

# Governing the Grey Zone

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## Why Hybrid Regimes in Europe's Eastern Neighborhood Pursue Partial Governance Reforms

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Bolkvadze, K. (2016) Cherry Picking EU Conditionality: Selective Compliance in Georgia's Hybrid Regime, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68:3, 409-440, DOI: 10.1080/09668136.2016.1154138

Bolkvadze, K. (2017) Hitting the Saturation Point: Unpacking the Politics of Bureaucratic Reforms in Hybrid Regimes, *Democratization*, 24:4, 751-769, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2016.1247808.

Bolkvadze, K. (2017) To Reform, or to Resist? Political Fragmentation and Judicial Corruption in Hybrid Regimes. Unpublished manuscript.

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### **Abstract**

Every year the European Union, as well as numerous other international organizations, states, and transnational networks wield ample resources to promote democratic governance in the developing countries. However, the impact of these reform promotion efforts varies widely. Many scholars have blamed structural conditions, or the inadequate rewards offered by the donors, as the reasons behind the partial impact of external actors. However, such approach portrays recipient governments as passive objects of the external influence, and overlooks the fact that domestic actors can, themselves, actively subvert or facilitate the reforms. In this dissertation, Ketevan Bolkvadze addresses this gap, by departing from the literature on hybrid regimes, and by placing incumbents and their incentives structures at the forefront of the analysis. The three different studies in this thesis zero in on the hybrid regimes in Moldova and Georgia, and examine how political fragmentation and incumbent's time-horizons shaped their response to the EU-promoted reforms.

The findings from this dissertation show that the external actors are often caught between a rock and a hard place. When they provide assistance for reforms in dominant-party hybrid regimes, incumbents might use this to bolster their popular support, while, in parallel, side-lining their opponents. Thus, donor assistance might help them perpetuate their political tenure. By contrast, while in fragmented hybrid regimes authoritarian tendencies are not an immediate risk, incumbent politicians often use the existing malfunctioning state institutions – and even donor assistance - for reaping personal monetary benefits. In the first case, donor assistance ends up being used for partisan purposes; in the second case, it risks being used for private ends. Both are troubling outcomes.

**Key Words:** hybrid regimes, EU conditionality, external reform promotion, bureaucracy, judiciary, corruption