## The geography of support for emocracy in Europe
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# The Geography of Support
# for Democracy in Europe*

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*Introduction*

The stability of a political system depends to a large extent on the degree of popular acceptance of the principles that create the framework of the political system. This is particularly true in the case of democratic political systems, because the set of actions that can be taken to ensure the survival of the system is limited to only those actions that are acceptable under the rules of the democratic game. If this is true, then it follows that the way people react to the principles of the political systems governing their lives is of particular interest for democratic systems.

This is the main topic I address here. This paper focuses, primarily, on understanding the mechanisms of support for democracy, distinguishing between democracy and authoritarian alternatives. While the existing literature tends to analyze support for democracy as a unidimensional phenomenon, my approach is to think of democracy and authoritarian alternatives not as two ends of the support for democracy dimension, but, rather, as distinct sub-dimensions. While in some contexts the two sub-dimensions of support for democracy may be strongly related, justifying a single dimension approach, in other contexts I expect these sub-dimensions to be independent of each other, support for each of the sub-dimensions being generated through distinct mechanisms, justifying, thus, a bi-dimensional approach. The results presented here will show that this bi-dimensional operationalization of support for democracy fits better the reality.

A second central point of this paper is the assumption that the mechanisms of support for democracy/authoritarian alternatives are not homogenous across all Europe. One cannot expect the citizens of the older democracies in Western Europe to have the same views on democracy as a citizen from a former communist country. Moreover, based on advances towards democratic consolidation, the postcommunist transitions in Central and

Eastern Europe have shown two distinct groups of countries. The first group includes those countries that have managed the transition rather successfully (Western ex-communist countries/Central Europe), while the second group includes the laggards and those that have failed to complete the transition (Eastern ex-communist countries/Eastern Europe). The analyses I present here will show that the mechanisms of support vary significantly across these three groups of countries.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section of the paper presents a brief overview of the literature on support for democracy and the theoretical framework used in this article. The next section describes the data and the methodology used in the paper. The main part of the paper is devoted to presenting and interpreting the results of the data analysis, followed by a section that summarizes the main findings of this study.

## Support for Democracy

Although a certain history *ended* in 1989, with the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, other histories began at the same moment. In the case of the ex-communist countries, this new history was built around the complex transition from communism to democracy and from planned economy to market economy. The simultaneity of the political, economic, and social transitions represented the main characteristic of the post-communist transitions[1]. Such a complex project convinced some authors that the post-communist transitions had rather low odds of success[2]. In most cases, however, time disproved most of these predictions and showed that "amazingly little resistance from below has come to those reforms that have been instituted"[3]. The main negative effect of the simultaneous transitions was that

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[1]   Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition: The East European and East German Experience*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1997; Andreas Pickel, Helmut Wiesenthal, *The Grand Experiment: Debating Shock Therapy, Transition Theory, and the East German Experience*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997; George Schopflin, "Postcommunism: The Problems of Democratic Construction", *Daedalus*, vol. 123, no. 2, 1994, pp. 127-141.

[2]   See, for instance: Larry Diamond, "Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered", *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 35, no. 4-5, 1992, pp. 450-499; Stephen Haggard, Robert Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995; Joan Nelson, "Linkages between Politics and Economics", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1994, pp. 49-62; Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991.

[3]   John Hall, "After the Vacuum: Post-communism in the Light of Tocqueville", in Beverly Crawford (ed.), *Markets, States, and Democracy: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Transformations*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995, p. 89.

the transition to democracy was complicated and prolonged by the transition to a market economy.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the literature discussing different phenomena grouped under the general headings of democratization and marketization flourished, as political scientists and sociologists used this newly available group of countries to study different aspects of the relationship between the democratic transition and the economic transition. They approached this relationship either at the macro level, focusing on the new institutional set-up and on its performance[4], or at the individual level, focusing on mass support for political and economic reforms[5].

While the debates about the type of market economy to be implemented have started right from the beginning of the transition, in the case of the political transition in most countries there seemed to be a general consensus that a democratic political system was the only valid choice. This was quite visible in consistently high levels of support for democracy recorded throughout the region[6]. Later studies have used more detailed measures of support for democracy, showing significant variation in the level of support for democracy

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[4]  Michael Bernhard, Christopher Reenock, Timothy Nordstrom, "Economic Performance and Survival in New Democracies: Is there a Honeymoon Effect?", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2003, pp. 404-431; Ross Burkhart, Michael Lewis-Beck, "Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis". *American Political Science Review*, vol. 88, no. 4, 1994, pp. 903-910; Marcus Kurtz, Andrew Barnes, "The Political Foundations of Post-communist Regimes", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 5, 2002, pp. 524-553; Adam Przeworski, Fernando Limongi, "Modernization: Theories and Facts", *World Politics*, vol. 49, no. 2, 1997, pp. 155-183; James Robinson, "Economic Development and Democracy", *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 9, 2006, pp. 503-527.

[5]  Raymond Duch, "Tolerating Economic Reform: Popular Support for Transition to a Free Market in the Republics of the Former Soviet Union", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 87, no. 3, 1993, pp. 590-608; Geoffrey Evans, Stephen Whitefield, "The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1995, pp. 485-514; Ada Finifter, "Attitudes toward Individual Responsibility and Political Reform in the Former Soviet Union", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 90, no. 1, 1996, pp. 138-152; Jerry Hough, "The Russian Election of 1993: Public Attitudes toward Economic Reform and Democratization", *Post-Soviet Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1994, pp. 1-37.

