

The nature of the Education Cleavage in four Eroding Democracies¹

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Abstract: *In recent years, weaker and consolidated democracies alike were in many instances caught by a wave of autocratisation. However, given the protractedness in the time of the phenomenon of democratic erosion, it is not unlikely that the process overlaps with multiple electoral cycles. This gives to those parties committed to liberal democracy a window to organise themselves and challenge the incumbent at the ballots. The present study investigates whether the political division between incumbent parties and organised pro-democratic opposition in Poland, Hungary, Bolivia and Turkey coincides with a political cleavage that fits Baiern and Maier's three-dimensional conceptualisation of the term. Through a quantitative approach, it emerges that indeed authoritarian and liberal values (Normative dimension) substantially account for the divergence in political support (Organisational dimension) by the different educated groups (Social dimension) in all the countries under observation. These findings not only support the existence of an educational cleavage outside of Western and Northern Europe, but also highlights its centrality in the ongoing fight for democracy. Furthermore, Hungary appears as a peculiar case, since democratic commitment accounts more than the authoritarian-liberal scale in explaining the support (or lack of it) for the incumbent party by the Hungarian educational groups.*

Keywords: *Autocratisation, Democratic Erosion, Educational cleavage, Political Cleavages, DPA scale, Authoritarian scale.*

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I. Introduction

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 – Hekimci 2020). A reconfiguration of a political cleavage along similar lines is taking place in those countries transitioning from a democratic regime to an authoritarian one. In this study, the concept of autocratisation is denoted according to Luhrmann and Lindberg's definition. Autocratisation 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 regardless if this process ultimately results in a full democratic breakdown (Luhrmann – Lindberg 2019). In their systematic analysis of this 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*).

As mentioned, when this process of erosion takes place, political opposition tends to coalesce under the banner of democracy against the ruling elite (Selcuk – Hekimci 2020). Since this usually happens while free elections are still in place, this pro-democratic camp often challenges the non-democratically committed elite at the ballots. As an example, we can mention Venezuela and the formation of the Democratic Unity Roundtable (Valenzuela 2014), or in the European context Poland and the creation of the Civic Coalition for the general elections of 2019. In some other cases, such as in Turkey, these alliances failed to formalise into a proper electoral coalition. This divergent outcome can be traced back to the persistence among the opposition of different inter-cutting cleavages, cleavages that run even deeper than the authoritarian-democratic one (Selcuk – Hekimci, 2020).

These differences in the nature of political opposition in democratic eroding countries call for the clarification of another key concept – 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 versus incumbent party) and a value one (pro-democracy versus pro-transition). This is a *de facto* 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 in the relevant literature (Robert 2002; Kriesi 2010). Bartolini and Mair's conceptualisation of the term closely follows Rokkan's original writings and includes a third dimension alongside the two aforementioned: a social dimension. Summarising their argument: a cleavage is made up of a socio-structural element, a normative element composed of all those values that provide a sense of in-group identification to the socio-structural group, and an organisational element which is to say the institutions that the socio-structural groups form in the political and social arena (Bartolini – Mair 1990: 215).

Abandoning the social element from the definition means getting rid of a fundamental component of a cleavage. Yet this approach characterised the studies of the European party systems of the early 2000s. Political divisions were found to be between those parties proponent of post-materialistic values versus those fighting for strictly materialistic ones, between parties characterised by liberal values versus others more authoritarian. These cleavages, in contrast to those that preceded them, were believed to lack any specific social group of reference. This until Stubager found in the two societal segments of 'more formally educated' and 'less formally educated' the missing groups of reference of those values and political cleavages that have been observed dominating the modern 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 these shared values. The social and normative elements then find expression in the organisational realm, with the social group of more formally educated students voting for parties proponent of liberal values, and with these parties reframing their priorities in an attempt to capture this new electoral constituency. The Danish scholar was initially sceptical about the validity of his findings outside of Scandinavia. Nonetheless, a series of research that followed Stubager's breakthrough showed the link between obtaining a higher level of education, adopting liberal values and voting for specific political parties to be true even in other European regions (Pavlovic et al. 2019; Ford – Jennings 2020).²

II. Study's hypotheses

From these premises, the present study aims to test the existence of a similar link not just between people with less time spent in the educational system and political parties characterised by more authoritarian values, but between the less formally educated and political parties behind a clear process of autocratisation.

An integral part of the investigation consists in the finding of an actual correlation between a lower education level and authoritarian tendencies in the countries examined. Because even though education can be found, and has been found, to be a significant predictor for specific political support in many different contexts, what we are trying to assess here is the existence of a cleavage. For this reason, it becomes fundamental to assess the presence of a value dimension and of its role as the bridge between social category and political organisation.

