Carrots and Sticks? Democratic Quality in Post-Communist Europe after Accession to the European Union.

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Abstract: The impact of the accession to the European Union on the democratic quality of the post-communist member states was intensively discussed since the accession negotiations first started in the 90ies. Until 2004 the scientific community generally agreed on the positive impact on democratic quality, triggered by political conditionality applied by the EU during the accession process. After the “Eastern Enlargement” the situation is not as clear anymore, as some New Member States show a high level of democratic quality after the accession, in other cases democratic quality even decreased after enlargement. What influence does pre-accession conditionality really have on the post-communist countries? This paper provides a theoretical discussion on mechanisms within a rational choice framework and further discusses the basis of the project: What is democratic quality, and how to measure it.
Introduction

A myriad of literature is dedicated to the complex relationship between the European Union (EU) and the political system of its member states. In the past couple of years an increasing number of scholars engaged in intensive research on the EU as one of the exogenous factors of democratic transformation, emphasizing its importance in the process of consolidation (a.o. Schimmelfennig 2010; Lavenex/ Schimmelfennig 2009; Freyburg et al. 2009; Ekiert/Kubik/Vachudova 2007). The new member states (NMS) which entered the EU in 2004 and 2007 are the most interesting cases in this regard, because of the high level of conditionality connected to a possible accession.

The dominant literature insists that accession to the EU is strongly connected to an increase of democratic quality, as the Copenhagen Criteria define the preconditions of enlargement and emphasize the importance of stable institutions that guarantee democracy, human rights, rule of law and the protection of minorities. Some empirical studies demonstrate the positive influence of the EU on the transformation process in post-communist European countries (f.i. Schimmelfennig/Scholtz 2008), which is initiated by conditionality connected to membership. The discussion on influence by the EU is primarily based on a rationalist perspective, which proposes an unequal relationship between the candidates on the one hand, and the dominant actor – the European Union – on the other hand (a.o. Kubicek 2003). The situation after the accession to the EU presents itself more complicated, as there is no clear theoretical framework explaining the positive and negative changes in democratic quality after 2004 and 2007. Both the rather simplistic mechanism of influence and the diffuse empirical situation after enlargement indicate that the relationship between the EU and the post-communist member states follows a different and more complex logic than generally assumed. Crucially, most studies rely on poorly operationalized measures of democratic quality, which makes an empirical assessment of variation over time and cases rather difficult.

I argue that the European Union actually has had a positive influence on democratic quality in some of the cases in the pre-accession phase, based on different levels of conditionality applied in the accession process. Contrary to popular assessments I however believe that an increase in democratic quality in the pre-accession phase induced by the EU is followed by a decrease in democratic quality after accession, as maintaining formally introduced structures without a

rewarding perspective is too costly. This paper therefore proposes a rather pessimistic view of the long-term effect of accession connected to conditionality, as I expect countries which enter the accession process with rather low levels of democratic quality to only profit to a certain extend from membership when it comes to democratic structures of their political system.

This paper serves two purposes: It defines a consistent theoretical framework able to explain variation in democratic quality after enlargement and discusses the operationalization of the dependent variable – democratic quality. In order to adequately measure change in democratic quality over time the concept of one of the most complex and refined democracy indices – the Democracy Barometer – has been replicated for the countries and time span of interest. First results support my main hypotheses and show the need of more careful and in depth elaboration of both the relationship between the EU and its candidates as well as on its relation with the new member states.

Three dimensions constitute democratic quality: participation, freedom and control. Following Diamond and Morlino (2005) “(...) a quality democracy [is considered] to be one that provides its citizens a high degree of freedom, political equality, and popular control over public policies and policy makers through the legitimate and lawful functioning of stable institutions.” In this paper I more closely assess democratic quality in regards to freedom and control, two concepts, which primarily concentrate on a liberal-procedural understanding of democracy. How have these two dimensions been affected by the accession of the post-communist member states to the European Union and how?

The European Union and Democratic Quality

Needless to say that there are various factors influencing democratic quality besides from international organizations. To give a rather short overview over the mainstream assumptions on this field I will rely on the work of Ekiert, Kubik and Vachudova (2007). Their article skilfully summarizes the main conditions for democratization as discussed in the literature in this field. They list several domestic conditions, which influence(d) democratic transformation: national and historical conditions, political actors, geographical location, statehood, democratic legacies, ethnic conflicts, choice of political and economic institutions, efficiency of the bureaucracy, political competition, accountability, support for democracy by the elites, political culture, media and other factors influence the increase and decrease of democratic quality in a country. They emphasize the

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2http://www.democracybarometer.org/; Bochsler, Merkel, Bühlmann et. al.
factoring of economic reforms as important factor of successful transformation and also point out the importance of European Union accession negotiations for democratization (Ekiert et. al., 2007).