[6]  Geoffrey Evans, Stephen Whitefield, "The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment:..cit"; William Mishler, Richard Rose, "Trajectories of Fear and Hope: Support for Democracy in Post-Communist Europe", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1996, pp. 553-581; Richard Rose, William Mishler, "Mass Reaction to Regime Change in Eastern Europe: Polarization or Leaders and Laggards", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1994, pp. 159-182; Richard Rose, William Mishler, Christian Haerpfer, *Democracy and Its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1998.

between countries[7]. In all these studies, however, support for democracy and acceptance of authoritarian alternatives are considered to be the opposite ends of the dimension measuring support for democracy.

One cannot study support for democracy without going back to the roots, to Easton's work on system support. Easton defined diffuse support as "evaluations of what an object is or represents … not of what it does"[8], while specific support was defined as "a consequence from some specific satisfactions obtained from the system with respect to a demand that the members make, can be expected to make, or that is made on their behalf"[9]. Later, Muller expanded the definition of specific support and argued that "the most useful conception of specific support is not that its distinctive characteristic is demand satisfaction, but simply that it involves members' evaluations of the *performance* of political authorities"[10].

Our understanding of the stability of political systems changed as a result of distinguishing between the two types of support: a political system can maintain its stability for long periods of time, even when faced with low levels of specific support, as long as these are counterbalanced by satisfactory levels of diffuse support. The distinction between diffuse and specific support can also be interpreted, following Linz, in terms of legitimacy (as diffuse support) and of efficacy and efficiency (as specific support). Linz argued, just like Easton, that the efficacy and effectiveness of a political system can strengthen, reinforce, maintain or weaken the belief in its legitimacy[11]. More recently, several authors have refined Easton's schema even more, distinguishing among different types of specific support[12].

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[7]   Russell Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004; Ronald Inglehart, "How Solid is Mass Support for Democracy: And How Do We Measure It?", *Political Science and Politics*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2003, pp. 51-57; Ronald Inglehart, Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005; Hans-Dieter Klingemann, "Mapping Political Support in the 1990s: A Global Analysis", in Pippa Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp. 32-56; William Mishler, Richard Rose, "Learning and Re-Learning Regime Support: The Dynamics of Post-Communist Regimes", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2002, pp. 5-36.

[8]   David Easton, "A Re-assessment of the Concept of Political Support", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1975, p. 444.

[9]   David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life*, Wiley, New York, 1965, p. 268.

[10]  Edward Muller, "The Representation of Citizens by Political Authorities: Consequences for Regime Support", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 64, no. 4, 1970, p. 1152.

[11]  Juan Linz, "Crisis, Breakdown, and Requilibration", in Juan Linz, Alfred Stepan (eds.), *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1978, p. 18.

[12]  For more details, see Russell Dalton, "Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies", in Pippa Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens…*cit., pp. 57-77; Hans-Dieter

The approach I am using in this paper follows Easton's concepts of diffuse and specific support. Instead of using a single measure of diffuse or specific support, I operationalize support for democracy starting from five variables that capture people's opinions on this issue: agreement with the statement that democracy is better than any other form of government and evaluations of different forms of governing the respondent's country (having a democratic political system, having a strong leader who does not have to bother with Parliament and the elections, having experts make decisions according to what they think is best for the country, and having the army rule the country).

The last four items I use are known in the literature as the "democracy-autocracy preference" scale and have been used as components of a unidimensional scale in numerous studies[13]. Using data for 36 countries from the 2000 World Values Survey, Ariely and Davidov address the issue of cross-national comparisons of the democracy-autocracy preference scale and show that in order for it to be comparable among respondents from different countries, one item (having a democratic political system) needs to be eliminated from the scale. Once this item is excluded, the other three items can be used to construct a single scale that has metric invariance[14].

Rather than excluding from analysis the item mentioned above, I chose to add to the democracy-autocracy preference scale the fifth item (the one measuring agreement with the "Churchill hypothesis"). The respondents' positions on these five items place the individuals on two dimensions: support for democracy (defined by the first two items) and rejection of authoritarian alternatives (defined by the last three items). Since all the items I use represent support for the principles of the political system, the resulting dependent

Klingemann, "Mapping Political Support in the 1990s…cit.", in *Ibidem*, pp. 32-56; Pippa Norris, "Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens?", in *Ibidem*, pp. 1-27.

[13] See, among others, Jeffrey Dixon, "A Clash of Civilizations? Examining Liberal-Democratic Values in Turkey and the European Union", *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2008, pp. 681-708; Yilmaz Esmer, "Is There an Islamic Civilization?", *Comparative Sociology*, vol. 1, no. 3-4, 2002, pp. 265-298; Christian Haerpfer, "Support for Democracy and Autocracy in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2008, pp. 411-431; Steven Hofmann, "Islam and Democracy: Micro-level Indications of Compatibility", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 37, no. 6, 2004, pp. 652-676; Zhengxu Wang, Russell Dalton, Doh Chull Shin, "Political Trust, Political Performance, and Support for Democracy", in Russell Dalton, Doh Chull Shin (eds.), *Citizens, Democracy, and Markets around the Pacific Rim*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, pp. 135-156; Christian Welzel, "Are Levels of Democracy Affected by Mass Attitudes? Testing Attainment and Sustainment Effects on Democracy", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2007, pp. 397-424.