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

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

H1: Different education groups are more likely to vote for different political parties.
(Link between the social-structural dimension and the organisational one)

H1a: Less educated citizens will be more authoritarian-oriented.
(Identification of the group's shared values)

Hypothesis 1b: Liberal-authoritarian values cause a difference in voting behaviour 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 organisational one)

Given the existential perils of liberal democracy in the chosen countries, 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 among the social groups. This is a sentiment that is likely to still be 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 – Rose 2012; Chong – Grandstein 2015: 364). More recent research presents more mixed results about the universality of education's positive influence on democratic behaviours and values. Some research confirmed the existence of the phenomenon, but also downplayed its significance for those citizens educated in authoritarian regimes (Diwan – 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 – Robinson 2022).

As it will be illustrated, the four countries that will be used as subjects of this study differ in regard 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 and its mixed results, the correlation between preferences for autocracy-democracy and education level will also be tested.

Hypothesis 2a: Less educated citizens will prefer an autocratic regime, especially in those countries with a shorter democratic history.

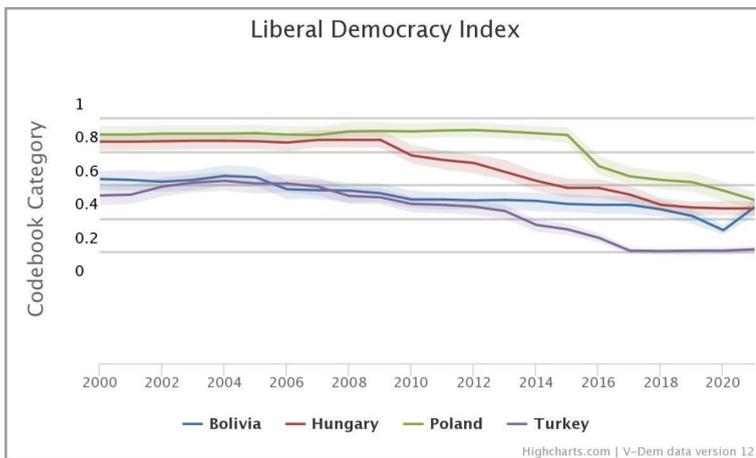
Moreover, the results of the elections in the democratic eroding countries can be a turning point between a fully authoritarian transition and a democratic recovery, thus democratic preferences might also account for the difference in voting behaviour between different educated social segments.

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

III. The subjects of this comparative study

The countries chosen as subjects for 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 countries: 2005 in Turkey, 2009 in Hungary, 2015 in Poland, and since 2015 the quality of democracy has worsened sharply in Bolivia.

Figure 1: Liberal Democracy Index



The four countries affected by the process of autocratisation are characterised by some similarities but also great differences in terms of political culture, political history and economy. Turkey can pride itself on a record of free and fair elections that dates back to 1950 (Kirischi – Sloat 2019: 4). This electoral-democratic history is however tainted by repeated military interventions in political affairs. The army for most of the country’s modern history never achieved the status of a professional and apolitical actor, something that is commonly considered to be a necessary feature of a liberal democracy (Huntigton 1957; 1996). Military officials invested themselves as the guarantors of Kemalism, and did not hesitate from intervening through military coups whenever the results of the democratic game threatened the principles upon which the republic was founded (Burak 2011). The democratic history of Bolivia, Poland and Hungary are more recent, with all the countries transitioning away from authoritarianism during what

Huntington defined as the third wave of democratisation (Huntington 1991). Despite the similarity in timing, even the process of democratic transitioning of these three countries was fairly distinct, with Hungary and Poland beginning the process of democratisation under the rule of one-party regimes, and Bolivia establishing a democratic government after a long series of military and civil-military dictatorships.

Their socio-economic indicators by the time their respective autocratisation process had begun also varied greatly. Without reporting here the entirety of the debate that stemmed from Lipset's modernisation theory (1959), assuming that democracy was indeed more likely to survive and consolidate in countries with a more developed socioeconomic, then we would find that all the countries under observation are characterised by elements that would run both against and in favour of a democratic breakdown.³ Poland and Hungary had literacy rates higher than 99% in 2015, while Turkey's and Bolivia's were around 90% in 2012 but with levels that would constantly be improved in the following years, in parallel to the worsening of their democracy. The Urbanisation levels were the highest in Turkey, Hungary and Bolivia with values close to 70% while Poland lagged behind at around 60%. Economic-wise the two Central European countries and Turkey could count on much higher average incomes per capita (<10.000 \$ in 2010) than Bolivia (3000 \$ ca), and also on a lower Gini coefficient. However, Bolivia is also the country that saw a betterment of both its economic indicators during its democratic erosions, a fate that was not shared by Turkey. One last note on the economic context, in Poland, Hungary and Bolivia the democratic transition coincided with an economic transition from an economy based on socialist and corporatist principles to neo-liberal arrangements. The non-democratic committed political elites of Hungary, Poland and Turkey were able to increase their powers without radically upsetting the countries' neo-liberal arrangements, limiting themselves to just slightly adapt them to further their political agenda (Fabry 2019: 127–157; Geva 2021; Adaman – Akbulut 2021). On the contrary, Bolivia has been ruled since 2005 by a government that is openly against the neo-liberal economic model of development (Mendonça Cunha Filho – Santaella Gonçalves 2010; Kaup 2010).

