 2000, the gravity centre of power moved to the President

Vladimir Voronin in office from 2001-2009. This became possible as a result of the February 2001 parliamentary elections, when the Party of Communists headed by Voronin won such a comfortable majority that they were able to elect the president and pass constitutional changes without coalescing with another party. Voronin was able to concentrate the power in his hands because while serving as President, he also retained the leadership of the governing Party of Communists. Making use of party structures of patronage, he not only kept party members in line, but also imposed his will on the workings of the Legislature and the Cabinet of Ministers. In a similar vein, in spite of formally switching to a semi-presidential system of government later in 2004, due to new prerogatives assigned to the president and retaining leadership of the governing United National Movement after his first election as President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili could concentrate even more power in his hands. As a result, Georgia under Saakashvili became even more "presidentialised" than under Shevardnadze (Mitchell 2009).

Fish (2006) admits that the system of government exerts lock-in effects but maintains, at the same time, that causation may also go in the opposite direction. Other authors go even further and claim that institutional design has little causal relevance (McFaul 2002, Way 2005, Levitsky and Way 2010). For Levitsky and Way (2010) increased presidential power is often a product, rather than a cause, of authoritarianism. Indeed, the first constitution of Azerbaijan providing for extensive presidential powers was adopted in November 1995, after president Heydar Aliyev managed to restrict political freedoms using the coup attempts in October 1994 and March 1995 as pretexts. Bunce and Wolchik (2008) underline that of the successor states of the Soviet Union there are only four countries that have adopted parliamentarianism: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova. They observe that these are the only states where the opposition won the first competitive elections. Therefore, it is suggested that founding elections had profound implications for the subsequent institutional choice and that in countries where there was more room for open politics at the time of adoption of the first constitutions, there was more willingness to craft stronger legislatures (Fish 1999, 2006). Similarly, Frye (1999) argues that in post-communist countries that underwent a rapid redistribution of wealth and where the party system was too weak to protect the initial gains of the winners of economic reform, the latter tended to side with presidents and push for the consolidation of their power. In the absence of strong political parties, the most visible points where power gravitated were presidential offices, which were less costly to target. Furthermore, under conditions of fragmented political parties, the co-ordination of collective

action against the rise of presidential powers was more difficult and costly. Likewise, the higher the gains of initial winners, the more resources they could offer to the consolidation of presidential powers. For presidents themselves, siding with the winners of economic reform was an attractive strategy, as the latter could provide campaign financing, media support and even deliver votes. In a similar vein, Gel'man (2003) contends that constitution making in Ukraine, among other cases, was dominated by the winners of earlier political battles who insisted on a flexible institutional framework that would put few constraints on the presidency.

The second major institution that exerts locking-in effects is the electoral system. Scholars argue that proportional electoral systems are better suited for increased levels of representation and for the development of stable party systems (Protsyk 2011). Majoritarian systems do a better job in other respects—linking voters and party representatives is one example—but do not favour representation of minority groups and stabilisation of party systems as much (Ishiyama and Kennedy 2001). In this regard, mixed electoral systems might have various effects on representation and the stabilisation of party systems depending on the proportion of seats won through party lists or SMD.

On this second institutional dimension, the most frequent choice were mixed electoral systems. Moldova is the only case that has opted for a proportional electoral system in 1993. Armenia, in 1995 opting for a mixed system with 40 seats of proportional and 150 seats of SMD representation, moved after two subsequent changes in 1999 (56 proportional and 75 SMD) and 2005 (90 proportional and 41 SMD) to a mixed system with the majority of seats contested on party lists. In 1995 Georgia began with a mixed electoral system in which the proportion of seats was in favour of those contested on party lists (150 proportional and 85 SMD). In 2008 the number of seats in the Supreme Council of Georgia was reduced to 150, and the number of seats contested on party lists (75) and in uninominal electoral districts (75) was equilibrated. As a solution to the stand-off caused by the "Orange revolution" in Ukraine, in December 2004 Verkhovna Rada adopted a number of constitutional amendments that foresaw, among other things, the substitution of the mixed electoral system with a proportional one. However, in October 2010 the Constitutional Court of Ukraine overturned the 2004 amendments and the previous mixed electoral system (225 proportional and 225 SMD) was re-established. Azerbaijan is the only case that has switched to another electoral system; after an initial experience with a mixed electoral system with a strong SMD component (25 proportional and 100 SMD), in 2002 it opted for a full SMD system.

As anticipated by the theory, the patterns in *Figure 6* illustrate the extent to which electoral systems in Eastern ENP countries would have contributed to the representation of minority interests in legislatures.

