

From Eastern Empire to Western Hegemony: East Central Europe under Two International Regimes

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The historic events of 1989–1992 surrounding the demise of the Soviet bloc created extraordinary challenges for both participants and observers of the political drama. The challenge to participants on both sides of the Iron Curtain was to create political order from the chaos of collapse. To observers, not least among them political scientists, the challenge was to create intellectual order by identifying appropriate conceptual frameworks capable of capturing the quintessential elements of the process and of assembling seemingly disparate events into coherent narratives.

The profession of political science responded with commendable zeal and produced numerous competing paradigms even before the events had unfolded in their entirety. Among these constructs was one that wove the process of dissolution into a grand evolutionary scheme presenting the fall of European communism as a triumph of human rationality culminating in the “end of history.”¹ Others similarly returned to the old paradigm of modernization and convergence, arguing that the demise of communism resulted from tensions between the ever-increasing complexity of the economic base and the continued backwardness of the political superstructure, a hypothesis that predicts the rise of political pluralism after the demise of the old regime.² Still others portrayed the fall of the Bloc as an instance of political extinction to be interpreted in terms of biological analogies,³ or as an instance of imperial decay

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1. Francis Fukuyama, “Are We at the End of History?” *Fortune*, 15 January 1990, 75–77.
2. Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); or Lucian W. Pye, “Political Science and the Crisis of Authoritarianism,” *American Political Science Review* 84:1 (March 1990): 3–19.
3. Kenneth Jowitt, “The Leninist Legacy,” in Ivo Banac, ed., *East Europe in Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992), 207–25.

in whose wake the erstwhile satellites would replicate the turmoil experienced by postcolonial societies in the Third World.⁴

Last but not least is the large group who eventually came to be known as “transitologists,” because they could discern in the chaos of collapse the processes of transition—either *from* authoritarianism, or, with still greater teleological strain, *to* democracy—based largely on analogies drawn from the recent experience of Latin American and South European political systems.⁵ Some of these constructs are devoid of theoretical assumptions; others seek to identify driving forces and impediments in the “legacies” left behind by previous regimes;⁶ still others try to explain changes on the basis of policy choices made in the fog of uncertainty, relatively unaffected by structural conditions.⁷

Rather than belaboring the utility and limitations of the above, this article suggests yet another paradigm, one that describes the changes experienced by the small states of East Central Europe as part of a process of transition, though not from authoritarianism to democracy but from one international regime to another. The term “international,” of course, refers to relations between and among states while the term “regime” implies a hierarchical relationship of sub- and superordination endowed with a system of “imperative coordination,”⁸ that is, with the power to set and enforce political agendas, if necessary, by means of force. Such relationships have been described between “chiefs and subordinates” in bodies politic (Weber), and, in international relations, between hegemons and clients.⁹ Like do-

4. See Jacques Rupnik, “Remapping Europe,” *Daedalus* 123:8 (Summer 1994): 91–114; or Roman Szporluk, “After Empire What?” *ibid.*, 21–39.

5. For a review of this literature, see Philippe Schmitter, “Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation,” *Journal of Democracy* 8:2 (April 1997): 168–74.

6. Jowitt, “Leninist Legacy,” 207.

7. Steven M. Fish, “Democratization’s Requisites: The Postcommunist Experience,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14 (July–September 1998): 21–48; also *idem*, “Postcommunist Subversion of Social Science and Democratization in Eastern Europe and Asia,” *Slavic Review* 58:4 (Winter 1999): 799–802; and personal conversations.

8. The term used by Parsons, translating Max Weber’s *Herrschaftssystem*. See Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1947), 152, 324.

9. On external forces shaping internal politics, see Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization* 32 (Fall 1978); on hegemon-client relations, see G. John Ikenberry and Charles A. Kupchan, “Socialization and Hegemonic Power,” *International Organization* 44 (September 1990), 283–315.

mestic regimes, international ones vary with respect to purpose, organization, and legitimacy.

Although the category of external power goes a long way toward explaining developments “on the ground” (to use a favorite term of American policy makers obviously looking down from on high), it does not tell us the whole story of politics in subordinate units and client states. As Weber recognizes, no system of imperative coordination, however ingenious or ruthless, will be absolute, or fully devoid of reciprocity.¹⁰ In reality, the hegemonic agenda is likely to clash with local habits and interests that are hard to eradicate since they are deeply rooted in the local socio-economic structure, culture, and historical memories. Since these aspects vary from society to society, hegemonic success in imposing the agenda will also vary, though even in the most asymmetrical power relations, the weak will have opportunities to frustrate or corrupt the externally imposed political agenda by simulation. Political outcomes thus will be the function of two sets of categories that are the focus here: (1) the needs and resources of the external agent; and (2) the resilience of domestic structures. While this new focus may not fully replace the other paradigms, it may be more effective in locating sources of tension, conflict, and “backsliding” than are the teleological constructs of transition with their fixed stages that have hitherto tended to dominate intellectual discourse about postcommunist politics.

Implicit in the use of this particular paradigm as a guide to understanding contemporary European politics is the judgment that, notwithstanding the substantial differences in their ends, means, and reception by the publics, a significant common denominator may exist between the politics of communism and postcommunism. What is common between these two cases is the role of external power in setting and enforcing political agendas for the states of the region and thus in influencing domestic political outcomes. Whether the influence is benign, malign, or downright evil is an issue that belongs to the realm of moral philosophy and in-

10. On this point, see Reinhard Bendix, *Work and Authority in Industry* (Berkeley-Los Angeles: University of California Press, [1958], 1974), xlv.

forms personal choices (including this writer's), but does not belong to the realm of empirical inquiry into structures of power and political outcomes.

Confusion about labels requires a brief note on empirical referents. "East Central Europe," formerly "Eastern Europe," refers to twelve, formerly eight, countries that between 1945 and 1989 were in the Soviet sphere of influence under communist governments whether or not these countries were fully integrated within the larger imperial system of the communist Bloc. This definition excludes the successor states of the Soviet Union, including the Baltic states, partly because they are outside this writer's area of competence, and partly because, having been under the formal jurisdiction of Moscow, they were part of the imperial "core" that dominated the "outer empire" in East Central Europe, or the "imperial periphery." The German Democratic Republic (GDR), while not singled out for special attention, was part of this "outer empire" of client states, but is excluded from the discussion of the contemporary period, for the obvious reason that it is now an integral part of a member state of the European Union (EU), and hence occupies a special place in the postcommunist universe.