The subject of economic transitions paves the way to the introduction of the last aspect that is here introduced to highlight the different political features of the countries under analysis: their party systems and their main political cleavages. Latin America was for many years considered to be deprived of any political cleavages. Even those political parties that were not supported by a network of individual clientelism still enjoyed inter-classes support and were de-ideologised in nature (Dix 1989: 25–6, 33; David Myers 1998; Roberts – Wib-

3 The values relative to the socio-economic indicators are taken from the web page of the World Bank data, accessible at the following link: <https://data.worldbank.org/>

bels 1999). The idea of a continent with a lack of cleavages was further reinforced by the high volatility characterising most of the political systems in the region. Things started to change in the years following the economic transition and the adoption of those economic beliefs that became known as the 'Washington Consensus'. The decline of the left, the implementation of policies of decentralisation and the presence of an Indigenous majority in electoral districts became fertile ground for the ethnic parties' entrance into the political arena of many Latin American countries (Van Cott 2005: 225). In Bolivia, the most successful ethnic party, the MAS, aggregated the support of the indigenous people around their opposition to neoliberal reforms, such as the Land reform of 1996 (Van Cott 2005). De facto this led, at least in Bolivia, to the creation of a full-fledged political cleavage that sees in the indigenous people its main social component, in the anti-neoliberalism its value dimension and in the MAS party its main political organisation. Poland and Hungary's party systems were also characterised for most of their history by high volatility (Enyedi – Tóka, 2007; Bertoa – Biezen 2014). However, the main political cleavages that established themselves in the two Central European countries were religious in nature, even though the ethnic-nationalist sentiment is still strong and it is becoming much more prominent (Enyedi – Tóka 2007; Jasiewicz 2009; Bertoa – Biezen 2014). In Turkey, the main two parties, the CHB and the AKP, are the organisational expression of reinforcing cleavages that divide the Turkish society between centre and periphery, and between Islamists and secularists, since at least the early 2000s (Ozbudun 2013: 57).

From the picture sketched so far, it appears that the countries compared here have quite little in common from a political and economic perspective, then why choose to compare them? Mainly, this has been done for the similarity in the patterns of their autocratisation processes, which fit almost perfectly the definition set by Luhrmann and Lindberg of democratic erosion (2019). Through a comparative approach, if similarity in outcome (the particular expression of the educational cleavage in its organisational dimension) is observed from different designs then our findings would be characterised by a degree of generality that would cut across geographical regions, features of political and economic systems and democratic history (Sartori 1991: 250).

Before moving to the empirical study, it is then imperative to highlight the similarities in their process of democratic erosion since, as just explained, this is the main criteria behind the selection of these specific countries.

Luhrmann and Lindberg (2019) define democratic erosion as 'the process of gradual but substantial undermining of democratic norms without the abolishment of the key democratic institutions by incumbents which have legally accessed power'. How is it possible to undermine democracy without abolishing its key institutions? In all the countries observed this has taken place through the reframing of the concept of 'democracy' by the incumbents. During the

democratic erosion, the importance of all those institutional elements established to limit the leader's power and at the base of liberal democracy starts to be downplayed both in the public discourse and at a formal level.

The case of Venezuela is here reported for its exemplificative value. After Hugo Chavez was elected president of Venezuela in 1999 one of his first acts was the summoning of a constitutional assembly for the drafting of an entirely new constitution. The new chart came to 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 political system of the country was built (Canache 2012; Coker 2014: 88; Garcia-Guadilla – 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 – Mallen 2018), and allowed the elected leader to rise above the other political institutions.