Figure 6: Electoral System: Expected Effects on Representation (1991-2010)
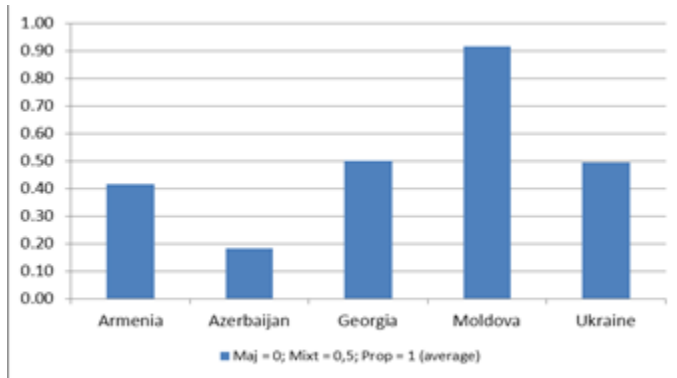
Moldova is assessed as having the most favourable electoral system for increased levels of representation in the Parliament. Georgia, Ukraine and Armenia represent the middle tier, while the electoral system in Azerbaijan seems to advantage individual, resourceful candidates.

In a nutshell, it seems that causation here works in both directions, allowing institutions and political regimes to reinforce each other. The more the balance of power was tipped in favour of democratic forces in the earlier years of the transition period, the more they have opted for institutions that disperse authority across branches of power and consolidate representation. At the same time, a system of government that reserved a stronger role for legislature and an electoral system that encouraged representation have kept the distribution of power wider and reinforced political pluralism. The first line of causation hints at the need to connect this section to actor-related determinants.

7. Actor-Related Determinants

Action theorists posit that the democratization process should be explained with reference to the idiosyncrasy of interaction among main political actors. In their view, it is first and foremost the strategic behaviour of actors and their balance of power that sets the defining parameters of political regimes. Given their stable interests, as well as the fluid condition under which they are forced to act and which requires flexible responses, it is argued that democratization is a rather random process. Structural and institutional factors might be responsible for the changing conditions, but the fluctuating balance of power among main political actors could also come into play.

Indicative of the balance of power are patterns of power sharing at the level of executives and the strength of opposition within legislatures. Power-sharing deals and reasonable levels of opposition presence in parliaments indicate that there are no exclusive monopolies on power that are characteristic of autocratic regimes. *Figure 7* illustrates these two aspects of access to power.

Figure 7: Power-Sharing and Opposition Strength (1991-2010)
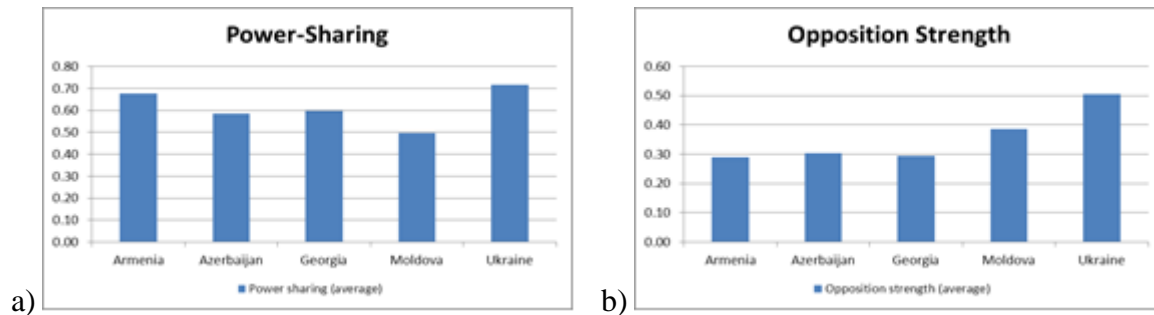
With regard to power sharing (*Figure 7a*), in the period from 1991-2010 Ukraine had the highest number of parties with representation in successive governments on average. Contrary to expectations, the number of parties sharing ministerial portfolios in different compositions of Moldovan executives was the lowest. On this indicator, the Caucasian cases fall in between. At first glance, this cross-country variation suggests that it is unlikely for an association between executive power sharing and regime patterns to be found. However, two worthwhile observations need to be stressed here. First, it was the sharing of executive power by members of the "Our Ukraine" Bloc that created conditions for reciprocal checks and balances and temporary

democratic advancements in Ukraine. Stalemate and dissent, triggered by the presence of more veto points in the Ukrainian executive branch, were background conditions under which political pluralism thrived during the Yushchenko administration. On the other hand, the absence of power-sharing deals in post-revolutionary Georgia created incentives for a quick return to some undemocratic habits practiced before 2003, in Shevardnadze's era. Second, a closer examination of Moldova, which appears to be a disconfirming case in *Figure 7a*, reveals that in the period of the coalitional cabinets of Ciubuc IInd, Sturza (1998-1999), Filat Ist and IInd (2009-2013) there were some improvements with respect to democratic principles and human rights. However, these two observations do not ameliorate the lack of fit between the number of power-sharing parties and regime dynamics; the degree of a pro-European (Western) position of the governing party or coalition must be added to the analysis. This addition leads to a two-by-two typology of executives.

