

Disenchanted or Discerning: Voter Turnout in Post-Communist Countries

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ABSTRACT

Conventional wisdom holds that variation in voter turnout in the first decade and a half of post-communist elections has been a function of widespread disenchantment with political and economic developments since the collapse of communism. We present a rival theoretical argument, which is simply that we should expect post-communist citizens are to turn out in greater numbers for elections with higher stakes. Using an aggregate-level cross-national time-series data set of 137 presidential and parliamentary elections in nineteen post-communist countries, we find much stronger empirical support for the stakes-based approach to explaining variation in voter turnout than we do for the disenchantment-based approach. Intriguingly, the stakes of an election can apparently be affected by such disparate factors as electoral institutions, international constraints on policy making, and concerns about the long-term viability of democratic transition. Taken together, our findings offer a theoretically integrated picture of voter participation in the post-communist world, and, more broadly, contribute new insights into political participation in new democracies.

In the first decade and a half of the post-communist transition, scholars of political participation noted with concern the apparent dramatic decline of voter turnout throughout East-Central Europe, Southeast Europe, and the former Soviet Union. From initial rates of 80% and higher in the first wave of open and competitive elections, average turnout rates in ex-communist countries have fallen to below 50% in recent years (Bernhagen 2006). Observers did not have to search far for viable explanations of this trend; disenchantment as a result of continued social and economic hardship, political and economic corruption, and a sense of exclusion as former communist era elites reconsolidated themselves and their hold on new governments was identified as the culprit (Mason 2003/2004; Krastev 2002; Kobach 2001; Nelson 1996).

This temporal downward pattern has masked another stylized fact, however: tremendous variation in voter participation can be found across both space and time in the post-communist world. Turnout as low as 43% can be found in 1991 (Poland) and 2004 (Slovakia); turnout over 85% can be found in 1990 (Romania) and 2004 (Georgia).

-- Insert Figure 1 About Here --

Our goal is to provide an explanation for this variation. Our principal finding is that rather than being driven by disenchantment, patterns of voter participation in post-communist countries can best be explained by what is at stake in a given election. In particular, turnout is higher in elections for more important institutions, when countries face fewer external constraints on policy making, and when the long-term political future of the country is more questionable. To provide empirical support for our argument, we rely on an original data set that covers the

broadest possible set of reasonably democratic elections in post-communist countries, encompassing 137 national elections from 19 countries over a 15 year period.¹

The paper makes three important contributions to the literature on voter turnout. First, it provides two unified theoretical perspectives on turnout that each generate a wide variety of observable implications. This allows us to test these theoretical approaches using a large number of variables, many of which are among the usual suspects in any paper on turnout but a number of which are not. While the particular hypotheses we test in the paper are obviously constructed with the post-communist context in mind, the more general classifications of disenchantment and stakes-based approaches to turnout can travel more widely. Second, we provide the first empirical test of the conventional wisdom regarding the relationship between discontentment and aggregate turnout levels in post-communist countries, and find that the conventional wisdom is actually misplaced. Finally, to the best of our knowledge our dataset, which includes 137 presidential and parliamentary elections, is by far the most extensive used to date to test turnout hypotheses in the post-communist context.

In the following section, we elaborate on our two theoretical perspectives, suggesting a set of testable hypotheses for each. We then briefly discuss the original dataset we constructed to test these hypotheses, as well as the statistical methods employed in our tests. Next, we present the empirical evidence that substantiates our claim that variation in post-communist turnout can best be explained by the stakes of elections as opposed to the relative disenchantment of the electorate at the time of the election. We conclude by assessing the implications of these findings for our understanding of political behavior in post-communist countries, as well as the more general academic literature on electoral turnout.

¹ We describe the data and the case universe in greater detail below.

Disenchantment vs. Electoral Stakes

The received wisdom regarding electoral participation in post-communist countries is that low turnout can be explained by disenchantment. For example, Mason (2003/04) writes that “citizens of the post-communist states in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union remain discontented, dissatisfied with the economy, and cynical about politics, and are increasingly staying away from the polls on election day” (48). The legacy of sudden and persistent double-digit unemployment, rising prices and increasingly unaffordable goods and services along with the state’s retreat from the provision of social services are all offered as reasons for voter disenchantment (Mason 2003/4, 48-49; Tworzecki 2003, 168-169; Bell 2001, 45). Scholars also cite rising disillusion and falling levels of political efficacy as another set of reasons why post-communist citizens are staying away from the polls; post-communist politics is, for many, marked by a sense of exclusion, corruption, and indeed outright criminality in some cases (Hutcheson 2004; White and McAllister 2004; Mason 2003/4; Kostadinova 2003).

In the literature on turnout in more established democracies, however, the question of voter turnout has often been cast in a different light. Rather than focus on the decision to vote as an act based on accepting or rejecting a particular set of political and economic institutions, scholars have considered voter turnout as a cost-benefit analysis to be resolved by individuals in a decision theoretic manner.² In these types of accounts, the decision boils down to whether a voter believes that costs of voting outweigh the perceived benefit of her candidate/party being elected, weighted by the likelihood that her vote will actually have an effect (be “pivotal”) on whether or not her candidate/party is elected.³ While debate continues as to whether there can

² For an overview, see Morton 1991; 2006, ch.2.

³ Given the generally low likelihood of ever being pivotal, subsequent work along this line has focused on whether voters gain ancillary benefits simply from the act of voting, such as a feeling of fulfilling one's civic duty (Aldrich 1993, Morton 2006).

ever be a satisfactory decision theoretic explanation for why people vote given the generally low likelihood of ever being pivotal in any given election (e.g. Grofman 1993; Green and Shapiro 1994; Friedman 1996, Franklin 2004; Morton 2006), a central insight from this approach is a useful counterpoint to the standard disenchantment story in post-communist countries: perhaps post-communist voters are more likely to participate in elections where they care more about the outcomes.⁴ If, as Aldrich (1993) has argued, the voting decision is a low-cost, low-expected benefit type of decision, then changes in the stakes of an election might be enough to tip significant numbers of voters into either staying home or casting a ballot.

In the remainder of this section we develop a number of testable hypotheses that stem from these two contrasting central propositions: (1) Voters ought to turn out in lower numbers the more disenchanted they are with developments in their country since the onset of the transition; and (2) Voters ought to turn out in lower numbers the less important the election. We consider each of these in turn.

Disenchantment

The standard way to conceive of disenchantment in post-communist countries is in terms of economic and political developments. Turning first to economic factors, we consider three different ways to identify the conditions under which citizens are likely to be more disenchanted with the state of the economy.⁵ First, we can examine standard macro-economic conditions in

⁴ There are of course other insights one can take from the cost-benefit approach to turnout. We could explore whether voters are more likely to participate in elections where they feel they have a greater chance of being pivotal (e.g., close elections), but this raises enormous methodological challenges in terms of aggregate-level measurement in multi-party systems and would almost certainly require the use of survey data. Alternatively, we could explore whether citizens are more likely to participate in elections where they have a larger variance in utility across different candidates or parties. Such an approach would also certainly require the use of survey data to test. Both approaches would represent interesting avenues for future research, but are beyond the scope of our current analysis.

⁵ There is little consensus in the turnout literature writ large on the role of economic factors. By far the most mixed findings have resulted from the proposition that turnout deviates from an expected value in response to changes in

the time leading up to a given election. Second, we can look at the overall level of economic development and/or quality of life in a given country at the time of an election. Finally, we can look at changes in economic conditions since the start of the transition. In all three cases, we would expect that the worse economic conditions are, the more disenchanted citizens are likely to be with the state of the economy, and therefore the lower turnout should be. While the three measures tap into different potential sources of economic discontent, evidence for any of these three hypotheses would offer support for the disenchantment approach; evidence to support all three would provide particularly strong support.