This article though concentrates on the conditions related to the EU which influence(d) democratization in post-communist Europe. While most researches state that the European Union is an important factor increasing democratic quality in the respective countries, there are also contradicting opinions on which role the EU played and continues to play in this context, especially regarding the post-accession phases.

Paul Kubicek (2003) outlined the most important mechanism through which international factors are relevant to democratization. Control over a state’s political institutions is one of the methods by which international actors can facilitate democratization. The EU does not directly take over control in countries, but incorporation into the EU does assure a certain amount of control by the EU. This applies primarily to members of the European Union. Another mechanism is contagion, which describes the process of systems or events spreading cross borders. It addresses certain correlations, but the casual mechanism (i.e. how exactly contagion operates) remains unspecified. The mechanism of convergence can be described both from a rationalist and a constructivist perspective; therefore, it either can be seen as a rationalist calculation or a social learning process. It can be best explained as the spread of international norms. The most developed approach among these four, however, is the concept of conditionality (Kubicek 2003, p.1-7).

“By conditionality, one refers to the linking of perceived benefits (eg. political support, economic aid, membership in an organization) to the fulfillment of a certain program, in this case [democratization and international actors; note from the author] the advancement of democratic principles and institutions in a “target” state. Conditionality is most clearly enshrined in the Copenhagen Criteria for membership, but one can point to a number of EU foreign policies built around the notion of democratic conditionality, particularly observance of human rights. (...) Conditionality (...) works on a cost/benefit analysis, and democracy results from a rational calculation;” (Kubicek 2003, p.7)

Kubicek argues that the success of EU conditionality depended strongly on the non-existence of a “rival-program” and also on the accordance of EU norms with the agenda of most elites. The behavior of the elites most importantly shaped the success of EU promotion, which also explains the variations in democratization all over Europe. Further Kubicek formulated hypotheses concerning the mechanisms of EU impact on states in the context of democratization. In line with
the mechanism of convergence and the mainstream literature on international norms, EU norms are more likely to be adopted when they are proximate to pre-existing norms. Also they are more likely to be adopted if the elites of a country are “new” and more open to novel ideas; however, a competing hypothesis posits that especially “new” states (elites, territory) might be more interested in fostering nationalism. Also the status of the persuader is relevant; the more authoritative and successful the EU is perceived, the more likely it is for EU norms to be adopted. Further the rhetoric change based on communication influences real change and therefore norm adoption, as well as the existence of transnational networks. Also the norm adoption will be more intense when the outside actor refrains from lectures and demands and instead engages in sustained argumentation. When it comes to the mechanism of conditionality, the size and credibility of the offered incentives define the success of policy/norm adoption. As stated above the logic of conditionality follows a rational actor model. But also within this concept transnational networks play a crucial role: if external actors find domestic allies, conditionality is more likely to work. In sum Kubicek indicates that the European Union influences democratization in post-communist Europe in a positive way – under certain domestic conditions (Kubicek 2003).

In their prominent article on EU rule transfer to candidate countries Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier line out the general assumptions on the relation between the European Union and applicant countries (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier 2004), which were adopted by lots of researchers. Up to now their model of rule adoption dominates this research field, therefore their assumptions will mark the starting point of this review. They present the external incentives model as most fitting for the explanation of rule transfer, contrasting it to two alternative models: the social learning model and the lesson-drawing model. The external incentives model is a rational bargaining model; therefore the actors are seen as strategic utility-maximizers. In this model, the EU would be the dominant actor and sets its rules as conditions that the applicant countries have to fulfill in order to receive their rewards – the ultimate reward being membership. In this model EU conditionality follows a strategy of reinforcement by reward (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier 2004, p. 663). In this equation also adoption costs, veto players and the credibility of conditionality play a crucial role for successful rule adoption (Schimmelfennig, Sedelmeier 2004, p. 664 – 667). Following the core tenets of social constructivism the competing social learning model assumes a logic of appropriateness. The involved actors choose the most appropriate course of action, motivated by values and norms. In the lesson-drawing model actors are not satisfied with the domestic status quo and they adopt EU rules when they expect that by that domestic policy
problems are solved. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier emphasize that in context of democratic conditionality the success of EU external governance varied with the size of adoption costs, indicating that membership perspective has no significant impact on democratization. The countries which were on their way to democracy in the 1990ies did not need the incentives in order to be more democratic; in the more undemocratic countries adoption costs were too high and therefore ineffective. Only in regards to minority rights membership perspective might have been crucial for rule adoption. Contrary to democratic conditionality acquis conditionality depends predominantly on the credibility of membership (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004, p.667-672).

