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(Post)Materialism, Satisfaction with Democracy and Support for Democracy in Eastern Europe

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Abstract

The materialist-postmaterialist value dimension, understood as assigning priority to self-expression and quality of life as opposed to physical and economic security, has been one of the most important heuristic tools in the analysis of the changes of predominant values in cross-cultural and comparative studies in past decades. In recent elaboration of self-expression and emancipative values (in both cases, with postmaterialism as the most important component), postmaterialist values have been viewed as an essence of democratic political culture and a cultural precondition of effective democracy. This study was aimed at analysing the relation between postmaterialist values (understood as a political - *thick* culture variable), satisfaction with country's democracy (institutional - *thin* culture variable) and support for democracy. The data from the European Values Survey (EVS), conducted on the nationally representative samples in twenty East European countries on the total of twenty countries and 30,393 respondents, were used. It is shown that postmaterialism is an important aspect of democratic political culture in Eastern Europe; in general, the most supportive of democracy are postmaterialists. On the other hand, there is a mixed pattern between the postmaterialist values and satisfaction with democracy – in some countries, citizens satisfied with democracy are more prone to choose postmaterialist items compared to the dissatisfied ones, while in some other countries the reverse is true. Both are, however, important predictors of the support for democracy as well as the country's level of democracy development (measured by the EIU Democracy index). The relevance of postmaterialist values for the promotion of democratic political culture in Eastern Europe, possible alternative mechanisms of value change as well as the materialist-postmaterialist conception are discussed.

Keywords: (post)materialist values, political culture, satisfaction with democracy, support for democracy, East European countries.



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Introduction

In the past several decades, (post)materialism has had a very important role in the political culture debates. In a number of studies, Ronald Inglehart (e.g. Inglehart, 1971; 1990; Inglehart&Abramson, 1999; Inglehart&Baker, 2000; Inglehart&Welzel, 2005; Welzel&Inglehart, 2005) has shown that postmaterialist values, understood as a dimension that describes prioritizing security/lower needs versus the higher order ones, are linked to various normative beliefs or politically relevant dispositions as well as macro-level measures – the numerous indices of country's economic (e.g. GDP per capita) and political development measures (e.g. Freedom House scores).

More recently, self-expression values (Inglehart&Welzel, 2005), supposedly one of the two main dimensions of cultural variation, or emancipative values (Welzel, 2013; Welzel&Inglehart, 2009) have replaced the earlier focus on postmaterialist values only. However, postmaterialist values are integral and the most important part of these two syndromes. Self-expression values include postmaterialist values, trust in others, political activism (signing a petition), subjective well-being and tolerance of deviant behaviour (homosexuality) (Inglehart&Welzel, 2005). Similarly, emancipative values include gender equality (over patriarchy), tolerance (over conformity), autonomy (over authority) and postmaterialist values (Welzel&Inglehart, 2009). On the other hand, a parallel line of research (Inglehart&Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2006; Welzel&Inglehart, 2005) continued to treat postmaterialism as a separate measure but focusing only on the “specifically libertarian aspects of postmaterialism, disregarding its ecological and aesthetical components (which are less relevant for democracy)” (Welzel&Inglehart, 2005, p. 10). Whatever its form, postmaterialism seems to be a very important aspect of democratic political culture.

Based on numerous empirical evidence that indicates the low levels of postmaterialist (i.e. self-expression/emancipative) values in Eastern, post-communist societies (Welzel&Inglehart, 2005; Inglehart&Baker, 2000; Inglehart&Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2006; 2013), as well as on the supposed dynamics of the postmaterialist value shift described in socialization and scarcity hypotheses (Inglehart, 1990; Inglehart&Welzel, 2005), there is an often heard argument on the lack of cultural preconditions for a functional democracy in Eastern Europe. Due to the absence of certain structural preconditions, a limited experience with democracy and a long period of authoritarian rule, the democratic regimes established in this part of Europe after the fall of communism supposedly laid on an incompatible political culture that lacks some of the main features of a democratic outlook. The democratic regimes established during the last decade of the past century in this part of Europe are mostly described as (only) formal democracies (Inglehart&Welzel, 2005) or non-democracy or hybrid regimes (Welzel, 2013). The main argument can shortly be summarized as following: “for some countries to consolidate their democracy, a major shift in political culture is required” (Klingemann, 2006, p. xi). Otherwise, democratization is nothing but mimicry and a reestablishment of some sort of aggressive dictatorship becomes a highly probable outcome (Jowitt, 1996). The non-stated (or rarely explicit) assumption is that culture causes structure and not *vice versa* (e.g. Eckstein, 1988; Inglehart, 1988; 1990; Inglehart&Welzel, 2005), a view that some scholars describe as a *thick* culture conception (Mishler& Pollack, 2003).