Similarly, we can consider different observable implications of political disenchantment. If lower turnout is a function of disappointment over the failure of democracy to become firmly established in countries, then we should expect to see lower turnout at lower levels of democratic consolidation.⁶ Another form of political disappointment could stem from a country's relationship to European expansion. If the European Union functions as the ultimate guarantor of democratic consolidation, then we might suppose that citizens of countries that are farther

the state of the economy. In the West and some developing democracies, this relationship takes three possible forms: "mobilization," where economic hardships encourage people to enter the political world to redress grievances (Aguilar and Pacek 2000; Radcliff 1992; Schlozman and Verba 1979); "withdrawal," where a sour economy encourages citizens to quit the political process to focus on less peripheral concerns (Jesuit 2003; Radcliff 1992; Caldeira, Patterson, and Markko 1985; Rosenstone 1982; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Sniderman and Brody 1977); and of course, no effect at all, with economic downturns neither politicizing nor alienating voters (Lehoucq and Wall 2004; Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Fiorina 1978; Arcelus and Meltzer 1975). For better or worse, the scant literature devoted to voter participation in the post-communist world is a microcosm of the larger field of turnout research, in that it is characterized by inconsistency more than anything. Pacek's (1994) aggregate-level analysis of four post-communist elections found that economic adversity depressed turnout, a finding also reported by Fowler (2004) in Hungary. Meanwhile, Kostadinova's (2003) more detailed aggregate study showed no economic effect on turnout at all. Individual-level analyses report similarly mixed results, with Wyman and White (1995) finding little impact of economics on the 1993 Russian Duma election, and Bahry and Lipsmeyer (2001) finding positive evaluations of the economy actually decreased the likelihood of voting in the 1995 Russian Duma contest.

⁶ Here we are heading into less charted waters in terms of the turnout literature, largely because democratic consolidation is taken for granted in the established democracies dominating most of the scholarly work on turnout. Tangentially related, however, is research indicating that that political interest and efficacy are crucial in mobilizing post-communist voters (Uhlener and Harper 2003; Tworzecki 2003; Szelenyi et al 1996).

from EU membership might be more disenchanted with political developments and thus, according to the disenchantment framework, less likely to vote.⁷

Electoral Stakes

Our alternative theoretical framework suggests that post-communist citizens will participate in greater numbers in elections where there is more at stake.⁸ While there are numerous ways to observe variability in the stakes of different elections, we focus on a number of theoretically motivated hypotheses that are suitable for systematic comparisons across space and time: institutional arrangements; international constraints on policy making; the ethnic composition of society; the effect of democratization; and overall levels of economic wealth.

Prior research on turnout has focused a great deal of attention on the question of variation in turnout for elections for different types of institutions (e.g., executive vs. legislative elections, elections in presidential vs. parliamentary systems).⁹ From our perspective, the question of whether a given election is for a parliament or president is much less important than the combinations of governing system and election type. Therefore, rather than hypothesize that presidential or parliamentary elections ought to have higher turnout, we instead expect to see higher turnout in elections for “dominant” institutions (presidents in presidential systems, parliaments in parliamentary systems) than in elections for “dominated” institutions (parliaments in presidential systems and presidents in parliamentary systems). Similarly, we ought to expect

⁷ A third cause of political disappointment is corruption, which has attracted more and more attention in the scholarly literature on post-communist politics (Cokgezen 2004; Hellman, Jones and Kaufmann 2000). We do not include corruption in our list of observable implications of the disenchantment approach simply because we do not have adequate data to test this hypothesis across our entire sample. We did, however, test the effect of corruption on turnout across a limited sub-sample of the data for which corruption data were available, and found absolutely no relationship between levels of corruption and turnout.

⁸ Throughout the paper, we refer to these interchangeably as stakes-based hypotheses, electoral stakes hypotheses, or electoral importance hypotheses.

⁹ See for example Fornos, Power, and Garand 2004; Perea 2002; Perez-Linan 2001; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998; Jackman and Miller 1995; Jackman 1987; and Powell 1986.

minimal turnout differences in parliamentary and presidential elections in semi-presidential systems.

Another way in which the stakes of a given election could be lowered is by policy decisions being removed from the domain of the incoming government because of international constraints. In the post-communist context, two such arrangements are particularly germane. Perhaps most importantly, joining the EU requires the adoption of a significant amount of European law, which restricts options available to national level governments (Vachudova 2005). Thus in contrast to the disenchantment approach, a stakes-based approach predicts lower turnout as EU membership becomes more likely (and is eventually assured). Another international constraint on domestic policy making in many post-communist countries was participation in an International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality program in return for access to IMF funding and policy advice. A stakes-based hypothesis would therefore predict that the more time a country had remaining in an IMF program (if any), the lower the turnout.

Another factor that could increase the potential stakes of an election is ethnic heterogeneity. To the extent that losing elections in ethnically divided societies can lead to more permanent shifts in the balance of power, we would expect elections in ethnically heterogeneous countries, *ceteris paribus*, to be seen as more important in the eyes of voters than elections in more ethnically homogenous countries.

A stakes-based approach also suggests that turnout should be higher in elections following periods of democratization. To the extent that democratization makes politics more accessible to more citizens, we would expect more of them to exercise their right to vote. Moreover, in elections with genuine competition and real choices, the chance that entrenched actors will lose positions of prominence increases, thus raising the stakes for all involved.

Finally, one could also argue that the stakes of any election are higher the poorer a country is. Consistent with general arguments in the literature about the emergence of post-materialist values (Manza et al. 1995; Inglehart 1990, 1977), we might suppose that as countries' standards of living increase, people will in general worry less about politics, and, therefore, electoral turnout should decline.

Table 1 (below) concisely summarizes these hypotheses. Readers should note in particular the hypotheses (EU Status, Wealth) for which there are *opposing* predictions across the two theoretical approaches.

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Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses empirically, we constructed an original dataset consisting of 137 parliamentary and presidential elections in nineteen former communist countries over a fifteen year period.¹⁰ We only excluded elections that were so clearly flawed in the eyes of outside observers so as to cast doubt not only on the fairness of the election but on the very credibility of basic electoral statistics, such as turnout figures. As a consequence we excluded elections in countries rated as “Not Free” by Freedom House during the year in which the election was held, such as elections in the Central Asian former Soviet republics, Azerbaijan, and Belarus. We also

¹⁰ The following elections certified as “mostly free and fair” make up our database. For legislative contests: Albania (1991, 1992, 1996, 1997, 2001), Armenia (1990, 1995, 1999, 2003), Bulgaria (1990, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2001), Croatia (1990, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2003), the Czech Republic (1990, 1992, 1996, 1998, 2002), Estonia (1990, 1992, 1995, 1999, 2003), Georgia (1990, 1995, 1999, 2004), Hungary (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002), Latvia (1990, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2002), Lithuania (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004), Macedonia (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002), Moldova (1990, 1994, 1998, 2001), Mongolia (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000), Poland (1989, 1991, 1993, 1997, 2001), Romania (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004), Russia (1990, 1993, 1995, 1999, 2003), Slovakia (1990, 1992, 1994, 1998, 2002), Slovenia (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004), Ukraine (1990, 1994, 1998, 2002). For presidential contests: Armenia (1996, 2003), Bulgaria (1992, 1996, 2001), Croatia (1992, 1997, 2000), Georgia (1995, 2000, 2004), Lithuania (1993, 1997, 2002-2003), Macedonia (1994, 1999), Moldova (1991, 1996), Mongolia (1993, 1997, 2001), Poland (1991, 1995, 2000), Romania (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004), Russia (1991, 1996, 2000, 2004), Slovakia (1999, 2004), Slovenia (1990, 1997, 2002), Ukraine (1991, 1994, 1999, 2004). The results are nearly identical if we include the pre-1996 Kyrgyz and Belarusian elections, which were present in earlier versions of the analysis but have now been dropped in an effort to avoid including countries where we do not have mostly free and fair elections across the entire time period.

excluded elections in Bosnia and Yugoslavia, because the former is still largely governed as an international protectorate, whereas the latter has too short of an electoral track record since the fall of Milošević.