Figure 8: Typology of Executives

	Pro-European Government	
Coalitional Goverment	**Yes**	**No**
Yes	4	2
No	3	1

Coalitional *and* strongly committed pro-European (Western) governments (Moldova in 1998-1999 and 2009-2013; Ukraine in 2005-2006) were the most conducive to increased levels of political contestation (cell 4). On the other side, in cases with a single or hegemonic governing party that *does not* espouse a strong pro-European (Western) identity (Azerbaijan in 2000-2005; Georgia in 1999-2003; Moldova in 1994-1998, 2001-2005; Ukraine in 2002-2004), there were the least favourable conditions for democratic advancement (cell 1). Georgia under Saakashvili in 2004-2010 was the only case with a hegemonic *and* strongly committed pro-Western identity governing party (cell 3). Finally, Armenia for most of the period since its independence; Azerbaijan in 2005-2010; Georgia in 1995-1999 and Ukraine in 1994-2002 were cases of

coalitional governments with a *weak, if any* pro-European (Western) identity (cell 2). The cases of Moldova (1998-1999; 2009-2013) and Ukraine (2005-2006), located in the upper-left property space of the typology, show that democratic advances became possible when executive power was shared among ideologically closed partners with a strong commitment to European integration. Executives, during the rule of United National Movement in Georgia, had a similar stance on European integration, but the absence of any meaningful checks and balances on their power left more room for discretionary action, to the disadvantage of open politics. Without a strong (or any) pro-EU commitment, cases located in the property spaces on the right had even less motivation to move along a democratic path.

Empirical data on the strength of opposition during the period from 1991-2010, as reflected by its share of seats in the parliament (*Figure 7b*), comes close to theoretical expectations. In Ukraine and Moldova opposition forces had bigger shares in the parliaments than their counterparts in the South Caucasian cases. This approximation of opposition strength should not be equated with opposition mobilisation, which takes into account the size of opposition protests. According to Levitsky and Way (2010), although opposition protest was important in certain historical moments (e.g., Ukraine in 2004), it is not sufficient to explain the success and failure of post-Soviet authoritarianism. Instead, what counted in their view was organizational power (strong states and/or governing parties), which explains better why competitive authoritarianism in Armenia was stable and why Georgia and Moldova have experienced both democratic breakthroughs and authoritarian backslides. In the case of the former, a powerful coercive apparatus allowed incumbents to repeatedly thwart high levels of opposition mobilisation; in the latter, little organizational power could not contain even limited opposition protests (e.g., Georgia in 2003). With a comparable (low) presence of opposition as in the Georgian parliament, Azerbaijan did not experience a similar breakthrough. In Ukraine in 2004 the Kuchma regime fell under conditions of a strong oppositional capacity for mobilisation, which was nevertheless endogenous to a low organizational power and Western facilitation (Levitsky and Way 2010, Bunce and Wolchik 2009). To this end, a stronger opposition might be a sign of weaker autocratic capacity or of what Way (2005) terms "pluralism by default".

The presence of stronger oppositions in the context of post-Soviet countries might also indicate sharper cleavages within the population and elites in what concerns nation building, regime preferences and external alliances (Bunce and Wolchik 2008). Indeed, Ukraine and

