

<p><b>Taking Partly Free Voters Seriously: Autocratic Response to Voter Preferences in Armenia and Georgia</b></p>	<p><b>Countries involved:</b> Armenia and Georgia</p>
	<p><b>Institutions involved:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) – Georgia <a href="http://www.crrc.ge/">http://www.crrc.ge/</a></li> <li>• The Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) - Armenia <a href="http://www.crrc.am/">http://www.crrc.am/</a></li> </ul>
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<p><b>Short Description:</b></p> <p>This project intends to compare and contrast how political actors manipulate institutions in Armenia and Georgia with the goal of staying in power. We are primarily interested in a regime's policy responses to the electorate's preferences although, arguably, these responses are mediated by the regime's institutional environment. Thus, our aim is to identify and analyze (1) the political constraints faced by the autocratic ruling party and (2) the regime's policy responses to voter preferences as shaped by these constraints. The dependent variable is regime stability. We have two key independent variables: (1) political constraints for the autocratic ruling party, and (2) volatility in salient policy areas. The main claim of this research is that the stability of competitive authoritarian regimes depends not only on international pressure, elite composition, institutional factors and economic crisis, but also on the regime's policy responses to voters' preferences. Hence, our first hypothesis suggests that weak political constraints open an opportunity for the regime to practice volatile policies before elections to satisfy the demands of the median voter. The second hypothesis states that the regime with volatile public policies will have larger electoral support. Thus, weak political constraints matched with volatile policies provide a key to understanding the stability and durability of competitive authoritarian regimes.</p>	
<p><b>Main Objectives:</b></p> <p>The project's objectives are to (1) understand to what extent autocratic ruling parties do respond to the electorate's preferences; (2) analyze how these responses do shape public policies; (3) investigate the role of institutional constraints in shaping policy responses of the ruling party.</p> <p>To achieve these objectives, the project envisages the following activities: (1) literature review, (2) secondary data analysis, (3) in-depth interviews with key political and policy actors, (4) experimental study of voters' policy preferences.</p>	
<p><b>Expected Outputs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A book in English;</li> <li>• At least one paper in a peer reviewed journal;</li> <li>• Two conference papers per country;</li> <li>• Quarterly posts on CRRC's blog in Armenian, Georgian and English;</li> <li>• At least four public presentations and round table discussions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Duration:</b> 24 months (1 March 2014 - 29 February 2016)</p>	<p><b>Value:</b> 99'810 CHF</p>