[14] Gal Ariely, Eldad Davidov, "Can We Rate Public Support for Democracy in a Comparable Way? Cross-National Equivalence of Democratic Attitudes in the World Value Survey", *Social Indicators Research*, vol. 104, no. 2, 2011, pp. 271-286.

variables are indicators of diffuse support for democracy (the dependent variables are discussed in detail in the section on data and methodology). The main advantage of this approach lies in the clear distinction it makes between diffuse and specific support on one hand, and between different sub-dimensions of support for democracy on the other, thus addressing some of the problems identified in the previous literature. This approach allows distinguishing between true democrats and "democrats with adjectives", those who agree with the idea of democracy while, at the same time, disagree with main principles of democracy in particular[15].

## *Support-Generating Mechanisms*

What are the factors that influence support for democracy? Support for different ways of governing a country indicates the preference for a certain structure of the political system. An individual's preference for one model or the other can be determined through two main mechanisms, one based on resources and the other based on ideology. From these two mechanisms I derive two general hypotheses (the resource hypothesis and the ideology hypothesis) to be tested in this paper. From these general hypotheses one can also derive a series of additional hypotheses about the effects of the independent variables used in the analysis.

The first mechanism that can determine an individual's preference for the structure of the political system is resource-based. According to this mechanism, the resources a person has at his or her disposal will determine, partly, the preference for a specific form of governing the country. Starting from the assumptions that those who are better off have fewer reasons to change the political system, the following general hypothesis can be stated:

> *The resource hypothesis*: The higher the level of resources available to an individual, the higher that person's level of support for democracy and the lower their level of support for authoritarian alternatives.

The first set of independent variables I use in analyses is represented by indicators of socio-economic status: gender, age, education, income, and employment. Gender is a control variable; there are no reasons to believe that attitudes towards democracy vary by gender. Age can be interpreted as an indicator of availability of resources: as people age they accumulate more and

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[15] Andreas Schedler, Rodolfo Sarsfield, "Democrats with Adjectives: Linking Direct and Indirect Measures of Democratic Support", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 49, no. 5, 2007, pp. 637-659.

more resources. A second interpretation argues that, as a general rule, older people tend to be more conservative than younger people. Moreover, in post-communist countries, in addition to the position in the life cycle, age also captures the respondent's experiences with different types of political and economic systems. Based on these different interpretations, I expect the effect of age on support for democracy and on rejection of authoritarian alternatives to be positive in the group of Western democracies, and negative in the group of ex-communist countries.

Education and income are the main indicators of resources I use in analyses. Educationoffers individuals a better set of tools that can help them to cope with changes in the economic and political arenas. I expect education to have a positive effect on both sub-dimensions of support for democracy. Incomeshould also have a significant effect on support for the structure of the political and economic system. Higher income should be associated with higher levels of support for democracy and higher levels of rejection of authoritarian alternatives. Employment status is included in the model as a control variable.

The analysis should also include a series of variables measuring evaluations of the way democracy and the market economy are functioning, and optimism about economic prospects both for the individual and for the community. These forms of specific support are considered to be among the most important determinants of support[16]. Unfortunately, the European Values Study does not include many of the items used in the literature to capture the effects of these evaluations[17].

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[16]   Ian McAllister, "The Economic Performance of Governments", in Pippa Norris (ed.), *Critical Citizens*…cit., pp. 188-203; Arthur Miller, Ola Listhaug, "Political Performance and Institutional Trust", in *Ibidem*, pp. 204-216; William Mishler, Richard Rose, "Trust, Distrust, and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-communist Societies", *Journal of Politics*, vol. 59, no. 2, 1997, pp. 418-451; *Idem*, "What Are the Origins of Political Trust: Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-communist Societies", *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2001, pp. 30-62; Robert Rohrschneider, *Learning Democracy: Democratic and Economic Values in Unified Germany*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

[17]   For a discussion of the sociotropic theory and of the personal experiences versus the national assessment hypothesis, see Morris Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981; Roderick Kiewiet, *Macroeconomics and Micropolitics: The Electoral Effects of Economic Issues*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1983; Michael Lewis-Beck, *Economics and Elections: The Major Western Democracies*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1988; Michael Mackuen, Robert Erikson, James Stimson, "Peasants or Bankers? The American Electorate and the U.S. Economy", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 86, no. 3, 1992, pp. 597-611; Gregory Markus, "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote: A Pooled Cross-Sectional Analysis", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1988, pp. 137-154.

There are only three evaluation variables available. The first one, satisfaction with life, measures a generalized form of evaluation, based on the resources that individuals have at their disposal, without offering a referent for the evaluation. I believe this variable will capture in an indirect way respondents' subconscious evaluations of the current situation in the country. The higher the level of satisfaction with life, the higher the level of support for democracy and the higher the rejection of authoritarian alternatives should be. The second one, satisfaction with democracy, is a measure of specific support for democracy. This variable should have positive effects on support for democracy and on rejection of authoritarian alternatives. The third one, evaluations of government performance, is a clearly defined measure of specific support for one of the most important actors of the political and economic systems. To the extent that diffuse support is influenced by such measures of specific support, I expect it to have a positive effect on the dependent variables.

