

Title: **The nature of the education cleavage in Democratic Eroding countries**

Abstract

The current third wave of autocratization has assumed global proportion. Many transitioning countries have arrested their process of democratization. In some instances weaker and consolidated democracies alike have also undertaken a process of democratic erosion or democratic hollowing. In these latter cases, however, the elected elite needs time to substantially undermine those liberal-democratic institutions that constrained their power. The process of democratic erosion often overlaps with multiple electoral cycles, which gives those parties committed to liberal democracy a chance to challenge the elite at the ballots and interrupt the autocratization process. This paper investigates whether this political division between incumbent parties and pro-democratic opposition coincides with a specific cleavage as defined by Baiern and Maier.

Keywords: Autocratization, Democratic Erosion, Educational cleavages, Political Cleavages.

Theoretical and methodological framework

Introduction and starting hypotheses

In the context of transitional countries, the emergence in the political arena of a pro-democratic camp against an authoritarian one has been observed in several instances (Saxonberg, 2001; Selcuk and Hekimci, 2020). A reconfiguration of a political cleavage along similar lines is taking place also in those countries transitioning from a democratic regime to an authoritarian one. In this paper, the concept of autocratization is declined according to Luhrmann and Lindberg's definition. Autocratization is thus seen as the loss of democratic traits of a regime, regardless of whether the country affected by it is a fully consolidated democracy, and whether or not this process results in a full democratic breakdown (Luhrmann and Lindberg, 2019). In their systematic analysis of the phenomenon the two scholars have also observed that in the majority of cases, the democratic countries that transitioned to an authoritarian system have done so as a result of democratic erosion (ibidem). In other words, in the countries in question, some of the fundamental institutions of liberal democracy have been intentionally undermined by a political elite that rose to power through regular elections.

As aforementioned, when this process of erosion takes place, a united political opposition tends to form against the ruling elite and under the banner of democracy (Selcuk and Hekimci, 2020). Since this usually happens while free elections are still in place, often this pro-democratic camp challenged the non-democratically committed elite at the ballots. As an example, it is possible to mention Venezuela and the formation of the Democratic Unity Roundtable (Valenzuela, 2014), or Poland and the creation of the Civic Coalition for the general elections of 2019. In other cases, such as in Turkey, these alliances failed to formalize into a proper electoral coalition. This latter outcome is mainly due to the persistence among the opposition parties of different inter-cutting cleavages that run even deeper than the authoritarian-democratic one (Selcuk and Hekimci, 2020).

These differences in political opposition practices to halt the process of democratic erosion call for another clarification of a key concept, that of cleavage. When the term cleavage has been used to indicate the re-positioning of parties in the context of democratic erosion, the concept encapsulates two specific dimensions: a political one (opposition coalition vs incumbent party) and a value one (pro-democracy vs pro-transition). This translates into an abandonment of the demanding definition of the term developed by Bartolini and Mair, a definition that after decades of debates was finally able to bring some clarity to the literature on the subject (Robert, 2002; Kriesi, 2010). Bartolini and Mair's conceptualization of the term, following its original interpretation by Rokkan, includes a third dimension: a social one. Summarizing their argument: a cleavage is composed of a socio-structural element, a normative element that comprises all those values and beliefs that provide a sense of in-group identification within the social group, and the organizational element of the social one in institutions, of which a party is its most political expression (Bartolini and Mair, 1990, p. 215). Abandoning the social element means getting rid of a fundamental component of cleavage as intended by those who theorized it.

Yet this approach characterized the studies of the European party systems of the early 2000s. Political parties' divisions were found to be along post-materialistic values vs more strictly materialistic ones, but these cleavages were also believed to be characterized by a lack of any specific social group of references. This until Stubager found in the two societal segments of: "more formally educated" and "less formally educated" the missing groups of reference of those new values and political cleavages that other authors had previously observed dominating the European political landscape (Stubager, 2010). Stubager reached the conclusion that the particular features of the Danish education system tend to expose the Danish students to liberal values. Consequently, the longer the amount of time spent in the

education system, the more likely it is to form a sense of belonging with other students on the ground of shared liberal values. The two social and normative elements then find expression in the organizational realm, with the social group of more formally educated students voting for parties representing liberal values, and the parties reframing their stances and priorities in an attempt to capture this electoral constituency. The Danish scholar was however skeptical about the validity of his findings for other regions. Nonetheless, a series of research that followed Stubager's breakthrough showed a link between obtaining a higher level of education, adopting liberal values, and voting for a specific political party even in other European regions (Pavlovic et al, 2019; Ford & Jennings, 2020).¹

From these premises, the present study aims at finding and analyzing similar links between social segments with lower education and not just political parties with authoritarian tendencies but political parties whose elite is behind a clear process of autocratization.

Doing so requires also finding an actual correlation between lower education and authoritarian tendencies. Because even though education can be found as a significant predictor of specific political support, what we are trying to assess here is the existence of cleavage, and thus the value element and its role as connecting link becomes fundamental.

As such the first set of hypotheses can be framed as follows:

H1: Different education groups are more likely to vote for different political parties

(Link between the social-structural dimension the and organizational one)

H1b: Less educated citizens will be more authoritarian oriented

(Identification of the group's shared values)

Hypothesis 1c: Liberal-authoritarian values cause a difference in voting behavior among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.

(Assessment of the influence of the group's values in connecting the structural dimension to the organizational one)

Given the existential perils of liberal democracy in the chosen case studies, other sets of values are introduced into the equation in order to observe their influence on party support, starting from the absence or presence of a pro-democratic commitment. This is a sentiment

¹ Zoran Pavlović, Bojan Todosijević & Olivera Komarlt (2019) have found a correlation between education and specific party preferences in most of the Balkan countries.

that is likely to be still acquired by the citizens through their time spent in the education system. For instance, a majority of Cross-national studies have shown that the educational level is the dominant social structural factor conditioning support for democracy, regardless of the democratic quality of the country taken into consideration or the region covered by the study (Evans and Rose, 2012; Chong and Grandstein, 2015, p.364). However, more recent studies present more mixed results about the universality of education's positive influence on democratic behaviors and values. Some research confirms the existence of the phenomenon while downplaying its significance for those citizens educated in authoritarian regimes (Diwan and Wartanova, 2020). Other studies completely rule out the positive correlation between education and democratic values when education is attained in authoritarian countries with a long authoritarian legacy (Osterman and Robinson, 2022).

The four case studies of the current paper differ in regards to geographical region, levels of democratic quality at the start of the process of erosion, and length of their democratic history. So in the light of the more recent literature, the correlation between preferences for autocracy-democracy and education level will also be tested.

Hypothesis 2b: Lesser educated citizens will prefer an autocratic regime, especially in those countries with a longer democratic history

Moreover, the results of the elections in the democratic eroding countries can be a turning point between a fully authoritarian transition and a democratic recovery, thus democratic preferences might also account for the difference in voting behavior between different educated social segments.

Hypothesis 2c: Democratic-autocratic preferences cause a difference in voting behavior among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.

However, it is important to note that the concept of democracy is not usually totally rejected by the incumbent of democratic eroding countries. Democracy is rather re-framed to downplay all those institutional elements established to limit the leader's power, which are at the base of the liberal declination of the term. For instance, after Hugo Chavez was elected president of Venezuela in 1999 one of his first acts was drafting a new constitution. The new constitution would highlight the participatory dimension of democracy at the expense of the liberal institutions set up by the Punto Fijo Pact of 1968, which were until that point the

pillars upon which the democratic political system of the country was built (Canache, 2012; Coker, 2014, p, 88; Garcia-Guadilla and Mallen, 2018). According to the new constitution the “People”, as a unitary group, became the sole and ultimate source of authority. This newly established communal model of democracy soon translated into the prevarication of civil and individual rights by the will of the majority (Garcia-Guadilla and Mallen, 2018), and allowed the leader chosen through popular election to raise himself above all the other political institutions.