The unit of analysis is the individual national election.¹¹ We include all elections for national office in which the whole electorate had the opportunity to vote: any first-round parliamentary and any first or second round presidential election.¹² Concurrent parliamentary and presidential elections are treated as a single election but different rounds of presidential elections are counted as two elections, since turnout can (and often does) differ significantly. The dependent variable in all of the analyses is turnout as a percentage of registered voters.¹³ The coding of all variables can be found in Appendix II.

Given the difficulties of collecting data on post-communist countries, we are pleased to note that there are only four variables in the analysis for which we are missing data.¹⁴ Rather than list-wise delete observations in a dataset with an N of 137, we employ the following strategy to deal with missing data.¹⁵ We replace all instances of missing data in a given variable with a constant value (we use 0), and we simultaneously create a dummy variable identifying all of the cases where we have made this replacement. By including this dummy variable in any analysis using the variable in question, we can interpret the coefficient for the original variable as

¹¹ We include only parliamentary and presidential elections; we do not include referenda.

¹² We exclude parliamentary runoffs in mixed or SMD systems, as voting occurs only in certain electoral districts in these cases.

¹³ The main source for these turnout statistics was the IDEA website <http://www.idea.int/vt/index.cfm> supplemented where necessary by national election statistics. While turnout as a proportion of voting age population is also a desired measure, much of these data were absent from the IDEA data set, as was the necessary population data to calculate the scores for missing cases. Using these figures would have required deleting a significant proportion of the observations from the dataset, so we rely instead on turnout as a percentage of registered voters.

¹⁴ All four are economic variables: human development indicators (7 missing); unemployment lagged one year (18 missing); inflation lagged one year (18 missing); and per-capita TVs (21 missing).

¹⁵ For dangers of list-wise deletion, see King et al. 2001.

the substantive effect of the variable for the cases for which we actually have data.¹⁶ For clarity of presentation, we omit the coefficients and standard errors of the dummy variables identifying cases of missing data from the presentation of our results, but they are available from the authors upon request. A series of dummy variables identifying the electoral sequence number are also included in all regressions (except where explicitly noted) and are similarly omitted from the tables presented in the text; these results are also included in the materials available from the authors upon request.

Considering that our dataset is a cross-sectionally dominated panel and given the presence of serial auto-correlation and panel heteroskedasticity, we ran a series of Prais-Winsten regression models with heteroskedastic panels corrected standard errors.¹⁷ Since we were interested in both the cross-country and the within-country effect of different variables, the statistical tables presented in the text of the paper are all random-effects models (although, as noted in the previous paragraph, we have election sequence controls in the models). In Appendix I, we present a series of robustness tests illustrating the effect of a variety of different specifications on our base model, such as a fixed effects model, including a lagged dependent variable, and adding both fixed effects and a lagged dependent variable in the analysis.¹⁸

¹⁶ To illustrate this point, note that the coefficient for the variable in question will be exactly the same regardless of how the missing values are replaced (e.g., 0, 1, the mean of the variable, etc.); only the coefficient on the dummy variable identifying the missing cases will change. We do not use Amelia (or a similar process) to impute missing data because most of our missing data is from elections that occur very early in the transition period, and we fear that a data generating process based primarily on data from later in the transition period might not be appropriate for the early transition period.

¹⁷ The models presented were run using the `xtpcse` command in Stata 9.1.

¹⁸ Readers should also note that all models include a constant term, but given the fact that we are omitting numerous variables from the presentation of the regression tables, we also omit the constant term, which is intuitively meaningless without the full set of coefficients. The constant term is also included in the full regression results available from the authors upon request.

Empirical Analysis and Discussion

We begin our analysis by considering the empirical evidence at the heart of the stakes-based argument: do more citizens participate in elections for more important institutions? Table 2 presents the regression results we use to answer this question.

-- INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE --

Models 1 and 2 introduce two of the most common institutional variables: whether the election is a parliamentary or presidential election¹⁹; and whether the election occurs in a parliamentary, semi-presidential, or presidential system.²⁰ By themselves, none of these variables have any statistically significant effects on turnout across our elections. However, when we interact these variables to identify high and low importance elections in the manner predicted by the stakes-based approach, we find a very different story. Model 3 demonstrates that both high-importance elections (parliamentary elections in parliamentary systems, presidential elections in presidential systems, and simultaneous elections in mixed systems) and medium-importance elections (parliamentary or presidential elections in semi-presidential systems) have statistically and substantively higher turnout than low-importance elections (parliamentary elections in

¹⁹ We also include a dummy variable for simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections; the omitted category is presidential election.

²⁰ As our dataset contains both presidential and parliamentary elections, we do not present results testing the effect of electoral rules in parliamentary (e.g., proportional representation (PR) vs. single member districts (SMD), levels of thresholds for distribution of seats in proportional representation systems); moreover, these distinctions do little to distinguish between the disenchantment and stakes-based approaches. However, turnout scholars may be interested to note that when we ran such models using only the parliamentary elections, we found that both PR and mixed-PR systems have *lower* turnout than straight SMD elections. It should be noted that this finding is the opposite from what previous researchers have found in both the post-communist context (Kostadinova 2003) and in a much wider cross-national setting (Blais and Dobrzynska 1998).

We code presidential, parliamentary, and semi-presidential systems on the basis of the Frye, Hellman, and Tucker executive power index (original version available at <http://www.wvs.princeton.edu/jtucker/pcelections.html>; updated version received in personal communication from Timothy Frye). If the president scores above a 10 in executive powers, the country is coded as a presidential system. If the president scores above a five but less than 11 and is popularly elected, the country is coded as a semi-presidential system. If the president is not popularly elected or scores below a six, the country is coded as a parliamentary system. We also code all Soviet republics as parliamentary systems through the August 1991 coup attempt, at which point they are all assigned their starting value based on the index. Mongolia, which is not included in the index, is coded as a semi-presidential system. Readers should note that these objective rules lead us to very similar coding decisions as found in Armingeon 2005.

presidential systems or presidential elections in parliamentary systems), the omitted category in the analysis. Indeed, all else equal, high-importance elections had almost 8.5% higher turnout than low-importance elections.

-- INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE --

While intuitively easy to interpret, coding the importance of elections simply as dummy variables obscures the fact that there may be different effects for some of the specific combinations of types of elections and types of governing systems (e.g., parliamentary elections in parliamentary systems may differ from presidential elections in presidential systems). Therefore, in Model 4 we fully specify all of the possible interaction effects.²¹ As the coefficients on the constitutive terms can not be interpreted as unconditional marginal effects (Brambor, Clark and Golder 2006), Table 3 displays predicted turnout levels – holding all other variables constant at their means – for the different possible interactions.²² Two observations seem to be particularly important. First, all of the predicted effects are in the correct direction. Predicted turnout always decreases – for both parliamentary and presidential elections – as the election becomes correspondingly less important due to institutional arrangements (e.g., turnout in a parliamentary election in a presidential system < a parliamentary election in a semi-presidential system < a parliamentary election in a parliamentary system).²³ Similarly the two high-importance elections have the highest predicted turnout of the six combinations and the two low-importance elections have the lowest predicted turnout of the six combinations, exactly as

²¹ The omitted category is presidential election in a presidential system. Readers should note that for the purpose of properly specifying these interaction effects, the parliamentary election variable excludes parliamentary elections held simultaneously with presidential elections in presidential systems, which in practice means that one parliamentary election (the 1995 Georgian election) is not coded as a parliamentary election by this variable.

²² As the estimated model is linear, the difference between the predicted turnout across the six cells would be exactly the same regardless of the levels at which we set the other variables.

²³ It is worth noting that while predicted turnout in parliamentary elections increases in an almost linear fashion from presidential to semi-presidential to parliamentary systems, there is almost no difference between the predicted turnout in presidential elections in parliamentary and semi-presidential systems.

the electoral importance hypothesis would predict. That being said, the second conclusion to be drawn from the table is that the effect is clearly stronger in presidential systems than in parliamentary systems. In both presidential and parliamentary systems, the high-importance election has a higher predicted turnout than the low-importance election, but the magnitude of this effect is almost two and a half times as large in presidential systems (12.2%) as in parliamentary systems (4.8%). Finally, just as the stakes-based approach suggests, there is almost no predicted difference between turnout in presidential and parliamentary elections in semi-presidential systems.

-- INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE --

An interesting question to consider is whether this distinction between high and low importance elections was present from the earliest days of the transition, or whether it emerged over time. In a separate analysis, therefore, we interacted the high importance election category with electoral sequence.²⁴ We then calculated predicted values for these different interactions with other variables set to their means, the results of which are displayed in Figure 2. The pattern is very clear: while turnout declines across both high and medium/low importance elections, the magnitude at which it drops off is significantly larger for the latter. Put another way, as the transition progressed, post-communist citizens were likely learning that it was less important to participate in low/medium-importance elections than high-importance elections. In a sense, Figure 2 is a stark illustration of post-communist voters developing “normal” political behavior within a remarkably short period of time. Interestingly, these results are supported by the findings from a 1995 Russian survey reported by Pammett (1999). By our coding, as well as

²⁴ More specifically, we created dummy variables identifying the four categories displayed in Figure 2: the first election, the second election, elections 3-5, and elections 6 and beyond. Each category was then interacted with the simple dichotomous measure of high vs. medium/low importance elections (for clarity of presentation, we combine the low and medium importance elections into a single category in this analysis). Regression results are available from the authors upon request.

by all conventional accounts, Russia is a strong presidential system (Fish 2000). And apparently, Russians themselves were quite aware of this. Respondents were asked to evaluate how important the parliamentary elections of December 1995 and the presidential elections of 1996 would be for Russian democracy. For the parliamentary elections 34% of respondents thought they would be definitely or probably important for Russian democracy, while for presidential elections the share was 55%. This suggests that at least one reason turnout was higher in the 1996 Russian presidential elections than the 1995 Russian parliamentary elections was that Russian voters were aware of the greater institutional importance of the Presidency in Russia, and thus the greater stakes of presidential elections.

Taken together, Tables 1 and 2 and Figure 2 present strong empirical support for the institutional component of the stakes-based approach. More post-communist citizens turn out to vote in elections for high-importance electoral institutions than for other electoral institutions, and this trend only increases over time. Strikingly, the direction of this effect is correct across all of the possible interaction of governing and electoral institutions, although it appears to be most pronounced in presidential systems. Furthermore, Table A1 in Appendix I demonstrates that these institutional effects are remarkably robust across alternative specifications of the statistical model.

Further tests of stakes-based hypotheses can be found in Table 4, and in particular in Models 3 and 4. Recall that we previously identified five additional observable implications of the stakes-based approach: due to external constraints on policy making, turnout ought to be lower in countries with more time remaining in IMF programs and in countries more likely to join the EU; due to higher stakes, turnout is expected to be higher in more ethnically fragmented countries, in poorer countries, and following periods of democratization.

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Model 3 of Table 4 directly tests the external constraints argument. Consistent with the electoral stakes theory, we find that turnout is indeed lower in elections that occur when countries have more time remaining in an IMF program.²⁵ To test the effect of likelihood of EU membership, we divided countries into three “tiers”. First-tier countries are those that had strong reason to assume they would be admitted to the EU in the first expansion wave (or, for some elections in 2004, have already been admitted). Third-tier countries are those with minimal chances of joining the EU in the foreseeable future. Second tier countries lie somewhere in between: they may have a chance of joining, but it is unclear how realistic that chance is and when it might occur.²⁶ Model 3 of Table 4 reveals that, as predicted, turnout is lower in the first-tier likely admits to the European Union than in either the second or third-tier EU countries.

One might argue, however, that first and second tier EU status has a different meaning at different points in time. In 1992, for example, first-tier EU status meant that a country was likely to join the EU at some distant point in the future, whereas in 2003 first-tier status carried with it very real demands in terms of adopting EU requirements as national law. To assess the extent to which the relationship between EU status and turnout is dependent on time, in a separate analysis

²⁵ One might conjecture that we could test the disenchantment hypothesis in a similar manner, by proposing that having spent more time under IMF conditionality could lead to more economic disappointment. We tested this empirically, but found no relationship at all between turnout and time spent under IMF conditionality agreements.

²⁶ More specifically, from 1990-1996, the Visegrad 4 (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia (and then the Czech Republic and Slovakia) are coded as first tier countries, the former Soviet Republics, Mongolia, Albanian, and the former Yugoslavia (with the exception of Slovenia) are coded as third tier countries, and the remaining countries are placed in the second tier. From 1997 – 2002, we include in the first tier any country that has opened negotiations with the EU for membership. Starting from 1997, that includes Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic; in 2000 it expands to include Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia. Former Soviet republics, Mongolia, and members of the former Yugoslavia (excluding Slovenia) are placed in the third tier for this entire period, and the remaining countries are placed in the second tier. From 2002 on, we place those countries that are going to be included in the first wave of expansion in the first tier (Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), former Soviet republics and Mongolia are in the third tier, and the remaining countries – now including the states of the former Yugoslavia (asides from Slovenia) are in the second tier.

we interact EU status with four different time periods. The results of this interaction – plotted in Figure 3 – reveal a very clear story.²⁷

-- INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE --

For the period of time in which EU membership was but a distant goal (1990-96), there is little relationship between EU tier and turnout. However, as accession to the EU becomes more imminent, turnout drops in first-tier countries. Indeed, although the linear relationship identified in Model 3 of Table 4 suggested that turnout in first-tier countries was likely to be about 6% lower than in third-tier countries, by the 2000-2004 period, the gap is actually more than twice as large: elections in first-tier EU countries in this period are predicted to result in almost 14% lower turnout than for elections in third-tier countries. And while on average turnout in second tier countries is statistically indistinguishable from turnout in third-tier countries, a closer look at the temporal evolution reveals strong support for the stakes-based theory. Thus, during 1997-2000, the time period which was decisive for their European integration prospects, second-tier countries experienced a rebound in turnout compared to the 1993-6 period. Moreover, their turnout was 9% higher than in first-tier countries (significant at .05) and even 4% higher than in third-tier countries, a finding which confirms the anecdotal evidence from the Bulgarian elections of 1997 and the Slovak elections of 1998, which were widely regarded as the last opportunity to “catch the train to Europe.” However, once this objective was achieved (or at least was within reach) turnout in second-tier countries dropped significantly between 2001 and 2004, and started to resemble the turnout patterns in the more advanced first-tier integration candidates. At the same time, third-tier countries experienced a turnout surge in recent elections, in line with the high stakes of electoral contests (such as in Georgia and Ukraine in 2004), which were

²⁷ The regression results used to generate Figure 3 are available from the authors upon request.

widely regarded as renewed referenda about the future domestic and international trajectory of relative transition laggards.

Thus, both international constraint implications provide empirical support for the electoral stakes hypothesis. Returning to Table 4, we can also assess the empirical support for three additional stakes-based implications. Model 4 reveals that, as predicted, turnout is higher following periods of democratization.²⁸ Looking across all of the models, we also see clear evidence that overall development – as measured by the United Nations Development Program’s Human Development Index (HDI)²⁹ – coincides with lower turnout, again as predicted by the electoral importance hypothesis. Finally, we note that the coefficient for ethno-linguistic fractionalization is positive, as expected. The standard errors, however, are sufficiently large in all of the models that we do not have strong confidence in this effect. It is worth noting, though, that HDI is correlated with ethno-linguistic fractionalization: when we use other proxies for wealth (discussed in greater detail below), we often have much more confidence in the larger positive coefficients we find for ethno-linguistic fractionalization (see Table 5).

Overall, across a wide variety of tests, we find strong empirical support for the predictions of the stakes-based approach. Turnout is higher in more important elections and following period of democratization, and it is lower when countries are wealthier and when incoming governments are likely to be more constrained in their policy making by international commitments. Indeed, the only stakes-based test for which we could not confirm empirical support was the presence of ethno-linguistic fractionalization, and even here we always found

²⁸ This is measured by the change in Freedom House political and civil rights scores since the preceding year; see Appendix II for details.

