The three worlds of post-communism: revisiting deep and proximate explanations

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Since the upheavals of 1989–1991, the post-communist countries have embarked upon three distinct political trajectories: a path leading to democracy in the Western part of the setting, a path leading to autocracy in the Eastern part of the setting, and an intermediate path – both in geographical and political terms – leading to 'defective' democracy. This article seeks to explain the emergence of these three worlds of post-communism. Using typological theory as the principal methodological tool, we revisit Herbert Kitschelt's distinction between deep (structural) and proximate (actor-centred) explanations. The empirical results show that the post-communist setting is characterized by striking regularities in the form of clustering in the *explanandum* as well as the *explanans*. The orderings of referents on both the deep and the proximate attributes show a remarkable co-variation with the political pathways of post-communism – and with each other. The presence of such systematic empirical regularities lends support to two conclusions. First, both kinds of explanations elucidate the present variation in post-communist political regime types. Second, the variation on the deep factors largely explains the variation on the proximate factors. Kitschelt's general plea to dig deeper is thus supported, and the explanatory quest turns into a challenge of theoretical integration.

Keywords: post-communism; democracy; deep and proximate explanations; causality; configurational methods

The breakdown of communism in 1989–1991 took an entire generation of scholars by surprise.[1] *A fortiori*, the nascent field of 'post-communist studies' was bereft of any dominant explanatory paradigm. Not surprisingly, then, the early 1990s witnessed a plethora of competing theoretical diagnoses of the new reality – both regarding the *direction* of change and with the respect to the *drivers* of change. As Valerie Bunce has described, optimists pointed to the coming of

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a glorious democratic future based on liberal principles; pessimists foresaw an unenviable era of political and economic populism, if not outright dictatorship.[2]

The empirical reality overturned both sets of predictions, however. First, the setting came to exhibit a fairly systematic partition between democracies and autocracies; the former cluster situated on the western fringes of the old empire, the latter cluster inhabiting the eastern territories. Second, a number of post-communist countries – conveniently situated between the two others geographically – drifted toward a third cluster of 'defective democracies'.[3] The present article sets out to discuss and elucidate the advent of this tripartite division of the *explanandum*, the three worlds of post-communism from which the title is drawn.

That objective brings us back to the early debate concerning the *explanans*. Intertwined with the hefty disagreement about the future shape of the former Eastern bloc, advocates of very diverse approaches were engaged in rampant explanatory debates in the early 1990s. At the end of the decade, however, two competing paradigms had crystallized.

On the one hand, proximate explanations – that is, actor-centred approaches – were going from strength to strength. The causal factors emphasized by these approaches were, *inter alia*, the outcome of the initial elections, constitutional engineering, and the character of the economic reform process.[4] In general, the matching causal chain led from actor-choices to political outcomes. More particularly, the proximate explanations of regime change shared two propositions concerning social change – and in doing so they were heavily indebted to the so-called school of Transitology which had emerged in the 1980s.[5] First, the important factors shaping the political outcomes dated from the transitional upheavals, not from antecedent structural factors. Second, and consequently, these constraints were put in place by actors in a relatively voluntaristic way.[6]

On the other hand, spearheaded by Herbert Kitschelt's forceful critique of these very theories,[7] another cohort of students of post-communism were turning their attention to the way historical legacies and other structural factors have shaped the scope of choice.[8] Kitschelt's own appraisal is based on a distinction between deep, structural explanations on the one hand and shallow, proximate explanations on the other. He anchors the separation on the temporal dimension, stressing that the deeper the causes are, the more distant they are from the *explanandum*, and the more blurred the affiliated causal mechanisms tend to be.[9]

Contrariwise, proximate causes are situated relatively close to the outcome temporarily and provide clear-cut causal mechanisms. At first sight, they thus have a competitive edge as *explanans*. But looks may be deceiving. Kitschelt's ontological point is that the proximate explanations are often too closely (sometimes almost tautologically) linked with the outcome to be causally interesting *vis-à-vis* their deeper counterparts. As causes, they are better construed as intermediate links in a chain that leads from the deep factors to the outcome. And this equals saying that the major theoretical and empirical task is not one of matching the relative explanatory power of competing bids, but one of theoretical integration.

Somewhat surprisingly, in the context of the former communist countries there is a lack of research dedicated to assessing the empirical relevance of Kitschelt's fundamental critique. In fact, his propositions have not really been tested by juxtaposing deep and proximate causes in a common explanatory framework, thereby elucidating their mutual relationship as well as their individual political effects. The objective of this article is to provide such a test. Our preliminary assertions, inspired by Kitschelt, can be formulated as a two-sided hypothesis, amenable to empirical testing:

1) Both the deep and the proximate explanatory variables account for the present variation in post-communist political regimes.
2) The deep explanatory variables account for the variation in the proximate explanatory variables.

Methodological issues

That Kitschelt's critique has not been assessed more systematically probably owes much to the methodological issues implied by his ontological propositions. As described above, his recommendations are based on the premise that proximate explanations are too superficial, temporally speaking. Yet there is more to it than that. *Pari passu*, he makes the case for a path-dependent account of political change in the former communist bloc. Structural conditions to a large extent determined whether 'open' or 'closed' politics characterized the transition, the argument goes, and these characteristics then paved the way for a number of proximate mechanisms of transmission. From a democratic perspective the post-communist reality has therefore been one of either 'virtuous' or 'vicious' circles; a set of positive and negative spirals unleashed by the deep constraints and then reproduced by the proximate choices. To elaborate, an auspicious structural point of departure has made for auspicious proximate actor-choices, ultimately locking in an auspicious political regime form (*in casu* democracy) – and likewise (or better: contrariwise) with an inauspicious structural point of departure.

These arguments have salient methodological consequences. In gist, they undermine – or at least question – the use of what Kitschelt terms a 'tournament of variables', that is, standard, multiple regression techniques. The more proximate actor-centred variables will tend to wash out the deeper structural variables merely because they are more closely linked to the outcome on the dimension of time. But this tells us preciously little about the causal chain *tout court*.