A Revolutionary Empire

The agendas of international regimes reflect the interests and identities of hegemons. After 1945 the Soviet Union became the hegemonic regional power in East Central Europe. Its agenda reflected the geopolitical interests and identity of a great power on a mission to challenge the global status quo in the name of a universalist ideology of egalitarianism and from a position of relative economic inferiority. This combination of geopolitical ambition and economic backwardness largely explains the character of Soviet institutions. While an expansionist — or liberationist — foreign policy required substantial resources, extracting those resources from a backward economy required a system of mobilization. The instruments of this system were chiefly a centralized bureaucratic economy and political authoritarianism. Although over the decades of Soviet history there were repeated instances of tinkering with economic and political reforms, these reforms always fell short of

permitting the full play of market forces, or of abandoning the political monopoly of the party-state.

The geopolitical design and the universalist political formula served to legitimate a system of vertical integration. However, the Soviet Union was also a multi-ethnic state, a circumstance that required an elaborate system of horizontal integration. Originally averse to ethnic solidarities and identities, Bolshevik leaders and the Soviet state eventually created an ethnopolitical design that we may designate as one of selective particularism. As part of this design, the peoples of the Soviet Union were encouraged to find identity and pride in folklore, literature, and the arts, and to search for their particular group's historical contributions to universal human progress, as long as their symbols and narratives did not offend another, especially Soviet, people's identity. These principles appeared in conjunction with the policy of *korenizatsiya* (establishing roots), aimed at creating ethno-territorially based institutions staffed by local administrative elites. To be sure, these high-minded principles of ethnic equality and solidarity were to bend at times under the weight of political expediency—witness the deportation of lesser peoples during the Second World War—and, in the final analysis, the effectiveness of these policies depended on coercive instruments to enforce the boundaries of the permissible. But the policies were ingenious enough to provide an ideological base for a multinational state in an age of rampant nationalism. Initially feared for its anti-Soviet potential, the ethnic identity of Russians was relativized, indeed diabolized, as “Great Russian chauvinism,” its vestiges evident till the end of communism mainly in the submersion of Russian into Soviet institutions. But under Stalin, Russian culture and identity, too, were gradually rehabilitated, and after 1945 Russians were singled out for their heroism in the official narrative of the war.¹¹

As all political systems, that of the Soviet Union possessed foundation myths in the form of sacralized historical narratives. One

11. For two excellent analyses of Soviet ethnopolitics, see Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” *Slavic Review* 53:2 (Summer 1994): 414–53; and Amir Weiner, “Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism,” *American Historical Review* 104:4 (October 1999): 1114–55.

of these revolved around the memories of the “Great October Revolution” and reinforced the social solidarity of elites during the early years of communism. Nothing illustrates the centrality of this myth better than that its authoritative version, the famous *Short Course*, was edited by a committee chaired by Stalin himself. After 1945, however, this narrative was supplemented by another on the history of the “Great Patriotic War” of 1941–45. This new narrative in part validated the revolution and the sacrifices made by Soviet peoples in the 1930s. It also provided a new legitimating instrument for the enlarged empire by adding to the revolutionary epic the narrative of liberation achieved by the dynamic and expanding forces of socialism.

Bearing this slogan of liberation, the Soviet Union entered East Central Europe during the Second World War filling, after some initial forays in 1939–1941, the political vacuum left by the collapse of Germany. To mechanistic thinkers about international relations, the filling of such vacuums requires little explanation: power, by its own logic, is simply sucked into the void. Yet Soviet behavior was far from mechanistic. It followed well-established geostrategic and political principles. True, in an age of conventional warfare, considerations of military security loomed large. But far more important were ideological considerations of self-validation, the justification of past sacrifice, and the messianic urge of agents of a revolutionary ideology to demonstrate the universal relevance of their institutional experiment. The corollary to this effort was “Zhdanovism,” a rigid insistence on institutional uniformity and a doctrinaire denial that there could possibly be separate roads to socialism. There were, finally, more immediate economic considerations dictated by the logic of a militarized society exhausted and devastated by a major war. In the absence of alternative resources, the Soviet war machine and infrastructure had to be rebuilt by relying on classical methods of colonial exploitation. This in turn required the strict vertical integration that characterized the Soviet imperial system. Though mitigated by the Brezhnev doctrine of 1968, this regime was not renounced until Gorbachev’s great leap into uncertainty in the late 1980s.

The agenda of this imperial system was designed to project the Soviet model into eight newly conquered states on the European

continent. It included a wide range of items that would deeply affect most aspects of social, economic, and political life, that is, a design for economic centralization to mobilize resources for the benefit of the larger imperial system and its defense establishment. This system was underpinned by a political design for the creation of one-party monopoly and an administrative design to replace legal technicalities, routines, and procedures with a highly personalized and broadly discretionary patrimonialism. There would be an ethnic agenda serving the purposes of *pax Sovietica* in a region of many animosities, pursued by a careful rewriting of national histories, a cultural agenda to civilize uncouth (*nekulturnii*) peasant populations, and, most ambitiously, the creation of a new, communally minded, disciplined “socialist man.” Together, the Soviet goals were woven into a larger scheme of co-opting these populations into the great historical venture of fighting imperialism, a project that required the abridgment of national sovereignties while pretending to respect them in public rhetoric and symbols. This was accomplished by centralizing decision making in Moscow, and by considerable micromanagement—Moscow would retain de facto power over appointments of local first secretaries and politburos, and Soviet personnel exercised tight controls over local economies, police forces, and the military.¹²

This ambitious design was bound to clash with local identities and interests. While the masses resented the uninvited burdens of mobilization, the new elites were resentful of the hyper-centralization of Stalin’s empire, if only because it prevented them from carrying out their functions more effectively. In the Stalin era, these latent resentments were ferreted out by terrorizing both elites and populations. In the post-Stalin years, however, controls became more subtle, and the system somewhat decentralized, reflecting not only changing exigencies but also the gradual realization that methods of integration that had worked in Turkmenistan or Tadjikistan would not necessarily work in Warsaw, Prague, or Budapest. Yet, till the very end of communism, the fundamental “contradictions” between the externally imposed in-

12. Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, [1960] 1967), 105–39.

stitutions and local structures were not fully resolved, and since these local structures varied over time, they produced a political landscape of considerable diversity. The outcome depended mostly on the level of precommunist economic development and the nature of the political culture encountered by communism. As to the first, the less-developed economies of the southeast seemed more compatible with the system of bureaucratic mobilization and distribution than the progressively more sophisticated and developed economies of the northwest tier of the region. As to the second, whether attributable to religious differences—between eastern and western Christianity—or to divergent imperial traditions—Ottoman or Hapsburg—the societies of the region may be credibly divided in terms of their different degrees of communalist-paternalism and affective neutrality. On the two sides of this divide, the cultures of the northwest ranking higher on the scale of affective neutrality were less hospitable to the highly personalized, arbitrary political practices of communist government than those of the southeast.¹³ More by accident than by the logic of history, these cultural configurations coincided with levels of economic development, a correlation that produced variable responses to communist government, manifest both in the persistence of intellectual dissent and in the incidence of large-scale popular movements against communism. Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany all had their own unsuccessful episodes of political upheaval and, from the 1970s onward, produced, in sharp contrast to quiescent Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania, vigorous intellectual dissidence. The case of culturally and economically diverse Yugoslavia is somewhat more problematic, for while a major political cleavage most definitely ran along the northwest-southeast axis, the conflict between “liberals” and “conservatives” was intertwined with ethnic wrangling on both sides of the divide and played itself out within the framework of reformed communist institutions.