Hungary's process of democratic erosion has also been accompanied by a reframing of the concept of democracy both at a constitutional level and in the public discourse. The features of “democracy” have not been formally altered by the constitutional amendments. However, Fides’s supermajority in the legislative assembly paved the way to the substantial undermining of core liberal-democratic principles. For instance, the separation of powers characterizing a liberal-democratic institutional setting has been hampered by the executive extension of its control over the central bank and the appointments for the judiciary offices. Check and balances assured by some prerogatives of the parliamentary opposition have also been progressively scrapped (Sajò, 2019; Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2019). This new reconfiguration of the Hungarian political system has been made explicit by Orban himself when in 2014 he declared that “We [the Hungarian people] have to abandon liberal methods and principles of organizing a society. The new state that we are building is an illiberal state, a non-liberal state” (Buzogany, 2017, p. 2). Even in this case the legitimacy of the incumbent still derives from the electoral process and the coincidence between the will of the people and the will of the majority (Sajo, 2019). These two cases fit the main model of autocratization through democratic erosion developed by Lhurmann and Lindberg (2019) and parallel also the main patterns of autocratization exhibited by Turkey and Poland (Drinóczi and Bień-Kacała, 2019). Bolivia’s history of democratic erosion is quite peculiar. Evo Morales was elected for the first time in 2005, and despite the drafting of a new constitution that strengthened the idea of popular and indigenous participation, the erosion of liberal democratic institutions never reached the intensity observed in the aforementioned cases and the incumbent was always re-elected through fair and free elections. Nonetheless, the phenomenon was still present and gained speed after the attempt by Morales to remove the presidential terms limit in 2017. (Velasco Guachalla et al, 2021). This brief excursus on the characteristics of the process of democratic erosion was necessary for mainly two reasons. First, in the eventuality that Hypothesis 2c is refused, the reason can now be traced back to the fact that the incumbents generally do not present themselves as anti-democratic. Thus the

democratic preferences of citizens might not be playing a role in explaining the divergence in support for the incumbent party. Second, in the case of Hypothesis 1a being accepted, it brings up the possibility that behind the incumbent’s support by the lesser-educated lies their broader and non-strictly liberal conception of democracy rather than a stronger preference for a fully autocratic regime.

Hypothesis 3b: Lesser educated citizens are more likely to have an illiberal conception of democracy

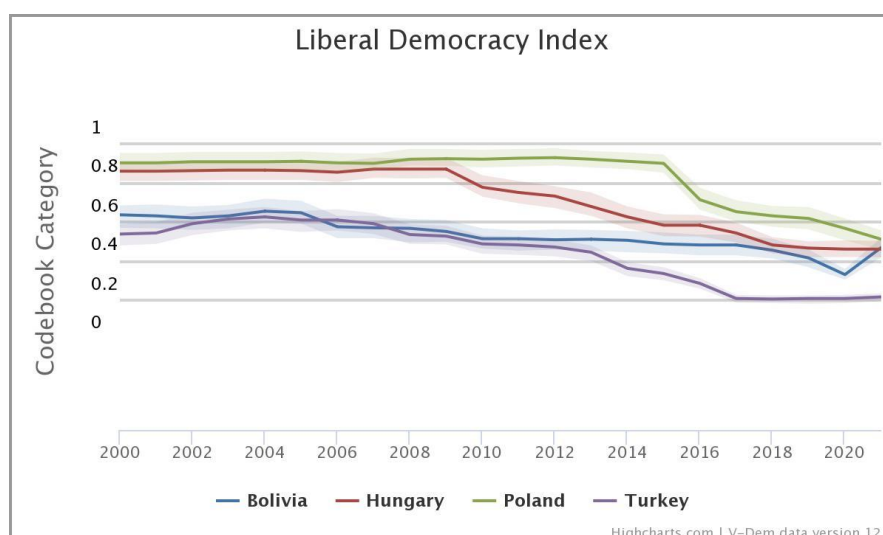
Hypothesis 3c: Illiberal-liberal conceptions of democracies cause a difference in voting behavior among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.

Methodology

Case studies

The methodology chosen to test these hypotheses closely follows the one illustrated by Pavlovic et al (2019) in their article “Education, Authoritarianism, and Party Preference in the Balkans”. The case studies, of course, differ since their aim is to explore the educational cleavage in the Balkan region, while in this case, the focus is on countries undergoing a process of autocratization. The democracies chosen as subjects of this study are Bolivia, Turkey, Hungary, and Poland. Their choice is based on the fact that in all these countries the quality of liberal democracy has declined steadily in recent years, as both the literature (Agh, 2016; Gerschewski, 2020; Velasco Guachalla et al, 2021) and the V-Dem index indicate (Figure 1). The index also shows the date of the beginning of the phenomenon in each of the case studies: 2005 in Turkey, 2009 in Hungary, 2015 in Poland, and since 2015 the quality of democracy worsened sharply in Bolivia as well.

Figure 1



The data that will be used in this study are taken from the EVS-WVS Joint dataset 2017-2020. In all four countries, the surveys were taken in 2017. The year, with perhaps the exception of Turkey, is time-wise optimal. In fact, a survey taken too close to the incumbent's first election runs the risk of not being fully revealing, since the process of democratic erosion is protracted in time, and since also the political opposition needs time to mobilize. At the same time, data about voting intentions from surveys conducted too long after the beginning of the phenomenon of autocratization would risk being invalidated by the citizens' disillusion with the electoral process, since it has to be expected that it progressively become less free and less fair. Even the citizens' fear of an autocratic elite that has already solidified its power might lead to untrustworthy responses.

Concepts operationalization

A three-level categorical variable on the highest education level attained by the respondents is often used in the analysis section as the independent variable. The variable was already codified in its three levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary education) by the WVS and the EVS. Regarding the political support for each political party, in Hungary, Bolivia, and Turkey the respondents were asked to answer the following question: "If the elections for the Parliament were held tomorrow/next week, would you vote? Which party or coalition would you vote for?", while in Poland the question was framed in a slightly different way "Which party or coalition do you feel the closest to?". Not all the parties of the 4 countries are going to be observed in their relation to respondents' education and their values. In this study, only the party of the incumbent and the main opposition party/coalition are taken into consideration.

The most complex part regards the construction of the values dimensions. For the authoritarian-liberal one, Pavlovic et al. utilized a conventional scale of authoritarianism composed of nine items obtainable from the EVS and WVS questionnaires: (1) whether homosexuality, (2) abortion, (3) divorce, (4) euthanasia, and (5) having casual sex are acceptable; (6) whether people prefer a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliaments and elections; (7) whether obedience is an important quality child should learn at home; (8) whether one should always love and respect one's parents regardless of their qualities and faults; (9) and whether people believe that greater respect for authority in the future is a good thing (Pavlovic et al, 2019). This scale has been adopted already by Regt et

Al. (2011, p, 302), which in turn re-elaborated it from Altemeyer's Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale (ibidem).

In Altemeyer's original work authoritarianism was conceptualized as the covariance of a (1) strict adherence to conventional norms and values (conventionalism), (2) an uncritical subjection to authority (authoritarian submission), and (3) feelings of aggression toward violators of norms (authoritarian aggression) (Altemeyer, 1988).² In the RWA scale the first 5 items measure the latent variable "conventionalism," while the later 4 the "authoritarian submission and aggression" (ibidem).

In this paper, the model's fit for each one of the case studies singularly will be asserted through Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the scale's items (Ariely and Davidov, 2011).³ An important difference is the exclusion of one of these nine original items, namely "whether one should always love and respect one's parents regardless of their qualities and faults" since the question was not present in all the four questionnaires.