Also, and equally problematically, the general tendency of the variables to coincide in the post-communist setting means that we are presented with massive problems of multi-collinearity.[10] In this situation, multiple regression analysis, at most, allows us to pinpoint the joint importance of packages of variables, not their individual effects nor their relative importance.

Kitschelt deserves much praise for having brought these issues to the fore. Yet it seems to us that he does not take the methodological consequence of his

own line of reasoning. He seems to favour the use of sophisticated statistical techniques, such as panel regression analysis, to scrutinize post-communist pathways for the simple reason that they make up what may be termed the 'industry standard'.[11] However, as argued above, the statistical techniques are not very helpful when it comes to disentangling the causal mish-mash of post-communism, the helter-skelter of bivariate relationships. If it is possible to find a comparative method, or a combination of comparative methods, better suited for testing Kitschelt's proposition, one should therefore do so.

On the basis of the preceding discussion, three criteria for such methods must be observed. First, inferential tools that pave the way for identifying causal pathways by the systematic use of simple logical arguments concerning temporal developments are direly needed. Second, the striking empirical regularities of the *explanandum*, the existence of three separate worlds of post-communism, point to the presence of manifest co-variations, which call for explicit methodological treatment. Third, the logic underpinning the notion of virtuous and vicious circles means that methodological tools capable of handling conjunctural causation, given a relatively low number of cases, are warranted.

Bearing this in mind, comparative tools placed in the qualitative tradition – emphasising differences in kind – appear to be more suitable for the task at hand than standard quantitative techniques. In this article, we employ a multi-method approach which allows us to appreciate all the said points in the context of analysing a medium number of cases. First and foremost, we use typological theory, a qualitative tool that is virtually tailored to identifying causal pathways whilst keeping the temporal *problematique* in mind. As George and Bennet have pointed out,

> [a]n important advantage of typological theorizing is that it can move beyond earlier debates between structural and agent-centered theories by including within a single typological framework hypotheses on mechanisms leading from agents to structures and those leading from structures to agents.[12]

Three typological analyses of post-communist political pathways are used to test the hypotheses: from a deep perspective, thereby testing the general relevance of Kitschelt's structural corrective; from a proximate perspective, in turn testing whether the actor-centred approaches account for the variation on the dependent variable; from a joint – or juxtaposed – perspective by construing each of the two dimensions as 'packages' (i.e., composite indices) and contrasting them. Subsequently, the typological analysis is backed up by a related technique, namely crisp-set QCA (csQCA), before a statistical path analysis is employed as robustness-test to check whether the general results are overturned when treating the differences within the setting as differences of degree. Finally, when analysing our typological findings, we discuss the logical criteria for establishing causality – and use these considerations to construct a general model which integrates the deep and the proximate explanations.

The qualitative part of this multi-methods approach share some affinity with that proposed in an interesting, recent article by Carsten Schneider and Claudius Wagemann.[13] Schneider and Wagemann also elaborate Kitschelt's ontological propositions by investigating deep and proximate explanations separately before re-integrating them into a common framework through a 'two-step approach'. Like Schneider and Wagemann, we have a somewhat broader understanding of deep explanations than Kitschelt does: we take them to cover all factors relatively stable and outside the manipulative reach of (current, domestic) actors.[14] This is in contrast to proximate factors, which can fluctuate significantly within short periods of time and are easier to change by human agency besides being causally closer to a particular outcome.

However, we part way with Schneider and Wagemann in a number of important regards. First, concerning the *explanandum*, we seek to account for the kind of regime form, not the extent of democratic consolidation, which is also reflected by our trichotomizing the dependent variable. Second, whereas Schneider and Wagemann analyse a more general universe of transitional countries,[15] we are only preoccupied with the post-communist microcosm, the one Kitschelt had in mind when making his distinction between deep and proximate causes. Third, and most importantly, Schneider and Wagemann's objective is basically to develop the fuzzy-set QCA (fsQCA) approach, using democratic consolidation merely as an illustration. Ours is to clear empirical ground – overgrown with a distinct set of causes – using typological theory backed up by csQCA and path analysis.

The three worlds of post-communism

In spite of what seemed a common point of departure, viz., a patchwork of interwoven political, social, and economic characteristics,[16] the three worlds of post-communism came into their own very quickly.[17] To appreciate this shift from communist uniformity to post-communist diversity, we set out to capture the present dividing lines between different post-communist political regime forms. Doing so, we follow Robert A. Dahl's procedural definition of democracy (or polyarchy) accentuating a list of necessary, institutional properties: elected officials; free, fair, and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship.[18]

To measure the status of the empirical referents on these properties, we turn to Freedom House's disaggregated data, reported in the Freedom in the World survey. More specifically, we use the scores of four attributes matching Dahl's criteria, viz., electoral process, political pluralism and participation, freedom of expression and belief, and associational and organizational rights. All of them are, in accordance with the Dahlian point of departure, considered to be mutually constitutive attributes. It is therefore proper to construct a composite measure using a minimum aggregation procedure.[19]

Table 1. The post-communist distribution of political regime types, 2005.

Democracies	Defective Democracies	Autocracies
Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia	Albania, Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Ukraine	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

After a standardization of the scores (0–100), an application of this logic produces the following classificatory schema. We consider the countries in the upper quartile (above 75) to be democracies, the countries in the two lowest quartiles (below 50) to be autocracies, and the countries in between to be defective democracies. Since we are interested in the general political demarcation lines of the setting – rather than finely graded differences – this tripartite classification should do.[20] In the first year for which the disaggregated Freedom House scores are available, the 2006-scores covering the year 2005, the consequent empirical ordering is the following.[21]

Table 1 shows that in 2005, 11 post-communist countries were democracies, nine were autocracies, and six were defective democracies. Notice, thus, that although the speed and timing of democratization in individual post-communist countries have varied, it now appears to have produced distinct forms of political regimes, coinciding with three geographical subregions. To elaborate, all democracies are situated in the Western part of the setting, all the autocracies are situated in the Eastern part of the setting, and – Mongolia being the only exception – the group of defective democracies in an intermediate area in the south-east. The descriptive analysis therefore supports the presence of a tripartite empirical division of the *explanandum*: a classificatory pattern that has bound in space and has become more clear-cut over time.