The remaining variables in the analysis influence support for the structure of the political and economic systems through the ideology-based mechanism. This mechanism is rooted in the assumption that people acquire and develop, during their lifetime, different values and beliefs that have to be integrated into a unitary and consistent set. If this assumption is true, then the following general hypothesis should also be true:

> *The ideology hypothesis*: An individual's preference for democracy, for authoritarian alternatives, for the free market model, or for the state interventionism model should be consistent with other values the individual holds.

Interest in politics has been interpreted as "an indicator of citizens' cognitive involvement in the political process"[18]. It also seems to be related to attitude formation and to political participation[19]. Both this variable and the informed about politics variable, measuring consumption of news on political issues, are, in fact, indicators of an informed and active citizen, one that fits the image of a democratic citizen. I expect these two variables to have significant positive effects on support for democracy and on rejection of authoritarian alternatives. Two additional variables, civic activism and political activism, also indicate active citizens, who decide to follow their interests using the

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[18]   Fritz Plasser, Peter Ulram, Harald Waldrauch, *Democratic Consolidation in East Central Europe*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1998.

[19]   Jose Maria Marraval, *Regimes, Politics, and Markets: Democratization and Economic Change in Southern and Eastern Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997; Oskar Niedermayer, *The European Citizens' Interest in Politics and their Attitudes and Behavior Concerning the EC and European Integration*, Reports of the Centre for European Surveys and Studies, 90–6, Centre for European Surveys and Studies, Mannheim, 1990; Jan Van Deth, "Interest in Politics", in Kent Jennings, Jan Van Deth (eds.), *Continuities in Political Action: A Longitudinal Study of Political Orientations in Three Western Democracies*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1990, pp. 275-312.

mechanisms set-up by democratic systems for exactly this purpose. The effects of these variables should be similar to the ones discussed above.

The last variable included in the models is the ideological self-placement on the left-right dimension. In advanced democracies the rules of the political system are accepted to the same extent by people, regardless of their ideological preferences. Left and right, however, have a different meaning in the post-communist countries, leading me to expect significant differences between the coefficients of this variable in the Western democracies and their coefficients in the ex-communist countries.

Given the different paths countries have taken on the road to democracy and market economy, I analyze the relationship between the two sub-dimensions of support for democracy at the aggregate level in three groups of countries: Western European democracies, Western ex-communist societies, and Eastern ex-communist societies[20].

The relationship between support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives should have different forms in the three groups of countries. More specifically, based on the path that has led a country to having a democratic political system, I have the following expectations: (1) since Western European democracies have had a long, organic experience with democracy, I expect the correlation between the two sub-dimensions of support for democracy to be positive and significant and (2) since ex-communist countries have had a shorter experience with democracy and since their experiences with democracy have also been affected by extraneous factors (economic crises, ethnic conflicts, formation of new states etc.). I expect the correlation between the two sub-dimensions of support for democracy to be significantly different (either a non-significant correlation or a significant but negative correlation) from the one recorded in the group of Western democracies. Moreover, given their different interbellum experiences and their cultural differences, it is possible that the relationship between support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives will differ between Western and Eastern ex-communist societies.

## *Data, Variables, and Methodology*

The individual-level data used in this paper come from the fourth wave of the European Values Study (EVS), conducted between 2008 and 2009. The dataset contains data for 44 European countries. I have split the Great Britain sample into Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Germany sample into

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[20] This classification is based on Ronald Inglehart, Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005.

West Germany and East Germany, ending up, thus, with 46 cases at level-2. At the individual level (level-1), the dataset includes a total of 65.393 cases.

The two dependent variables related to support for democracy are based on five variables representing respondents' attitudes toward democracy and toward authoritarian alternatives: *democracy is better than any other form of government* (measured on a scale from 1, representing strong agreement with the statement, to 4, representing strong disagreement with the statement), *having a democratic political system*, *having a strong leader*, *having experts make decisions*, and *having the army rule* (all these variables range between 1, indicating that having such a system is very good way of governing the country, and 4, indicating that having such a system is a very bad way of governing the country). The first two of these variables represent support for democracy. I have recoded them so that the minimum value (1) represents low support for democracy, and the maximum value (4) represents high support for democracy. The last three variables represent rejection of authoritarian alternatives, a sub-dimension which I consider to be distinct from the sub-dimension measuring support for democracy. Based on the correlations among the five items and on the results of exploratory factor analyses (the specifics of these analyses are discussed at the beginning of the next section), I have used the first two variables to construct an additive index of support for democracy (rescaled to range between 1 and 4). The other three variables were used to construct an additive index of rejection of authoritarian alternatives (also rescaled to range between 1 and 4).

The gender variable is coded 1 for male respondents and 0 for female respondents. The age variable is used as a set of three dummy variables: under 30 (the reference category), 30-59, and over 60 years old. Education is used in the models as a set of dummy variables indicating lower education (the reference category), middle education and upper education. The income variable is measured by twelve categories of income. Employment status is used in the models as a set of dummy variables indicating the respondent is employed, unemployed, retired, or other, including students, and housewives (the reference category). Satisfaction with life is a ten-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of satisfaction with life. Satisfaction with democracy is a four-point scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy. Government evaluation is a ten-point scale, with higher scores indicating positive evaluations. Ideological self-placement on the left-right scale is used in the models as a set of dummy variables indicating self-placement to the left (scores 1-3 on the original variable), to the right (scores 8-10 on the original variable), or to the center (the reference category, scores 4-7 on the original variable). Interest in politics is measured on a four-point scale, with higher scores indicating a higher degree of

interest in politics. Informed about politics is a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who follow news about politics at least several times a week, and 0 for respondents who follow news about politics less often than weekly. Civically active is a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who belong to at least one voluntary organization and 0 for respondents who do not belong to any voluntary organizations. Politically active is a dummy variable coded 1 for respondents who have been involved in at least one form of protest and 0 for respondents who have never been involved in any form of protest activities. Country type is a set of dummy variables measured at country level, indicating Western European democracies (the reference category), Western ex-communist societies, or Eastern ex-communist societies.