Hungary's process of democratic erosion followed a similar pattern. The features of 'democracy' have not been formally altered by the drafting of a completely new constitution, but rather through a series of amendments. Fidesz's supermajority in the legislative assembly was what paved the way to the substantial undermining of core liberal-democratic principles. For instance, the separation of powers has been hampered by the executive extension of its control over the central bank and over the appointments for the judiciary offices. Checks and balances assured by some prerogatives of the parliamentary opposition have also been progressively scrapped (Sajó 2019; Drinóczi – Bień-Kacała 2019). This new reconfiguration of the Hungarian political system has been made explicit by Orbán himself when in 2014 he declared to the public 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: 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 parallel the autocratisation of Turkey and Poland (Drinóczi – Bień-Kacała 2019). Similarly, in Bolivia Evo Morales's first election in 2005 was accompanied by the drafting and ratification of a new constitution that strengthened the idea of popular and indigenous participation. The hollowing of the Bolivian 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 2015, reaching its apex with Morales's removal of the presidential terms limit through its control over the Constitutional Court (Velasco Guachalla et al. 2021).

Methodology

The methodology adopted to test our hypotheses closely follows the one illustrated by Pavlovic et al. (2019) in their article ‘Education, Authoritarianism, and Party Preference in the Balkans’. Each step will be explained in more detail in the section covering the actual analysis. In more general terms, binomial logistic regressions are used to verify the correlation between education level and political support, then a one-way ANOVA analysis will assess the connection between liberal values/democratic support and education, and Kappas comparisons will finally tell us the level of influence solely by liberal values and democratic support in accounting for the difference in political preferences by the different education groups. The countries, of course, differ from those studied by Pavlovic et al since their aim was to explore the educational cleavage in the Balkan region while in this case the focus is on countries undergoing a process of autocratisation.

Datasets

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 the political opposition needs time to mobilise. Furthermore, data about voting intentions from surveys conducted too long after the beginning of the phenomenon could be invalidated by the citizens’ disillusionments with the electoral process, since it has to be expected that it progressively becomes less free and less fair. Moreover, the citizens’ fear of an autocratic elite that has already solidified its power might also lead to untrustworthy responses.

Concepts operationalisation

A three-level categorical variable on the highest education level attained by the respondents is generally used in the analysis as the main 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, 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 four countries are going to be observed in their relation to respondents’ education and their

values: 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. utilised a conventional scale of authoritarianism composed of nine items obtainable from the EVS and WVS questionnaires: whether (1) 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: 302), which in turn re-elaborated it from Altemeyer's Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale (ibidem).

In Altemeyer's original work, authoritarianism was conceptualised 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).⁴ In the RWA scale the first five items measure the latent variable 'conventionalism', while the later four the 'authoritarian submission and aggression' (ibidem).

In this paper, the model's fit for each one of the countries singularly will be asserted through Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the scale's items (Ariely – Davidov 2011).⁵ 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 four questionnaires.

The dimension of the democracy-autocracy preference (DAP) scale is operationalised 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 – Davidov 2011). After having conducted a CAF in all the single countries 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

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

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

the main cause lies in the fourth item 'having a democratic political system', and in the broad arrangement 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.

Methodological and theoretical limitations

Before continuing the reader should be aware of some limitations that are intrinsic to the employed methodology. The first weakness lies in the small number of cases considered. Some countries whose autocratisation patterns also fit the model sketched above, such as Venezuela in the early 2000s, had to be excluded from this study on methodological grounds, namely for the lack of necessary data. Other countries, like Brazil and India, have instead been covered by the WVS surveys during the years of their democratic erosions, and their inclusions would certainly fit the aim of this investigation. However, a lack of familiarity with these two countries' cultural and political contexts led to their exclusion, limiting this way the potential coverage of this research. As Sartori argued in his famous article 'comparing and miscomparing', there is not a definitive number of cases after which it is possible to attribute to the findings of a comparative study the character of universality (Sartori 1991), this should also be remembered in case the sought cleavage exists and presents the same features in all the four countries.

A more conceptual weakness lies in the fact that the Altemeyer model of authoritarianism was developed considering right-wing authoritarianism, and in the case of Bolivia is used here to test the authoritarian personality of citizens who are living under a left-leaning autocratic elite. If the specific political orientation of authoritarian government results in specific features associated with the authoritarian values of a given society is a hypothesis worth investigating. However, given the generality of the dimensions of conventionalism and submission to authority that constitute the authoritarian model, it is believed that this factor would not invalidate the result substantially. The reader should be nonetheless aware of this fact, especially in case of a divergence in the outcomes between Bolivia and the other three countries.