However, in later publications Schimmelfennig agrees with other scholars, like Pridham, Kubicek or Vachudova, that EU accession is a necessary tool for successful EU democracy promotion and provides empirical evidence for these assumptions in several publications –linking the success of external democracy promotion to domestic conditions in line with the external incentives model. Sizeable and credible EU incentives are necessary to overcome opposition to EU rules by domestic governments or veto-players (Schimmelfennig and Trauner 2007; Schimmelfennig and Scholtz 2008, Schimmelfennig 2008, Schimmelfennig 2007; Schimmelfennig and Cirilautas 2010).

Vachudova (2010) sides with Schimmelfennig, Pridham, Kubicek and others when emphasizing that the European Union presides over the most successful democracy-promotion ever implemented by an international actor. EU leverage has had an important independent effect on domestic political change and in the accession phase the EU had a significant influence on the increase of democratic quality in the respective countries. Nevertheless the domestic political elites and groups in a country determine the effective influence of the European Union.

Dimitrova and Pridham (2004) make a similar argument, namely that the EU has developed a distinctive “integration-model” as form of democracy promotion. Compared to other International Organizations like the NATO, the OSCE or the Council of Europe the European Union is an outstanding actor in democracy promotion. The preferences of the domestic actors and the state of the reform are the crucial variables that define the impact of international actors on democratization. Also they emphasize the importance of the way elites identify with the EU as a way of legitimation, which has the potential to explain the level of compliance among post-communist state with the EU’s demands for democratization (Pridham and Dimitrova 2004).

In their article “Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Post-Communist World” Kopstein and Reilly (2000) argue that the main connection between the European Union and the
democratic quality in post-communist Europe is the geographical distance, which determines the
success of transformation. They argue that literature in the tradition of institutional path
dependency - which states that the choice of institutions primarily shaped the transformation of
post-communist countries in Europe – fails to explain, why these institutions were chosen and can
therefore be not the starting point of an analysis. In a well performed study they show that
geographical proximity to the EU has had a positive influence on the transformation of post-
communist countries. One explanation for the effects of geographical location is the impact of
location on the structure of domestic interests and ultimately the policies chosen (Kopstein, Reilly
2000). The explanatory power of the gravity model might be limited, but their model proves to be
vital for quantitative studies in this area.

Johanni Grossmann concludes in a Freedom House Report on Membership as tool of
democratization that foreign democratization does not have the power to start something that
does not already exist – therefore democratization support by the EU can only increase the speed
and quality of democratization. Obviously this report is based on Freedom House Data.
Democratization from outside is most effective when it is based on a strong movement within the
country and supports active in-country democratization forces (Grossmann 2006). Maybe the most
critical scholar in this field is Alina Mingui-Pippidi. In a 2006 publication – using Freedom House
data – she argues that after the start of the negotiations with the EU there is actually no increase
or very little increase in democratic quality. Therefore she concludes that the enlargement process
itself has little or no influence on democracy (Mingui-Pippidi 2006). Especially in those countries
which face severe problems with democratization, for instance widely spread corruption, the
European Union fails to have any influence on the political structures of the respective countries.
Especially after accession, when the EU lost most of its levers, lots of former pro-Europeanization
actors returned to previous practices and clientele-based distribution of spending budget, control
of public media and immunity from corruption accusation (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010, p.77-81).