The first analyses I present are simple univariate and bivariate descriptive analyses, performed in SPSS. When analyzing individual-level data, instead of the regular OLS model I estimate the models using HLM, in order to account for the clustering of individuals within countries[21]. Since the country samples have different sizes, in all individual-level analyses I use a weight variable bringing all samples to the same size (N = 1500), while taking into account the weight variable provided by EVS, which controls for the population structure by gender and age[22]. Missing data are deleted listwise.

## *Results and Discussion*

As shown in the previous section, the dependent variables I use are created starting from multiple indicators. Theoretically, for all dependent variables the original indicators should group on two dimensions: support for democracy and rejections of democratic alternatives. The first step in constructing the dependent variables consisted of checking the correlations among the original variables, followed by an exploratory factor analysis (principal components with extraction of factors with eigenvalues greater than one and with varimax rotation) in each of the 46 countries included in analysis.

The values of the KMO statistic ranged between 0.514 and 0.734 and the factor analysis procedure extracted the theoretically expected two factors in 43 countries. The exceptions were Iceland, where factor analysis extracted only a

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[21] For details about hierarchical linear models and about the HLM software, see Stephen Raudenbush, Anthony Bryk, *Hierarchical Linear Models: Applications and Data Method*, Sage Publications, London, 2002.

[22] See EVS, GESIS, *EVS 2008 Method Report*, GESIS – Technical Reports 2010/17, 2010, retrieved from https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/download.asp?db=E&id=17682. Last accessed: October 10, 2013.

single factor, Georgia, where factor analysis extracted three factors, and Azerbaijan, which had a two-factor solution different from the one expected. When asked to extract only two factors, the solutions for Georgia and Iceland conformed to the theoretical expectation. The two factors, support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives explain, together, between 50% and 68% of the variance.

Given that in 45 of the 46 countries included in analysis the factor analysis solutions conformed to the theoretical expectation regarding the grouping of the five variables, I decided to use in analyses the two additive indices: *support for democracy* and *rejection of democratic alternatives*. Figure 1 presents the relationship between these two sub-dimensions for each of the three groups of countries I analyze: Western European democracies, Western ex-communist societies, and Eastern ex-communist societies.

The three graphs reveal a series of interesting patterns. First, it should be noted that the correlation between the two sub-dimensions is positive and strong in the older European democracies, as expected: countries with a higher average score on the support for democracy variable tend to have higher average scores on the rejection of authoritarian alternatives variable as well. Portugal is the only country of this group that stands out, due to the rather low average score on the rejection of authoritarian alternatives variable. Second, it should be noted that the correlation between the two sub-dimensions in the Eastern ex-communist group is not significant. This result suggests that in these countries support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives are two distinct and unrelated dimensions. The most important result, however, is the one recorded for the group of Western ex-communist societies. The correlation in this group is positive and strong, similar to the one observed in the group of older democracies.
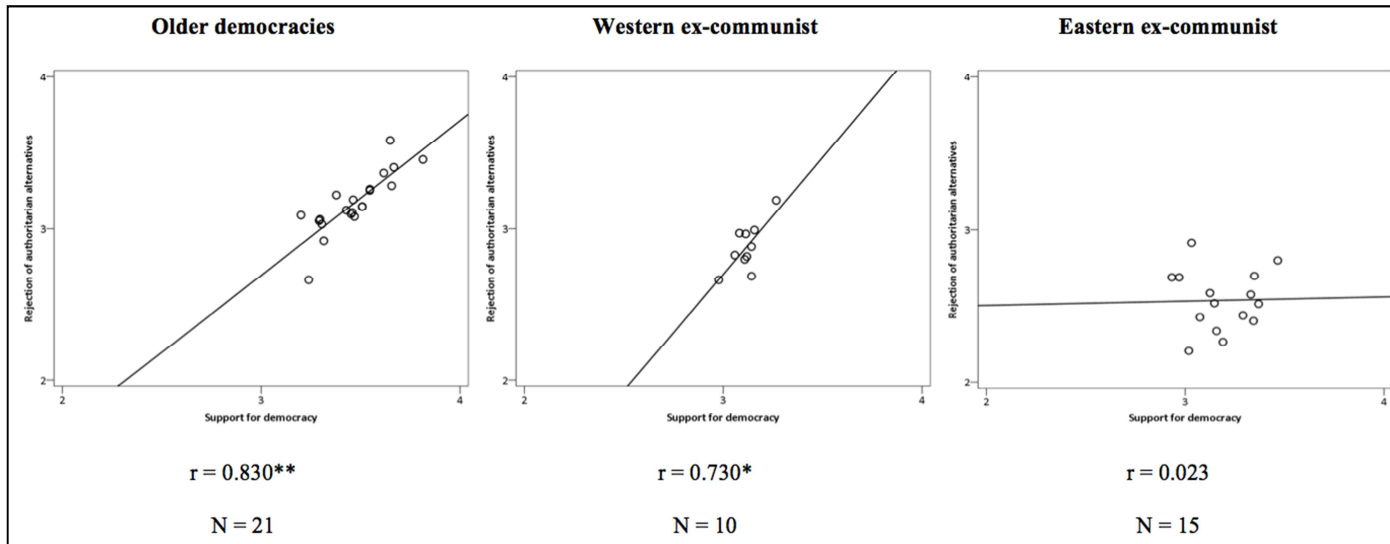
*Figure 1.* Relationship between support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives by type of country, EVS 2008-2009