13. This argument has been elaborated in considerable detail in Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Post-communism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Apart from the bibliography of this work, see Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

The accidental expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Bloc and Moscow's progressive relaxation of centralized controls provided opportunities for local initiatives and experiments, especially with respect to economic institutions. The first of these experiments, Yugoslavia's, is all too familiar. It entailed the introduction of market signals, greater enterprise autonomy, and the privatization of agricultural holdings. A more restricted version of this "new economic model" was subsequently designed for Czechoslovakia, and actually introduced in Hungary, and a still more careful experiment was undertaken by Poland with the privatization of agriculture and of some services. In contrast, the governments of East Germany, Romania, and Bulgaria, eschewed the idea of decentralization and tried to rationalize the centralized system itself. In their day, these reforms provided fodder for innumerable books, articles, and dissertations. But in retrospect, whether "reformed" or not, these experiments must be deemed to have failed, because of "creeping recentralization"¹⁴ and the continued weight of the planning and political bureaucracies. Surely, though exaggerated by the manipulation of official statistics, these economies have shown some capacity to increase the sheer volume of their gross material product. But with their level of efficiency low, this output could be produced only by sustaining absurdly high investment rates and, ultimately, at the expense of the general standard of living. Worse still, the products so generated had value only within the confines of the militarized imperial system, but were worthless in real, world market terms. Even within the relatively closed confines of the Bloc economies, rates of growth began to fall after an initial spurt in the 1950s and 1960s despite the influx of considerable amounts of western capital in the next two decades. As a result, throughout the communist period, the countries of the bloc lagged behind the leading capitalist economies of the Continent, and at the end of the period they emerged as more backward than they had been before the Second World War. As table 1 shows, in the interwar period, calculated at purchasing power parities, the arithmetical averages of the per capita GNPs (gross

14. For a classic statement on this process, see Gregory Grossman, "The Structure and Organization of the Soviet Economy," *Slavic Review* 21:3 (June 1962): 215–20.

Table 1. *Ranking Countries by Per Capita GNP, Percentages of the West*

Country	Precommunist		Postcommunist	
	<i>P. Bairoch</i> 1933–38	<i>C. Clark</i> 1926–1934	<i>P. Havlik</i> 1989	<i>World Bank</i> 1990s
GDR ^a	100.8%	81.8 %	46.3 %	—
Czechoslovakia ^b	54.2	56.9	37.8	36.7
Hungary	43.8	44.8	29.2	30.5
Poland	36.3	35.1	21.2	25.7
Romania	33.0	29.7	16.5	20.7
Bulgaria	35.6	32.3	16.5	21.3
Yugoslavia ^c	32.6	40.8	26.1	13.4
Arithmetical Average of above	48.0	45.9	27.6	21.2

SOURCES:

Paul Bairoch, "Europe's Gross National Product, 1800–1975," *Journal of European Economic History* 5:2 (1976): 273–340.

Colin Clark, *The Condition of Economic Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1940).

Peter Havlik, *East-West Comparisons*, Research Report no. 174 (Vienna: WIIW, 1991). World Bank, *World Development Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Calculation of Percentages: Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: the Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 353, 403.

NOTE: The West: Belgium, France, Germany (after 1945: FRG), Holland, Sweden, Switzerland.

^a Calculations for interwar period based on estimates of the GNP for the future territory of the GDR. See Ludwig Bress, *Technologische Evolution im Systemwettbewerb* (Erlangen: IGW, 1982).

^b 1990: Czech Republic and Slovakia adjusted for population size.

^c Former Yugoslav Republics, adjusted for population size.

national product) of six East European countries (plus the territory of the GDR) were calculated between 46 and 48 percent of the averages of six selected advanced capitalist countries. By 1989–1992, this ratio declined to about 27 percent, or, excluding the GDR, to 21.2 percent.

Much like the economies, the seemingly spectacular success of ethnic policies began to unravel toward the end of the Soviet period. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union became a model for a multinational state in which diverse ethnic groups lived together in peace while celebrating their ethnic identity without violating the sen-

timents of others. In East Central Europe, too, the Soviets were able for some time to maintain their imperial *pax*, indeed accomplishing part of the Enlightenment project by building collective identities without invoking negative images of socialist neighbors. But this peace was deceptive for, as a lesson to social psychologists, ethnic tolerance was practiced but not internalized and habituated. Instead, ethnicity remained what Max Weber assumed it to be, a perennial temptation for inclusion and exclusion whenever the opportunity arises. Whether in the Soviet Bloc, in the Soviet Union, or in Yugoslavia, manifestations of ethnic hostilities were checked by supra-ethnic political and police machines. As the grip of these machines loosened, ethnic differences bubbled to the surface and, in the first postcommunist decade, became the principal agents of structuring allegiances in the competition for power, territory, and material goods.

Western Hegemony on the Road to Commonwealth

In contrast to the Soviet Union, the emerging western commonwealth comprises some of the most prosperous societies of the world with a vested interest in their continued preeminence, if not dominance, of the modern world economy. The representative character of their institutions reflects their long history as successful pioneers of industrial capitalism. But while we are oft tempted to believe that this past, together with a cultural tradition of legal impersonality, in and of itself predicts democratic stability, the future viability of these democracies depends on their ability not only to sustain but also to continuously increase current levels of prosperity. Indeed, pressures on the states to sustain growth at times seem to overwhelm their political process. If in the Soviet Union a geopolitical design for external expansion undermined the system's ability to satisfy consumer demand, in the case of the West, consumer pressures have frequently put limitations on the efficient use of resources to serve a creative foreign policy and more efficient long-term security arrangements. Present policies toward the former eastern bloc represent a case in point. By rough calculation, the United States and other members of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) reaped a very sub-

stantial post-cold war “peace benefit” over the past decade, only a tiny fraction of which has been spent on creating a more secure international environment.¹⁵