IV. Analysis

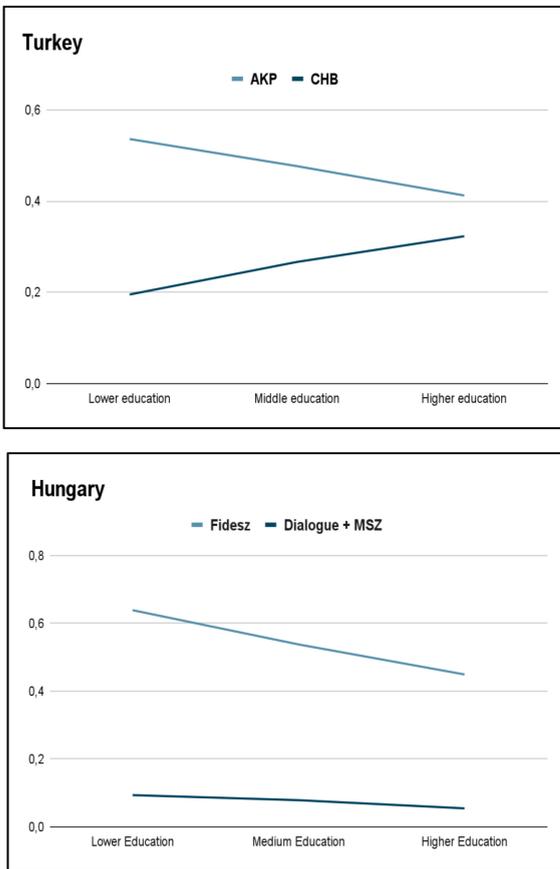
Testing hypothesis H1: Different education groups are more likely to vote for different political parties.

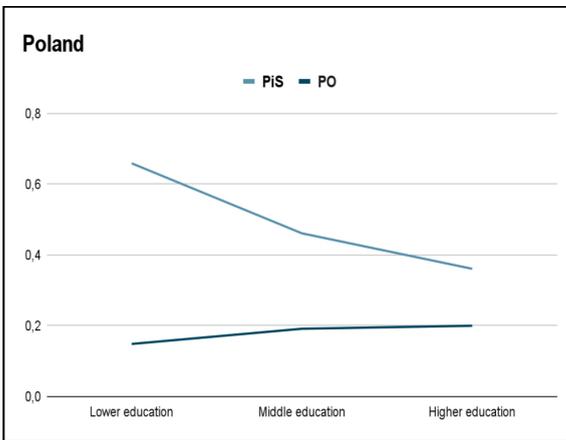
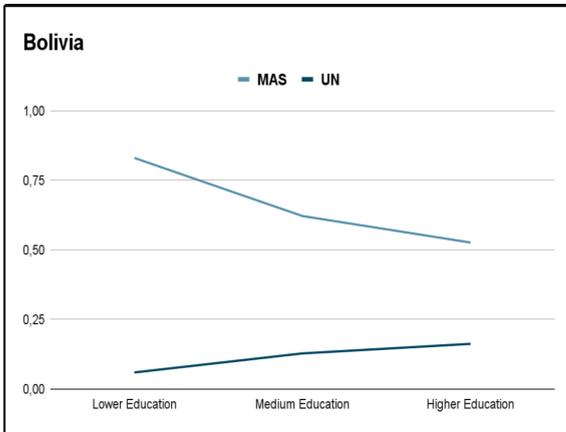
In order to test Hypothesis H1, a series of binomial logistic regressions for each country have been conducted with the voting for the incumbent political party versus voting for any other party as the dependent variable. A second logistic

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, higher education and voting for the incumbent party were negatively correlated in all the countries observed, but 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 have run together in different coalitions to challenge Orban and his party ‘Fidesz’.

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 levels





Before continuing with the testing of the main hypothesis, a preliminary step consists of identifying the parties' stance on the main values and concepts that the EVS authoritarianism and DPA scales try to capture. If it appears that the parties more strongly supported by the less-educated citizens are also characterised by a 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 organisational 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 rigorous testing later on. Nonetheless, results in line with the starting hypothesis would further justify the direction of this study and could offer a base for the interpretation of divergent statistical results.

Through data obtained from the Manifesto Project Database, Table 1 highlights 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 Au- thority: 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 –3.770	0.000 – 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 counter-intuitively, it is possible to see that some of the parties leading the process of democratic erosions are also emphasising their support for constitutionalism. This could be explained by their efforts at legitimising their rule and increasing their power through constitutional amendments, as it was mentioned in one of the previous sections.