This result suggests that, from this perspective, the Western ex-communist societies are more similar to the older democracies (countries with which they share a more or less common culture and a common history between the two wars) than to the Eastern ex-communist societies (countries with which they share only the experience of the communist regimes). The results presented so far suggest that the Iron Curtain shifted towards east, leaving the Eastern ex-communist societies still struggling to accept that authoritarian alternatives are not acceptable for a democratic system.

I move now the focus of the discussion from these descriptive analyses to multivariate analyses. Given the structure of the data, with people nested within countries, all the individual-level analyses presented next are performed using HLM, thus accounting for the clustering effects. The first models I estimated were the fully unconditional models (i.e. one-way random-effects ANOVA models), which partition the variance of the dependent variable into variance within countries and variance between countries.

The intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) show that 12% of the variance in support for democracy is between countries (with the remaining 88% being within countries between people). In the case of rejection of authoritarian alternatives, there is significantly more variance between countries: 23% of the variance is between countries (with the remaining 77% of the variance being within countries between people). For both dependent variables related to support for democracy, the ICC coefficients show that there is significant variation between countries.

The full models explaining support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives are presented in Table 1. Additional intermediate models are not shown here but are available from the author upon request. Given the fact that two independent variables suffer from a large proportion of missing data (income has 18% missing data and left-right has 25% missing data), I have estimated additional models (without both variables, without income, and without left-right) in order to check for the sensitivity of the results. In all models the coefficients keep their signs and their significance, suggesting that the reduction in the number of cases at level-1 does not modify the relationships identified in the final model.

By comparison to the fully unconditional models, the model for support for democracy explains about 10% of the variance recorded at the individual level, and about 54% of the variance recorded at the country level (these coefficients are, in fact, proportional reduction in error measures and they can be interpreted as equivalents of the multiple determination coefficients from OLS models.). The model for rejection of authoritarian alternatives explains about 7% of the variance recorded at the individual level, and about 72% of the variance recoded at the country level.

**HLM Models for Support for Democracy
and Rejection of Authoritarian Alternatives**

| | Support for democracy | | Rejection of authoritarian alternatives | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 2.693 | (0.074) *** | 2.731 | (0.060) *** |
| Western ex-communist | -0.145 | (0.058) * | -0.110 | (0.080) |
| Eastern ex-communist | -0.090 | (0.067) | -0.431 | (0.068) *** |
| Gender: Male | -0.006 | (0.009) | 0.005 | (0.009) |
| Age: 30 - 59 | 0.093 | (0.016) *** | 0.111 | (0.033) *** |
| x Western ex-communist | -0.088 | (0.029) ** | -0.081 | (0.038) * |
| x Eastern ex-communist | -0.065 | (0.030) * | -0.101 | (0.038) ** |
| Age: 60 and over | 0.135 | (0.024) *** | 0.155 | (0.039) *** |
| x Western ex-communist | -0.121 | (0.032) *** | -0.098 | (0.051) |
| x Eastern ex-communist | -0.160 | (0.036) *** | -0.168 | (0.046) *** |
| Education: medium education | 0.055 | (0.008) *** | 0.069 | (0.012) *** |
| Education: high education | 0.150 | (0.014) *** | 0.152 | (0.014) *** |
| Income | 0.019 | (0.005) *** | 0.026 | (0.005) *** |
| x Western ex-communist | -0.001 | (0.015) | -0.031 | (0.011) ** |
| x Eastern ex-communist | -0.006 | (0.014) | -0.010 | (0.019) |
| Employment: employed | -0.031 | (0.012) * | -0.014 | (0.013) |
| Employment: retired | -0.016 | (0.014) | -0.038 | (0.018) * |
| Employment: unemployed | -0.034 | (0.020) | -0.038 | (0.017) * |
| Satisfaction with life | 0.012 | (0.003) *** | 0.011 | (0.004) ** |
| Satisfaction with democracy | 0.075 | (0.009) *** | -0.008 | (0.012) |
| Government evaluation | 0.019 | (0.004) *** | 0.002 | (0.005) |
| Left-Right: Left | 0.082 | (0.014) *** | 0.135 | (0.017) *** |
| x Western ex-communist | -0.119 | (0.034) *** | -0.149 | (0.025) *** |
| x Eastern ex-communist | -0.089 | (0.033) ** | -0.155 | (0.033) *** |
| Left-Right: Right | -0.004 | (0.017) | -0.067 | (0.029) * |
| x Western ex-communist | 0.050 | (0.031) | 0.068 | (0.038) |
| x Eastern ex-communist | 0.073 | (0.028) ** | 0.001 | (0.039) |
| Interest in politics | 0.036 | (0.009) *** | 0.027 | (0.009) ** |
| Informed about politics | 0.072 | (0.015) *** | 0.060 | (0.015) *** |
| Civically active | 0.017 | (0.013) | -0.015 | (0.013) |
| Politically active | 0.093 | (0.015) *** | 0.048 | (0.015) ** |
| Level-2 variance, $u_0$ | 0.020 | | 0.029 | |

| Level-1 variance, r | 0.286 | 0.320 |
| PRE at level-2 | 0.544 | 0.722 |
| PRE at level-1 | 0.099 | 0.066 |
| Level-1 N | 36430 | 34962 |