Within these economic parameters, the western powers, broadly defined, may be described as conservative defenders of a global status quo or, more precisely, as defenders of economic systems that guarantee steady, open-ended growth. While this role is common knowledge and requires little proof, it is far less generally recognized that these societies are Janus-faced: conservative in defending their market position, but revolutionary with respect to a series of cultural innovations that, over the past thirty years, have fundamentally refashioned social and political relations in the West. These cultural innovations may be summarized under two rubrics. Under one, we can speak of a postmodern social revolution that has involved a radical reconceptualization of social roles and relationships: between men and women, children and adults, among ethnic groups, between humans and god, and even between humans and members of the animal kingdom. Under the other, we can speak of the challenge of liberal universalism to the legitimacy of the classical, “Westphalian,” model of the nation-state, founded on the idea that the modern state was both the product and the producer of cultural homogeneity and, further, that it possessed a sovereign essence, entitling it to deal with its own citizens or subjects without external interference and constraints. The truly revolutionary character of these changes is now gradually, and often grudgingly, recognized in public and academic discourse,¹⁶ including the discourse of radical populists and fundamentalists the

15. For the period January 1990–December 1996, G-7 commitments of direct grants to East Central Europe are reported at \$31.7 billion. See Wade Jacoby, “International Organization, Central European Elites and Western Models” (forthcoming article); see also “Costs and Benefits of Eastern Enlargement: the Impact on the European Union and Central Europe,” *Economic Policy* 24 (April 1997), quoted in *The Economist*, 12 April 1997, 77. During the same period, U.S. defense spending fell from \$324 billion (1990) to \$239 billion (1997). In relation to the U.S. GNP, defense spending fell from 5.9 to 3.1 percent, for NATO Europe from 3.6 to 2.2 percent. See U.S. Bureau of Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1998), 339–41; see also NATO, *On-Line Library Nato Handbook* at nato.int/docu/handbook/1998 v155).

16. See Gertrude Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures* (New York: Knopf, 1999); and an equally revealing review of the book by Terry Teachout, “We Lost, Now What?” *National Review*, 22 November 1999, 51–52.

world over, who have lately been inclined to invigorate the old grievance of economic dependency with the new theme of cultural imperialism.

Another point about western identity surfaces here. The part of the world that we today refer to as the “West” differs from the definitions of an earlier age when it referred to the lands of western Christianity. Today’s West is a geopolitical entity that has emerged from the wrenching experiences of two wars, the Second World War and the subsequent cold war “fought” against the Second World of global communism. Both these wars provided rich material for solidarity-building narratives, for they can be easily read as epic confrontations between the forces of good and evil and as sagas of both heroism and suffering. While the cold war was an epic of cultural self-preservation and communist oppression of captive nations, the Second World War was a saga of Anglo-American heroism, continental suffering, and German guilt. Ironically, this formula permitted the effective reincorporation of Germany into a postwar liberal commonwealth, for the moral diminution of the country was a major guarantee that, its economic, demographic, and military potential notwithstanding, it could and would not strive again to achieve continental hegemony.

For a good many years the imminence of the Soviet threat to the “free world” (or “western civilization”) dominated public attention, and images of an “evil empire” helped solidify a “united Europe” as well as a new “Euro-America,” whose president in 1963 could proudly declare himself a citizen of the capital of defeated Germany. In the sacralized narratives of the newly defined West, the evils of communism and fascism were given equal play (as in the much celebrated studies of totalitarianism), and on occasion diabolized communism even seemed to trump the demons of fascism. But with the cold war “won,” the balance of discourse quickly returned to the narrative of the Second World War. This shift is manifest in the extraordinary proliferation of war stories on the screen and in both popular and scholarly writing. It is further manifest in differing public and press responses to the display of the symbols of the two totalitarianisms, in the continued vigor displayed in ferreting out malefactors of fascism while neglecting to develop international standards for dealing with the malefactors

of communism, in revising immigration laws and practices, and, overall, in the de-demonizing of communism in public discourse.¹⁷ The roots of these attitudes are deeply emotional, but the policies are not devoid of underlying rationality. In the United States the sacralized memories of the Second World War fill a void left after the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s turned earlier symbols of unity — pilgrims, puritans, pioneers — into symbols of divisiveness. In Europe, meanwhile, memories of the war were rekindled when German reunification again raised the historical specter of hegemony.¹⁸ Overall, the changing balance of symbolism indicates that radical particularism presents a more imminent danger to liberal projects than the ghosts of Leninism.

What, then, made the West move into East Central European politics? Much as in 1945, the collapse of one great power created a vacuum and provided opportunities for establishing another international regime. But once again, this did not happen mechanically via the laws of physics. The collapse of the Soviet bloc came as a surprise to all and at a time when the West had no firm geopolitical project beyond its desire to manage or contain its conflict with the Soviet Union. Thus in 1989–1990, western policies toward the East were largely ad hoc prompted by the weight of their own cold war rhetoric of solidarity and by a clamoring in the East for “rejoining” the West. However, by the time the first association agreements were signed in the winter of 1990–91, it was reasonably clear that the western powers were poised to fill the vacuum that had appeared between the cold war West and the former Soviet Union. Western motives were multifold and in some respects comparable to those of the former hegemon. Above all, there were considerations of security, a need to preempt political chaos in a

17. The discourse in the celebrated Élian González case illustrates these points. Supporters of a speedy repatriation described Cuban communism as a “lifestyle” and no longer a “looming evil” (quoted in *Newsweek*, 1 May 2000, 80), while denouncing conservative columnist George Will for committing blasphemy by comparing Cuba to fascist states and the antebellum South (see “An Insult to History,” editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 April 2000).

18. For a German source on this subject, see Heiner Moeller, “Die neue deutsche Gefahr: Grossmacht Deutschland, europäische Destabilisierung und Sicherheit in Europa nach dem kalten Krieg,” in Andrea Komlosy, Hannes Hofbauer and Jürgen Elsässer, eds., *Krisenherd Europa: Nationalismus, Regionalismus, Krieg* (Göttingen: Die Werkstatt, 1994), 335–56.

region adjacent to the West, and, further, an unspoken desire to redraw front lines in case of a future challenge from Russia and other successor states of the Soviet Union. Just as important, however, was the ideological impulse for self-validation,¹⁹ the felt need to demonstrate the universal relevance of liberal projects—the building of postmodern societies and postnational states—to both external skeptics and domestic conservatives. It is in this motivation that critics of the liberal project discern “bible-wielding” missionary zeal,²⁰ denounce treating democracy as “religion spread by means of conversion through punitive sanctions,”²¹ see a kind of liberal Zhdanovism in the uniform application of the liberal institutional agenda, or, in the case of Kosovo, complain about the triumph of ideology over *Realpolitik*. Critics of the western project are also likely to charge that economic interests drive the design, citing an undue haste in liquidating import restrictions in the East without reciprocating them in the West,²² the excessive share of foreign capital in the most profitable sectors of the eastern economy,²³ or the rather consistently unfavorable balance of trade for the eastern economies. The jury is still out on these matters, for in the aggregate the advantages are minuscule when measured against the total volume of the exports and the GNPs of the advanced industrial economies.²⁴