Other scholars paint a more optimistic picture of the post-accession phase, indicating that pre-
accession conditionality either has a lasting effect also in the post-accession phase or other
mechanisms replace pre-accession conditionality. Frank Schimmelfennig and Florian Trauner argue
that even though the external incentives model indicates that domestic preferences and veto-
players might trump and therefore rule compliance will not be guaranteed post-accession pre-
accession conditionality has a long-term effect even after conditionality. Four main sources of
compensation may contribute to explaining why compliance does not suffer post-accession: post-
accession conditionality in some areas of EU policy - for instance participation in the EMU - could replace pre-accession conditionality. Also monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms that the EU has in place to ensure compliance among its member states. Also other international organizations might fill the gap, f.i. the Council of Europe or its European Court of Human Rights in the field of human rights. Financial and technical support for administrative and judicial capacity building can prevent non-compliance as well as social learning and transnational exchange. And finally the external incentives model would not predict the complete reversal of externally induced rules; institutional changes have been introduced that can’t be reversed that easily (Schimmelfennig, Trauner 2009). Mungui-Pippidi on the other hand attests especially Bulgaria and Romania a decrease of democratic quality right after accession (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010, p.77-81).

In order to undermine their assumptions Schimmelfennig and Trauner review the empirical studies of the past couple of years which address post-accession compliance. Schwellnus et al. (2009) explore post- and pre-accession compliance in the field of minority protection rules and conclude that there is a positive change in this field, even after accession. Also the other papers review in Schimmelfennig and Trauner’s article conclude that there actually is rule compliance post-accession, although there is a broad variation in the transposition behavior of the respective countries, like Christoph Knill and Jale Tosun (2009) conclude. The independent variables bureaucratic capacities, trade with the EU and most importantly the country’s performance in terms of pre-accession policy alignment explain the variance in the dependent variable transposition behavior. Andrea Kriszan (2009) finds empirical evidence for the assumption that social learning and financial assistance helped the problems of law enforcement post accession. Therefore Schimmelfennig and Trauner conclude that the transposition behavior of the new member states is good overall and has not worsened after accession; however there is a gap between transposition and law enforcement and application (Schimmelfennig, Trauner 2009).

Epstein and Sedelmeier (2008) argue that the external incentives model in the tradition of rational choice might be able to explain rule compliance in the pre-accession phase, but somehow fails to explain what happens in the post-accession phase. Alternative mechanisms – especially social learning and other mechanisms in the tradition of constructivist approaches – could present a more appropriate starting point for further research in this area (Epstein, Sedelmeier 2008).

Epstein and Sedelmeier (2009) assess international influence beyond conditionality and show a wide range of empirical findings in different areas. As there is no alternative source of conditionality when it comes to democratic quality after enlargement (in a few policy areas
conditionality continues, f.i. membership in the Schengen area and in EMU are not automatically connected to EU membership), an incentive-based approach would expect a significant loss of influence for the EU after accession. The empirical findings collected in their book do not cover democratic quality, but at least show that the effect of conditionality depends on the respective area of interest.

**Carrots and Sticks – reloaded**

In order to assess the relationship between the European Union and democratic quality of post-communist member states I side with the rather less prominent and more pessimistic assumptions outlined above. As I agree that enlargement is in fact an effective tool regarding democratization, I assume that this positive effect is neither long-lasting nor important for countries that enter membership negotiations with a relatively high level of democratic quality. While EU-accession does not have a significant effect on countries which already provide for sophisticated democratic structures, countries which struggle with democratic structures convenient with EU standards have to elaborate on specific areas in order to become a full member state. Therefore they are more likely to show a decrease in democratic quality after accession, as – according to the external incentives model – the main reward has already been received. As criticized in the very beginning of this paper, the main theoretical framework used in order to analyze democratization through EU-accession paints a rather simplistic picture of the relationship between the EU and the candidate countries respectively post-communist member states. The main problem with the external incentives model derives from the definition of conditionality: It is treated as a rather static condition, which either prevails or not. When it is at work, it works, when there is no conditionality, there is no effect. This would equal a rather ordinary assessment of the relationship between the European Union and the applicant countries, numerical described as 0 and 1. Two rearrangements of the mechanism of conditionality form the basis of the theoretical model suggested. (1) Conditionality is not either present or not; there is a wide range of different levels of conditionality. To some areas a higher level of conditionality might be applied, other areas of democratic quality might have been hardly touched by conditionality. Also the level of conditionality can change over time. (2) Conditionality does not just “stop”. Conditionality continues to have an effect, even if it is not directly applied anymore. The level of conditionality in the pre-accession phase determines the level of the EU’s impact on democratic quality in the post-accession phase. If a high level of conditionality towards democratic quality is applied in the pre-accession phase, this results in an increase of democratic quality in the pre-accession phase, and an
decrease in the post-accession phase according to the assumptions outlined above. Therefore conditionality matters for both the accession process and the changes in democratic quality after accession, however in a rather different fashion than most scholars proposed.