Identifying explanatory variables

As should be clear from the preliminary theoretical and methodological discussion, the aim of this article is not to find the 'smoking gun' – *the* explanatory variable – of post-communist democratizations. In fact, we have argued that chasing such monocausality is not worth while due to the existence of virtuous and vicious circles. The aim is much more general, viz., to juxtapose and possibly integrate deep and proximate explanations within the literature, thereby testing the merits of Kitschelt's influential critique. Notice that the consequent analysis is very much theory-driven. Beyond the theoretical objective *per se*, this is also important methodologically.

The use of typological theory is premised upon constructing categorical classifications on the explanatory as well as the dependent variables. When

using such simple dichotomies and trichotomies, in which the cut-off points become critical whenever the variables are not naturally nominal-scaled, it is helpful to embed the taxonomic orderings in theory. Consequently, where at all possible, we will use the data and the cut-off points of existing explanations. This is also reflected by the fact that we dichotomize ordinal- and interval-scaled variables using thresholds justified by the extant theories, not around means or medians.

More to the point, to facilitate the subsequent typological analysis, all the variables are dichotomized in such a way that the presence of a particular attribute implies the theoretical expectance of democracy whereas the absence of the property implies the expectance of autocracy. A thorough reading of the literature on post-communism[22] has identified four deep and three proximate explanatory variables, which are presented and operationalized below.

Political legacies (LEGACIES) as described by Herbert Kitschelt.[23] Based on the status on the two pre-communist attributes of bureaucratic state legacies and the balance of power between communists and their challengers at the introduction of communist rule, Kitschelt makes a distinction between the respective legacies of i) bureaucratic-authoritarian, ii) national-accommodative, iii) patrimonial communism, and iv) colonial periphery. The argument holds that both bureaucratic-authoritarian and national-accommodative communism made for a democratic transition in 1989–1991 due to the strength of the opposition. In contrast, patrimonial communism and its sub-class, colonial periphery, made for autocratic continuity because the communist incumbents only faced weak opposition. We dichotomise the variable accordingly.

Modernization (MODERN) as used by Marcus J. Kurtz and Andrew Barnes.[24] According to modernization theory, socio-economic development promotes democracy through the empowerment of civil society, thus increasing tolerance, moderation, and the demand for freedom. We dichotomize the variable on the basis of the first reported GDP figures from the World Bank (PPP, constant 2000 international USD) after the breakdown of communism – and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia – using a threshold of $5300 per capita. This threshold is contained within what may be termed a zone of relative affluence and is well-suited as cut-off point empirically.[25]

Vicinity to Western Europe (WEST) as described by Jeffrey S. Kopstein and David A. Reilly.[26] Kopstein and Reilly use the distance of a post-communist country's capital to the twin capitals of Berlin and Vienna – whichever is closer – to measure this variable. They also operate with a distinct neighbour-effects variable based on the average democracy-score in neighbouring countries. It turns out that the two correlate overwhelmingly (Pearson's r=0.93). To avoid awarding double weight to the geographical factor, we have therefore confined our attention to the former attribute. It has been dichotomized using a four-fold distinction made by Kopstein and Reilly in an overview table, in which they draw borderlines using the three distances of 500, 1000, and 1500 miles. We collapse the two first of these categories, expected to be positively associated with democracy, and the

two last, expected to be negatively associated with democracy. Hence, 1000 miles, placed in a wide, natural gap in the empirical distribution, constitutes the cut-off point.

The Resource Curse (NOOIL) as described by Theresa Sabonis-Helf and Younkyoo Kim.[27] The logic of this explanation is that governments are naturally induced to use their revenues from natural resources, first and foremost oil, to undermine democratization. The money comes with no strings attached and can therefore be used to relieve social pressures through the provision of patronage and public goods – and at the same time it opens a wide avenue for repressing oppositional forces. Fine-grained data on oil production are unfortunately rather unreliable.[28] This does not present much of a problem here, however, as heavy public reliance on oil money is very much a matter of 'either-or', not least in the context of the examined countries. We order the countries dichotomously by isolating the post-communist hydro-carbon rich countries listed in the IMF Guide on Resource Revenue Transparency.[29]

Displacement of communist incumbents at the first elections (DISPLACE-MENT) as described by M. Steven Fish.[30] Fish argues that the outcome and the character of the initial elections after the breakdown of communism laid out the tracks of the economic reform process. Others have extended the causal chain to the political reform process, arguing that an oppositional win over the communist incumbents at the first elections favoured democratization.[31] Gener-ally speaking, Fish's original data is well-suited for our purposes. However, to avoid tautological reasoning arising from the fact that some of the sub-components of his composite index of displacement can be construed as proxies of democracy, we will only use the sub-component measuring the actual outcome of the initial elections. This ordering is easily converted into a dichotomous classification as Fish's score of 0 indicates the absence of incumbent displacement, whereas the two other possibilities (1 and 2) indicate some sort of displacement.

Economic reform (REFORM) as described by M. Steven Fish and Omar Choudhry.[32] Entering the debate pitting economic shock therapy against gradual-ism, Fish and Choudhry argue that economic liberalization has had a positive effect on democratization in the longer term. The numbers measuring economic liberalization are derived from De Melo et al., who – in turn – distinguish between advanced reformers, high-intermediate reformers, low-intermediate reformers, and slow reformers.[33] We use this distinction between reformers (the former two classes) and non-reformers (the latter two classes) to dichotomize the variable.