²⁹ The measure, published by the UNDP in its annual World Development Report, measures human development achievements in terms of life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income.

coefficients in the correctly predicted direction that are significant in alternate specifications of the model.

The evidence related to the disenchantment approach, however, is markedly less supportive. Models 1 and 2 of Table 4 present empirical tests of the crux of the disenchantment argument: is turnout lower when economic conditions are worse? Recall that we posited three different ways to consider disappointing economic conditions: traditional measures of macro-economic conditions; change in the state of the economy since the start of the transition; and overall wealth/development. The first of these categories – as illustrated in Model 1 of Table 4 – provides the strongest support for the disenchantment hypothesis. Turnout is lower in the presence of higher inflation and higher unemployment rates.³⁰ However, the fact that GDP growth has a statistically significant *negative* effect on turnout contradicts the disenchantment hypothesis. In general, all three of these effects are robust to a wide variety of respecifications of the model (see the remaining models in Table 4, as well as Tables 1 and 4). With two economic indicators in the correct direction, though, we can at least say on balance that there is some consistency here with the disenchantment theory.

We can not, however, make this claim about change in the economy since the start of the transition. To measure this, we use GDP in the current year as a percentage of a country's GDP in 1989. When we include this variable in our analysis without an interaction effect (see below, Table 5, Model 5), we actually end up with a negative coefficient – the opposite of what the disenchantment hypothesis predicts – although the effect is only marginally statistically

³⁰ In our models, we include economic conditions lagged by one year. Using current year economic conditions produces the same general pattern, although in most cases the standard errors are quite a bit larger.

significant and depends on model specification.³¹ In Model 2 of Table 4, however, we interact GDP as a % of 1989 with the number of years that have passed since the beginning of the transition and the results are striking: whereas during the early transition years turnout was higher (but statistically insignificant) in countries with less dramatic output declines, the trend was reversed as the transition progressed, and starting in 2000 countries with more vigorous economic recoveries actually experienced significantly lower electoral turnout, a finding which is clearly at odds with the predictions of the disenchantment hypothesis.³²

The final manner in which we consider the state of the economy concerns overall levels of wealth/development. According to the disenchantment theory, we expect to see lower turnout for elections held where more people are poorer or have a lower standard of living. As noted previously, we use HDI to tap into this question of overall standard of living. As was also noted previously, the HDI indicator is actually in the opposite direction of what the disenchantment story predicts: turnout is lower when society as a whole is richer.

-- INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE --

Of course, HDI is not the only variable one could use to tap into overall levels of development. In Table 5, therefore, we consider four other potential development proxies: the percentage of the population living in urban areas, GDP per capita, number of phones per 1000 residents, and number of TVs per 1000 residents; we also include GDP as a percentage of 1989 GDP in this table. All of these measures have various advantages and disadvantages – e.g., percentage urban varies little within countries, number of TVs could be tapping into other politically relevant phenomena as well – but what is striking is that there is not a single case

³¹ For example, if we also control for HDI, the effect is weaker in both statistical and substantive terms, arguably because the two variables have a high positive correlation (.52) since more developed countries had a better transitional growth record.

³² For example, in 2004 a one-standard deviation (21%) increase in GDP as a % of 1989 was associated with a substantively large 5.9 % reduction in predicted turnout (significant at .01).

where we find the relationship predicted by the disenchantment theory! No matter what proxy of wealth we employ, we always find that higher degrees of development result in lower turnout. In some of these cases the standard errors are sufficiently high to question the statistical significance of this negative relationship, but clearly there is no evidence to support the positive relationship between wealth and turnout predicted by the disenchantment framework. These cross-national turnout trends are reinforced by public opinion data from cross-national surveys: thus, a survey administered from 1998-2001 in 13 of the ex-communist countries in our sample (Roller et al 2005) asked respondents whether they agreed with the statement that “As long as things are getting on well, I’m not really interested in who is in power.” On average almost two thirds of respondents from the region agreed with the statement (with country averages as high as 75% in Bulgaria and 84% in Romania), which adds further credibility to the claim that the turnout decline may after all reflect a certain complacency rather than dejection on the part of post-communist citizens.

Returning to Table 4, we can examine support for the final observable implication of the disenchantment hypothesis, the political disenchantment indicators of EU status and overall level of democratization. In neither case do we find support for the disenchantment hypothesis. As noted earlier, all else being equal, third-tier EU countries have higher, not lower, turnout rates than first-tier countries, and this effect only increases in size as the actual accession of the first-tier countries to the EU approaches. In terms of degree of democratization, the coefficient for lagged Freedom House democracy scores in Model 4 of Table 4 is indeed positive, as predicted by the disenchantment theory, but the results do not approach statistical significance.

Overall, we conclude that the evidence in support of the observable implications of the disenchantment approach is much weaker than the evidence in support of the electoral stakes

approach. While higher unemployment and inflation did in fact keep people away from the polls, lower GDP growth had the opposite effect. Moreover, across a wide range of proxy measures, we find no evidence to support the contention that people in poorer countries vote less than those in richer countries. Similarly, we do not find any evidence that countries with more difficult political or economic transitions have lower levels of turnout in national elections. We also find no evidence of political disenchantment depressing electoral participation; neither lower Freedom House scores nor exclusion from the EU result in lower rates of turnout.³³ In contrast, we are confident that voters turn out in greater numbers in elections for more important institutions, when there are fewer international constraints on policy making following the election, in periods of time following democratization, and when a country's long term democratic future is less assured.³⁴ In short, in the aggregate, post-communist voters do seem more likely to participate in elections when the stakes are higher.

Conclusion and Implications

The primary contribution of this paper is to provide an explanation for aggregate level variation in turnout in national elections in post-communist countries. As noted in the previous section, we find much stronger empirical support for the claim that turnout is likely to be lower in less important national elections than we do for the claim that turnout should be lower when the electorate is likely to be more disenchanting with political and economic developments. In short, post-communist citizens appear to be choosing which elections to participate in on the

³³ Similarly, as was mentioned in an earlier note, we did not find any relationship between levels of corruption and turnout in a subset of the data.

³⁴ Moreover, these findings are fairly robust to alternative means of specifying the cross-section time-series models, including adding fixed effects and lagged dependent variable. There are some exceptions, the most notable being that HDI, which varies much more significantly across countries than within countries, has a much smaller coefficient (although still in the same direction) in the fixed effects models. Similarly, the effects for both inflation and lagged GDP disappear in the fixed effects models. See Appendix I for details.

basis of the stakes of the election, as opposed to merely pouting and refusing to play when they are upset with how the game is developing.

However, the paper also makes a number of other contributions to the academic literature on post-communist political behavior, as well as to the study of electoral participation more generally. Our argument that participation in an election is a function of the stakes of that election is of course dependent on a context of information awareness whereby voters can discern the policy implications of election results. The extant voting literature makes clear the importance of political information in shaping voter decisions in mature democracies (Fearon 1999; Zaller 2001; 1992). As Duch (2001) succinctly argues, however, the new post-communist polities are characterized by “novel information demands and opportunities associated with democracy...(citizens are) exposed to increasingly numerous, heterogeneous, and conflicting messages regarding both the economy and politics...they also face a much broader set of political choices for which this information is relevant.” (897). In short, new and rapidly expanding information creates profound challenges for electorates unaccustomed to sifting through it. In time, however, such barriers are overcome as voters become better informed about critical issues. While Duch associates this trend with a projected increase in economic voting over time, we have found a similar logic to turnout patterns. As each successive election provides more information about policy choices, voters become more acutely aware of what “matters” and what does not. Thus, in finding increasing stakes-based effects over time in terms of both electoral institutions and European integration (see Figures 2 and 3), we join Duch in noting the important role that can be played by the passage of time in the development of post-communist political behavior.