Impelled by these motivations, the leading powers of the West

19. In the words of *The Economist* of London, “inevitably, since victors dictate the terms of post-war order, the new post-cold war interventionism has reflected the views and values of the West, notably the United States.” (“The Economist Review,” 13 May 2000, 4).
20. András Sajó, “Universal Rights, Missionaries, Converts and Local Savages,” *East European Constitutional Review* (EECR) 8:1 (Winter 1997): 46.
21. French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine in abstaining from voting for the Warsaw declaration on democratic principles; see *RFE/RL Newslines*, 27 June 2000.
22. See Alan Mayhew, *Recreating Europe: The European Union’s Policy Towards Central and Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21–23; Kazimierz Poznanski, “The Morals of Transition: Decline of Public Interest and Runaway Reforms in Eastern Europe,” in Sorin Antohi and Vladimir Tismaneanu, eds., *Between Past and Future* (Budapest/New York: Central European Press, 2000), 232.
23. Poznanski, “The Morals of Transition,” 234–42.
24. Although western trade with Eastern Europe (including the European members of the former USSR) increased three times between 1990 and 1997, it still represents only 7 percent of EU trade with Japan, the United States, and other “developed capitalist” countries, and amounts to a mere 1.6 percent of the EU countries’ aggregate GDP (See *UN International Trade Statistical Yearbook* [New York, 1997], 522–25, and *EU Facts and Figures*, 1998 [europeanunion.org/profile/facts]).

gradually formulated a broader plan of co-opting the societies of East Central Europe into the existing institutional framework of the larger liberal commonwealth, but tied full-fledged membership to a list of conditions.

The largely familiar list begins with economic liberalization — the opening of the countries to foreign trade, privatization of assets, and the marketization of prices — to go hand in hand with the requirement of democratization, in practice with the conduct of free and fair elections and with guarantees for freedoms of speech, media, and association. Liberalization and democratization are to be accompanied by the reintroduction of the rule of law, meaning the establishment of fixed rules and impersonal procedures so that judicial systems should be able to protect both the integrity of the civil contract and the political process. A corollary to the rule of law is the professionalization of the bureaucracy necessary to reduce “corruption” and to develop an administrative system capable of dealing with the complex of regulatory norms incorporated in the EU’s *acquis communautaire*.

This political-economic agenda is supplemented by a list of cultural priorities, including an agenda for refashioning social relations by codifying gender, human, and animal rights, passed to prospective members as part of the *acquis*, or by ambassadors, or as part of IMF and World Bank packages. Another section of the cultural agenda addresses minority rights and desirable patterns of behavior by ethnic majorities, embodied in formal resolutions, (such as Council of Europe Resolution 1201), and, less formally, in the proddings of western diplomats and statesmen.²⁵ Completing the list is a moral agenda requiring that East Central Europeans recognize their collective transgressions of liberal norms, less under the decades of communism than before and during the Second World War.

Predictably, this agenda ran counter to the force of some legacies, both communist and precommunist, which, perversely, often reinforced each other. Take economics. On the one hand, dismantling the communist legacy of centralization resulted in the “cre-

25. For a long list of these public admonitions see Janos, *East Central Europe*, 367–71. For more recent examples concerning the Roma-Gypsy minority, see *RFE/RL Newswire*, 24 February and 13 March 2000.

ative destruction” of structures that, in turn, was responsible for output collapse, trade deficits, and unemployment. The fallout was then aggravated by the prewar legacy of backwardness and an attendant feeling of relative deprivation that East Europeans experienced most acutely as they were rejoining the free world. But economics simply does not tell the whole story. The emancipatory thrust of the postmodern cultural agenda bumped into a wall of traditionalism in societies, recently peasant, that were reinforced by communist neo-Victorianism, with its preference for asceticism and its reverence for hierarchy. In addition, there was the new ethnopolitical thrust of universalism, which encouraged minorities to assert their identities more aggressively, while discouraging majorities from flaunting their own collective identities or from sacralizing their own foundation myths.²⁶ Last but not least, states were bluntly expected to surrender their sovereign rights just as they were recovering them from Soviet usurpation, which recovery, incidentally, had been a centerpiece of the western propaganda beamed toward the “captive nations” of the East.²⁷

It will be the task of future historians to untangle the learning process as Brussels and Washington came to realize these juxtapositions and the magnitude of the task of co-opting East Central European nations into their commonwealth after reshaping them in the images of the West. Here we can only mark the broad outlines of the process as it moved from ad hoc adaptations to a system of conditionality and then to one of imperative coordination. The idea of conditionality dates to the Association Agreements of 1991–92, followed by IMF and World Bank conditionalities routinized during 1992–93.²⁸ In these early years, hegemony was “soft,” meaning that it relied exclusively on economic incentives, wielding both negative and positive inducements. These in-

26. The worldwide relevance of this phenomenon and the potential clash between the ethnic agendas of universalism and particularism is described in vivid colors in Yoram Hazony, “Anti-Social Texts: Israel’s Zionism-Free Textbooks,” *New Republic*, 17–21 April 2000, 46–55.
27. See Csaba Gombár, “By the Time Sovereignty Fell Into Our Laps It had Become Obsolete,” in Gombár, ed., *The Appeals of Sovereignty* (Highland Lakes, N.J./New York: Atlantic Publications/Columbia University Press, 1998), 7–48.
28. Steven Weber, “European Union Conditionality,” in Barry Eichengreen, Jeffrey Frieden, Jürgen von Hagen, eds., *Politics and Institutions in an Integrated Europe* (Berlin: Springer, 1995), 192–202.

cluded not just current trade-offs but the manipulation of expectations: the promise of future rewards in the form of drafting time-tables and establishing “tiers” for admission into the institutions of the EU and NATO. After 1993, however, this soft international regime was sorely tested by civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–94), by the collapse of public order in Albania (1997), and by the overtly anti-systemic defiance of Yugoslavia. Military interventions followed for purposes of internal peace-keeping and for preempting the disintegration of states. Then came the events of 1998–99 in Kosovo and NATO’s response with open war, in the course of which the United States emerged as a genuine *Ordnungsmacht* in the nineteenth-century mold. Part and parcel of these new developments were formal doctrinal statements specifying the parameters of the permissible. We thus now have a “Clinton doctrine” promising military intervention to repress violent manifestations of ethnic particularism and radicalism, and more recently a “Verheugen doctrine,” named after Guenter Verheugen, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, who in February 2000 issued an injunction against populist and nationalist parties—including the Slovak HZDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia), the Croatian HDZ (Croatian Democratic Community), and the Romanian PDSR (Social Democratic Party of Romania)—that barred their playing a political role in the public life of countries aspiring to become members of the European Union.²⁹

And yet, just as in the case of Soviet hegemony, the codification and practices of “imperative coordination” have not so far produced, and are unlikely to do so in the future, uniform outcomes in the client states. Again, these differences in outcome are not haphazard, but are related specifically to variations in economic structures, culture, and demography. Thus, the crisis of creative destruction in economics is not uniform but varies with the position, and competitiveness, of the given country in the contemporary world economy. This, in turn, has to do with levels of economic development attained *before* the advent of communism. This may strike the reader as counterintuitive. Yet the seeming paradox is easy to explain. Sectors of the economy once designed with

29. RFE/RL Newslines, 11 February 2000

an eye to the competitive world market were easier to turn around and make competitive under contemporary market conditions than the gigantic metallurgical and heavy industrial compounds that had been built to produce exclusively for the economic needs of the Soviet Bloc.