Notes: (1) Significance levels: * p < 0.050, ** p < 0.010, *** p < 0.001. (2) Level-2 N = 46. (3) Reference category for type of country: Western democracy. (4) Reference groups: female (for gender), age under 30 (for age), lower education (for education), housewife, student, other (for employment), and Center (for Left-Right).

The intercept coefficients show the average level of support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives for the three groups of countries included in analysis. They show that the average level of support for democracy is slightly lower in Western ex-communist societies. The main result, however, is found in the case of rejection of authoritarian alternatives: in this model the Eastern ex-communist societies have a significantly lower average score. Comparing the coefficients for the two models, it can be argued that the rejection of authoritarian alternatives is the variable that distinguishes best among the three groups of countries.

Moving on to the slope coefficients, in addition to the results presented in Table 1, the coefficients for those variables that include an interaction term with the type of country are presented, in a graphical format in Figure 2 and Figure 3.
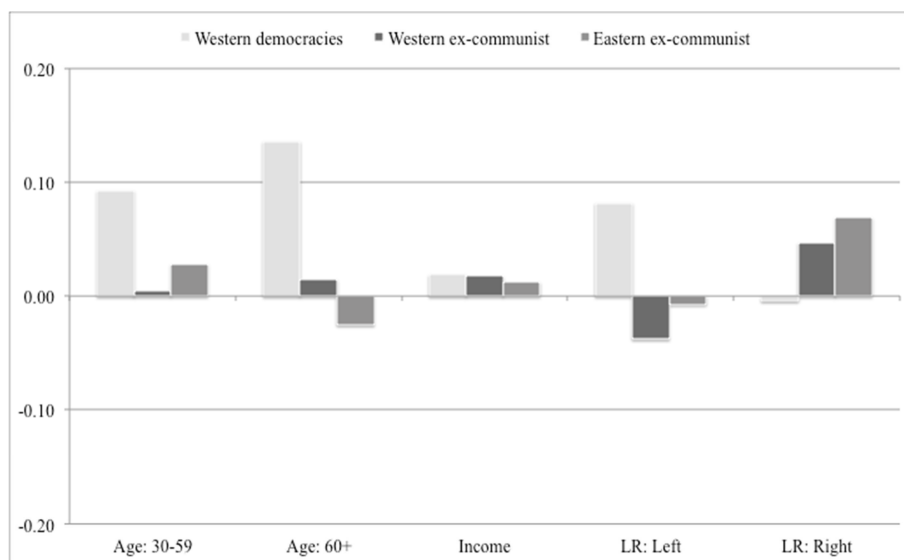


*Figure 2*. Slope coefficients for select variables – support for democracy model

The slope coefficients for age show that in Western democracies support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives increase with age. The coefficients for the interaction terms between age and type of country show that in ex-communist countries the effect of age is significantly lower than in Western democracies. Computing the slope coefficients for the former communist countries shows that in this group the effect of age on the two dependent variables is not significantly different from zero.

Education has a significant positive effect on both dependent variables: low levels of education are associated with lower levels of support for democracy on both sub-dimensions, while the highest levels of support are recorded for those with higher education. The effect of education is similar in all three groups of countries (in the model including interaction terms for this variable, their coefficients are not significant).
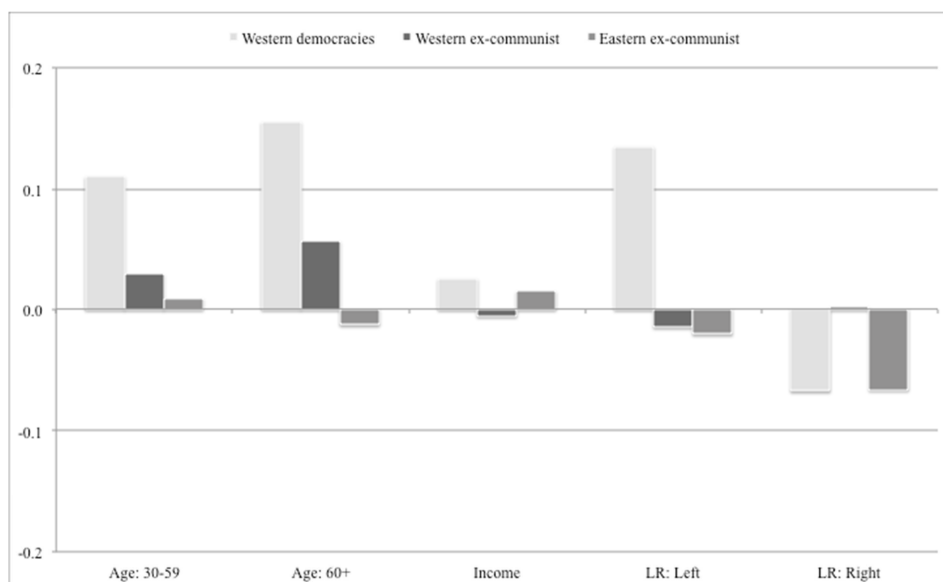


*Figure 3*. Slope coefficients for select variables − rejection of authoritarian alternatives model

Income has a significant positive effect on both dependent variables, indicating that respondents with higher income tend to have higher levels of support for democracy on both sub-dimensions. This positive effect is similar in all groups of countries, the exception being the effect on rejection of authoritarian alternatives in the group of Western ex-communist countries, where the slope coefficient is not significantly different from zero.