Comparisons between the East and West have often shown that citizens of Eastern Europe are characterized by lower levels of political tolerance (Gibson, 1998; 2002; Peffley&Rohrschneider, 2003) or political activism (Dekker et al., 2003); furthermore, they generally support democracy less intensely (Klingemann et al., 2006; Pavlović, 2007). If found, the support for democracy in Eastern Europe is usually treated as lip service to democracy, not value-driven or supported by a commitment to deeper democratic values and norms (Inglehart&Welzel, 2005; Welzel&Inglehart, 2009).

However, the premises of the culturalist paradigm of political change and the (political) structure versus (political) culture debate have often been called into question. There is a large body of evidence suggesting that effective democracy can cause allegiance to it where previously absent. The evaluation of system performances, in economic and political terms, and the quality of citizens' experience with the system shape the political attitudes and behaviours and contribute to the (lack of) allegiance to democratic institutions and norms (Jackman & Miller, 1996; Mishler & Rose, 2002; Muller & Seligson, 1994). In a newly democratized society, citizens can and must learn to be "democrats" and that is only possible in the context of democratic civic culture and pluralism and through the experience with the democratic political process (Dalton 1994; Fleron, 1996; Niemi & Hepburn, 1995), which is a sort of a lifetime-learning model (Mishler & Pollack, 2003). Once established, it is highly probable that democratic institutions will produce democratic values (Fleron, 1996). Democratic political culture is hence rather the effect than the cause of democratic structure. In other words, political culture is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for democratic governance, but economic and political performance is seen as crucial (Mishler & Pollack, 2003).

There is a great deal of empirical evidence in line with this statement. Gibson (1996) showed that the support for democracy in Russia and Ukraine was "a mile wide and more than an inch deep" (p. 417), suggesting that this was not a mere case of lip service to democracy. Contrary to Inglehart's (1990) assumption of unidirectional causation – civic culture affects democracy but not *vice versa* – some researchers have shown that democratization increased the importance of pro-democratic values (Schwartz & Sagie, 2000), as well as that most civic culture attitudes did not have any significant impact on change in democracy, while some of them were rather effects of democracy (Muller & Seligson, 1994). Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that the levels of political tolerance (Duch & Gibson, 1992), trust in social and political institutions (Rose et al., 1997; Loewenberg, Mishler and Sanborn, 2010; Boda & Medve-Balint, 2014) or support for marketization and democracy (Whitefield & Evans, 1999; Pavlović, 2013; 2014a) in post-communist countries can be explained in rational choice terms, as the products of resocialization during the period of democratization, i.e. the effects of economic and political performance evaluations. Even more, the patterns of influence of relevant factors (such as age, education, income etc.) on support for democracy (Klingemann et al., 2006) or institutional trust (Loewenberg, Mishler and Sanborn, 2010; Boda & Medve-Balint, 2014) seem to be quite similar in Eastern/Central Europe and in the established Western democracies. Similarly (and of special relevance for the present study), some studies have shown a strong influence of the current economic context (such as inflation and unemployment rate at the time of survey) on the postmaterialist preference (Clarck & Dutt, 1991; Clarke et al., 1997; Clarke et al., 1999; Duch & Taylor 1993; 1994; Pavlović, 2014b; 2015), which can hardly be explained in political culture/socialization terms.

The evidence linking postmaterialism and support for democracy is in fact rarely given and, if so, the evidence that proves the importance of mass attitudes for democracy is mainly based on aggregate level measures and uses the described value syndromes (e.g. Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel & Inglehart, 2005; 2009). The present study offers some additional insights into the political and pro-democratic character of postmaterialism. Numerous scholars argue of (post)materialism as a measure of political and liberal values, instead of an early instilled value preference. De Graf and Evans (1996), based on the data that show the strong influence of educational level on the postmaterialist value preferences, argued that the standard postmaterialist index does not measure postmaterialism, but values related to political liberalism. Another study showed that educational level had a greater impact on postmaterialist scores based on a standard four-item battery, than on the postmaterialist index constructed of other items without a political connotation (Warwick, 1998). In some studies, the cohort differences become smaller, even trivial once the

education is controlled for (Duch&Taylor, 1993; Warwick, 1998). This viewpoint argues that some items in the battery will be sooner accepted by those who, during their years of schooling (or through some other experiences like living in an urban dwelling), learned to appreciate the values they stand for (Duch&Taylor, 1993; Pavlović, 2009; 2014b; 2015).

Furthermore, as previously stated, in some studies Inglehart and his associates have clearly treated postmaterialism as a measure of liberty aspirations and value-rooted pressure for the growth of freedom (e. g. Welzel, 2006; Welzel&Inglehart, 2005). Bearing in mind that the content of postmaterialist items (e.g. participation/voice of people) in standard (post)materialism four or twelve items battery (Inglehart, 1990) refers to democratic norms and values *per se*, it seems that this connotation of postmaterialism is unrighteously neglected and often overlooked.¹ Since Inglehart's model describes the postmaterialist value shift in terms of the socialization process and culture/value change, postmaterialism could be treated as a very important cultural variable in the classic (political) structure versus (political) culture debate and as a *thick* culture variable (Mishler& Pollack, 2003).