Strong Legislatures (LEGISLATURE) as described by M. Steven Fish.[34] Fish creates a Parliamentary Power Index, on a scale from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating stronger legislatures. He then argues that a high degree of parliamentary power (and hence a weak presidency) makes for democracy whereas a low degree of parliamentary power (and hence a strong presidency) makes for autocracy. More particularly, Fish emphasises that a country that opted for a strong legislature

is one that scored above 0.60 in the Index.[35] We dichotomize the variable using this threshold.[36]

Testing the deep explanations

To test the merits of the deep and proximate explanations, we turn to typological theory. A brief note on this technique seems warranted. A typology is a multidimensional and conceptual classification, that is, it is an ordering on a compound of attributes.[37] Yet the pure ordering of a multi-dimensional property space is merely the descriptive face of typologies. Typologies also offer an anchorage for causal inference.[38] This is so because the respective orderings on attributes, of which the compound is made up, normally capture a theoretically relevant distinction between the presence and absence of an explanatory factor or the phenomenon to be explained. A typology formed in this way therefore necessarily posits something about theoretical relationships within the property space at hand – it delineates the expected pathways within the typology itself.[39]

On the basis of the serial operations on the four structural variables and the dependent variable, it is straightforward to form the deep typology by unfolding the complete property space of 48 types. However, before doing so, the theoretical expectations must be spelled out. Recall that the justifications for including each of the explanatory variables was that when the attribute used to separate the dichotomous classes was present, the variable would theoretically make for democracy and when absent it would theoretically make for autocracy.

The following empirical expectations can be formulated. First, democracy and autocracy are thought to reflect two equilibrium-points in which all deep attributes are present and absent, respectively. By implication, and bearing the relatively large number of democracies and autocracies in mind, the prediction is that many of the cases clump in the two polar types of cell 1 and 48.[40] We refer to the former polar type as 'structure-based democracy' and the latter polar type as 'structure-based autocracy'. Second, the defective democracies should inhabit the intermediate types close to the diagonal reflecting a mix of present and absent attributes. In Figure 1, the typology is depicted with empirical referents.[41]

By and large, the ordering matches the theoretical expectation, mirroring the fact that the countries clump along the diagonal. Nine countries belong in the polar type of structure-based democracy and four countries in the polar type of structure-based autocracy. Moreover, none of the six defective democracies either has or lacks all the structural attributes. Consequently, 19 out of the 26 countries are classified as anticipated theoretically. Notice, in addition, that most of the Western countries are to be found in polar type 1, most of the Eastern countries in polar type 48 or in adjacent types, and many of the 'midway' countries of the south-east in the interposed types – reflecting the three worlds of post-communism. Viewed from the higher ground, then, the analysis confirms the

			+ Legacies		- Legacies	
			+ Mod	- Mod	+ Mod	- Mod
Democracy	+ West	+ Nooil	CZE EST HRV HUN LTU LTV POL SVK SVN		BGR ROM	
		- Nooil				
	- West	+ Nooil				
		- Nooil				
Defective Democracy	+ West	+ Nooil			MKD UKR	ALB MDA
		- Nooil				
	- West	+ Nooil				GEO MNG
		- Nooil				
Autocracy	+ West	+ Nooil				BLR
		- Nooil				
	- West	+ Nooil				ARM KGZ TJK
		- Nooil			RUS	AZE KAZ TKM UZB

Figure 1. The full deep typology with empirical referents, 2005.

relevance of understanding the post-communist political pathways through the prism of a deep analysis.

Testing the proximate explanations

On the basis of the dichotomous classifications of the three proximate variables and the trichotomy of political regime forms, a typology consisting of 24 types can be unfolded. The theoretical predictions mirror those of the preceding analysis.

Where all three attributes are present, democracy is the expected political outcome, and where all three attributes are absent we anticipate an outcome of autocracy. Any other combination implies an expectation of defective democracy.

This time we name polar type 1 'actor-induced democracy' and polar type 24 'actor-induced autocracy'. Figure 2 shows to what extent the 2005-reality of post-communism conforms to the predictions.

Nine countries belong in the type of actor-induced democracy and six countries in the type of actor-induced autocracy, that is, in the two combinations construed as stable equilibria. Of the six defective democracies, four have the expected mixed combinations of attributes whereas two (Macedonia and Ukraine) exhibit the respective presence and absence of all attributes, showing that the fit is not perfect.

Still, when considering the theoretical expectations, no less than 19 out of 26 countries are again classified as expected. This is also visibly to the naked eye as

		+ Legislature		- Legislature	
		+ Displ	- Displ	+ Displ	- Displ
Democracy	+ Ref	CZE	BGR		
		EST	ROM		
		HRV			
		HUN			
		LTU			
		LTV			
		POL			
		SVK			
		SVN			
	- Ref				
Defective Democracy	+ Ref	MKD	ALB		
			MNG		
	- Ref	MDA		GEO	UKR
Autocracy	+ Ref				
	- Ref			ARM	AZE
				KGZ	BLR
				RUS	KAZ
					TJK
					TKM
					UZB

Figure 2. The full proximate typology with empirical referents, 2005.

the countries clearly clump along the diagonal. Notice, once more, that most of the Western countries are placed in polar type 1 whereas most of the Eastern countries group in polar type 24. Finally, a large proportion of the 'intermediate' countries are found in the interposed types, yet again highlighting the existence of three worlds of post-communism.

Juxtaposing and integrating the two explanatory packages

A typological analysis

The two preceding analyses both exposed some striking empirical regularities. Not only was it possible to draw a very coherent picture of the causal pathways, it was possible to do so from a deep as well as a proximate point of view. Fact of the matter is that the explanatory power of the two approaches appears even-handed – 19 out of 26 referents were classified in accordance with the predictions both times around. The only substantial difference between the approaches was that relatively more defective democracies were 'correctly' classified by the deep typology and relatively more autocracies by the proximate typology. Taken together, the analyses therefore supported the first of our two hypotheses – that both the deep and the proximate explanations explain the present variation in post-communist political regime types. Harking back to the second hypothesis, the interesting question is now: How do the deep and proximate variables, taken as wholes, relate to each other?

To juxtapose the deep and proximate variables, it makes sense to treat each of the two clusters of variables as packages (i.e., as composite indices). The justification for doing so is the striking regularities discovered in the preceding sections. To capture these regularities, we construe each of the clusters of variables as *one* dimension on which we may either encounter the presence of all attributes, the presence of some but not all attributes, or the absence of all attributes.[42] Theoretically, a full presence connotes that the country in question is expected to be a democracy, a mixed score that it is expected to be a defective democracy, and a full absence that it is expected to be an autocracy.