The dimension of the democracy-autocracy preference (DAP) scale is operationalized using the WVS and EVS items resulting from the following questions: "For each, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or a very bad way of governing this country?": (1) Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections. (2) Having experts, not governments, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country (3) Having the army rule (4) Having a democratic political system (Ariely and Davidov, 2010). After having conducted a CAF in all the single case studies on cross-national democratic attitudes, Ariely and Davidov (ibidem) found that the DAP model was not acceptable for many of those countries. The two authors believed that the main cause lays in the 4th item "having a democratic political system", and in the broad arrange of meanings that can be attributed to the term. Since this weakness of the model could just be context-dependent, at first the D.A.P. will be tested maintaining all of its original items.

Finally, the third value dimension investigates the respondents' illiberal-liberal conception of democracy through the following questions: "How much is this feature essential for a democracy?": (1) Democracy: Religious authorities interpret the laws (2) Democracy: People choose their leaders in free elections. (3) Democracy: The army takes over when the government is incompetent. (4) Democracy: Civil rights protect people's liberty against

² The reader can see how the three dimensions parallel those of "the authoritarian personality" developed by Adorno in his homonymous book.

³ The CFA estimates the relations between observed indicators (our 9 items) and the hypothesized latent construct (authoritarianism), and provides fit indices that report whether the hypothesized structure of associations between a latent construct and its proposed indicators fits the data.

oppression. (5) Democracy: Women have the same rights as men. Higher results will be associated with the respondent's conception of democracy which is in line with the classic liberal interpretation of democracy, with items 1 and 3 re-coded in a way to fit this overall logic of the model. The attempt to construct this model, referred to from now on as “LID (Liberal-Illiberal Democracy)”, is original in nature but it will be justified in the light of the existing literature.

As mentioned in the previous section, the term “democracy” has come to assume different things in the public discourse of democratic eroding countries.

The classic liberal-democratic conception entails, alongside the democratic component of the popular will, a separation of powers among different institutional bodies, a system of checks and balances that effectively maintain and reinforce this separation (Canache, 2012, p.98), the respect of civil and minority rights (Dahl, 1989, 318; Canache, 2012, p.98), the separation between religion and state, the rule of law and the citizens' equality before it (Dahl, 1989, p. 88-114), and the non-intervention of the army in political matters (Huntington, 1957; 1996). The LID scale unfortunately does not cover all these aspects. Items such as “Having a strong leader who is not bothered by the legislative” are linked to the idea of the separation of powers but do not ask the respondents what is its relation to democracy. The item regarding religious authorities is included because of the autocratization features observable in some of the case studies. For instance, in Turkey, the reframing of “democracy” as “the people’s will represented by the president Erdogan” was paralleled by the reframing of “Turkish people” as “the religious Turkish people”(Sozen, 2020, p.19). While In Poland scholars have observed an alliance between segments of the national Catholic religious hierarchies and the ruling PiS (Zug and Zug, 2020; Meyer-Resende and Hennig, 2021).

Analysis

Chapter 1

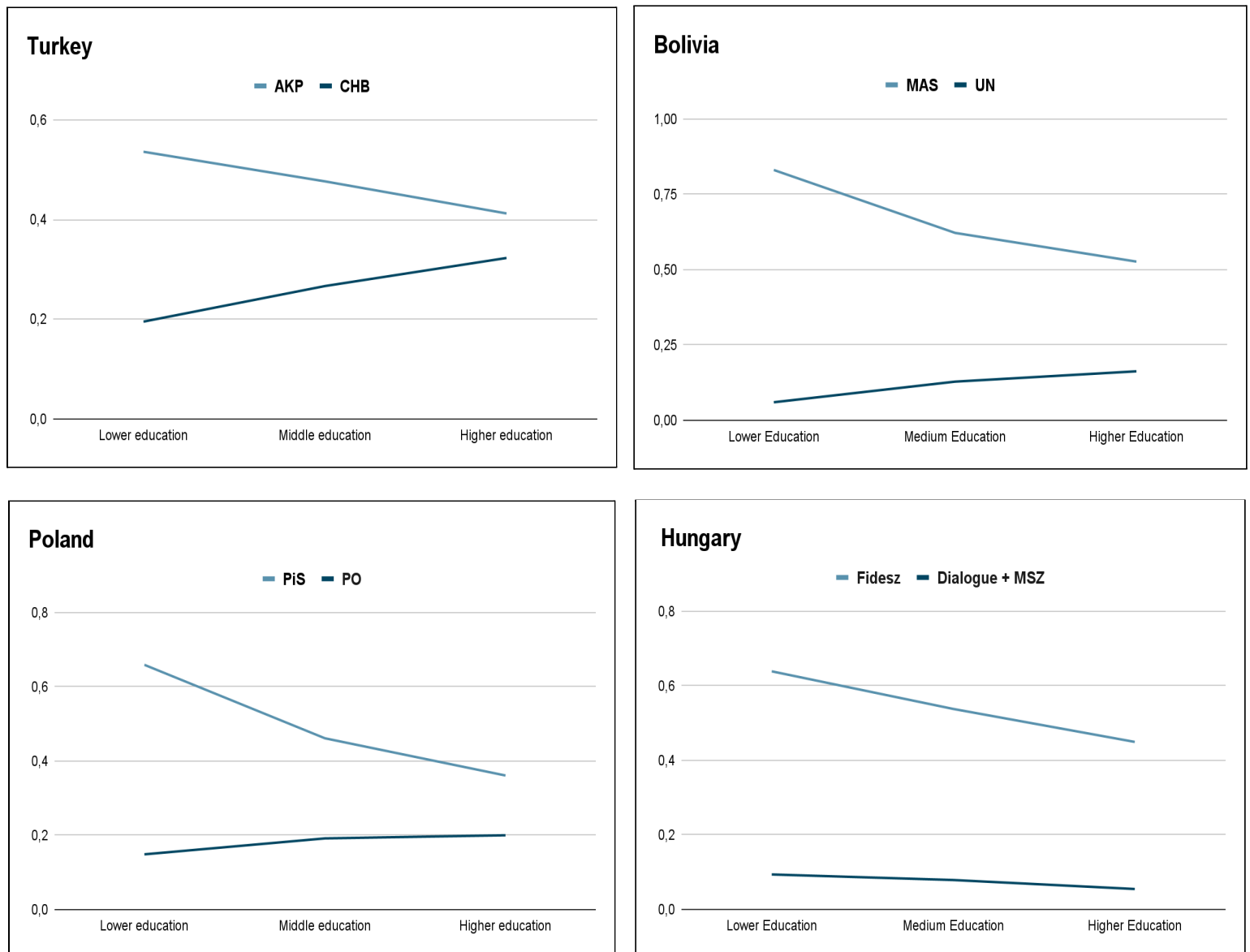
Testing hypothesis H1: *Different education groups are more likely to vote for different political parties*

In order to test Hypothesis H1, it has been conducted a series of binomial logistic regression for each case study with the voting for the incumbent political party versus voting for any other party as a dependent variable. A second logistic regression was carried out this time with “voting for the main opposition party versus voting for any other party” as the dependent variable. In this first phase education was the only predictor of party orientation

used, no other control variables were added. As expected, education and voting for the incumbent party are negatively correlated in all the countries observed, while the relation between being more educated and voting for the main opposition party is not equally linear. For instance, in the case of Hungary, higher educated citizens are also less likely to support the coalition composed of “Dialogue For Hungary” and the moderate “Hungarian Socialist Party” (MSZP), which since 2014 run together in different coalitions to challenge “Fidesz” and Orban.

The results of the binary logistic regressions are reported in the Annex, while Figure 2 shows the decrease in the predicted probability of voting for the Law and Justice (PiS), Fidesz, Movement for Socialism (MAS), and the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP), at the increase in education level.