Still, treating it as a mere political and pro-democratic orientation in the context of the supposed mechanism and determinants of change would be quite challenging for Inglehart's assumptions. The model's insistence on the substantial role of formative years and economic/physical security is easily transferable and applicable to the materialist pole of the dimension, i.e. the relation between economic welfare and the satisfaction of lower (material) needs. If postmaterialism is an expression of those features of human nature that value autonomy and freedom of choice, democracy being the structural parallel of those inner forces, is the support for democracy an unquestionable and inherent consequence or an expression of holding postmaterialist values (i.e. those norms and values embedded in democracy)? Is postmaterialism a standard or a criterion by which the democracy is measured and evaluated? Or could valuing postmaterialist goals be "learned" during positive experiences with the regime that acknowledges and cherish democracy, showing that it is something worth valuing? In other words, is postmaterialism a standard for or a consequence of the evaluation process – a *thick* or *thin* culture variable? Put more simply, does one value democracy because one is postmaterialist or one can become postmaterialist after acknowledging the personal or group benefits of democracy (in whatever terms)? The dynamic interplay between the support for democracy, the satisfaction with the performances of country's democracy and postmaterialism could give us some insights and at least partial answers to these questions.

This bears special relevance in East European countries. Majority of those countries lack preconditions that are related to the postmaterialist shift in theory. Postmaterialism in Eastern Europe is in some sense not to be expected and where and when found has unclear and multiple sources (Pavlović, 2014b; 2015). If a meaningful link between postmaterialism, satisfaction with democracy and support for democracy in East European countries is to be found, that would be another contribution to the view that the nature of some of the main political variables between the Eastern and Western Europe does not substantially differ. It would additionally prove that support for democracy is not, by definition, superficial or just a mere lip service to democracy.

Furthermore, such evidence would shed a different light on postmaterialism, additionally proving its sensitiveness to the prevailing *political* context. As previously mentioned, numerous studies have shown a

¹ It is interesting to note that in Inglehart's theory the political connotation and the political culture context of postmaterialism is only related to a broader syndromes of attitudes, beliefs and values, postmaterialism being only a part of it (e.g. self-expression values). Before arguing of self-expression values, Inglehart himself (e.g. Inglehart, 1988; 1990) spoke of a syndrome of civic culture which included life-satisfaction, interpersonal trust and rejection of revolutionary change of society and excluded (post)materialism.

relative influence and importance of prevailing economic conditions, those aspects of the value dimension that are covered by materialist items. Similarly, postmaterialist pole items have a clear, usually understated and overlooked political connotation and even more neglected implications. Do the current political conditions influence the postmaterialist items selection? If one is more prone to value/choose “fighting rising prices” as an important social goal in a country with high or rising inflation rate, can similar analogy be applied to the other pole of the postmaterialist value dimension – is one more prone to value “protecting freedom of speech” in a country in which it is a poorly guaranteed democracy norm? Could a similar “deprivation logic” be applied? Does one value democratic norms or postmaterialist goals because they function well or because they should function better? Are postmaterialist oriented citizens prone to support democracy differently if we take into account their evaluation of democracy? Or, to use terminology suggested elsewhere (Rose&Mishler, 1994), are postmaterialists in Eastern Europe *Leaders* (those who favour pluralistic regime even before they experience it) or *Laggards* (hesitant in their commitment until the new democratic regime has shown what it is worth)? The answers to these questions can have additional relevance for the structure versus culture debates in political culture studies.

Methodology

Sample. The analysis was performed on nationally representative samples in twenty East European countries (N=30,393) from the fourth wave of EVS (EVS, 2011) (conducted from 2008 to 2010). The following countries were included in the analysis: Albania (N=1,534), Bosnia and Herzegovina (N=1,512), Bulgaria (N=1,500), Belarus (N=1,500), Croatia (N=1,525), Czech Republic (N=1,821), Estonia (N=1,518), Hungary (N=1,513), Latvia (N=1,506), Lithuania (N=1,500), Moldova (N=1,551), Montenegro (N=1,516), FYR Macedonia (N=1,500), Poland (N=1,510), Romania (N=1,489), Russian Federation (N=1,504), Serbia (N=1,512), Slovak Republic (N=1,509), Slovenia (N=1,366) and Ukraine (N=1,507).