When combining these two trichotomous classifications, a typology once again comes into existence. This final typology exhausts the possible logical combinations of statuses on the two explanatory dimensions. In Figure 3, the typology is illustrated with empirical referents.

One thing is immediately clear. The orderings on the two dimensions correlate very strongly.[43] Thirteen out of 26 countries are found within the two polar types. An additional nine falls into the mixed-mixed type, which means that only four do not clump along the diagonal of the typology. Notice, furthermore, that all the deviant cases fall into types adjacent to the types making up the diagonal. No country thus falls into the theoretically implausible types that combine a full presence on one package with a full absence on the other package.

We also see clear evidence of the three worlds of post-communism. In Figure 3, **bold** is used to highlight the democracies and *italic* to highlight the

		Proximate package		
		Full presence	Mixed score	Full absence
Deep package	Full presence	**CZE** **EST** **HRV** **HUN** **LTU** **LTV** **POL** **SVK** **SVN**		
	Mixed Score	MKD	ALB *ARM* **BGR** GEO *KZG* MDA MNG **ROM** *RUS*	*BLR* *TJK* UKR
	Full absence			*AZE* *KAZ* *TKM* *UZB*

Figure 3. The full typology of deep and the proximate packages with empirical referents.

autocracies. The clear majority of the democracies fall into polar type 1, which we term 'guaranteed democracy'. Likewise, four out of nine autocracies are found in polar type 9, which we term 'guaranteed autocracy'. Finally, four out of six defective democracies are contained in type 5, the intermediate type *par excellence*.

Aberrations are encountered, however, as a good handful of countries have become either democracies or autocracies in spite of not having or not lacking all attributes. We will discuss some of these in the context of the subsequent csQCA-analysis. But at this stage a very simple observation, linked to the classificatory logic, is pertinent. Recall that classes are separated by differences in kind whereas the differences within a class are measured in degree. Consequently, we

can elucidate the differences in the degree of *democraticness* and *autocraticness* within the twin classes of democracy and autocracy by scrutinizing the disaggregated Freedom House ratings. One thing is noteworthy: The democracies that lack some attributes on both dimensions (Bulgaria and Romania) generally score lower on our democracy measure than the democracies with full presence of attributes. Likewise, the autocracies sharing some attributes on both dimensions (Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia) generally score higher than the autocracies with full absence of attributes – or merely a full absence on one of the dimensions. Accordingly, these few outliers are, each from their side, closer to the thresholds demarcating the class of defective democracy than their political cell-mates, just as one would expect.

The most important task here, however, is to relate the two alternative kinds of approaches to each other in order to integrate them into a common explanatory framework. Recall in this connection that causality is a concept implying at least four requirements: 1) a theoretical link between cause and effect; 2) a corresponding empirical co-variation; 3) that the cause antedates the effect; 4) that alternative explanations are controlled for.[44] Both the deep and the proximate variables fulfil each of these criteria (as causes). The respective variables were, first, selected with reference to their theoretical relationship with the outcome in question, second, turned out to stand in the expected empirical relationship to the three possible outcomes on this variable, third, were measured at a point in time predating the measurement on the dependent variable, and, fourth, were chosen from the plethora of theoretical propositions based on their explanatory power in relation to their alternatives in previous studies.

Yet much the same can be said about the relationship between the deep variables and their proximate counterparts. The structural attributes are all more basic (deep-seated) than the actor-centred. Moreover, the two packages stand in a very systematic empirical relationship and it hard to imagine any alternative factor that could spoil this. Can we, finally, establish a theoretical link between the two packages? Clearly we cannot create a causal chain leading from the choices of the actors to the structural attributes because of the temporal sequence. Contrariwise, it seems very much possible to establish a causal chain leading from the deep attributes to the proximate actor-choices.

Features such as the outcome of initial elections, constitutional choice, and economic reforms to a large degree capture various aspects of 'open politics' and societal mobilization. It is very likely that the structural point of departure should impact on this. If a society is modernized, has a vibrant civil society as well as cultural and political linkages to Western Europe, and is not subjected to the resource curse – as was (and is) the case in the Western part of the post-communist world – competitive politics, including the formation of viable oppositional parties, is to be expected during a transitional window of opportunity. If, on the other hand, all of these (or almost all of these) attributes are absent – as was (and is) the case in the Eastern part of the post-communist world – competitive politics is not to be expected in such a situation.

In a nutshell, the actors do not act in a vacuum, and the 'deep arena' is likely to significantly shape their room for action. Even though the causal chain may very well work through the proximate variables, they should therefore not be regarded as root causes, but rather as mechanisms of transmission. In sum, then, we posit that the deep structural point of departure has determined, or at least very much constrained, the proximate choices of the actors and that the combination of these two dynamics have shaped the political pathways of post-communism – a cross-temporal dynamic that the notion of virtuous and vicious circles conjures up an apt image of.

One should not get carried away by the merits of this explanatory edifice, though. As Kitschelt has pointed out, the actor-centred choices may be completely spurious. To quote:

> Either the deeper causes x 'work through' the shallower cause y to bring about the final outcome z $(x \rightarrow y \rightarrow z)$; or the cause x bring about both what appears as the shallower cause y as well as the outcome z $(x \rightarrow y; x \rightarrow z)$.[45]

This objection goes for our analysis, too. As a result of the high collinearity, viewed from the higher ground it is very difficult to distinguish between these alternatives. The ultimate test requires actual process-tracing of the individual post-communist cases,[46] but such an exercise lies beyond the scope of this article. Notice, however, that the convincing theoretical links between the identified proximate attributes and the outcome on the dependent variable supports the notion that some of the causal impact does indeed pass through these choices. Furthermore, the feasible theoretical links between the deep structural constraints and the proximate actor-choices further underpin the notion of a coherent chain – of an integrated whole that is.

Are the results robust?