Figure 2 Mean predicted probabilities of different voting outcomes for educational level



Before continuing with the testing of the main hypothesis, a preliminary step consists in identifying the parties' stance on the main values and concepts that the EVS, DPA, and LID scales try to capture. If it appears that the parties more strongly supported by the less-educated citizens are also characterized by strong support for traditional beliefs, a stronger emphasis on political authority, and a more negative view of constitutionalism and democracy, then this would be an ulterior hint toward a connection of the socio-structural side of the cleavage with the organizational side through the sharing of the aforementioned values. This connection could just be a case of correlation without causation, and therefore it will require more rigorously testings later on. Nonetheless, results in line with the starting hypothesis would further justify the direction of this study.

Through data obtained from the Manifesto Project Database, Table 1 highlight the parties' stances on selected issues as expressed by their electoral manifesto of 2015 and 2018, with higher scores being synonyms of a higher emphasis on a specific issue.

Table 1: Parties' manifestos scores on selected issues

Country	Constitutionalism: Positive	Democracy: positive	Traditional Morality: Positive	Political Authority - Strong government
Poland	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018
PiS	0.146 - 0.548	1.987 - 1.371	2.338 - 2.955	0.205 - 0.426
Civic Platform (PO)	0.091 - 0.236	0.912 - 5.813	0-000 - 0.079	0.000 - 0.000
Hungary	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018
Fidesz	1.133 - 0.000	1.133- 0.673	0.567 - 8.52	5.666 - 0.448
Hungarian Socialist Party	0.000 - 0.000	4.727 - 4.173	0.169 - 0.298	0.000 - 0.000
Dialogue	0.000 - 0.055	3.459 - 3.77	0 - 0.328	0.364 - 0.055
Bolivia	2014	2014	2014	2014
MAS	1.514	0.336	0.336	0.589
National Unity (UN)	0.000	5.057	0.000	0.126
Turkey	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018	2014 - 2018

AKP	0.000	5.972-1.795	1.529-0.649	0.049-0.115
CHB	5.972 - 0.134	9.524- 8.011	0.348- 0.000	0.000- 0.000

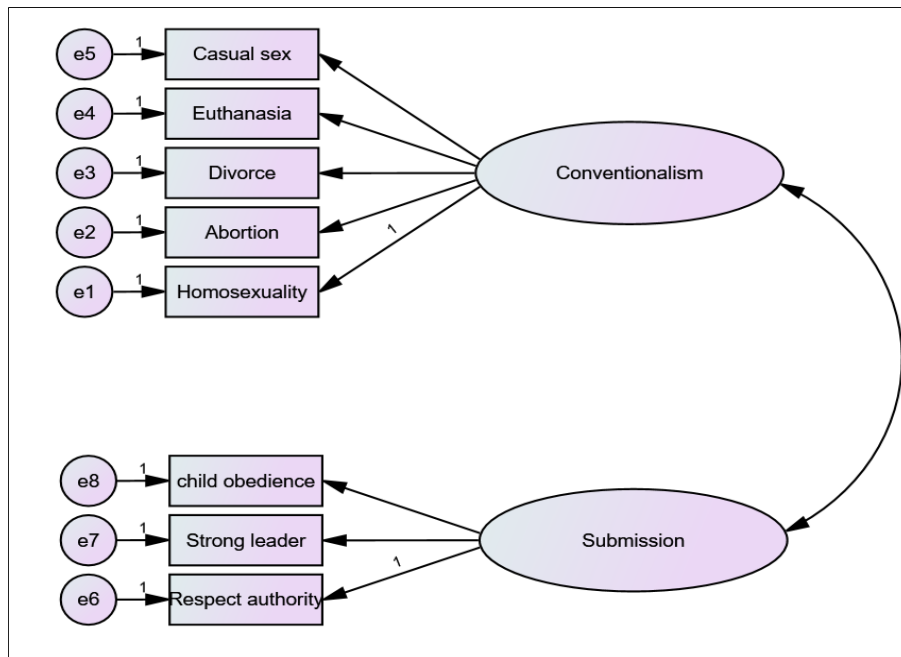
Perhaps counterintuitively, it is possible to see that some of the parties leading the process of democratic erosions are also emphasizing their support for constitutionalism. This could be explained by their efforts at legitimizing their rule and increasing their power through constitutional emendation which was mentioned in the introductory section.

The other scores seem more in line with the study's hypotheses. In the case of Poland between 2014 and 2018, the PiS manifestos decreased their emphasis on democracy to stress the importance of greater political authority and traditional values (the main dimensions behind the EVS authoritarian scale). Hungary is perhaps the case study in which the cleavage around democracy is the most formalized at the organizational-political level: with Fidesz refocusing its platform on conventional values and political authority, and the opposition keeping their ground as the main proponent of democracy. A similar trend can be seen also in the non-European autocratizing countries.

Testing Hypothesis H1b: *Less educated citizens will be more authoritarian oriented*

In both the works mentioned in the methodology, the latent variable “authoritarianism” was constructed by first subjecting the nine items to a multiple-groups confirmatory factor analysis with a maximum likelihood method of estimation (Regt et al, 2011; Pavlovic et al, 2019). Similarly in this study, a series of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs) were conducted in each of the case studies. The software employed for the tests, AMOS.16, is not capable of computing variables presenting missing values, so an expectation-maximization algorithm has been used to bypass the issue. The model analyzed is the one depicted in Figure 3. The 8 items have been divided among those constructing the “Adherence to conventional norms” and those composing the “Submission to Authority” dimensions of an authoritarian personality, in accordance with Altemeyer's reconceptualization of the term. Finally, the variable “Important child quality: obedience” has been re-coded in order for it to follow the same direction as the others (Higher score = Lower authoritarian tendencies).

Figure 3: Confirmatory factor analysis model of EVS Authoritarianism Model



The alpha value of the 9 items scale found by Regt et al, (2010) was around 0.60. Similar values have been observed in the country by country analysis by Pavlovic et al. The overall alpha value of the modified EVS authoritarian model used in the present study does not differ despite the elimination of one of the items. The alpha reported in Table 2 is the standardized one because some of the items in the survey were operationalized on different scales⁴.

Table 2: EVS Authoritarianism Scale: Goodness of Fit Statistics of CFA⁵

Country	Standardized Alfa ⁶	RMSEA	CFI
Poland	,703	0,070	0,961
Bolivia	,580	0,031	0,980
Hungary	,660	0,066	0,954
Turkey	,755		

⁴ For instance, the question “In which circumstance is Homosexuality Justifiable?” is a Likert scale with 10 possible replies from “never justifiable” to “always justifiable”, while the variable “Having a strong leader who does not bother with parliament and elections” is coded on a scale of just 4 values.

⁵ The goodness of the statistics of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis are interpreted according to the guidelines set by Schreiber, James B. et al. in “Reporting Structural Equation Modeling and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results: A Review” (2010).

⁶ A generally accepted rule is that an α of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8-1.00 is a very good level (Cho; 2016).

The model's Goodness of Fit for Turkey, like for all the others, is acceptable according to the literature. However, the standardized factor loading of the items associated with the "submission to authority" dimension is non-existent.⁷ The only reason why the model is statistically acceptable appears then to be the strong loading of the items of the sole "conventionalism" dimension.

This misfit of the model in only this singular case study might be due to cultural peculiarities of the country, the non-equivalence of particular items across countries, or a combination of both (Ariely and Davidov, 2011), it can not be ruled out also the human error during the CFA or in the interpretation of its outputs. Whatever the reason is, the EVS authoritarian scale has not been used in the analysis of the Turkey case study.