Variables and Measures. The following variables were used in the analysis:

(Post)materialist values. The standard four-item index (Inglehart, 1971; 1990) was used as a measure of (post)materialist values. The respondents were asked to choose two out of four social goals towards which their country should strive in the following ten years: *fighting rising prices*, *maintaining order* (materialist values), *giving people more say in important government decisions*, *protecting freedom of speech* (postmaterialist values). The respondents who chose two materialist goals obtained the score of 1 (materialist values); those who chose both postmaterialist goals obtained the score of 3 (postmaterialist values), while the respondents of mixed priorities obtained the score of 2 (mixed type).

Satisfaction with democracy. Measured by one four-point scale item “On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in [COUNTRY]?”. The relevance of this variable stems from the fact that, as shown elsewhere (Linde& Ekman, 2003), this should not be treated as an indicator of the support for the principles of democracy but as an item that taps the level of support for the way democratic regime works in practice and it will be treated here as such; an important institutional (or a thin culture) variable and a very important predictor of support for democracy in some Eastern European countries as previously found (Pavlović, 2014a).

Support for democracy. The autocracy-democracy scale, often used as a measure of general support for democracy in political culture studies (e.g., Klignemann et al., 2006; Pavlović, 2008; 2010), was used in the present study as well. The scale was constructed in the following way: the scores of two items measuring attitudes towards autocracy on a four-point scale (“Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections” and “Having the army rule”) are added and the sum is subtracted from the sum of

scores of two items measuring preference for democracy on a four-point scale (“Having a democratic political system” and “Democracy may have its problems but it’s better than any other form of government”). Scale values range from -6 (autocracy) to +6 (democracy).

Democracy level. Democracy index 2008² is an index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit that measures the state of democracy in 167 countries. The index is based on 60 indicators grouped in five different categories measuring pluralism, civil liberties, and political culture (index range 0–10).³ This measure is used here as an indicator of a country’s democracy level (a macro-level variable in multilevel analysis).

Bearing in mind all of the peculiarities of individual countries, country by country analysis on the individual level was performed firstly. In the analysis of the individual and country level predictors of the support for democracy, hierarchical linear modelling was applied, with the support for democracy as a dependent variable. Data were weighted by country weight variable available in the EVS dataset to adjust socio-structural characteristics in the sample (gender and age) to population parameters.

Results

There is a clear pattern in the relation between postmaterialist values and support for democracy. With rare exceptions, the most supportive of democracy are the postmaterialists; on the other hand, materialists show the weakest support for democracy. Among the observed East European countries (**Figure 4-1**), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and Romania slightly deviate from this trend (absent or very minor differences in support for democracy between the three types). In general, more supportive of democracy are those citizens who highly value societal goals that capture its essence⁴.

In **Figure 1**, another important piece of data can be observed – citizens in each value type and in each country are, on the average, on the positive pole of the autocracy-democracy scale, i.e. positively oriented towards democracy as an ideal⁵.

On the other hand, the prevailing feeling towards democracy’s performances in Eastern Europe is negative (**Figure 2**). There is only one country in which the majority of citizens are satisfied with democracy (Belarus). In all other cases, dissatisfied citizens outnumber the satisfied (very often by a large margin). Furthermore, the more satisfied one is with country’s democracy, the more supportive one is of democracy as an ideal⁶. Since we saw that the acceptance of democracy in general is influenced by the respondent’s

² Obtained from www.eiu.com (accessed 10/09/2014).

³ In addition to a numeric score and country rankings, the index categorizes countries as one of four regime types: full democracies, flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes. In the 2008 report, regarding the countries included in the present study, the Czech Republic and Slovenia were classified as full democracies; Belarus as an authoritarian regime, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Russia as hybrid regimes; all other countries belonged to the group of flawed democracies.

⁴ Correlation analysis has shown that there are no significant correlations between the postmaterialist value index and autocracy-democracy index in Albania, Bulgaria, Latvia and Russia. In all other cases, the correlation coefficients are significant and positive, varying from $r=.06$ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) to $r=.25$ (Slovak Republic).

⁵ Applying the typology offered by Klingemann (2006) that differentiates between “autocrats” (those who obtained scores from -6 to -1 on the autocracy-democracy scale), “undecided citizens” (scale value 0), “democrats” (scale values 1-4) and “strong democrats” (scale values 5-6), the majority of citizens in each country would be classified as “democrats”.

⁶ Only in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova there are no significant correlations between the level of satisfaction with democracy and autocracy-democracy index. Except for Belarus, where the negative correlation is registered ($r=-.28$, $p<.01$), in all other cases, more positive feelings towards country democracy bring about a more intense support for democracy in general (lowest $r=.06$, $p<.01$ [Hungary], highest $r=.24$, $p<.01$ [Estonia]).

value preferences, the question occurs whether there is a meaningful link between the satisfaction with democracy and (post)materialist value preferences and what the consequences for allegiance to democracy in general are.