As Table 2 suggests, the larger was the proportion of a country's industries built under state socialist auspices, the greater was the initial collapse of output in the early post-communist period, and the more problematic were the campaigns for economic and political liberalization. In the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, where the incremental increases of the percentage shares of industry in national income were 7.3, 11.3, and 14.3 percentage points respectively, output collapses in 1994 ranged between 8.9 to 19 percent. A far starker picture emerges from the statistics of Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, where the pre-war contributions of industry to the gross national product were far lower and where the communist-built increments in manufacturing industries were 32.6, 28.7, and 25.9 percentage points respectively. These countries suffered greater output collapses ranging from 22.1 to 27.7 percent, and, as we have seen, greater political turmoil. More anecdotally, this is the story of Czech beer and textiles or Hungarian electronics and pharmaceuticals versus Romanian heavy chemical and machine-building plants, the Slovakian armament factories, or Bulgarian light industries built with an eye on demand in the shortage economy of the Soviet Union. The case of Slovakia is particularly striking, and to most observers puzzling, because it provides the only example of a once underdeveloped region catching up with more developed countries under communism. Yet this impressive Slovak development, measured by physical indicators of output, was rendered illusory under conditions of postcommunism within the new context of profit-driven global competition. Hence the seeming paradox that one of the most developed and "successful" ex-communist countries has been resisting economic liberalization and floundering between radical populism and liberalism in its domestic politics. A similar factor explains many of the differences among some of the republics of the former Yugoslavia. Among them, Slovenia, the republic where the share of industry in the region's GDP grew a mere 11 percent

under communism, has converted into a country with an export economy oriented to western markets with relative ease. This contrasts sharply with the patterns we find in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the industrial sector was largely communist-built and the product of the infamous “bum investments” (*promašane investicije*) into heavy industrial compounds capable of providing patronage and employment rather than exportable products.³⁰ In these republics today we find deeply troubled economies, though, clearly, protracted violence in Bosnia and Serbia has added significantly to economic malaise. The case of Croatia is somewhat more complex, for a disproportionate share of the republic’s profitable, hard-currency-earning economy was in the service sector, which collapsed in the 1990s mainly because of the uncertainties created by the Balkan war.

Next to economics, there is the East-West cultural divide already noted in the communist context. Whether this divide is the product of religion or of imperial heritage, its existence seems to be confirmed by regional variations in attitudes toward impersonal juridical norms. By definition, the cultural milieu of highly personalized communalism should be less receptive to objective law and procedure than a culture of greater affective neutrality. To be sure, western observers have found fault with legal institutions of all countries.³¹ Yet the legal systems of the countries seem to deviate from western norms in different ways. The most frequent criticism of the legal systems of the Northwest is that they are in some ways overdeveloped, meddlesome, and hyperactive.³² Those of the cultural East are described as suffering “from chronically

30. See Joseph T. Bombelles, “Federal Aid to the Less Developed Regions of Yugoslavia,” *East European Politics and Society* 5:3 (Fall 1991): 459–60; Paul Shoup, *Yugoslavia and the National Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), esp. 235–36, 243–45.

31. Wiktor Osyatynski, Review of *Legal Reform in Post-Communist Europe: The View from Within*, by Stanislaw Frankowski and Paul B. Stephen in *East European Constitutional Review* (EECR) 5:1 (Winter 1996): 79–81.

32. For Hungary, see András Sajó on the “perverse effects of the rule of law” in “How the Constitutional Court Killed Hungarian Welfare Reform,” *EECR* 5:1 (Winter 1996): 31–41; for Poland, Jerzy Wiatr, “Constitutional Accountability in Poland after 1989,” *ibid.*, 42–46. For Slovakia, Cass R. Sunstein, “The Legitimacy of Constitutional Courts: Notes on Theory and Practice,” *EECR* 7:1 (Winter 1998): 61–62. Also, “Interviews with the Area Judiciary,” *East European Constitutional Review* 6:1 (Winter 1997): 64–90.

Table 2. *Extent of Communist Industrialization and Per Capita Output Collapse*

	Industrialization*			Output Collapse (1994)
	Pre-Communist (1938#)	Communist (1980s)	Difference	
Czech Republic	59.6	66.9	7.3	19.0
Poland (1950)	37.1	52.0	14.9	8.9
Hungary	35.7	47.0	11.3	16.6
Bulgaria	18.3	50.9	32.6	27.7
Romania	28.4	57.1	28.7	27.0
Slovakia	35.9	61.8	25.9	22.1
Yugoslavia	17.6	42.4	24.8	n.a.
Slovenia	35.9	46.9	11.0	5.6
Croatia	22.5	38.5	15.9	16.0
Serbia	16.1	43.8	27.7	50.0
Bosnia-Herzeg'na	17.1	50.6	33.5	n.a.
Macedonia	14.3	51.5	37.2	47.0
Montenegro	8.1	36.5	28.4	n.a.

SOURCES: Ivan Berend György Ránki, *East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Budapest: Akadémia, 1977); M. C. Kaser and E. A. Radice, *The Economic History of Eastern Europe, 1919–1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). For Yugoslavia: *Statistički godišnjak. Savezni zavod za statistiku* (Beograd, 1989), 101–103. For output collapse: *European Bank for Regional Development Report (1994)*, (Brussels, 1996), 185.

* Percentage contribution of industry to GDP.

Figures for Yugoslavia are from 1953.

weak legal cultures and severely defective mechanisms for contract enforcement.”³³ They are taken to task for being “unable to repress their past,”³⁴ for ignoring the law and making judgments on purely personal grounds,³⁵ and, as in Bulgaria, for lacking acceptance from the population at large.³⁶ While far from conclusive, available statistics suggest similar correlations between culture and the prevalence of what we perceive as corruption, but what

33. William H. Buiet, “Challenges of the Second Transition Decade in Russia,” *Transition* 11:5 (August–October 2000): 24.