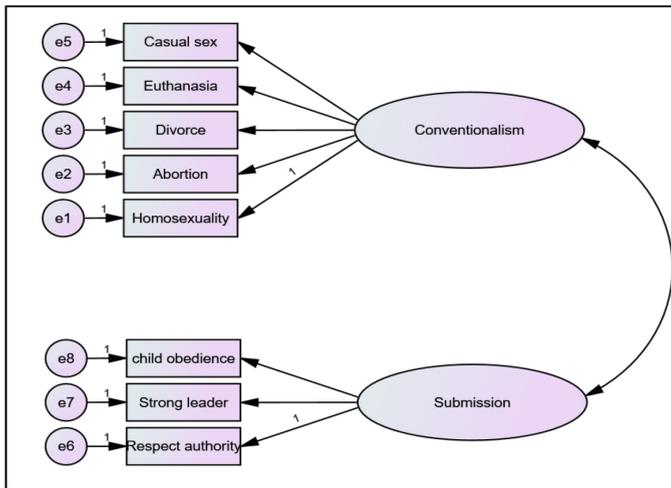
The other scores seem more in line with the study’s hypotheses. In the case of Poland between 2014 and 2018, the PiS manifestos decreased their emphasis on democracy to stress the importance of greater political authority and traditional values (the main dimensions behind the EVS authoritarian scale).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

Testing Hypothesis H1a: 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-group

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 countries. The software employed for the tests, AMOS.16, is not capable of computing variables presenting missing values, so an expectation-maximisation algorithm has been used to bypass the issue. The model analysed is the one depicted in Figure 3. The eight 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 reconceptualisation 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 of the EVS Authoritarianism Model



The alpha value of the nine 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 from those results despite the elimination of one of the items. The alpha reported in Table 2 is the standardised one because some of the items in the survey were operationalised on different scales⁶.

6 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.

Table 2: EVS Authoritarianism Scale: Goodness of Fit Statistics of CFA⁷

Country	Standardised Alfa ⁸	RMSEA	CFI
Poland	.703	0.070	0.961
Bolivia	.580	0.031	0.980
Hungary	.660	0.066	0.954
Turkey	.755		

The model’s Goodness of Fit for Turkey, like for all the others, is acceptable according to the literature. However, the standardised factor loading of the items associated with the ‘submission to authority’ dimension is non-existent.⁹ The only reason why the model is statistically acceptable appears then to be the strong loading of the items of the sole dimension of ‘conventionalism’.

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

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 Stubager’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.

Stubager in his research went a step further, following more closely Bartolini and Maier’s conceptualisation 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 be-

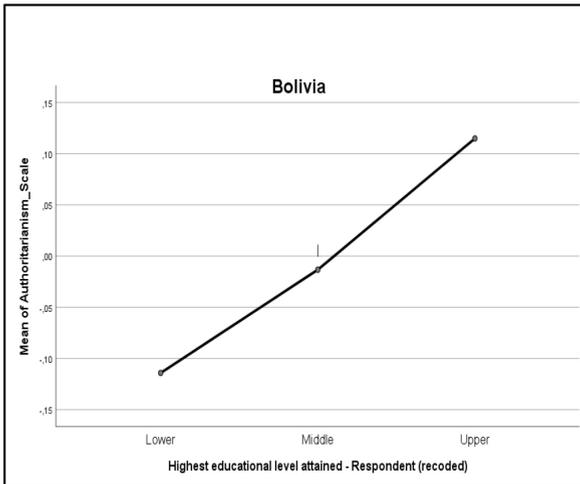
7 The goodness of the statistics of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis are interpreted according to the guidelines set by Schreiber, James B. et al. in ‘Reporting Structural Equation Modeling and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results: A Review’ (2010).

8 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).

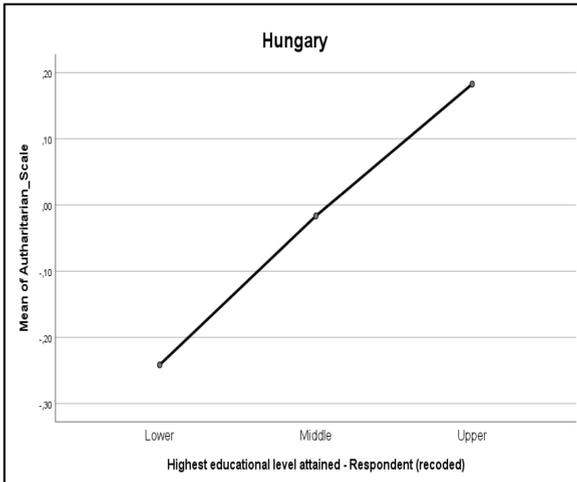
9 The Factor loading of Turkey’s ‘EVS authoritarian model’ can be found in the annex.

tween the two variables. A connection which is moderate in Central Europe $\eta^2 > 0.06$, and weaker but still statistically significant in Bolivia with $\eta^2 > 0.03$.¹⁰