Similarly, the literature on post-communist politics has long been fascinated with differences across groups of countries, and in particular across those that have progressed further institutionally, economically, and politically vs. those that clearly lag behind (Frye 2002; Hellmann 1998; Rose and Mishler 1994). While most research has focused on the important question of why countries are either winners or laggards, in this paper we have provided evidence of an interesting consequence of being in one of these two groups. Somewhat counter-intuitively, we find that political participation can actually be more vibrant in the latter category. Recent increases in turnout during presidential elections in Croatia, Georgia, and Ukraine, and even Kyrgyzstan for example, coincide with major political change and mass mobilization. Far from being demoralized and politically demobilized, citizens in the more trouble-prone countries appear to view the electoral process as a critical venue for responding to the changes occurring around them. This finding certainly calls into question the supposition that negative consequences of the transition depress political participation (Bernhagen 2006; Hutcherson 2004).

Our analysis also helps to link previous unconnected findings on the importance of specific sets of institutional, economic and developmental factors. In the comparative turnout literature, broad theoretical focus is often sacrificed in the pursuit of providing empirical evidence for a specific indicator. We have presented two such theoretical stories here in the form of the disenchantment and stakes-based arguments. We have argued that these are particularly appropriate for the post-communist context, but they may very well fit other contexts as well. Either way, we hope they illustrate the value of trying to provide general theoretical perspectives on turnout that can encompass institutional, political, and economic variables in an analysis without being beholden to them.

Finally, discussions of mass political behavior in transitional societies often assume unique and/or idiosyncratic patterns conditioned by those societies' singular experiences in moving beyond their authoritarian pasts. Post-communist societies represent a particularly attractive opportunity to test for such uniqueness: the depth and the nature of the dual economic and political transition is an unambiguously singular event, as are the accompanying multiple traumas. Initial accounts of demoralized populations increasingly alienated from democratic politics fed this position and painted an especially bleak picture for the region. Our analysis suggests that this appraisal of post-communist turnout as a function of initially high optimism (and consequently high turnout) followed by disenchantment (and consequently lower turnout) may warrant reconsideration. What we have proposed in this study is a somewhat more complex view that brings together a variety of factors into a coherent explanation of voter participation patterns. Rather than "tuning out" with disappointment from the election process, portions of post-communist mass publics are learning to pick and choose which elections are worth their time and effort. Moreover, the greater turnout decline in the region's reform frontrunners suggests that lower turnout is primarily a signal that many of the tougher economic and political issues of the post-communist transition have been resolved. From this perspective, a more optimistic view of long-term democratic prospects in the region may be in order.

Future research will be needed to pursue some of the issues that have been raised here but are beyond the scope of our current analysis. One interesting question is *why* people are more likely to turn out. Two stories would be consistent with our cross-national findings. On the one hand, this could be part of a completely individual calculus about when it is or is not worth taking the time to go to the polls and vote. As discussed earlier, the admittedly anecdotal survey evidence from Russia in 1995 (Pammett 1999) does suggest that post-communist voters were

quick to realize institutionally based differences in election stakes. On the other hand, judging by prior research on political participation in the US (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), it could also be the case that political parties and candidates make more of an effort to mobilize voters in more important elections. In the post-communist context, this interpretation would imply that it is political elites who learn when and where it is worth their time and resources to mobilize the public. However, such an interpretation is somewhat undermined by the notorious weakness of East European political parties, and by the fact that the gradual increase in resources and campaigning experience of post-communist parties has actually coincided with an over time decline in turnout. Ultimately, case studies and multi-level analysis of survey data will be necessary to adjudicate between these two alternatives. Both of these approaches are beyond the purview of our current analysis but should be pursued by future research. Nonetheless, the current analysis has provided fairly consistent evidence that post-communist citizens are very much attuned to the stakes in the electoral process even after the novelty of competitive elections has faded away. Indeed, after a decade and a half of competitive elections, post-communist voters seem to have become increasingly competent at navigating the turbulent waters of post-communist politics – even if at times that means staying away from the polls.

Appendix I: Robustness Tests with Fixed Effects and Lagged Dependent Variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Turnout			0.397***	0.207**			0.345***	0.173*
(prev)			(0.078)	(0.099)			(0.083)	(0.099)
Log					-8.928***	-9.387**	-5.867***	-10.210**
TVs/1000					(1.317)	(3.756)	(1.425)	(4.626)
ELF	6.747		3.928		14.841***		11.695**	
	(5.369)		(4.539)		(4.828)		(4.859)	
HDI	-66.75***	-19.599	-42.17***	-20.037				
	(15.716)	(23.327)	(13.855)	(24.621)				
Log	-2.280***	-1.694**	-1.757***	-1.905**	-1.764**	-1.379**	-1.441**	-1.619**
Inflat(t-1)	(0.740)	(0.678)	(0.654)	(0.769)	(0.697)	(0.586)	(0.598)	(0.661)
Unemploy	-0.378**	-0.127	-0.330**	-0.424	-0.389**	-0.076	-0.347**	-0.369
ment (t-1)	(0.179)	(0.224)	(0.167)	(0.279)	(0.154)	(0.215)	(0.162)	(0.262)
GDP chg	-0.374***	-0.166	-0.302***	-0.116	-0.327***	-0.131	-0.246**	-0.117
t-1	(0.123)	(0.120)	(0.115)	(0.123)	(0.117)	(0.114)	(0.110)	(0.118)
Parliament	-5.880	-23.33***	-8.494**	-19.07***	-8.657**	-25.67***	-10.29***	-19.37***
System	(4.168)	(4.799)	(3.486)	(6.052)	(4.038)	(4.693)	(3.436)	(5.287)
Semi-Pres	-5.770*	-7.027**	-6.892***	-4.680	-5.532*	-5.356	-6.385***	-4.500
System	(3.095)	(3.432)	(2.245)	(3.815)	(2.918)	(3.332)	(2.267)	(3.926)
Parl in	17.045***	19.811***	18.156***	19.070***	18.380***	20.272***	18.540***	19.399***
Parl	(4.490)	(3.829)	(3.893)	(3.917)	(4.650)	(3.936)	(3.939)	(4.023)
Parl in	11.885***	10.077***	12.024***	10.515***	11.175***	9.178***	11.372***	9.617***
Mixed	(3.830)	(2.959)	(3.213)	(2.952)	(3.844)	(2.869)	(3.149)	(2.876)
Parl	-12.16***	-12.27***	-13.07***	-12.30***	-12.96***	-11.64***	-13.43***	-11.65***
Election	(3.143)	(2.245)	(2.369)	(2.145)	(3.264)	(2.196)	(2.383)	(2.152)
Observations	137	137	118	118	137	137	118	118
Number of countries	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Chi-squared	150.63	829.78	285.44	637.09	233.64	893.63	356.29	672.03
Ctry Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Results taken from regression including controls for election number, cases missing data in inflation, unemployment, TVs, and HDI, a constant term, and, where indicated, country fixed effects; full regression results available from authors upon request/in a web based appendix