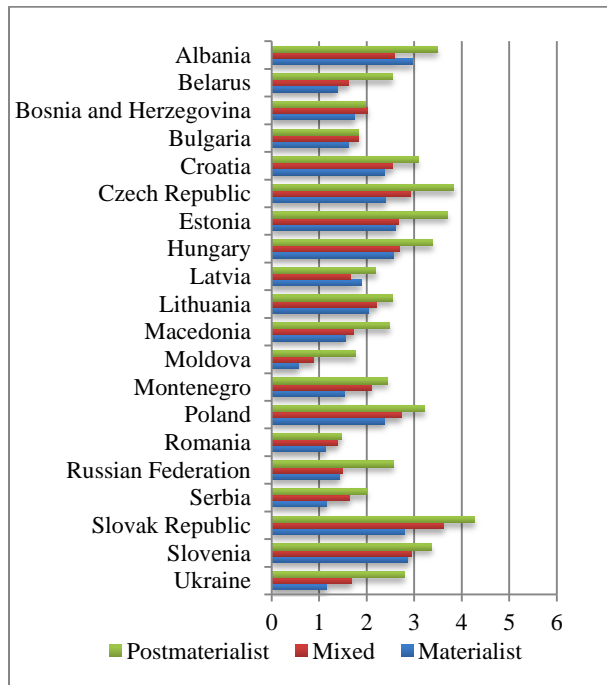


Figure 1.

Support for democracy by value type in East European countries

Note: Bars present the mean on autocracy-democracy index for the respective value type.

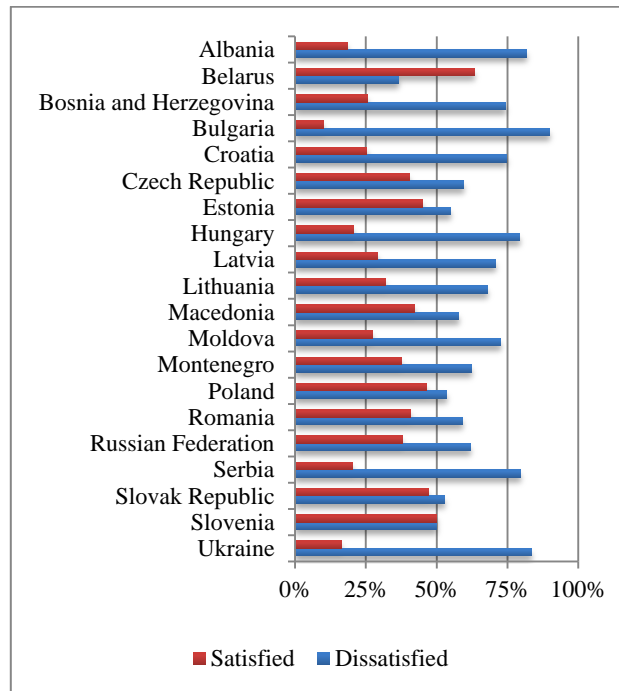


Figure 2.

Satisfaction with country's democracy in East European countries

Note: The "satisfied" category includes those who are "very" or "fairly" satisfied; those "not very" or "not at all" satisfied are treated as a "dissatisfied" group.

One might also wonder whether the respondents who differently evaluate country's democracy are prone to value the analogue societal goals in a different way. Do the respondents satisfied with democracy value postmaterialist goals more highly than their unsatisfied compatriots? If we compare the proportion of satisfied and dissatisfied citizens in each East European country in three value types, we can see a rather complex picture (**Figure 3**). The bars on the left side of the graph (negative values) imply that there are more dissatisfied than satisfied citizens classified in the respective value type; the bars on the right side of the graph show the opposite. The data for the postmaterialist type are of special relevance.

In eleven countries the citizens dissatisfied with democracy chose the postmaterialist goals more often than the citizens with positive feelings towards democracy's performances. In the remaining nine countries the picture is quite the opposite – a more satisfied citizen is more prone to rank postmaterialist goals higher. In some cases, the differences are minor (or to be more precise – the influence of satisfaction with democracy is more prominent in the remaining two value types) and generally low (around 5% in the

absolute terms). Still, the postmaterialist value preference from the “optimistic” and “pessimistic” perspective could imply the different sources and dynamics of postmaterialism within each country or in a comparative perspective.

The respondent who is satisfied with country’s democracy can express his/her appreciation for democratic norms by saying that the country should continue to strive towards democratic norms (i.e. postmaterialist goals) because they have some clear “benefits”; one can value something that one possesses but wants it more or unchanged (Rokeach, 1973).