In order to re-test the results derived from the typological analysis, we first employ csQCA to scrutinize if the same empirical patterns emerge from an alternative, although associated, kind of data treatment.[47] CsQCA is a configurational method which – in the context of the social sciences – represents an attempt to narrow the gap between quantitative (variable-oriented) and qualitative (case-oriented) research.[48] It is based on set theoretical reasoning (Boolean algebra) and, consequently, allows the researcher to identify multiple conjunctural relationships in terms of necessity and/or sufficiency. Like case-oriented approaches, it treats cases as wholes, that is, the different aspects of a case are defined in relation to each other. At the same time, however, it shares the variable-oriented techniques' broad understanding of social phenomena – and embraces their ability to reduce complexity through mathematical data 'manipulation'. For readers not familiar with crisp-set analysis, when reading the formalized results, upper-case letters indicate the presence of an outcome or causal condition (coded 1) and

lower-case letters indicate its absence (coded 0). Concerning the interpretation of Boolean operators, * means logical *and*, + means logical *or*.

As the required dichotomous coding of the outcome (democracy) and the conditions has already been carried out to facilitate the typological analysis, we can move straight to the construction of a truth table. This is achieved by regrouping all identical cases, in terms of their scores on the conditions, into a single configuration. The consequent truth table (Table 2) shows that the 26 cases are covered by 12 different configurations.

No contradictions are uncovered, that is, no cases have identical conditions but different outcomes. We are therefore able to further reduce complexity through the application of the so-called minimization rule. The rule says that if two Boolean expressions (configurations) differ in only one causal condition but produce the same outcome, the causal condition that distinguishes the two expressions is irrelevant and can be removed to create simpler, combined expressions.[49]

The truth table shows that no less than five conditions, viz., vicinity to Western Europe, modernization, no large-scale oil production, a strong legislature, and extensive economic reforms are present in both of the configurations linked to a positive outcome. They can thus be identified as necessary for democracy in the post-communist context. However, in order to constitute a sufficient path (to democracy), they have to be combined with either the simultaneous presence of favourable political legacies and displacement of the incumbents in the first election *or*, alternatively and somewhat counter intuitively, the absence of these

Table 2. Truth table of the dichotomized data linked to outcome and conditions.

Country	Demo.	Legac.	West.	Mod.	Nooil	Legis.	Displ.	Ref.
Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bulgaria, Romania	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
Macedonia	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Albania	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1
Moldova	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0
Mongolia	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Ukraine	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
Belarus	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Russia	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Tajikistan	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

two attributes. In formal terms, the paths explicitly connected with democracy look like this:[50]

1)   WEST*MODERN*NOOIL*LEGISLATURE*REFORM*LEGACIES*
     DISPLACEMENT (Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia) (82%) +
2)   WEST*MODERN*NOOIL*LEGISLATURE*REFORM*legacies*
     displacement (Bulgaria, Romania) (18%).

In toto, these results[51] lend strong support to our conclusions based on the typological analyses. First, the full model does not produce many contradictions; in fact it produces none – which mirrors the presence of manifest regularities on the ground. Second, all conditions are included in the paths, showing the expected direction, which indicates that they play a significant role in the virtuous circles described in this article. Third, both deep and proximate conditions are identified as critical, underscoring that conjunctural causality rather than monocausality is a fact of life in the post-communist world.

The csQCA results further emphasise an interesting point which was also evident in the typological analyses – that Bulgaria and Romania are 'democratic overachievers' considering their statuses on the explanatory attributes. To be sure, as we have already noted they are less democratic than their cell-mates within the class of democracy. Nevertheless, both countries have been able to sustain democracy in spite of their lack of a full presence of attributes on both the deep and the proximate package. The surprising merits of Bulgaria and Romania can probably – partially at least – be explained by a factor we have not considered as it did not fit into the distinction between deep and proximate causes,[52] viz., the EU-enlargement process.

As Milada Anna Vachudova[53] has convincingly argued, Bulgaria and Romania only made the democratic turn after the ascendancy of what she terms the 'active' leverage of the EU, i.e., after the initiation of actual membership negotiations in the mid-1990s. In the early 1990s, by contrast, the lack of political competition allowed the communist incumbents in these countries to pursue an illiberal course of action; something the then 'passive' leverage of the EU could not hinder. Translated into our explanatory edifice, the deep constraints – in particular the political legacies – were unfavourable to democracy. Only the impact of the enlargement process game made it possible to break these constraints. This goes to show that more attention could be paid to the relative weight of various explanatory factors over time, at least when descending the ladder of abstraction and scrutinizing particular countries.

As the last step in a multi-methods approach, we employ a statistical path analysis to further control the reliability of the typological results. First, a latent structural dimension and a latent actor-centred dimension are extracted from the raw data using principal component analysis. One factor with an eigenvalue above one is extracted for each group of variables; for both of them it accounts
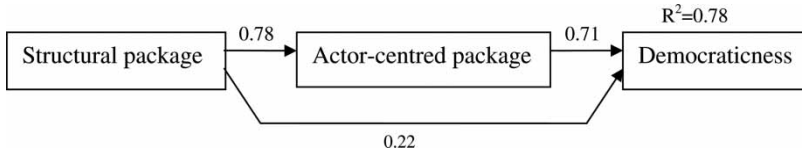
Figure 4. Path diagram illustrating the link between the explanatory packages and democraticness.

for approximately 70% of the variance. The factor scores derived from a principal component analysis (regression method) is then brought into play in a path analysis. Path analysis makes it possible to identify causal linkages among a set of variables. It is thus suitable for testing a causal model from a given theoretical stance – i.e., with the previous research on the area in mind – as it provides an indication of the model's strength.

The results are illustrated in Figure 4. It turns out that the deep package has a direct impact on democraticness as well as and an indirect impact through the proximate package. The path coefficients reflect the amount of variability in one factor that is explained by the other. In brief, the model indicates that the structural package predicts 78% of the variation in the actor-based package, and that the direct explanatory power of the two packages amounts to 22% and 71% of the variation in democraticness, respectively.[54] The high (adjusted) R-square of 0.78 tells us that the overall model provides a very good account for the variability in post-communist democraticness.