Appendix II. Coding of Variables

Variables	Coding/measurement	Source(s)	Mean	Standard deviation
Voter turnout % reg. voters	Actual voters as % of registered voters	<i>IDEA</i> website + country specific sources when necessary	70.23	12.87
Parliamentary System	1 = parliamentary system 0 = otherwise	<i>Authors</i> : See note 20	0.43	0.50
Semi-Presidential System	1 = semi-presidential system 0 = otherwise	<i>Authors</i> : See note 20	0.39	0.49
Parliamentary Election	1 = Parliamentary Election 0 = Otherwise	<i>IDEA</i> website + country specific sources when necessary	0.65	0.48
Simultaneous Pres and Parl Election	1 = Simultaneous Parliamentary and Presidential Election 0 = Otherwise	<i>IDEA</i> website + country specific sources when necessary	0.08	0.27
High Importance Election	1= Parl election in Parl system or Pres election in Pres system or simultaneous elections in semi-presidential system 0 = otherwise	<i>Authors</i>	0.50	0.50
Medium Importance Election	1= Non-simultaneous Parl or Pres election in semi-presidential system 0 = otherwise	<i>Authors</i>	0.35	0.48
Unemployment	% of economically active population	<i>EBRD Transition Reports</i> (various years) and <i>WDI</i> (2005)	9.91	6.68
Inflation (logged)	Log of inflation (%)	<i>EBRD Transition Reports</i> (various years) and <i>WDI</i> (2005)	3.56	1.69
GDP growth	% change in real GDP	<i>EBRD Transition Reports</i> (various years) and <i>WDI</i> (2005)	0.30	8.37
FH Democracy (t-1)	0 (least free) to 12(most free) ^a	<i>Freedom House</i> (2005)	7.54	2.89
FH Democracy Change	Change since previous year in FH Democracy score	<i>Freedom House</i> (2005)	0.77	1.61
IMF Program Months Left	# of months left in existing IMF program; no program = 0	<i>Authors</i> : Based on data from www.imf.org	3.66	6.97
Human Development Index (HDI)	0 (lowest) -1(highest)	<i>UNDP</i>	0.78	0.07
Urban	% urban population	<i>WDI</i> (2005)	61.17	8.91
GDP per cap	GDP per capita (\$)	<i>WDI</i> (2005)	2691.11	2069.66
Phones per 1000 (logged)	Phones per 1000 residents	<i>WDI</i> (2005)	4.63	1.93
TVS per 1000 (logged)	TVs per 1000 residents	<i>WDI</i> (2005)	5.70	0.55
Ethno-linguistic fractionalization	0 (completely homogenous) to 1 (completely fractionalized)	<i>Roeder</i> (2001)	0.30	0.17
First EU tier	1= First-tier EU candidate 0 = otherwise	<i>Authors</i> : See note 26	0.31	0.46
Second EU tier	1 = Second-tier EU candidate 0 = otherwise	<i>Authors</i> : See note 26	0.26	0.44
Election#1-10	Dummies for the # of the current election since start of free elections in the transition period	<i>Authors</i>	N/A	N/A

a. Obtained by adding the scores for political and civil liberties, and then subtracting the sum from 14, to have higher scores correspond to higher degrees of freedom or democracy.

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Table 1: Summary of Hypotheses by Approach

	Institutions	Economy	International	Other
Disenchantment		+ Current economy + Overall wealth +ΔGDP since 1989	+ Closer to EU Membership	+ Democracy
Stakes	+”Dominant” Institutions	- Overall wealth	- Closer to EU Membership - IMF Agreements	+ Δ Democracy + Ethnic Heterogeneity

Table 2. Institutions and Turnout

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Parliamentary Election	-1.899 (1.556)			-12.168*** (3.143)
Simultaneous Election	1.119 (2.728)			
Parliamentary System		4.797 (3.361)		-5.880 (4.168)
Semi-Presidential System		0.411 (2.842)		-5.770* (3.095)
High Importance Election			8.542*** (2.159)	
Medium Importance Elections			3.995* (2.414)	
Parl Election in Parl System				17.045*** (4.490)
Parl Election in Mixed System				11.885*** (3.830)
Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization	7.848 (6.263)	8.352 (5.743)	7.283 (5.533)	6.747 (5.369)
Human Dev. Indicator (HDI)	-51.643*** (16.124)	-68.144*** (16.622)	-61.773*** (15.282)	-66.757*** (15.716)
Log Inflation (t-1)	-1.869** (0.754)	-1.954** (0.783)	-2.007*** (0.716)	-2.280*** (0.740)
Unemployment (t-1)	-0.336* (0.182)	-0.421** (0.175)	-0.341* (0.188)	-0.378** (0.179)
GDP chg t-1	-0.291** (0.127)	-0.314** (0.127)	-0.349*** (0.125)	-0.374*** (0.123)
Observations	137	137	137	137
Number of countries	19	19	19	19
Chi-squared	97.52	114.49	138.31	150.63

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Results taken from regression including controls for election number, cases missing data in inflation, unemployment, and HDI, and a constant term; full regression results available from authors upon request/in a web based appendix

Table 3. Predicted Turnout by Institutional Arrangement

	Presidential System	Semi-Presidential System	Parliamentary System
Presidential Election	76.3%	70.5%	70.4%
Parliamentary Election	64.1%	70.2%	75.2%

**Predicted Values from Table 2, Model 3*

Table 4. Electoral Importance vs. Disenchantment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Log Inflation (t-1)	-2.280*** (0.740)	-1.177 (0.797)	-2.165*** (0.727)	-1.993*** (0.722)
Unemployment (t-1)	-0.378** (0.179)	-0.420** (0.185)	-0.455*** (0.169)	-0.368* (0.191)
GDP chg t-1	-0.374*** (0.123)	-0.348*** (0.131)	-0.356*** (0.123)	-0.314*** (0.120)
Human Dev. Indicator (HDI)	-66.757*** (15.716)		-51.255*** (17.162)	-66.962*** (17.216)
GDP (% of 1989)		0.127 (0.143)		
GDP (% of 1989)*Trans year		-0.025** (0.013)		
Transition year		1.458 (1.196)		
Months IMF Prog Left			-0.351*** (0.098)	
First EU tier			-6.133** (3.115)	
Second EU tier			-0.701 (2.445)	
FH Democracy Change				1.926*** (0.698)
FH Democracy (t-1)				0.419 (0.593)
Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization	6.747 (5.369)	8.346 (6.884)	2.697 (5.665)	9.806* (5.613)
Parliamentary System	-5.880 (4.168)	-2.579 (4.431)	-5.675 (4.564)	-7.287 (4.526)
Semi-President System	-5.770* (3.095)	-3.372 (3.461)	-4.248 (3.494)	-7.115** (3.481)
Parl Election in Parl System	17.045*** (4.490)	16.127*** (3.840)	19.413*** (4.605)	16.635*** (4.152)
Parl Election in Mixed System	11.885*** (3.830)	11.723*** (3.552)	13.505*** (3.915)	11.704*** (3.484)
Parliamentary Election	-12.168*** (3.143)	-10.931*** (2.546)	-14.401*** (3.430)	-11.632*** (2.807)
Observations	137	137	137	137
# of countries	19	19	19	19
Chi-squared	150.63	113.47	183.38	161.86

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Results taken from regression including controls for election number (except model 2), cases missing data in inflation, unemployment, and HDI, and a constant term; full regression results available from authors upon request/in a web based appendix

Table 5: Additional Tests of Wealth and Development

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Urban t-1	-0.348*** (0.113)				
GDP per cap t-1		-0.001* (0.001)			
#Phones/1000 (log)			-4.458*** (1.298)		
#TVs/1000 (log)				-8.928*** (1.317)	
GDP (% of 1989)					-0.104* (0.069)
Ethno-linguistic Fractionalization	12.376** (5.831)	8.397 (5.904)	15.641*** (5.550)	14.841*** (4.828)	6.105 (7.095)
Log Inflation (t-1)	-1.164 (0.712)	-1.612** (0.726)	-1.633** (0.721)	-1.764** (0.697)	-1.486** (0.721)
Unemployment (t-1)	-0.393** (0.185)	-0.422** (0.187)	-0.418** (0.177)	-0.389** (0.154)	-0.421** (0.197)
GDP chg t-1	-0.301** (0.123)	-0.305** (0.130)	-0.295** (0.120)	-0.327*** (0.117)	-0.280** (0.131)
Parliamentary System	-11.404*** (3.953)	-7.396* (4.344)	-6.463 (4.235)	-8.657** (4.038)	-5.801 (4.570)
Semi-Pres System	-8.110** (3.249)	-4.960 (3.254)	-6.262** (3.119)	-5.532* (2.918)	-2.884 (3.586)
Parl Election in Parl System	17.086*** (4.004)	17.067*** (4.305)	17.023*** (4.448)	18.380*** (4.650)	16.178*** (4.049)
Parl Election in Mixed System	11.138*** (3.540)	11.777*** (3.765)	12.482*** (3.779)	11.175*** (3.844)	11.223*** (3.581)
Parliamentary Election*	-11.858*** (2.739)	-12.694*** (3.021)	-12.236*** (3.038)	-12.969*** (3.264)	-11.742*** (2.750)
Observations	137	136	137	137	137
# of countries	19	19	19	19	19
Chi-squared	127.53	123.18	137.00	233.64	113.28

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Results taken from regression including controls for election number, cases missing data in inflation, unemployment, TVs, and phones, and a constant term; full regression results available from authors upon request/in a web based appendix