- Hypothesis I: The level of democratic quality in post-communist member states of the European Union has been positively influenced by a high level of conditionality prior to the enlargement.
- Hypothesis Ia: Depending on the level of conditionality applied by the European Union prior to accession the positive influence varies over country and cases.
- Hypothesis Ib: The higher the level of conditionality, the higher the positive influence on democratic quality in the respective countries in the pre-accession phase.
- Hypothesis II: The level of conditionality applied in the pre-accession phase influences the level of democratic quality in the post-accession phase.
- Hypothesis IIa: The higher the level of conditionality in the pre-accession phase, the higher the possibility democratic quality decreases in the post-accession phase.
- Hypothesis IIb: If the level of conditionality is low in the pre-accession phase, the European Union hardly influences the level of democratic quality in the post-accession phase.

**On democratic quality**

As indicated above an insightful analysis of the change in democratic quality over time can only be based on a sophisticated conceptionalization and operationalization of this variable. In the field of empirical democracy research various democracy indicators provide data on democratic quality over time and cases, based on different kinds of theories, sources and methodology. Most of the existing indicators however present with major shortcomings in regard to their operationalization, which makes it almost impossible to implement them into an analysis. This section gives a short overview over the most prominent indices and their conceptual and methodological sets of problems.

- The **Freedom House Index** (Raymond Gastil) provides data on 193 countries on a yearly basis, concentrating on political rights and civil liberties. It does not explicitly measure the quality of democracy, but is used by researches as a proxy index to illustrate the state of democracy in a country.³
- The **Polity IV Index** (Jaggers/Gurr) illustrates the democratic quality of 163 countries over time,

³[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)
evaluating the level of both democracy and autocracy in a country. The index is based on the indicators participation, competition and rule of law. 

- The **Vanhanen Index of Democracy** (Tatu Vanhanen) combines the indicators participation and competition in a formula: (Level of participation * Level of competition)/100. This index combines turnout at national elections and the percentage of votes of the biggest party.\(^4\)

- The **Bertelsmann Transformation Index** evaluates the democratic transformation of 128 countries which are defined as transformation or developing states. The “Status-Index” combines political and economic transformation; the political component is based on statehood, participation, rule of law, institutional stability and political as well as societal integration.\(^6\)

- The **Index of Defect Democracy** was established by a research group under the direction of Wolfgang Merkel. It analyzes deficits found in different dimensions of democracy. (Pickel/Pickel 2006, S.234-238).

- The “**New Index of Democracy**”. By Hans-Joachim Lauth aggregates data from the Polity IV index, the political rights scale of the Freedom House Index and a constitutional state index established by Kaufmann (Schmidt 2010, p. 388).

- The **Democratic Audit** (Beetham, Boyle, Weir) is the most prominent example of a qualitative democracy index.

- The **new EIU index** provides biannual data on democracy since 2006. It predominantly uses survey data to assess the level of democracy in five categories – electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, the functioning of government, political participation, and political culture (Coppedge et al. 2011, p.251).

- **Democracy and Dictatorship** (Przeworski) and the **BNR** (Bernhard, Nordstrom, Reenock) both are binary measures of democracy (Coppelge et al. 2011).

- The **Democracy Barometer** (Bühlmann, Merkel, Müller et al.) compares the democratic quality of the OECD countries from 1995 to 2005, using various “objective” indicators. Its concept features three main dimensions of democracy, Freedom, Control and Equality.\(^7\)

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In order to illustrate the shortcomings of the presented indicators it is convenient to present the findings of Pickel and Müller (2007), who conducted a study based on a framework for the analysis of data developed by Munck and Verkuilen (2002) to evaluate the correctness of the indices’ modi operandi. They arrive at the conclusion that the Freedom House Index – the democracy index most frequently used by scholars as indicator for democratic quality – proves to be the most problematic index in terms of concept specification, conceptual logic, indicators, measurement, coding rules, transparency and aggregation of the data.