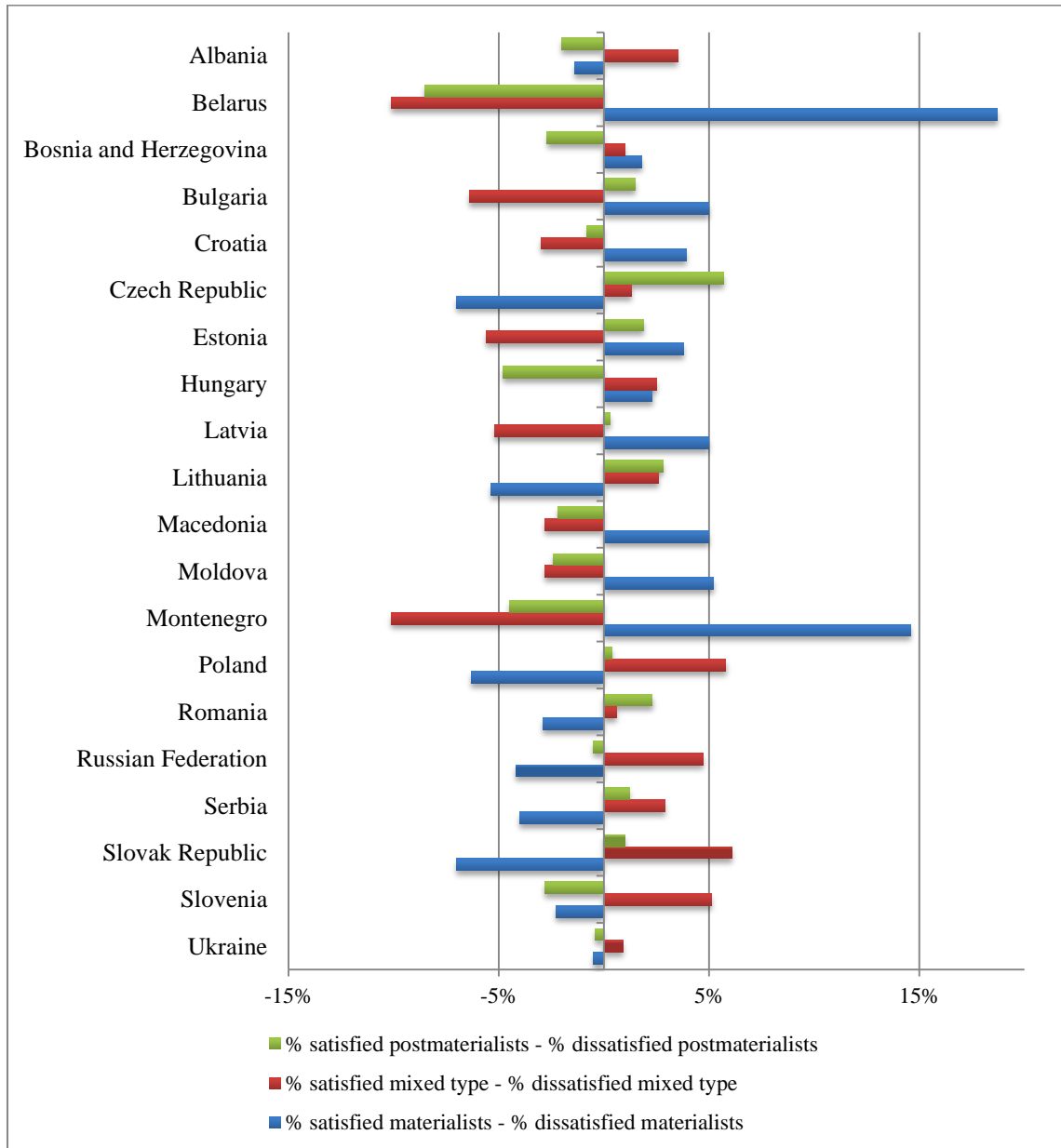


Figure 3.

The differences in the proportion of (dis)satisfied citizens in three value types by country

On the other hand, one can value something that one has not yet fully achieved. The citizen who highly values democracy in general can be cynical and critical towards its quality in his/her own society but still think that there is no alternative (i.e. still be postmaterialist). A negative evaluation of democracy could be based on the abstract, yet unfulfilled level of democratic norms towards which, in respondent's opinion, the society should strive. Deprivation logic is here fully applicable – one wants something that one does not have. In other words, the postmaterialist value preference can be either a consequence of the evaluation process or the source of such an evaluation. The two are strikingly different and, more importantly, hardly separable.

The materialist value preferences can be interpreted in a similar vein. In **Figure 3** we can see that the values shown for the materialist type are relatively higher compared to postmaterialist type, as well as that there are countries with prevailing unsatisfied or satisfied materialist type. A satisfied materialist may be a *materialist* because he/she assesses postmaterialist goals as fully or (sufficiently) accomplished in one's society (which is the reason why he/she is *satisfied*) and evaluate materialist goals as more pressing and acute⁷.

The evaluation of democracy in one's country can, on the other hand, be equalled with the evaluation of overall government performances, among other things in economic sphere (which, in citizens' mind, does not have to be or hardly is relatively unrelated to or separable from democracy as a *political system*). Some studies have shown that the citizens of East European countries accept the new political regime, but not the new economic regime (Rose&Mishler, 1994). Thus, by choosing materialist goals, one can simply want to state the reasons for his/her negative feelings towards country democracy – poor economic performances.