It is evident that the path analysis does not contradict our previous findings. On the contrary, the statistical model reconfirms the principal results of the typological analyses as both packages show a strong relationship with the extent of democraticness and, moreover, as the structural package explains most of the variation in the actor-centred package. The prior results are therefore not overturned – indeed, they are clearly supported – when construing the differences within the setting as differences of degree only. Finally, the model is a fine illustration of one of our initial methodological points. It shows that a classical 'tournament of variables' approach would have obscured the identified causal chain as the proximate package more or less wash away the deep package, statistically speaking.

Conclusions

This article set out to explain the advent of three separate worlds of post-communism – a systematic geographic distribution of political regimes – less than two decades after a seemingly uniform point of departure. Building on Kitschelt's influential paper from 2003, we have demonstrated that the most salient fact about the post-communist political pathways is the striking regularities we encounter, both from and a deep and a proximate point of view. But this means

that we are left with a Gordian knot as we have to consider which set of factors we should pin our faith in.

How to cut the knot? Our solution is fairly simple as we reject wielding the sword at all. Instead of opting for one package only – or one explanatory factor – the proximate attributes should be construed as intervening links in a causal chain that leads from the deep attributes to the political outcome. Structures do not create democracy (or autocracy for that matter); actors do. But the systematic – as opposed to random – diversity of post-communism, extending to the *explanandum* as well as the *explanans*, can only be thoroughly explained with reference to deeper factors. In a nutshell, our argument is that these are the genuine explanatory variables but that they kick in via the causal mechanisms provided by the proximate explanations.

As such, the empirical analyses have confirmed the two-sided hypothesis formulated in the introduction. The theoretical claim that arises from this conclusion is that virtuous and vicious circles, respectively, characterize the relationship between the deep and proximate factors, thereby conforming to a path-dependent logic. This equals saying that the dividing lines between democracies (in the Western part of the setting) and autocracies (in the Eastern part of the setting) are if not set in stone then at least very clear-cut. Methodologically, the contrast between these equilibrium-points, mirroring the respective presence and absence of the theoretically interesting attributes, are therefore best described by differences in kind, rather than differences in degree; which means that classificatory schema and typological mappings are appropriate when seeking to navigate the post-communist waters.

One important qualifications needs to be made here, however. The analyses also indicated that the class of defective democracy is characterised by diversity rather than uniformity. Although many of the countries showing a mixed score on both the deep and the proximate package were defective democracies, there were even more exceptions to this rule. Such regimes therefore cannot be construed as stable equilibria. Rather, they have an intrinsic propensity to create conjunctures – as has in fact been empirically demonstrated by the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005). Why this is so is a question that will not be addressed here, as it would require a new article. But one hypothesis that arises from our analysis is the following: the very fact that these countries have a mixed sheet on the explanatory factors means that the actors have much more room for manoeuvring than what would otherwise be the case.[55]

Even in this case, it is thus possibly to argue that the deep constraints have set the parameters for the actors. In total, then, the explanatory edifice arrived at represents a blow against the constricted focus on proximate explanations that dominated the study of regime change from the mid-1980s till the mid-1990s – even though it incorporates and relies on the findings of these approaches. For this research tradition does not construe the actor-centred explanations as intervening in nature, rather they portray them as *the* interesting explanatory variables

while emphasizing the fairly wide room for choice on the actors' behalf. This article has demonstrated the limitations of such a perspective, and we conclude with a plea for greater attention to structural conditions and for a further integration between deep and proximate theories.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. McFaul, 'Fourth Wave', 212.
2. Bunce, 'Political Economy of Postsocialism', 758.
3. Cf. Merkel, 'Embedded and Defective Democracies'.
4. E.g., Fish, 'Determinants'; Fish, 'Stronger Legislatures'; Fish, 'Democratization's Requisites'; Fish and Choudhry, 'Democratization and Economic Liberalization'; Ishiyama and Velten, 'Presidential Power'; McFaul, 'Fourth Wave'; Roeder, 'Varieties of Post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes'.
5. See O'Donnell and Schmitter, 'Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies'.
6. See, e.g., Fish, 'Determinants', 77–8; Fish, 'Stronger Legislatures', 11–12.
7. Kitschelt et al., *Post-communist Party Systems*; Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Outcomes of Post-Communist Regime Change'; Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Postcommunist Regime Diversity'. Notice that Kitschelt's 1999 book analyses different patterns of democratic party competition. In the two subsequent papers, however, his focus is squarely on explaining democratization, as is ours in this article.
8. A few authors, such as Janos, 'Continuity and Change in Eastern-Europe', in fact anticipated Kitschelt. But many more were to follow in his footsteps, e.g. those included in Ekiert and Hanson, *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*; Darden and Grzymala-Busse, 'Great Divide'; Pop-Eleches, 'Historical Legacies'.
9. Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Postcommunist Regime Diversity', 74–5.
10. Cf. also Pop-Eleches, 'Historical Legacies', 917.
11. This assertion is based on a critical review by Herbert Kitschelt of the doctoral dissertation of one of the authors in which he recommend – verbatim – for observing such an 'industry standard'.
12. George and Bennett, *Case Study*, 245.
13. Schneider and Wagemann, 'Reducing Complexity'.
14. Schneider and Wagemann try to capture this by replacing the adjective 'deep' with 'remote'.
15. Including Southern European, Latin American, and some – but far from all – post-communist countries.
16. Bunce, 'Paper Curtains and Paper Tigers', 981.
17. Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Postcommunist Regime Diversity', 49.
18. Dahl, *On Democracy*, 85.
19. According to Gary Goertz, using the minimum score – corresponding to the *fuzzy and* operation in fsQCA – with regard to the constitutive features is the preferable way to handle an aggregation process for many social science concepts. This certainly applies to the concept of democracy, which he – tellingly – uses to illustrate the point. See Goertz, *Social Science Concepts*. For similar arguments, see Bowman,

Lehoucq, and Mahoney, 'Measuring Political Democracy', 939–70; Sartori, *Theory of Democracy Revisited*.