The results of Pickel and Müller’s analysis adequately show the deficits of the indicators they included: the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), the Freedom House Index, the Polity Index, the Index of Democratization, the Index of Defect Democracies and the Democratic Audit. They certify problematic dimensions of democracy for the BTI; the dimensions are not well separated from each other, which leads to problems of measurement of the democratic quality of the countries, also they do not adequately theoretically embed their concept. The Polity Index lacks differentiation between its democracy dimensions; further a theoretical justification of the method of aggregation is missing. Also it is not clear what sources the final data-set is based on. The Freedom House Index, as mentioned above, proves to be the most problematic approach to empirical democracy research. Its main disadvantage is the missing transparency when it comes to data collection and aggregation. Vanhanen’s Index of Democratization is the most “objective” indicator, because it is not based on experts’ judgments, but on a simple formula including turnout and percentages of votes. This, however, proves to be its main disadvantage: it only concentrates on two basic elements of democracy and therefore does not reflect democratic reality.

The index of Defect Democracies proves to be the “best” index according to Pickel and Müller. That said, this index only provides regional studies but no broad empirical analyses. The Democratic Audit uses a concept that not only measures democratic quality but also includes democratic society as unit of analysis, which results in a very broad concept not able to capture the essential dimensions of democracy (Pickel/Müller 2006, p.529-531). Further the democratic audit is a qualitative democracy index and therefore not relevant for this thesis.

The Bertelsmann Transformation Index and the Index of Defect Democracy are both very good and carefully operated indices. However, they suffer from shortcomings regarding their conceptual assumptions. They only apply their indices to “transformation countries”. They restrict their analysis to a limited group of countries and furthermore, they ignore the fact that it is possible that also “consolidated” (See among others: Merkel 2007) countries, such as the Western countries
face problems regarding their democratic regimes. The theory of Embedded Democracy (Merkel et. al 2003) defines defect democracy as a democratic system, where basic electoral rights are provided but other parts of the political system are „defect“, like basic participation rights or rule of law. Why only apply these theoretical assumptions to „transformation“ countries?

The Democracy and Dictatorship Index as well as the BNR index reduce democracy to a dummy variable; both indices only give information on whether or not a country is a democracy – which of course is not very informative and both indices therefore unusable for this PHD project. The new EIU index only provides data from 2006 to 2010 and cannot give any information on the pre-accession phase. Also it is not very transparent as the sources of the final index are not revealed (Coppedge et al. 2011). The new index of democracy aggregates data from the Polity IV index, the political rights scale of the Freedom House Index as well as from a constitutional state index established by Kaufmann and therefore “duplicates” the shortcomings of the indices mentioned above (Schmidt 2010, p.386-389).

The most “useful” concept in the area of empirical democracy research is the Democracy Barometer. In total it aggregates 100 different “objective” indicators of democratic quality and is based on a distinctive concept of democracy. The final data-set can be easily decomposed and therefore sources and aggregation rules are very transparent (Bühlmann et al. 2011a.) The Democracy Barometer only features data on the OECD countries and therefore cannot be adopted in this research. Due to the complex rating system, the variety of included dimensions and most important the 0 to 100 scale it is possible to obtain variance in the democratic quality scores – and therefore to capture the variance of democratic quality over time. Therefore I replicated the concept of the Democracy Barometer for the sample and time period included in this research and I will further outline the concept, methodology and first results connected to my theoretical framework in the next chapter.

Variance in “Freedom” and “Control” over time and cases

As indicated above in order to assess variation in democratic quality over time and cases I replicated the Democracy Barometer for the ten new member states, which experienced similar patterns of regime change to democratic political systems. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia entered the EU in 2004 or 2007 and show different levels of democratic quality over time.

The Democracy Barometer is based on a complex concept tree, featuring the three main dimensions Control, Freedom and Equality as main indicators of democratic quality. All dimensions
can be disaggregated to the 100 underlying indicators, which are scaled from 0 to 100 and aggregated through an arctan-formula.\(^8\)

So far I coded the indicators for Control and Freedom, strictly following the codebook provided by the Democracy Barometer. Due to missing data for the respective countries and time period I exchanged and left out some of the indicators. Scaling and aggregation follows the structure outlined by the Democracy Barometer, with scales from 0 to 100 for the basic indicators and the application of the two aggregation formulas outlined. At the two basic levels of the concept tree data was aggregated by using a simple arithmetic mean; the three top levels were aggregated by using following formula (Bühlmann 2011b):

\[
DQ = a \times \text{ARCTAN} \left( f(x;y) \times \frac{b}{c} \right)
\]

\(DQ = \) Democracy Barometer score for aggregation
\(a = \) Weighting factor for diminishing return; higher values = higher limiting value for diminishing return; Set to 80
\(b/c = \) Weighting factor for calibration, so that \(Z = 0\) if \(x = 0\) and \(y = 0\); \(Z = |100|\) if \(x = |100|\) and \(y = |100|\); Set to \(1,203,835 / 4000\)

The dimensions control and freedom are calculated in the same manner. In the next part of this paper I will provide an overview over the different levels of the concept tree and the included indicators for freedom and control.