Moldova have less homogenous ethnic populations and significant Russian-speaking minorities for whom Moscow often played the role a lighthouse does for ships' navigation. It seems plausible that the absence of a popular consensus on the meaning and geographical reach of the nation, ethnic and religious cleavages reinforced by territorial and economic disputes engender political stability and democratic development because debates around such issues are predominantly exclusionary (McFaul 2002, Ekiert *et al.* 2007, Bunce and Wolchik 2008). However, the more ethnically homogeneous Caucasian cases were not more democratic than Moldova and Ukraine over the period from 1991-2010. This resonates with the finding that ethnic homogeneity is not necessarily related to democratic development (Fish 1999). On the contrary, it might well be the case that the presence of relatively strong opposition groups undermines their exclusive grip on power and leads to cyclical waves of increased contestation that open up at potential points of (presidential) power transfer (Hale 2005). The presence of ethnic cleavages meant that successive incumbents on either side had to face relatively serious threats from mobilised anti-incumbent opposition, which led to increased levels of contestation (Way 2005). On the other side, skilful anti-democratic elites may well exploit existing cleavages to ensure their long hold on power. For instance, the "Karabakh clan" managed to maintain the stability of regime in Armenia by politicizing the territorial conflict with Azerbaijan and to suppress opposition protest with the help of the strong police and security apparatus that emerged out of a victorious war with Azerbaijan (Levitsky and Way 2010). Both Heydar and Ilham Aliyev also used the conflict with Armenia to legitimise encroaching on political and civil rights. The mere presence of territorial conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria set additional hurdles for democratic development in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova (Gallina 2010). Furthermore, insofar as identity issues and territorial problems engender stability in general, they may also undermine the ability of autocratic-leaning leaders to consolidate their powers (Way 2005). The President of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrossian, was forced to resign in February 1998—less than two years after his re-election in the first round of presidential elections in September 1996—after advocating an internationally brokered solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict that was deemed unacceptable by a relevant segment of the Armenian elites and public.

The proportion of votes cast for winning candidates in the first round of presidential elections might serve as an additional indication of oppositional strength. The most instances of overwhelming victories, with more than 75% of votes cast in the first round of presidential

elections, come from the South Caucasian cases. Such first-round victories occurred once in Armenia (83% for Ter-Petrossian in 1991), five times in Azerbaijan (98.5% for Mütallibov in 1991; 98.8% and 76.11% for G. Aliyev in 1993 and 1998; 76.84% and 88.73% for Il. Aliyev in 2003 and 2008); five times in Georgia (87.6% for Gamsakhurdia in 1991; 98.0%, 77.0% and 82.0% for Shevardnadze in 1992, 1995 and 2000; and 96.0% for Saakashvili in 2004), and once in Moldova (98% for Snegur in 1991). In Azerbaijan and Georgia *all* presidential campaigns from 1991 to 2010 were decided in the first round of elections. In other words, all winning candidates contesting the presidential office have been elected with overwhelming majorities in the first round. In the case of Armenia, there were two situations in which the winning candidate could only be elected in the run-off (Kocharyan in 1998 and 2003). By contrast, all presidents of Ukraine—with the only exception of Kravchuk, who won in the first round in 1991 with 61.59% of votes—were elected in the second round of elections. Similarly, before Moldova switched to a parliamentary system in 2000, in the second and last direct presidential election in 1996 Lucinschi won only by a small margin against his contender, Snegur, in the second round.

In sum, the number of parties of power in the executive body does not say much about regime trajectories. However, a coalitional government that shares a strong pro-EU identity proves to be a promising facilitator of external democracy promotion efforts. Finally, countries with lower shares of opposition in the parliament proved less democratic and thus less hospitable sites to external factors of democratization. A stronger opposition presence is a sign of authoritarian failure, as well as an indication of sharper internal cleavages exploited by comparable contending groups, whose reciprocal anti-incumbent challenges often lead to cyclical waves of increased contestation.

8. Conclusions

This paper looks at the domestic facilitators and impediments to EU democracy promotion efforts in Eastern ENP countries. It finds that the negative balance between the size of EU incentives and the costs of democratic transformation has impeded democratic consolidation in Eastern ENP countries. With both FH and Polity IV data, Moldova appears to be the most and Azerbaijan the least favoured case by this cost-benefit balance. Additionally, with both sets of data the variation of cases on this parameter largely reflects their long-term regime dynamics.

If the cost-benefit balance appears to be a relevant predictor of regime trajectories in this region, patterns of economic development do not match those of political regimes. Azerbaijan, the most authoritarian country in the region, had on average the second-highest GDP per capita and the highest GDP growth rate over the period from 1991-2010, while Moldova, the most democratic one, had the lowest GDP per capita, the lowest GDP growth rate and the second-largest agricultural sector. This lack of fit does not exclude the causal role of some structural determinants (e.g., effects of oil rents in Azerbaijan), but it underscores that structural determinants are not sufficient to account for cross-country variation in terms of regime dynamics.

Institutional choices, as reflected by the system of government and electoral system, seem to better match regime trajectories in Eastern ENP countries, but their independent effects are undermined by a reasonable possibility of reverse causality. Institutions and political regimes reinforce each other, which means that the road from institutions to the regimes is most likely in causal terms a two-way road. The more the balance of power was tipped in favour of democratic forces in the earlier years of transition, the more the government in question seemed to opt for institutions that disperse authority across branches of power and consolidate representation. At the same time, a system of government that reserved a stronger role for legislature and an electoral system that encouraged representation kept the distribution of power wider and reinforced political pluralism.