Finally, if we compare the support for democracy among the (dis)satisfied (post)materialists, several important pieces of information are revealed (**Figure 4**). In half the number of the observed countries, the most intense supporters of democracy are postmaterialists, no matter whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied. Furthermore, the two postmaterialist subtypes compared, the predominant pattern is that allegiance to democracy is more widespread among the satisfied than the dissatisfied. Here one might argue – *laggards* more than *leaders* (Rose&Mishler, 1994).

⁷ This bears special relevance if we have in mind that the EVS wave (2008-2010) used in this study was conducted on the eve of the worldwide economic crisis.

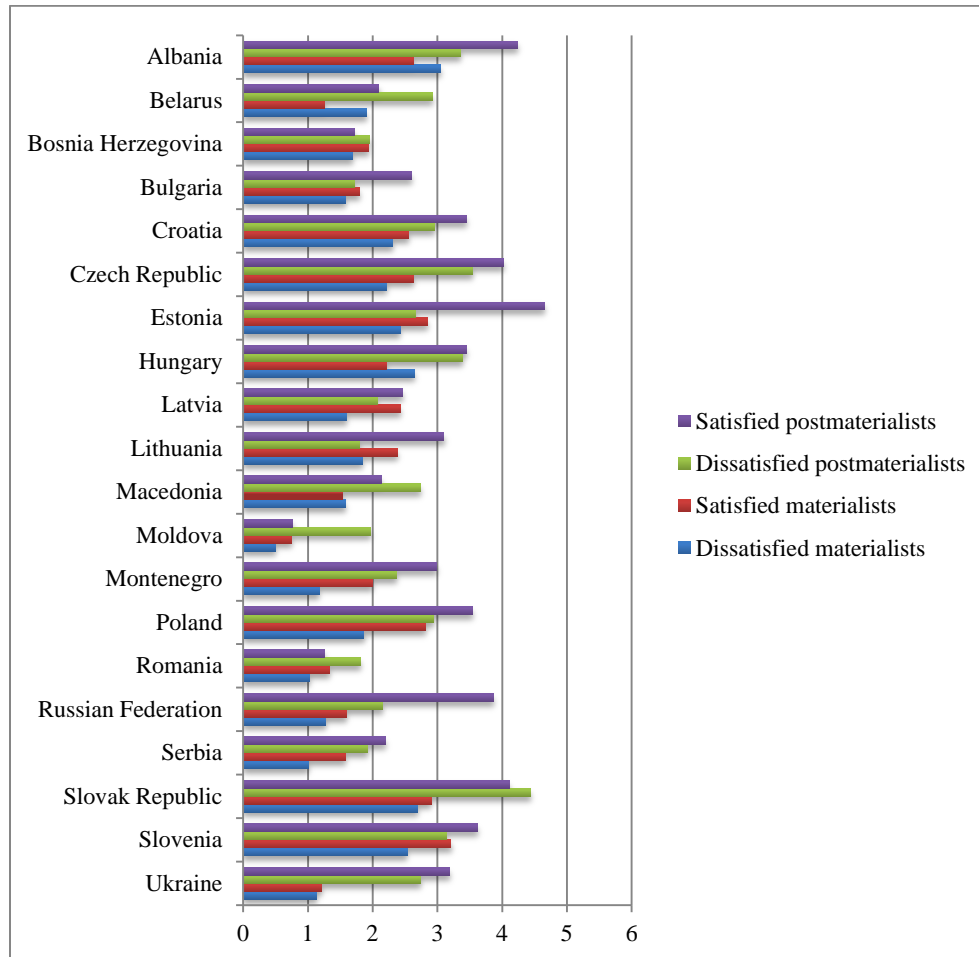


Figure 4.

Support for democracy by satisfaction with democracy and value type in East European countries

Similarly, the satisfied materialists, in general, show more support for democracy than the dissatisfied. Even more, in some countries (for example, Latvia or Lithuania) the satisfaction with democracy could be a more important determinant of the support for democracy than (post)materialism – satisfied citizens are more supportive of democracy than the dissatisfied; even a satisfied materialist is a stronger “democrat” than a dissatisfied postmaterialist.

Finally, the results of the multilevel analysis (**Table 1**) offer additional insights. The estimation of random parameters has shown that 10.7% of the variation in support for democracy stems from the variation between countries. All other things equal postmaterialism as well as satisfaction with democracy are significant predictors of the support for democracy and can account for some within and between country variance. The inclusion of the country level predictor – democracy level – in the model additionally increases the percentage of the explained between country variance (to 33% of the explained variance; data not shown in **Table 1**) and it is one of the most important predictors of the support for democracy. The citizens of those East European countries with more developed and effective democratic regimes are more supportive of democracy in general.