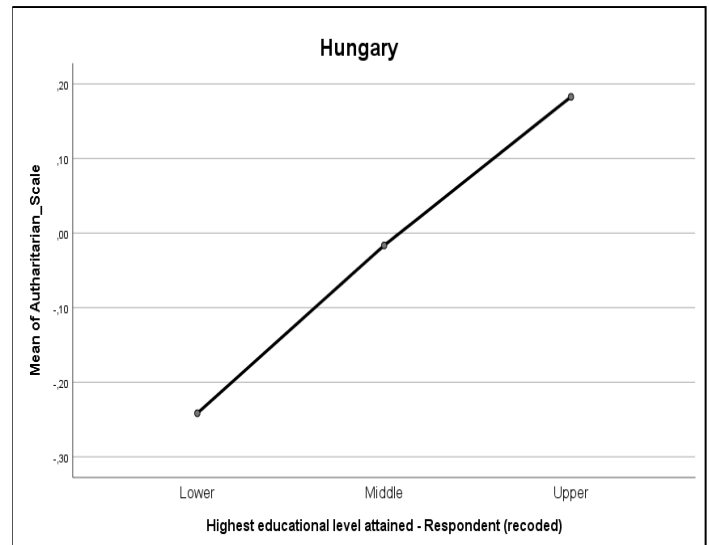
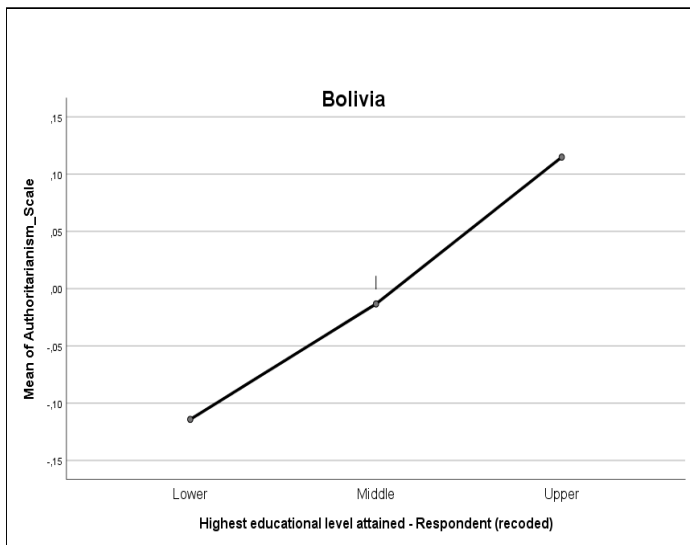
In all the other instances the one-way ANOVA shows that the authoritarian scale is positively correlated with the level of formal education. Higher values in the authoritarian scale, or greater liberal values, are associated with higher levels of education attained. This is in line with Stubagher's findings on the Danish education cleavage (Stubager, 2010), Ford and Jennings's ones about the Western European region (2020), and those of Pavlovic et al's research on the Balkan countries (2019). It appears that even in countries of Central Europe such as Hungary and Poland, and even as far as Latin America with the Bolivian case, there is a correlation between education and the adoption of liberal values.

Stubagher's in his research went a step further, following more closely Bartolini and Maier's conceptualization of cleavage. He also demonstrated that for the social segment of the more educated, liberal values function as identity providers allowing them to strengthen their self-identification as a different group. The one-way ANOVA does not allow us to test this dimension, but its results reported in Table 1 are nonetheless very telling regarding the connection between the two variables. A connection which is moderate in Central Europe $\eta^2 > 0.06$ and weaker but still statistically significant in Bolivia with $\eta^2 > 0.03$.⁸

⁷ The Factor loading of Turkey's "EVS authoritarian model" can be found in the annex.

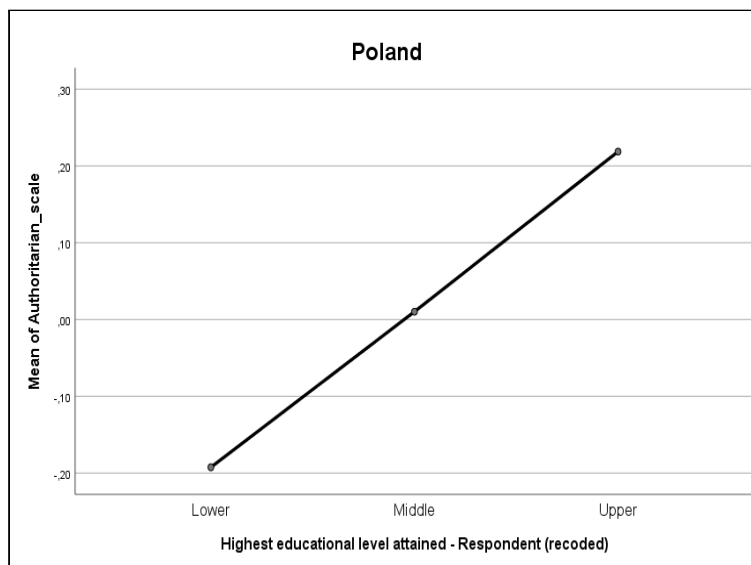
⁸ The interpretation of the η^2 has been made following the SPSS guide available at the following link <https://www.spss-tutorials.com/effect-size/>. Rule of thumbs in statistics are usually frowned upon. However, at least in regards to the Central European case-studies, these results seem in line with the theoretical literature.

Figure 4: Relationship between authoritarianism and education



$F(2, 2058)=38,26$ $p<0.001$ $\eta^2= 0,036$

$F(2, 1504)=49,06$ $p<0,001$ $\eta^2=0,061$



$F(2, 1340)=58,285$ $p<0.001$ $\eta^2=0.080$

Hypothesis 1c: *Liberal-authoritarian values cause a difference in voting behavior among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.*

Finally, it is time to observe the phenomenon of the distribution of political support by values and level of education in order to assess its nature as a proper cleavage. To do so the role of authoritarian-liberal values in party support will be estimated by introducing the EVS authoritarian scale as a control value alongside the independent variable “level of education”. At first, the Kappa index of the sole variable “level of education” was estimated by summing

the standard deviations of the three coefficients of each of its three levels. This “gross” Kappa (Pavlovic et al, 2019) was later confronted with the net Kappa, or in other words the overall Kappa once the regression coefficient of the authoritarian scale is also introduced. The greater the change between the two Kappa indexes, the greater the influence of authoritarian values in explaining the differences in political preferences among the education groups. The results of this operation are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Case study	Gross Kappa	Net Kappa	Change	Relative change
Poland				
PiS	0,35	0,22	-0,13	-37%
PO	0,45	0,31	-0,14	-31%
Hungary				
Fidesz	0,37	0,28	-0,09	-24%
Coalition	0,70	0,48	-0,22	
Bolivia				
MAS	0,36	0,22	-0,14	-38%
UN	0,54	0,33	-0,21	-39%

The changes in Kappa value show the influence of authoritarian and liberal values in explaining the differences in political preferences by the different educational groups. This is true for all the case studies and respective parties, except for the anti-Fidesz coalition in Hungary, for which the two variables were not significantly correlated.

Interpretation of the findings

The analysis conducted thus far demonstrates the existence of a full-fledged cleavage in all the four case studies observed. The lines of this cleavage separate the lesser and more educated segments of society and, politically, those parties that have undertaken a process of democratic erosion and those that are trying to stop them through the electoral competition. What partially separates these social segments from each other, and links them to specific political parties, is their different stance on the liberal-authoritarian axis. In fact, in line with

the mainstream literature, a strong correlation has been found between higher levels of education and stronger liberal values. This correlation was more significant in the Central European countries, and only moderately significant in Bolivia.

Stubager's theory about the education system being a carrier of liberal values only in Northern Europe and not necessarily in other European regions has been disproved in following studies on the subject (Pavlovic et al, 2019; Lujan, 2020). Different education levels have also been found to account for the divergent political support of specific parties in other Latin American countries (Barrera et al, 2021). Coherently with this literature, The results of the one-way ANOVA seem to indicate that indeed the education system of Bolivia exposes the students to liberal values, but to a lesser extent than the European ones.