Finally, the number of parties of power within executives does not appear to say much about regime trajectories. The degree of a pro-European (Western) outlook of the governing party or coalition must be incorporated into the analysis. To this end, a coalitional government that had a strong pro-EU identity proved to be a promising facilitator of external democracy promotion efforts. Countries with lower percentages of opposition in parliament proved less democratic and, hence, less hospitable sites for external factors of democratization to take effect.

Appendix: Indicators

Indicators: Cost-Benefit

Indicator	Description	Scoring	Calibration		Source
Cost-benefit balance	Net gain or loss from norm adoption	Takes an *average* measure of EU incentives (a&b&c) for a given country-year and subtracts from it a calibrated estimation of costs (a or b) for the corresponding country-year. The higher the difference, the higher the gain; the lower the difference, the higher the loss from (democratic) norm adoption	See below incentives and costs		See below incentives and costs
Incentives: **(a) EU assistance per capita**	Annual assistance per capita provided by the EU	The larger the volume (size) of assistance, the higher the perceived reward	29.11 EUR/cap (empirical maximum, MD, 2010)	1.00[3]	European Commission
(b) Commercial regime	The type of commercial regime between the EU and a target country	The more advanced this regime, the higher the perceived reward	No preferences GSPind GSP GSP+ ATP	0.00 0.10 0.25 0.50 0.75	Author
(c) Visa regime	The type of visa regime between the EU and a target country	The more advanced this regime, the higher the perceived reward	Not free Facilitated	0,00; 0.50	Author
Costs: **(a) Costs with PR data**	Costs of domestic transformation incurred from norm adoption. PR refers to three dimensions: electoral process; political pluralism and participation; functioning of government	The original continuous scale from 1 (wide range of PR) to 7 (few or no PR) is inversed so that higher ratings refer to higher standards of PR. Next, the difference between a given country-year estimation and a score of 6 for PR (theoretical expectation at which a country would qualify as democracy) is calculated	Obtained difference is divided at 5		Freedom House, author

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[3] Other country-year values are derived after dividing a particular amount of EU assistance per capita provided to a given country in a given year by the empirical maximum.

Indicator	Description	Scoring	Calibration		Source
(b) Costs with Polity data	Costs of domestic transformation incurred from norm adoption. The Polity score is an account of both democracy and autocracy scores	The original continuous scale from -10 (strongly autocratic) to +10 (strongly democratic) is transformed into a scale from 0 (strongly autocratic) to 20 (strongly democratic). Next, the difference between a given country-year estimation and a score of 16 for polity characteristics (theoretical expectation at which a country would qualify as democracy) is calculated	Obtained difference is divided at 16		Polity IV, author

Indicators: Structures

Indicator	Description	Scoring	Calibration		Source
GDP per capita	Annual GDP per capita	The higher the GDP per capita, the higher the score	$9942.59/ cap (empirical maximum, AZ, 2010)	1.00[4]	WB
GDP growth	Annual rate of GDP growth	The higher the rate of growth, the higher the score	34.5% (empirical maximum, AZ, 2006)	1.00[5]	WB
(Non)agricultural employment	Annual rate of employment in (non)agricultural sector(s)	The higher the rate of employment in non-agricultural sectors, the higher the score	x% is divided at 100		FAO, WB

Indicators: Institutions

Indicator	Description	Scoring	Calibration		Source
System of government	System of division of power within a given political system	The higher the dispersion of power associated with a given system of government, the higher the score	Presidential Semi-presidential Parliamentary	0.00 0.50 1.00	Author
Electoral system	System of rules used for the election of people's representatives in the legislative body	The higher the effect of a given electoral system on representation and stabilisation of political parties, the higher the score	SMD Mixed Proportional	0.00 0.50 1.00	Author

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[4] The procedure is similar to that referred to in fn. 3.
[5] Idem.

Indicators: Actors

Indicator	Description	Scoring	Calibration		Source
Power sharing	The extent to which power is shared among political parties within the executive body	The larger the number of parties sharing executive power, the higher the score	1 party 2 parties 3 or more parties	0.33 0.66 1.00	Keefer (2010), author
Strength of opposition	Balance of power between ruling party or coalition and opposition within the legislative body	The larger the percentage of opposition mandates from the total number of parliamentary seats, the higher the score	x% is divided at 100		Keefer (2010), Way (2005)

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