Table A1: Robustness Tests

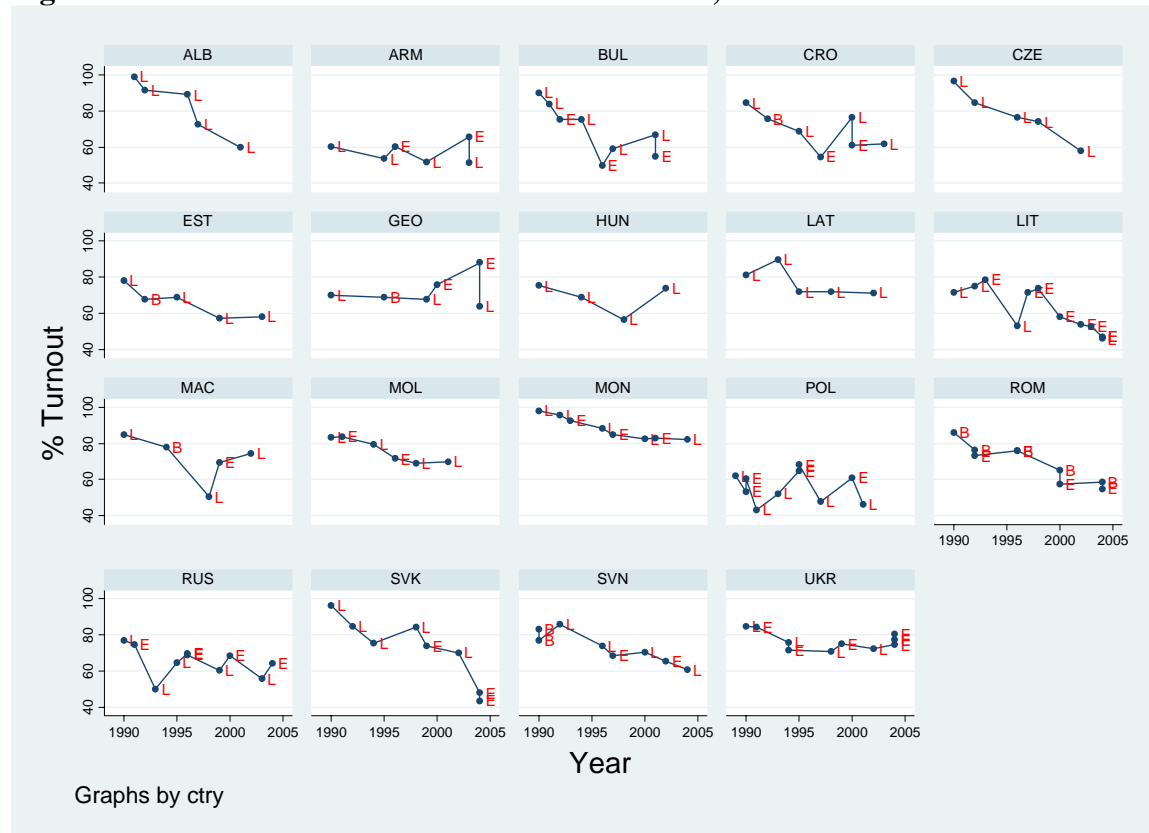
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Turnout (prev)			0.397*** (0.078)	0.207** (0.099)			0.345*** (0.083)	0.173* (0.099)
Log TVs/1000					-8.928*** (1.317)	-9.387** (3.756)	-5.867*** (1.425)	-10.210** (4.626)
ELF	6.747 (5.369)		3.928 (4.539)		14.841*** (4.828)		11.695** (4.859)	
HDI	-66.75*** (15.716)	-19.599 (23.327)	-42.17*** (13.855)	-20.037 (24.621)				
Log Inflat(t-1)	-2.280*** (0.740)	-1.694** (0.678)	-1.757*** (0.654)	-1.905** (0.769)	-1.764** (0.697)	-1.379** (0.586)	-1.441** (0.598)	-1.619** (0.661)
Unemploy ment (t-1)	-0.378** (0.179)	-0.127 (0.224)	-0.330** (0.167)	-0.424 (0.279)	-0.389** (0.154)	-0.076 (0.215)	-0.347** (0.162)	-0.369 (0.262)
GDP chg t-1	-0.374*** (0.123)	-0.166 (0.120)	-0.302*** (0.115)	-0.116 (0.123)	-0.327*** (0.117)	-0.131 (0.114)	-0.246** (0.110)	-0.117 (0.118)
Parliament System	-5.880 (4.168)	-23.33*** (4.799)	-8.494** (3.486)	-19.07*** (6.052)	-8.657** (4.038)	-25.67*** (4.693)	-10.29*** (3.436)	-19.37*** (5.287)
Semi-Pres System	-5.770* (3.095)	-7.027** (3.432)	-6.892*** (2.245)	-4.680 (3.815)	-5.532* (2.918)	-5.356 (3.332)	-6.385*** (2.267)	-4.500 (3.926)
Parl in	17.045*** (4.490)	19.811*** (3.829)	18.156*** (3.893)	19.070*** (3.917)	18.380*** (4.650)	20.272*** (3.936)	18.540*** (3.939)	19.399*** (4.023)
Parl in Mixed	11.885*** (3.830)	10.077*** (2.959)	12.024*** (3.213)	10.515*** (2.952)	11.175*** (3.844)	9.178*** (2.869)	11.372*** (3.149)	9.617*** (2.876)
Parl Election	-12.16*** (3.143)	-12.27*** (2.245)	-13.07*** (2.369)	-12.30*** (2.145)	-12.96*** (3.264)	-11.64*** (2.196)	-13.43*** (2.383)	-11.65*** (2.152)
N	137	137	118	118	137	137	118	118
Number of countries	19	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Chi- squared	150.63	829.78	285.44	637.09	233.64	893.63	356.29	672.03
Ctry Fixed Effects	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Results taken from regression including controls for election number, cases missing data in inflation, unemployment, TVs, and HDI, a constant term, and, where indicated, country fixed effects; full regression results available from authors upon request/in a web based appendix

Figure 1. Turnout in 19 Post-Communist Countries, 1990-2004



E = Presidential Election; L = Parliamentary Elections; B = Simultaneous Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

Figure 2. Over-Time Turnout Change by Election Importance

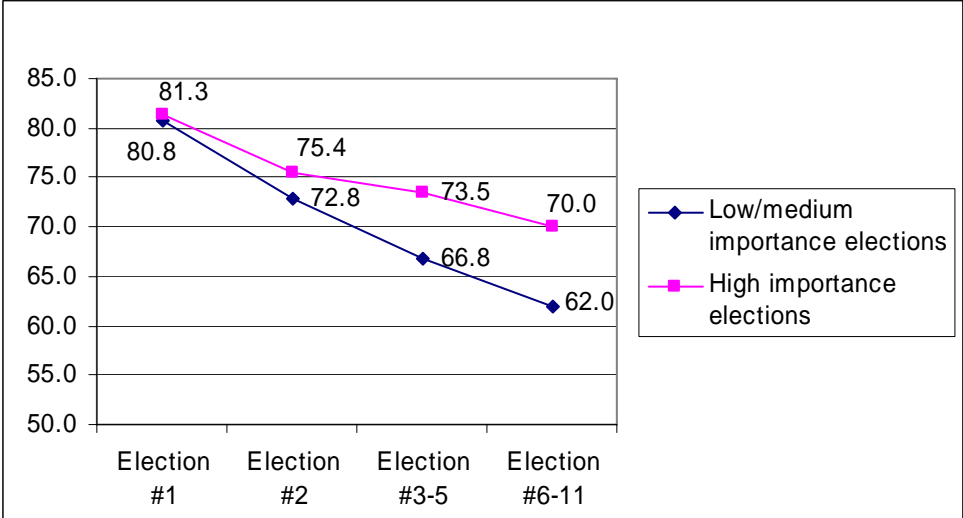


Figure 3. Over-time Turnout Change by EU Integration Tier