34. Osyatinski, 79.

35. Monica Macovei, “Legal Culture in Romania,” *EECR* 7:1 (Winter 1998): 79.

36. Sunstein, “The Legitimacy of Constitutional Courts,” 62.

may better be described as the subversion of impersonality in institutions and exchange by the persistent influence and recombination of personalized networks.³⁷

A third factor that enters the picture of variations is ethnic fragmentation. Four of the East Central European countries (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic) are relatively homogeneous ethnically, at least with respect to ethno-linguistic minorities from one of their neighbors. It is thus perhaps not particularly noteworthy that these countries should possess model legislation on ethnic minorities with full recognition of their cultural identity and rights. To be sure, even in these countries, ethnic tensions have resurfaced with respect to Jewish and Gypsy (Romani) minorities. But the more serious, persistent, and violent confrontations have happened in those areas where ethnic strife has territorial aspects. The most notorious have occurred in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, though ethnic conflicts have been no strangers to Slovakia and Romania with their Hungarian minorities, to Bulgaria with its Turks, and to Albania with its divisions between the Gheg north and the Tosk south.

As table 3 illustrates, these three variables—the precommunist level of economic development, political culture, and ethnic homogeneity—correlate closely with degrees of democratization (as well as with degrees of respect for political and civil rights) as measured by Freedom House, a major monitor of the transition project. Those rated plus on all three variables score numerically between 1.38 and 1.88 (1 being highest); while those rated all minus, score between 4.5 and 6.0 (with 7 being the lowest grade for democratic performance). All others fall between. At the same time, and quite logically, the degree of effective democracy and liberal practices correlates with the distribution of political preferences among the respective publics. More specifically, today, after ten years of externally sponsored democratic experiments, the countries of East Central Europe may be divided into three categories. In the first are those four countries where democratic institutions are deemed to work effectively. These are countries where the cit-

37. "Corruption: An International Comparison," *Transition* (World Bank) 7:7 (July–August 1996): 16–17.

izenry, though not without considerable sulking, have rallied around the western project, or, at any rate, have failed to rally around anti-systemic, anti-hegemonic political parties. Under whatever label, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia have been governed by parties that, on the whole are ready to accept western dispensations, and their radical opponents barely reach double digits at the polls. In the second category, however, we find five countries—Slovakia, Croatia, Bulgaria, and Romania, to which we may now tentatively add Serbia—where the political picture is more ambiguous. As of this writing (summer-fall 2000), four of these five are governed by liberal, pro-hegemonic coalitions. But, for combined economic, ethnopolitical, and cultural reasons, citizens in these countries are deeply divided over the merits and feasibility of the western project and are split almost evenly between pro- and anti-hegemonic parties. Consequently, their democratic development, in both extent and quality, has not followed a straight course, but has zig-zagged between radical populism and timid liberalism. This means that some of the present liberal coalitions may well be voted out of office again and replaced by parties who are more likely to simulate than to practice democracy. Finally, in the last category are three countries—Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, together with the former Yugoslav region of Kosovo, where the local impulse toward democratization has been notoriously weak. While their democratic institutions may be formally correct, this correctness, as indeed the very fabric of their societies, is sustained only by the presence of foreign military and police forces under arrangements reminiscent of the old League of Nations mandates.

In addition to economics, culture, and ethnicity, special attention is due the impact of the hegemonic historical narrative on contemporary politics and public discourse. It is fair to say that under late communism, the Second World War had been a fading memory, of interest mainly to dissidents bent on undermining the Soviet myth of welcoming populations liberated by the Red Army. However, interest in the war was rekindled after the collapse of communism as a result of exposure to the political discourse of the West. Compared to the communist period during which guilt was assigned to the former ruling classes, history now became two

Table 3. *Correlates of Democracy and Civil/Political Rights*

Country	Demo- cratization	Civil- Political Rights	Economics	Ethnic Homo- geneity	Cultural Imper- sonalism
Czech Republic	1.38	1.5	+	+	+
Hungary	1.44	1.67	+	+	+
Poland	1.44	1.78	+	+	+
Slovenia	1.88	1.69	+	+	+
Bulgaria	3.8	2.44	-	-	-
Croatia	4.2	3.94	-	-	+
Romania	3.9	3.56	-	-	-
Slovakia	3.8	2.75	-	-	+
Albania	4.5	4.06	-	-	-
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5.0	5.57	-	-	-
Macedonia	3.9	3.36	-	-	-
Yugoslavia	6.0	3.72	-	-	-

SOURCES:

- Democratization: Boris Shor, *Transition* 8:6 (May/June 1997): 1-4.
- Civil-Political Rights: Nine-year averages from Freedom House, *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 1998-1999* (Freedom House: Washington, D.C., 1999).

NOTE:

- Economics: + = precommunist industrialization relatively high.
- Ethnic Homogeneity: + = homogenous
- Culture: + = tradition of legal impersonality high.

intertwined narratives: one of collective heroism on the right side and collective suffering at the wrong hands, the other of collective responsibility for collaboration in an unjust war and various crimes against humanity. Whether so intended or not, this narrative serves as an implicit ranking device that spawned competition for virtue across ethnic and national boundaries, and has made the competition of historical narratives (and competition for the control of history) an integral, if yet little noticed, part of East Central European politics. Those who resist this ranking, resist it with alternative histories. They have the choice between the conservative narrative of collaborating under threats of national extinction and the communist narrative where responsibility for being on the wrong side of history was an onus borne by the ruling classes rather than by entire national communities.

From the West's point of view, the ranking implicit in the hegemonic narratives has had some perverse effects, in that those most virtuous by western standards also tend to be more self-righteous and less malleable toward the larger project than those who live under a cloud of past complicity. Thus Poles and Czechs have, on the whole, been tougher negotiating partners of the West, quicker to flaunt their sovereignty than Hungarians, Romanians, and Bulgarians. Poland continues to be the "main grumbler" over admission to the EU,³⁸ and the recent millennial jubilee of the country was not short on expressions of old-fashioned national pride.³⁹ Meanwhile, a succession of Czech governments has been conspicuous in defying Germany, the Council of Europe, and the United States.⁴⁰ Still, the grand test of these attitudes came during the Kosovo crisis of 1999 when Czech parliamentarians denounced NATO's unwarranted "aggression," reviving memories of Yalta and Munich, while the Romanian and Hungarian governments were more cooperative, notwithstanding widespread skepticism among their citizens, and the Bulgarian government mustered a show of enthusiasm despite the economic price the country had to pay for the NATO blockade and bombing raids.⁴¹

Serbia, of course, presents a textbook case of historical virtue being turned into a device for mobilizing national sentiment. Oft ridiculed by western observers as fixated on images of past martyrdom and on nostalgia for a battle fought six centuries ago, the

38. "Knocking on the Union's Door," *The Economist*, 13 May 2000, 49.

39. On 26 April 2000, the Polish Senate reaffirmed the country's commitment to "a Europe of sovereign and equal states." The vote came on the 1000th anniversary of Polish statehood (*RFE/RL Newslines*, 27 April 2000).