The results of the kappa comparison present us with the reverse picture, with liberal values accounting to a lesser degree for the political divergences among educational groups in Poland and Hungary. This might be due to the presence in the two countries of reinforcing value cleavages that characterize the education groups and their political choices (Pavlovic et al., 2019). Yet this is also the case in Bolivia with the ethnic and educational cleavages being reinforcing cleavages in the Bolivian society (Reimao and Tas, 2017, p.236). Another reasonable hypothesis is linked to the supply-side dimension of politics. The clearer the party's stance on an issue the more accurately voters may decide whether to accept the party's pleas for support (Pavlovic et al. 2019). Adopting this perspective then MAS would just be more able to promote those authoritarian-oriented values that characterize specifically the lesser-educated Bolivians, yet the scores in Table 1 also run against this theory.

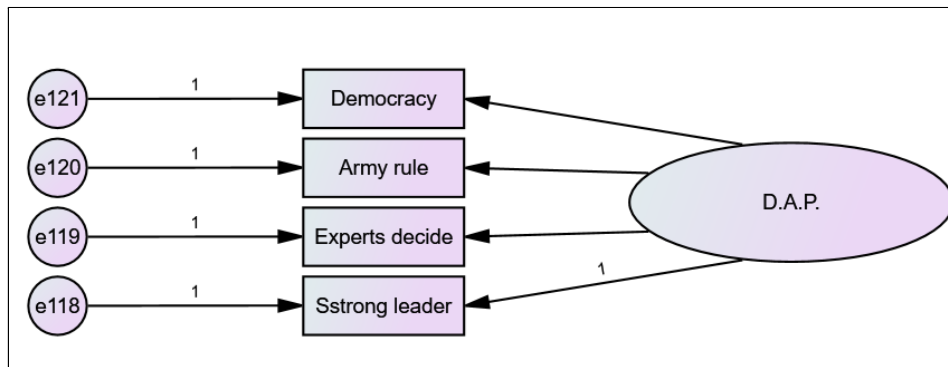
Chapter 2

Hypothesis 2b: Lesser educated citizens will prefer an autocratic regime

The analysis of the previous chapter provided some evidence in favor of the existence of a cleavage that has as its social groups of references educated and less educated citizens, with the latter mostly supporting those parties responsible for the declining democratic quality of their country. Following the most recent findings in the literature on cleavages it has been hypothesized that the set of values linking these social groups to these political parties was to be searched within the authoritarian-liberal values dimension. Indeed, it appears that some of the divergence in political preferences by different education groups can be explained by the different degrees of authoritarianism characterizing their average member (Figure 4, Table 3).

However, this research aims to go one step further, investigating if the political support given by the less educated to the incumbents' parties, is also purposefully given because of a weaker democratic commitment. This implies that voters are aware of the process of democratic dismantling and yet they are not necessarily against it or even go as far as to see it as a more favorable option than the democratic status quo. The democratic commitment is going to be tested by adopting the DAP model as an independent variable. This model, like the previous authoritarian scale, is also constructed through EVS and WVS items.

Figure 5: Confirmatory factor analysis model of Democracy-Autocracy Preference (D.A.P.)



Similar to the testing of the EVS authoritarian model, also in this case an expectation-maximization algorithm has been used to account for the missing variables so that the Confirmatory Factor Analysis could run. The item “Having a democratic political system” has been re-coded in order to follow the other items, so that higher scores would be synonymous with stronger preferences for a democratic system. Finally, the standardization of the items was not necessary since all of them were ordered on the same ordinal scale with 1 and 4 as the extreme values.

Table 4: D.A.P. : Goodness of Fit Statistics of CFA

Country	Alfa	RMSEA	CFI
Poland	0,454	0,149	0,890
Bolivia	0,287	0,052	0,973
Hungary	0,235	0,127	0,872
Turkey	-	-	-

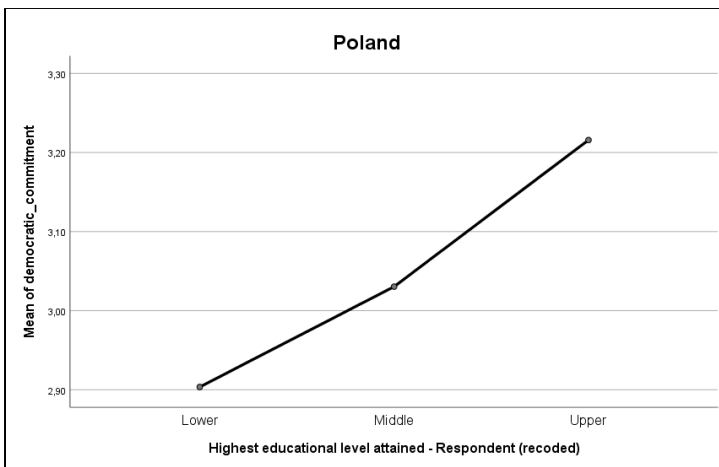
As it appears from the results of the CFAs reported in table 4, the measurement model is not acceptable in two of four of the case studies. In the case of Poland the RMSEA is greater than 0.1, and the factor loading for the item “Having a democratic political system” is null. In the case of Hungary, alongside the RMSEA greater than 0,1, the alpha value is also very low. For Bolivia, the model is acceptable but despite being re-coded the democratic variable is still negatively loaded. Ariely and Davidov's (2011) research would suggest that the problem lies in the open interpretation of the term “democratic”. These findings could indicate that the DAP model as it is, might not be an expression of any latent variable in these specific countries, let alone the latent variable that it was in our interest to observe: democratic commitment. Having run into the same exact problem as Ariely and Davidov (2011), it can be expected that no matter which modification will be made to the model, it is unlikely that its outcomes will be acceptable. The elimination tout-court of what the two authors believed to be the problematic item is also not an option: with only three items a CFA model has zero degrees of freedom and is therefore not testable.

A recent argument made by Sokolov (2021) is relevant for understanding the cause behind the model's weakness.⁹ According to him, such weakness goes deeper than the general misunderstanding of the term democracy by the respondents, and it rather concerns the nature of the items chosen. A non-democratically committed citizen might believe that democracy is not the best form of government and that the rule of a strong leader not bothered by the legislative is something of an improvement. Simultaneously, the same respondent might be particularly skeptical of the army's involvement in politics or it might be characterized by a general mistrust for technocrats. This logic can be brought to a higher level: more religious social segments might tend to prefer a theocratic regime change, and they would still be characterized by a higher preference for autocracy over democracy despite being completely against the eventuality of the army's rule over society. What Sokolov's argument implies in this context is the following: it would be theoretically unjustified to require strong intercorrelations and, thus, interchangeability, between these specific indicators used to measure authoritarianism (Sokolov, 2021). Thus it would be inappropriate to use correlation-based methods like SEM or CFAs to assess the validity of this kind of measure. The course of action adopted was then to construct and operationalize a scale of autocratic preferences despite the worse CFAs results, and repeat the analysis of the previous section.

⁹ Sokolov's reasoning was developed for another set of other items of the EVS, some of which will be composing the LID scale, but mutatis mutandis it covers also the subject of the current analysis of the DAP model

As figure 6 shows, the results of the ANOVAs are strongly context-dependent. For the Central European democracies, there is indeed a significant correlation between higher education and higher commitment to democracy over authoritarian alternatives. In Turkey, while the nature of the correlation between the two variables fits the hypothesis, such correlations are non-significant. The findings relative to the case study of Bolivia diverge from those of the rest. The Bolivian citizens who have attained a middle-level education, are on average more skeptical about democracy than those less educated. The one-way ANOVA between education and each of the single items composing the DAP scale (annex) indicates that this is mostly due to the technocratic stances characterizing the more educated segments of Bolivian society. Another partial explanation for this non-linear correlation is the preference expressed by the mid-educated for a strong leader, which as expected is greater than that expressed by higher educated Bolivians, but surprisingly is also greater than those of the less educated.