The only substantively significant result for the employment variable is recorded in the model for rejecting authoritarian alternatives: unemployed and

retired respondents have a lower score on this variable by comparison to the other groups.

The three evaluation variables included in the models (satisfaction with life, satisfaction with democracy, and government evaluations) have significant positive effects on the support for democracy sub-dimensions, suggesting the existence of an effect of specific support for democracy on diffuse support for democracy. In the model for rejection of authoritarian alternatives, however, the only variable with a significant effect is satisfaction with life, which increases the level of support.

The four variables representing informed and active citizens (interest in politics, informed about politics, civically active, and politically active) show that "democratic citizens" tend to have higher levels of support for democracy and a higher rate of rejecting authoritarian alternatives. Involvement in voluntary organizations is the only variable in this group that does not achieve significance. These results confirm the existence of the link, identified in the literature, between democracy and an active population.

The variable indicating respondents' position on the left-right continuum has interesting coefficients. First, it should be noted that in Western democracies respondents who place themselves at the left end of the scale tend to have higher levels of support for democracy on both sub-dimensions. In the case of ex-communist societies, this relationship disappears: supporters of the left are, generally, not significantly different from those who place themselves on the center of the left-right dimension with respect to support for democracy.

In the Western democracies, those who place themselves at the right end of the continuum do not differ from the centrists with respect to support for democracy, but they seem to have a higher level of acceptance of authoritarian alternatives. In ex-communist societies, however, the relationship is different: supporters of the right have higher levels of support for democracy in these countries. At the same time, supporters of the right in Eastern ex-communist countries are similar to their counterparts in Western democracies, in that they have higher levels of acceptance of authoritarian alternatives, while supporters of the right in Western ex-communist countries do not differ from centrists with respect to this variable.

## *Conclusions*

As I stated at the beginning of this paper, this study is based on the idea that democracy is a concept too complex to be captured by treating support for democracy as a unidimensional phenomenon. Starting from this, I have distinguished between support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian

alternatives and then I tested whether this theoretical distinction fits the reality captured by the data. The analyses presented here aimed to identify support-generating mechanisms, focusing on resources and ideology, and to describe the way these mechanisms work in three groups of European countries.

The analysis of the relationship between the two sub-dimensions of support for democracy country level (see Figure 1) revealed that the relationship is varying, depending on the type of country. Thus, in Western democracies and Western ex-communist societies the sub-dimensions are strongly correlated with each other, suggesting that a unidimensional solution fits the data better. At the other extreme, the sub-dimensions are independent of each other in the case of Eastern ex-communist countries, suggesting that a bi-dimensional solution is better suited for the reality of these countries. This represents one of the main contributions of this study to the literature.

In addition to the results presented here, I analyzed, in an additional paper the relationship between support for the social democratic model of market economy and support for the liberal model of market economy[1]. According to the results presented in that paper, Western ex-communist societies are more similar to Eastern ex-communist societies with respect to the configuration of attitudes towards different models of market economy. Taking both sets of results into account, citizens of the three groups of countries I analyzed have different understandings of the principles of the political and economic systems that govern their lives.

The results of the multilevel regression models offer some support for the general hypotheses presented at the beginning of the paper. The coefficients for gender, age, education and income are consistent with the *resource hypothesis*: they show that respondents with more available resources tend to have higher levels of support for democracy and higher levels of rejection of authoritarian alternatives. Some of these coefficients vary significantly across the three groups of countries, but these variations fit the resource hypothesis as well.

The behavioral and attitudinal items included in the analyses show that the preferences for democracy or authoritarian alternatives have an ideological component (as indicated by the significant effects of respondents' positions on the left–right dimension), and are influenced by respondents' evaluations of the current situation. These results are consistent with the *ideology hypothesis*.

The main contribution of this study, however, comes from the analysis of different sub-dimensions of support for democracy while taking into account the effect of living in a former communist country. The results presented in Table 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3 show that the variables included in the analysis have

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[1]    Claudiu Tufiş, "Dividing the Pie: Support for the Free Market and State Interventionism Models of Market Economy", in Loek Halman, Mălina Voicu (eds.), *Mapping Value Orientations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Brill, Leiden, 2010, pp. 71-105.

different effects on the dependent variables, depending on the type of country. Support for democracy is generated through different mechanisms, depending on the type of country. When this difference is not taken into account, the implicit assumption is that there are no differences between the types of countries and the results are averaged, leading to coefficients that are incorrect.

Summarizing the findings, it can be argued that both general hypotheses describing the support-generating mechanisms (the resource hypothesis and the ideology hypothesis) are supported by the data. Finally, the results show that support for democracy in former communist countries is generated through different mechanisms. Future research should focus on this finding and try to explain whether this difference is determined by cultural differences or just by development differences between the former communist countries and the rest of the European countries.