**Freedom**

“Freedom refers to the absence of heteronomy, and freedom rights are above all rights which protect an individual from infringements by the state. Historically, the most important of these rights under a secure rule of law have become one of the minimal conditions for democratic regimes.”\(^9\)

Freedom is a function of individual liberties, rule of law and public sphere, which are again functions of the right to physical integrity and the right to free conduct of life (individual liberties), equality before the law and quality of the legal system (rule of law) as well as the freedom to associate and freedom of opinion (public sphere).\(^{10}\) The basis of these components are subcomponents and indicators, which are aggregated in reversed order by calculating the arithmetic mean of the indicators and subcomponents. Various data sources provide the basis for the indicators, documentation is based on the codebook provided by the democracy barometer.\(^{11}\)

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\(^8\) [http://www.democracybarometer.org/documentation_en.html](http://www.democracybarometer.org/documentation_en.html)

\(^9\) [http://www.democracybarometer.org/concept_en.html](http://www.democracybarometer.org/concept_en.html)

\(^10\) [http://www.democracybarometer.org/documentation_en.html](http://www.democracybarometer.org/documentation_en.html)

\(^11\) There are still some indicators missing from my data collection, I will present the finalized results at the conference.
Control

"Freedom and equality can be seen as the most fundamental and driving principles in the development of modern territorial states. The two principles interact and can constrain each other but they are not generally irreconcilable. Guaranteeing as well as optimizing and balancing freedom and equality are the core challenge of a democratic system. The third principle, control, serves to equilibrate this unstable balance. (...)"

http://www.democracybarometer.org/concept_en.html
Control is a function if competition, mutual constraints and governmental capability, which are further based on vulnerability and contestability (Competition), executive-legislative relationship (mutual constraints) as well as governmental resources and conditions for efficient implementation (governmental capability). The data was scaled and aggregated in the same manner as for the dimension “freedom”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
<th>Czech Republic</th>
<th>Estonia</th>
<th>Hungary</th>
<th>Latvia</th>
<th>Lithuania</th>
<th>Poland</th>
<th>Romania</th>
<th>Slovakia</th>
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<td>194,89</td>
<td>164,64</td>
<td>204,15</td>
<td>115,99</td>
<td>64,18</td>
<td>205,05</td>
<td>53,09</td>
<td>226,25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>138,04</td>
<td>177,04</td>
<td>198,01</td>
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Table 2. “Control” over Time and Cases

Graphic 2. “Freedom” over Time and Cases
Conclusion & Outlook

As the tables above display especially in those countries that showed a high level of “freedom” respectively “control” in the 90ies variation in democratic quality is rather small. When it comes to Romania, Bulgaria or Slovenia rather big changes in democratic quality over time are indicated and especially in terms of “control” the data shows a vast decrease in democratic quality after accession to the EU. Latvia, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia present with the same pattern for “freedom”.

However, without further research and the addition of the dimension “equality” a distinctive statement on patterns in changes of democratic quality over time is not possible. What is sure is that neither prior to nor after the accession a consistent positive change in the respective dimensions of democratic quality is existent, which supports the assumption that the external incentives model as applied in dominant literature has little explanatory power.

An adequate theoretical framework has to be sensitive towards small changes in the relationship between the European Union and the post-communist member states, which have not been influenced in their democratic quality to the assumed extent. Apart from alternative explanations for change in democratic quality the accession negotiations and the requirements connected to the process of accession need to be more closely assessed in terms of specific demands and assistance directed towards democratic standards similar to the analysis conducted. Key documents of the two enlargement rounds, accession partnerships, financial assistance as well as progress reports serve as ideal starting point for a systematic analysis of the interaction between the former candidate countries and the European Union. Especially when it comes to Bulgaria and Romania alternative sources of conditionality following accession have to be considered.

More distinctive findings on the effects of accession to the European Union might also serve as useful basis for discussion on the accession process of current candidate countries and potential candidates, as a high level of democratic quality throughout the members states is with no doubt in the interest of the European Union.
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