Figure 4: Relationship between authoritarianism and education

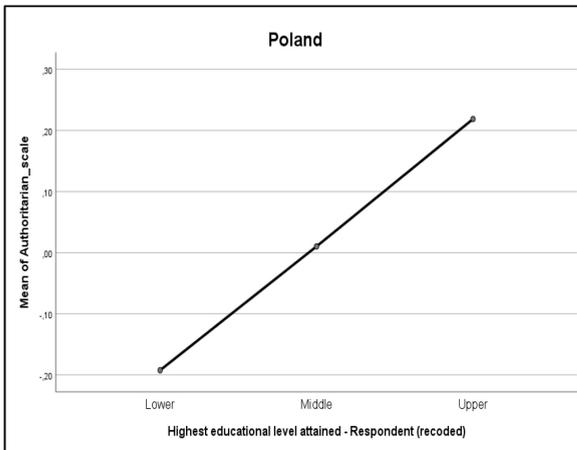


$F(2, 1504)=49,06$ $p<0,001$ $\eta^2=0,061$



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

¹⁰ 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/>. Rules of thumb in statistics are usually frowned upon. However, at least in regard to the Central European case-studies, these results seem in line with the theoretical literature.



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

Hypothesis 1b: Liberal-authoritarian values cause a difference in voting behaviour 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 summarised in Table 3.

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 countries and respective parties, except for the anti-Fidesz coalition in Hungary, for which the two variables were not significantly correlated.

Table 3

Party	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%
* not statistically significant				

Interpretation of the findings

The analysis conducted thus far demonstrates the existence of a full-fledged cleavage in all the four countries observed. The lines of this cleavage separate the less 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 characterise 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 – Tas, 2017: 236). Another reason-

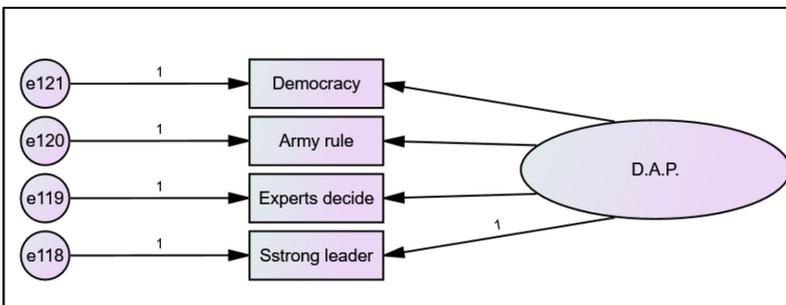
able hypothesis is linked to the supply-side dimension of politics. The clearer the party's stance on an issue the more accurately voters may decide whether to accept the party's pleas for support (Pavlovic et al. 2019). Adopting this perspective, the MAS would just be better able to promote (or 'would be more capable of promoting') those authoritarian-oriented values that characterise the less-educated Bolivians, yet the scores in Table 1 also run against this theory.

Testing Hypothesis 2a: Less educated citizens will prefer an autocratic regime.

The analysis of the previous chapter provided some evidence in favour 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 hypothesised that the set of values linking these social groups to these political parties was to be searched for within the authoritarian-liberal value 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 characterising their average member's personality (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 favourable option than the democratic status quo. The democratic commitment is going to be tested by adopting the DAP model as the 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, in this case an expectation-maximisation 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 standardisation 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	-	-	-
*not statistically significant			

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 countries. 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.¹¹ 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

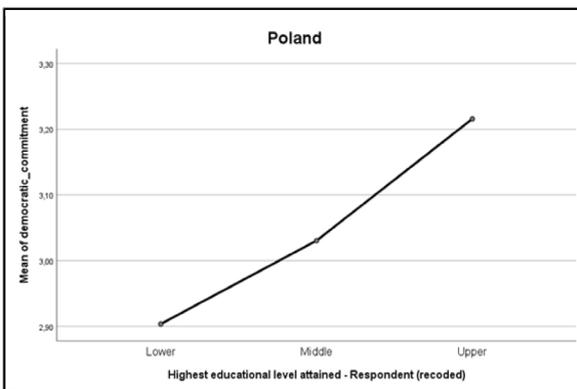
¹¹ Sokolov’s reasoning was developed for another set of other items of the EVS but mutatis mutandis it also covers the subject of the current analysis of the DAP model.

sceptical of the army’s involvement in politics or it might be characterised 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 characterised 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.

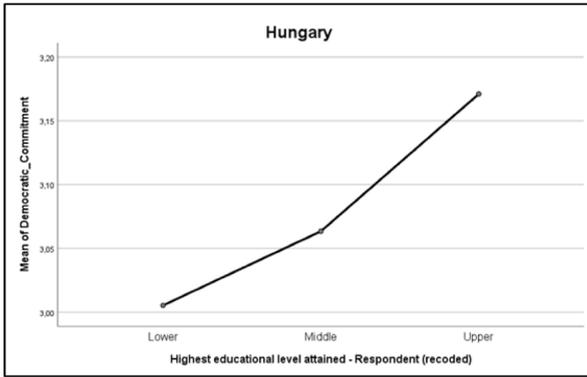
The course of action adopted was then to construct and operationalise a scale of autocratic preferences despite the worse CFA results, and repeat the analysis of the previous section.