40. More recently on the issue of expelling Russia from the Council of Europe and on the Council's resolution to abrogate the "Beneš decrees" of 1945 (on German and Hungarian collective guilt). On this last matter, Foreign Minister Jan Kavan advised pointedly that the "EU has not been established to solve anew problems of those defeated in World War II," adding that Germany could never be admitted to the EU if judged by its history (See *RFE/RL Newslines*, 20 and 27 April 2000). Shortly thereafter Vaclav Klaus, former premier and current leader of the opposition, opined that "Europe has reached the stage where the sovereignty of states is fundamentally challenged," and remonstrated against the moral-cultural agenda of the West as one that would lead to the breakup of the family and the traditional model of society (See *RFE/RL Newslines*, 24 June 2000).

41. For a summary of these reactions, see "Publisher's Column"; Andrew Stroehlein, "The Issue;" Pete Baumgartner, "Moscow, Minsk and Milosević;" Milan Znoj, "Kosova and Munich;" and several other articles in *The New Presence* (The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs), May 1999, 1-14.

collective consciousness of the Serbian public was not so much aroused by the distant past as by the memories of two world wars when they fought on the “right” side, and, despite losing hundreds of thousands of their own, never surrendered in defeat. These memories could be further embellished by a cold war narrative that saw Yugoslavs, “sold out” at Yalta, stand up once again in defiance, this time against the Soviets. Thus, throughout the war in Kosovo, images of Lazar and the monasteries were generously complemented by references to the two wars laced with stories of western perfidy. Were not Serbians fighting Croats, Moslems, and Albanians, all one-time allies of Hitler’s Germany? Was not Kosovo also a land reconquered from the puppet state of Greater Albania (created by Germany in 1943), and was it not part of Serbia’s patrimony sanctioned by not one but two treaties of peace (1919, 1947) to which the United States, France, and England were all signatories? And did Serbians ever flinch in the face of the Germanic tides of 1914 and 1941, while the French, now flying their Mirages over Serbian skies, had caved in to Hitler’s armies within a few weeks. The tone was set by Dobrica Ćosić, whose words were quoted time and again during the allied bombing campaign:

Every Serbian generation had its Kosovo. The insurrections against the Turks, the rejection of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum in 1914; the rejection of the military defeat in 1915 and the withdrawal of the army through Albania; the rejection of the Tripartite Pact with Germany on March 27, 1941; the insurrection against fascism, and the conduct of war under German conditions of retribution—a hundred Serbs for every German soldier; the rejection of Stalin’s hegemony in 1948. . . . Almost every generation in our history had to face the same fateful question: is it meaningful to struggle for freedom at an exorbitant cost?⁴²

If Serbians were committing atrocities and ethnic cleansing, they did so by waving the bible of historical correctness all the way to defeat.

42. Dobrica Ćosić, *Stvarno i moguće*, (Ljubljana-Zagreb: Cankarjeva založba, 1988), 143. Referred to by Svobodan Milošević while laying flowers at the national monument at Avala, *Ilustrovaná Politika*, 1 May 1999.

Conclusion

Two international regimes with very different identities, purposes, and capabilities have been examined here. The one associated with the Soviet Union established its hegemony over the region by force of arms in order to co-opt these countries not just into a conventional security system, but into a grand political venture designed to overthrow the global economic and political primacy of the West. In exchange, the Soviets promised paradise at the end of a long road to global socialism. But the project never captured the imagination of popular majorities, partly because too many in East Central Europe identified with the more developed West, and partly because that long road to paradise was paved with material deprivation and physical suffering. Also, emanating from a backward corner of the world, the promises of material progress had little credibility. Those who at one time thought otherwise, were apt to change their mind as the anti-western project ran out of steam, and as the economies of the Bloc were failing miserably in relative as well as absolute terms.

In contrast, the western democracies entered the politics of the region reluctantly, and with the credible claim of making its nations equal partners in a prosperous and secure commonwealth. While the paradise of full communism remained pie in the sky, the consumer paradise of western capitalism was fully visible in the shop windows of Paris, Vienna, and Berlin. To be sure, this grand project also requires sacrifice: the peoples of the region must trade in their old ways for future prosperity, and, as the principals were to discover in time, the project needed a power structure to enforce the West's historical mandate. Benign or not, the present relations between East Central Europe and the West are clientele relations and not those of equals. As in the Soviet case, these inequalities and deprivations invite doubt, above all among those who are unable to play by the new rules of the economic game, among those who resent the restructuring of ethnic hierarchies, or among those who fear chaos in the wake of the deconstruction of long-established value systems. For the time being at least, the promises of future political equality and economic re-

demption have retained a substantial degree of credibility among the citizenry of the East Central European states.

This legitimacy by expectation represents an important asset to the hegemonic West as it reduces the costs of the project by diminishing the need for current outlays to purchase compliance with the agenda of the international regime. But legitimacy by expectation, as opposed to direct trade-offs, has its perils. Leaders, to invoke Weber's wisdom yet again, must be able to deliver on their promises, or else unfulfilled expectations will result in the loss of their legitimacy. For the countries of the northeast tier, this means that entry into the European Union cannot be postponed indefinitely. It also means that when entry does come, it must come without long lists of qualifying clauses and moratoria in the fine print so as not to reduce these countries to second-class citizenship. In the southeast, of course, expectations are lower but doubts about the project remain high. Before these countries will more fully subscribe to the western agenda, they must be able to experience rates of growth high enough to keep alive hope for their eventual admission. Needless to say, paradise, or parity with the advanced industrial states of the Atlantic world, is not around the corner, but in order to stay on course, all the countries of the region must experience not just tangible improvements but a narrowing of the economic gap with the West.

Whether this will happen is itself contingent on unpredictable events in the larger environment of global economics and politics. As to the first, the protagonists of project must be concerned about cycles in the world economy: while favorable trends will be helpful to all, a global recession might undermine both the western will to aid and the eastern ability to cope with the task of economic development. As to the vagaries of world politics, they may change the present balance of power between East and West. In this respect we may have to contemplate two possible scenarios. In one, the United States may, under competing domestic or international pressures, withdraw from European politics leaving the tasks of consolidation and co-optation to the EU. In the other scenario, western hegemony on the Continent would face a renewed challenge from the East. Such a challenge, even if it falls short of an explicit threat of force may quickly unite the now-scattered

forces of discontent, the disheartened losers of status and hope who abound in all countries of the region, and rally them around radical flags whether red or brown. In either case, the countries of Western Europe will face a strategic choice. They may either do as the United States did at the onset of the cold war and mobilize resources and determination in ways commensurate to the task. Or they may circle the wagons around the countries adjacent to their own borders, thereby reducing the level of their exposure and commitments. If so, Central Europe may be divided again between competing spheres of influence with different sets of political and economic institutions.