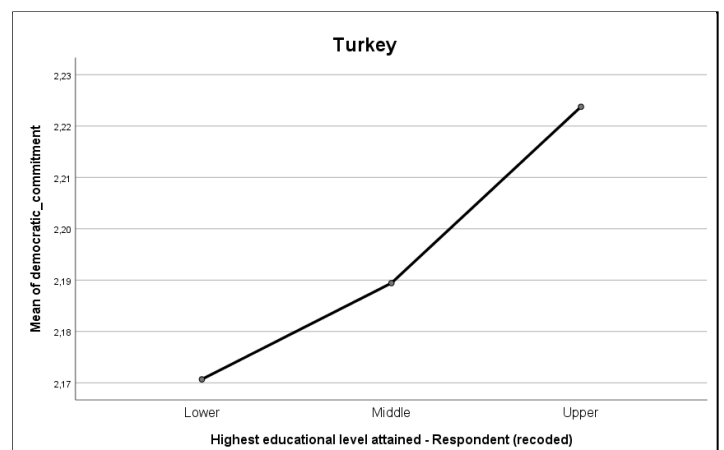
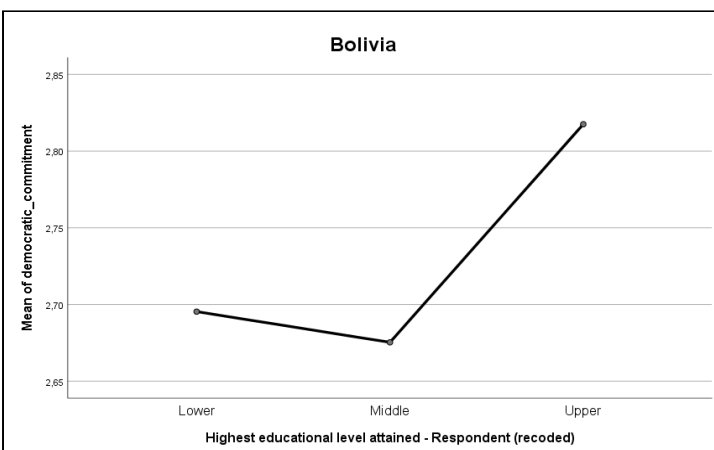
Figure 6: Relationship between democratic preferences and education



$F(2, 1299) = 41,686$ $p < 0.001$ $\eta^2 = 0,060$



$F(2, 1467) = 12,417$ $p < 0.001$ $\eta^2 = 0,017$



F(2, 2030)= 14,090 p<0.001 $\eta^2=0,014$

F(2, 2287)=1,054 p<0.349 $\eta^2=0,001$

Hypothesis 3c: Autocratic preferences cause a difference in voting behavior among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.

With the introduction of the DAP scale as a control variable, the Gross-Net kappas gap is in some instances larger than that resulting from the employment of the Authoritarian-Liberal scale. However, the binomial regressions tell us that the DAP scale is not a significant predictor of party preferences for most of the parties observed, with the exception of Fidesz and the Turkish ones. The hypothesis that the preference for a regime change can explain the differences in political preferences by the different educational groups can not be accepted or rejected in toto, but it is instead context-dependent.

Table 5

Case study	Gross Kappa	Net Kappa	Change	Relative change
Poland				
PiS	0,35	0,20	-0,15	
PO	0,45	0,34	-0,11	
Hungary				
Fidesz	0,37	0,23	-0,14	-38%
Coalition	0,70	0,48	0,22	
Bolivia				
MAS	0,36	0,21	-0,15	
UN	0,54	0,31	-0,24	
Turkey				
AKP	0,24	0,16	-0,08	-0,33%
CHP	0,22	0,19	-0,03	-12,5%

Interpretation of the findings

It has been found that in Poland, and to a lesser degree in Bolivia and Hungary the level of education can account for the differences in autocratic preferences within the countries' respective population. However, it is important to remember that Poland is also the country

with the highest level of preferences for democracy in absolute terms, despite this strong correlation between the two variables among the case studies.

While the results regarding the Central European countries fell in line with the literature on the education's role in the strengthening of democratic support and democratic-related political values, Bolivia offers us once again a fertile field for speculation. To start, a higher than average preference for a strong leader has been found. A cross-national study conducted by Sprong et al. in 2019, identified a significant link between economic inequality and the citizens' desire for a strong leader. When MAS achieved its first victory, the Gini index of the country was close to 0.60, among the highest in the world (World Bank, 2022). To this day it remains incredibly high, but it has been brought down to a historically low of 0.40 by the time of Morales ousting from power. In the context of Bolivia, the strong leader's ability in tackling the issue might have reinforced the societal belief that only by increasing the executive powers income inequality can be reduced.

Another peculiarity of Bolivia is the strong preference for a technocratic system of decision-making characterizing the more educated strata of society. MAS rose as a counter-movement to those parties of the establishment which embraced the neo-liberal agenda. Once in power, one of the first moves of the new government was the reduction of the power wielded by the technocrats of the Ministry of Finance (Dargent, 2015, p.159). Given the more educated opposition to Morales, pro-technocratic stances may be adopted as a self-identification mechanism, to differentiate them further from the less educated and the anti-technocratic and more populist values of their party of reference (Teik, 2014).

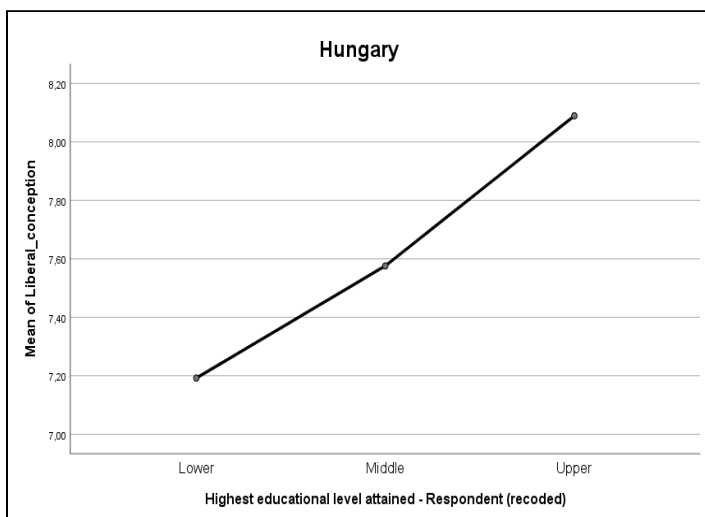
Not much can be said about the data reported in Table 4, it appears that despite the existence of a correlation between a higher level of education and a stronger democratic commitment to autocratic alternatives, the former variable is not the main reason behind the respondents' choice for supporting or not the incumbent party or its opposition. A Notable exception is Hungary, in which the DAP scale is significant, and when used as a control variable produces a larger Kappas divergence than the EVS authoritarian scale. It seems that in the country the liberal vs authoritarian values is not the only set of beliefs differentiating the social segments of the educational cleavage. This might even explain the country's lower Kappas difference observed in Table 3.

From a formal standpoint, Fidesz is not the only incumbent party that has abandoned any mention of democracy in a positive light, while its opposition started to be characterized by a specular trend (Table 1). This peculiarity might concern the empirical level and the intensity of the process of autocratization affecting the country, but further research is needed.