20. Furthermore, an application of a different dataset concerning the same year, viz., the Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006, supports our ordering. Using the minimum procedure on the Bertelsmann scores connected to the attributes of political participation (free, fair, and frequent elections, effective power to elected leaders, freedom of association and assembly, freedom of expression), the exact same distribution of cases into classes appear – with the sole exception of Macedonia. Based on this inductive line of reasoning, combined with our case knowledge, the ordering seems robust and plausible.

21. Due to missing data on the explanatory variables we have been forced to exclude Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro, leaving a set of 26 post-communist countries to be classified.

22. This reading is based, in particular, on the overviews presented by Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Postcommunist Regime Diversity' and Pop-Eleches, 'Historical Legacies'.

23. Kitschelt et al., *Post-communist Party Systems*; Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Outcomes of Post-Communist Regime Change'.

24. Kurtz and Barnes, 'Political Foundations'.

25. As it falls in a natural gap in the empirical distribution of cases.

26. Kopstein and Reilly, 'Geographic Diffusion'.

27. Sabonis-Helf, 'Rise of the Post-Soviet Petro-states'; Kim, *Resource Curse*. See also Fish, *Democracy Derailed* and some of the contributions in Ebel and Menon, *Energy and Conflict*.

28. Fish, *Democracy Derailed*, 84.

29. IMF, *Guide on Resource Revenue Transparency.*

30. Fish, 'Determinants'.

31. Bunce, 'Political Economy of Postsocialism', 782; McFaul, 'Fourth Wave'; Fish, 'Democratization's Requisites'.

32. Fish and Choudhry, 'Democratization and Economic Liberalization'.

33. De Melo, Denizer, and Gelb, 'Patterns of Transition'.

34. Fish, 'Stronger Legislatures'.

35. Ibid., 18.

36. Turkmenistan is not included in Fish's survey. However, his index is very much of the same ilk – and on the same scale – as the Presidential Power Index of Frye, 'A Politics of Institutional Choice'. In Frye's index, Turkmenistan receives a very high score of presidential power meaning that it is fair to place Turkmenistan in the group of countries with weak legislatures. In the statistical path analysis, we use Frye's score for Turkmenistan (0.35).

37. Cf. Lazarsfeld and Barton, 'Qualitative Measurement'; Bailey, *Typologies and Taxonomies*.

38. George and Bennett, *Case Study*; Elman, 'Explanatory Typologies'.

39. George and Bennett, *Case Study*, 235.

40. 48 types may strike the reader as quite a complex construct, the danger of which is often warned about in the literature on typologies (e.g., Elman, 'Explanatory Typologies'). However, as we predict a clustering around the diagonal, the presence of five variables does not present an unwieldy complexity.

41. The respective positioning of the independent variables is coincidental. It could take many other shapes but this would not change the identity of the 48 types.

42. This equals the typological technique termed 'indexing' by Elman, 'Explanatory Typologies'.

43. If we interpret the three values as an ordinal-scale of 1 (full presence), 2 (mixed score), and 3 (full absence), the statistical correlation (Kendall's Tau-b) between the two packages is an impressive 0.86.
44. Cf. Gerring, *Social Science Methodology*, 130–46.
45. Kitschelt, 'Accounting for Postcommunist Regime Diversity', 75.
46. Cf. George and Bennett, *Case Study*.
47. As this technique is primarily used to check the robustness of the findings, the description of the different analytical steps and reports of the results are comprised. We do, however, recognize the standards of good practice – except (due to space limitations) the publication of the raw data matrix – suggested by Wagemann and Schneider, *Standards of Good Practice*.
48. Ragin, *Comparative Method*; Rihoux and Ragin, *Configurational Comparative Analysis*.
49. Ragin, *Comparative Method*, 93.
50. If we allow all logical cases, i.e., empirically unobserved configurations (combinations of attributes), in the Booelan reduction (see Ragin and Sonnett, *Between Complexity and Parsimony*) this result emerges:

    LEGACIES (Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)+
    MODERN*displacement*LEGISLATURE (Bulgaria, Romania)·

    As we do not, however, wish to make any conclusions based on assumptions about unobserved variation, this result is not subjected to further interpretation.
51. CsQCA is only used as a secondary analytical tool. Thus, the space limitations do not allow us to interpret the results in detail, nor to discuss the complementary paths leading to non-democracy – apart from mentioning that they definitely do not contradict our arguments presented in the core text. The absence of favourable political legacies is the only necessary condition, while the analysis points to no less than seven different, and rather complex, solution terms:

    modern*NOOIL* legacies*displacement*LEGISLATURE*REFORM (Albania+Mongolia)+
    modern* NOOIL* legacies*west*legislature*reform (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan+Tajikistan)+
    modern* legacies*west*displacement*legislature*reform (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan+Tajikistan)+NOOIL*legacies*WEST*displacement*legislature*reform (Belarus+Ukraine)+MODERN*NOOIL*legacies*WEST*DISPLACEMENT*LEGISLATURE*REFORM(Macedonia) +modern*NOOIL*legacies*WEST* DISPLACEMENT*LEGISLATURE*reform(Moldova)+MODERN*nooil*legacies*west*DISPLACEMENT*legislature* reform (Russia)·

    An inclusion of all logical cases in the minimization procedure produces paths toward non-democracy has the following consequences:

    modern (Albania+Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan+Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan+Belarus+Moldova+Mongolia+Tajikistan)+legislature (or reform – logically substitute) (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan+Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan+Belarus+Russia+Tajikistan+Ukraine)+ legacies*DISPLACEMENT (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan+Macedonia+Moldova+Russia)·
52. Furthermore, the inclusion of the EU-variable into the general explanatory edifice would imply salient endogeneity problems. To the extent that potential EU membership is considered to be a structural variable, the variable measuring vicinity to Western Europe tends to be a fairly good proxy.
53. Vachudova, *Europe Undivided*.
54. All relationships are statistically significant at the 0.1-level.
55. For an example of a lucid analysis of actor-choices within such structural constraints, see Hale, 'Regime Cycles'.

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