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 a 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 country of Bolivia diverge from those of the rest. The Bolivian citizens who have attained a middle-level education are on average more sceptical 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 characterising 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.

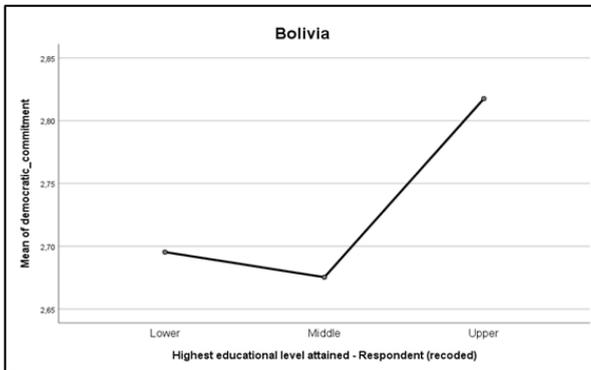
Figure 6: Relationship between democratic preferences and education



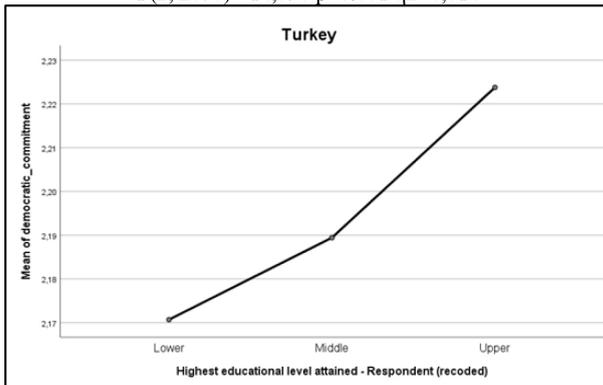
$$F(2, 1299) = 41,686 \quad p < 0.001 \quad \eta^2 = 0,060$$



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



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



$F(2, 2287)=1,054$ $p<0349^*$ $\eta^2=0,001^*$
 *not statistically significant

Testing Hypothesis 2b: Autocratic preferences cause a difference in voting behaviour among different educated social segments in democratic-eroding countries.

With the introduction of the DAP scale as a control variable, the Gross-Net kappa 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 cannot be accepted or rejected in toto, but it is instead context-dependent.

Table 5

Party	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	-0,14%
* not statistically significant				

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 despite this strong correlation between the two variables in Poland, the country is also the one with the highest level of preference for democracy in absolute terms. 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’s outcomes are once again open to speculation. To start, a higher-than-average prefer-

ence for a strong leader has been found.¹² 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, one of 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 income inequality can be reduced only by increasing the powers of the executive.

Another peculiarity of Bolivia is the strong preference for a technocratic system of decision-making within the more educated strata of society. The 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 influence wielded by the technocrats of the Ministry of Finance (Dargent 2015: 159). Given the general opposition to Morales by the more educated, pro-technocratic stances may be adopted as a self-identification mechanism, to further differentiate themselves from the anti-technocratic and more populist values of the lower educated 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. 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 versus 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, this trend has also been shared by the APK and the PiS (Table 1). This peculiarity might be traced back to the empirical level, and the intensity of the process of autocratisation affecting the country, but further research are needed to confirm this hypothesis.

V. Conclusion

That a political competition between non-democratic committed elites and an organised opposition emerges in democratic eroding countries was already evident without the need for extensive research. That these two political camps

¹² The relative data can be found in the annex

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 autocratisation. However, attempting to remain faithful to Bayern and Maier's conceptualisation of the term this study wanted to investigate the cleavage in all three of its classic elements.

Identified was the socio-structural element (the group of citizens who have attained only a lower level of education) and its organisational element (the party of the incumbent), what was lacking at the end of the first part of the 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 led to hypothesising other values that could explain the support given to the incumbent party by the less educated. For instance, the literature found a link between education and democratic support. Not only is this link confirmed to exist in three of the four case studies, but in Hungary, these different degrees of democratic commitment explain the support, or lack of it, for Fidesz.

Finally, this study ends with two final notes. The first is that overall education, for different reasons according to the context, remains an effective method to reducing people's allure for those politicians endangering our democracies. The second is to remember that this research hasn't considered those other cleavages that might exist in autocratising democracies alongside the educational one. While recognising the importance of education and the role played by the more educated in the defence of democracy, we should then refrain from falling into an over-simplistic and elitist view of the phenomenon.

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