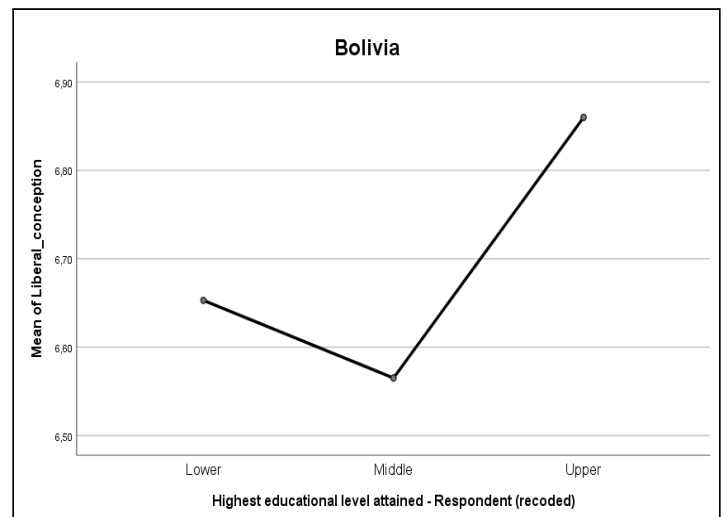
Chapter 3

Hypothesis 3b: Lesser educated citizens are more likely to have an illiberal conception of democracy

Sokolov's model was based on 6 items: “People choose their leaders in free and fair elections”, “Civil rights protect people from state oppression”, “Women have the same rights as men.”, “Religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws.”, “The army takes over when the government is incompetent”, and “People obey their rulers.” (Sokolov, 2021). When a CFA was conducted for the last three items that construct the dimension named authoritarian notion of democracy (AND), the results were not significant. This is when the scholar formulated the theory introduced in the previous chapter (ibidem). Given the overlapping of items between the AND and LID scale¹⁰, it is even more justified to put aside the CFAs analysis and directly operationalize the latter scale.

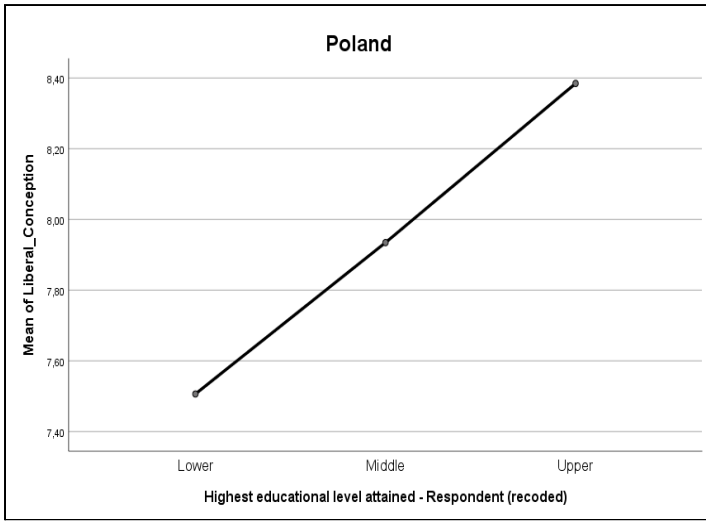


$F(2, 1485)=25,288$ $p<0.001$ $\eta^2= 0,033$

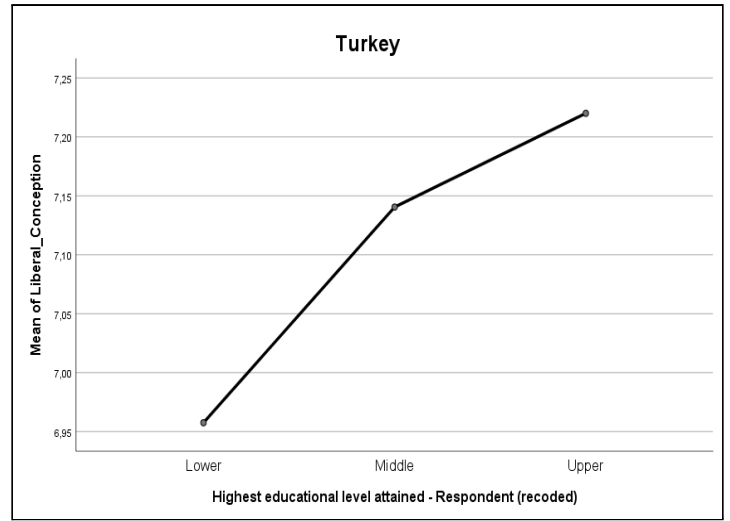


$F(2, 2044)=8,888$ $p<0.001$ $\eta^2= 0,009$

¹⁰ The reader can see that of those 6 items, 5 are the same used to construct the current LID scale. The decision to omit the item “People obey their rulers.” is linked to the fact that abiding by the ruler's decision is not a sign of an illiberal interpretation of democracy per-se, unless some specifications are added such as “people obey their rulers even if their decisions go against the spirit of the constitution, or translate in an infringement of minorities' rights”.



F(2, 1303)=36,243 p<0.001 $\eta^2= 0,053$



F(2, 2363)=3,962 p=0.019 $\eta^2= 0,003$

Hypothesis 3c: Illiberal-liberal conceptions of democracies cause a difference in voting behavior among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.

While at least in Hungary and Poland the one-way ANOVA showed that there is a strong and significant correlation between higher formal education and an interpretation of democracy closer to its liberal configuration and to its mainstream academic definition. The Gross-Net Kappas comparison indicates that this is not the reason for the differences in political preferences among the different educational groups. The LID scale is not a statistically significant predictor for the majority of the parties under analysis. Only in two instances, did we observe a divergent result: in regards to the political support of the PiS party in Poland and for the CHB in Turkey. In the first case, the sign is coherent with the hypothesis, although its impact is way weaker than that of the EVS authoritarian scale. In the second case, the magnitude of change in Kappa is so minimal that it can be excluded from the analysis despite its significance.

Table 6

Case study	Gross Kappa	Net Kappa	Change	Relative change
Poland				
PiS	0,35	0,30	0,05	-14%
PO	0,45	0,41	0,05	

Hungary				
Fidesz	0,37	0,34	0,03	
Coalition	0,70	0,68	0,02	
Bolivia				
MAS	0,36	0,29	-0,07	
UN	0,54	0,42	-0,12	
Turkey				
AKP	0,24	0,20	0,04	
CHP	0,22	0,23	+0,01	

Conclusion

That a political competition between non-democratic committed elites and an organized opposition emerges in democratic eroding countries was already evident without the need for extensive research. That these two political camps draw their support from specific social segments could have also been expected, and in fact, the first chapter of this study confirms it. Even though their constituencies are not exhausted by these two social categories, it appears that more educated citizens are less likely to feel closer to those parties responsible for the hollowing of their democracy, while less-educated citizens are one of their electorate of reference. Some authors would have been satisfied with these results and call for the existence of an educational cleavage in the democratic countries undergoing a process of autocratization. However, attempting to remain faithful to Bayern and Maier's conceptualization of the term this study wanted to investigate the cleavage in all three of its classic elements.

Identified the socio-structural element (the group of citizens who have attained only a lower level of education) and its organizational element (the party of the incumbent leader), what was lacking at the end of the first part of the present study was the psychological-normative elements (Stubager, 2010). What is the set of ideas and beliefs that provide a sense of in-group identification within the social category, and that works as a linkage between the social category and the political party of reference? Following the findings of research that have already covered educational cleavages in other contexts, we started from the hypothesis that these values were those associated with an authoritarian personality. Indeed, from the

Kappas analysis, it appears that authoritarian and liberal values account substantially for the divergence in political support by the different educational groups.

Nonetheless, the particular political situation of the case studies leads to hypothesizing other values that could explain the support given to the incumbent party by the less educated section of the observed societies. For instance, the literature found a link between education and democratic support. Not only this link is confirmed to exist in three of the four case studies, but in Hungary, these different degrees of democratic commitment are what explain the support, or lack of it, for Fidesz.

To double-check that this democratic commitment was a commitment to the liberal conception of democracy and not to its illiberal version, a new values scale was introduced into the equation. What emerged is that the more educated citizens of the Central European countries have indeed an idea of democracy more closely associated with the common academic understanding of it, and for this reason, they might be more skeptical of their national incumbent and its attempts at re-framing the concept. However, the different understanding of democracy alone bears no influence on the citizens' political choices.

This study will now end on two final notes. The first is that overall education, for different reasons according to the context, remains an effective method to reduce people's allure for those politicians endangering our democracies. The second is to remember that this research hasn't examined those other cleavages that might exist in the autocratizing democracies alongside the educational one. While recognizing the importance of education and the role played by the more educated in the defense of democracy, we should then refrain from falling into an over-simplistic and elitist view of this phenomenon.

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