Table 1. Multilevel model of support for democracy in Eastern Europe

| | Estimate | Std. Error | df | t | Sig. |
|---|-----------|------------|-----------|---------|------|
| <i>Estimates of fixed effects</i> | | | | | |
| Intercept | -.358 | .061 | 20.019 | -5.875 | .000 |
| <i>Individual level</i> | | | | | |
| Age | .012 | .006 | 22544.371 | 2.072 | .038 |
| Education | .143 | .006 | 22557.373 | 21.697 | .000 |
| Satisfaction with democracy | .077 | .006 | 22560.999 | -12.435 | .000 |
| Postmaterialism | .085 | .006 | 22550.042 | 13.553 | .000 |
| <i>Country level</i> | | | | | |
| Democracy level | .142 | .061 | 20.039 | 2.323 | .031 |
| <i>Cross-level interaction</i> | | | | | |
| Satisfaction with democracy * Democracy | -.072094 | .006205 | 22560.596 | -11.618 | .000 |
| <i>Random part</i> | | | | | |
| Country mean (σ_u) | .769 | .007 | | | |
| Level-1 effect (σ_e) | .073 | .023 | | | |
| <i>Model fit</i> | | | | | |
| Chi square | 58204.036 | | | | |
| AIC | 58224.036 | | | | |
| ICC | .108 | | | | |

Note: entries are standardized coefficients; Maximum likelihood estimates.

Furthermore, significant coefficients for the interaction term (satisfaction with democracy*democracy level) suggest the more prominent effects of evaluation variable in the countries with a more developed democracy: the citizens more satisfied with democracy are more intense supporters of democracy in a situation when democracy is more effective.

Conclusions

The presented data have several important implications. First of all, it seems that (post)materialism is undoubtedly an important aspect of the democratic political culture in Eastern Europe. No matter how poorly widespread postmaterialism in East European countries is, postmaterialists are exactly those who are the most intense supporters of democracy as an ideal. They are the safeguards of the idea of democracy and its windshields. If we view the concept of postmaterialism in the light of the original model (Inglehart, 1990), we might say that the support for democracy in Eastern Europe is far from being a mere lip service to democracy. At least to a limited extent it has cultural and *thick* culture roots. Furthermore, the lowest support for democracy in Eastern Europe compared to Western societies (Klingemann et al., 2006) can (partially) be explained by low levels of postmaterialism. But it seems that there's more to it and this is only one possibility.

As found elsewhere (Clarck&Dutt, 1991; Clarke et. al., 1997; Clarke et. al., 1999; Duch&Taylor 1993; 1994; Pavlović, 2014b; 2015), the items rankings in postmaterialism battery are highly sensitive to current economic conditions and individual evaluations. The data shown in this paper additionally indicate the importance of current political conditions and evaluations. It seems that postmaterialism may not be a criterion for political evaluations but its consequence instead. If it really is an early socialization product, a matter of *thick* culture – essential, fundamental, coherent, durable (Mishler& Pollack, 2003) – then we would not expect it to be under the influence of prevailing conditions. A postmaterialist should support democracy despite the quality of his/her evaluation of its functioning. However, as indicated on previous pages, the network between postmaterialism, satisfaction with democracy and support for democracy is rather complex. Furthermore, postmaterialism in some cases may be nothing but a tally or a summary of political and economic evaluations, the product of a lifetime experience. To use this terminology once more, a *thin* culture variable, which is rationally based, reciprocally related to political institutions, dynamic (Mishler& Pollack, 2003). Postmaterialism may not be an expression of the main ungratified personal needs, rooted in individual history (as the original model proposes), but a consequence or a summary of evaluations of how well the country has dealt with some important issues (economic and political). Or it may be “thicker” than mere evaluations (e.g. value orientation), a base for such evaluations or a looking glass for prevailing societal issues, but not early instilled and with no reference to more recent experiences.

If we have in mind that the support for democracy is influenced by the quality of country's democracy, it may be hypothesized that postmaterialism can be “created” by creating a more functional democracy. One way of making people more satisfied with democracy is through more positive outcomes of democracy itself, securing the benefits for the many. If democracy fulfilled the great expectations of East Europeans, they would become more satisfied with it and more prone to recognize and acknowledge the importance and value of having and living under the democratic regime, thus becoming more prone to value the postmaterialist liberty items, which would in turn further strengthen the democracy. It would be a sort of a “thin-to-thick” direction of the political culture change. There are studies that proved that the downward causation (macro-to-micro level) works quite well: thin aspects of political culture related to macro-level phenomena induce a change in the thick aspect of political culture (for example, individual value preferences), which results in further changes in responses to macro political conditions (Voinea, 2014, see also Voinea, 2013). Data presented here can be seen in this light and deserve further investigation.

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