

Introduction: The State of Democracy 20 Years on: Domestic and External Factors

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The countries of East-Central Europe (ECE) embarked on a democratic transition in 1989 were proclaimed consolidated democracies when they joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. Today most of the new democracies are experiencing “democratic fatigue” and some seem vulnerable to an authoritarian turn. The EU, seen as the guarantor of the post-1989 democratic changes, is experiencing an unprecedented economic, financial, and democratic crisis with the combined challenges of technocracy and populism. The article explores the different approaches to the study of democracies in ECE, their specific features and vulnerabilities, and tries to provide an interpretation of the premature crisis of democracy in ECE in a broader transeuropean context.

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Europe is experiencing an unprecedented economic and financial crisis with possible harmful, if not destructive, implications for democracy. Populist politics is on the rise across the continent, and authoritarian tendencies have re-surfaced in various states. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were proclaimed to be consolidated democracies when they joined the European Union (EU) in 2004–2007. At that time, they seemed to have workable constitutions, administrations, and markets. However, history is moving fast, and new democracies are seen as particularly vulnerable and susceptible to a dictatorial turn. A leading French newspaper, *Le Monde*, has already labelled Hungary “Un Etat Autoritaire au Coeur de l’Europe” (an authoritarian state in the heart of Europe).¹ The Romanian Prime Minister’s effort to impeach the Romanian President has been labelled a “quiet coup d’état” by

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the international press.² The Czech situation rarely makes it into the international press, but the tone of the domestic debate is of grave concern: “Is Parliamentary democracy threatened in the Czechlands?”³ asked a leading commentator, “Are we going to have a semi-authoritarian regime or democracy?” followed up a respected legal scholar.⁴

Are these judgments justified? Are most democracies in Central and Eastern Europe mature enough to cope with the negative implications of the current crisis? Are they able and willing to resist authoritarian temptation? How is the state of democracy to be assessed more than twenty years after the fall of the communist regimes?

Countries in East-Central Europe are certainly in a better position than most post-communist states in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe. Their EU membership used to be seen as a guarantee of not only prosperity but also of certain democratic standards. However, the EU has much more leverage over applicant states than member states, and one of the articles in this volume already talks about a “post-accession hooliganism” in the region. Moreover, at present the EU and its common currency is a factor more of instability than of harmony and the EU responses to the current crisis seem to be guided more by the logic of accountancy than by that of democracy. East-Central Europe has completed its “return to Europe,” but it has found that Europe is less “whole and free,” democratic and efficient than had been expected at the early stage of the journey two decades ago.

The crisis not only imposes severe economic hardships but also breaks fragile social contracts and political alliances. It generates suspicion, fear, and anger; it undermines stability, security, and predictability across the continent. If old European democracies find it extremely difficult to cope with the damaging implications of the current crisis, can new democracies be expected to do any better? After all, the economic downfall in some of the new democracies has been much greater than in any of the old democracies. For instance, Latvia has experienced a 25 percent drop in its GDP in the aftermath of the 2008 economic slump, but it has not experienced the same severe social conflicts and unprecedented political crisis as Greece, where the GDP drop has been less dramatic.⁵

What is the state of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe twenty years after the “revolutionary” breakthrough in the region? Are we observing a democratic fatigue or even regression after a period of democratic progress? Has the democratic pendulum swung back towards some kind of authoritarianism? Can young democracies survive the severity of the current economic crisis? This article and issue will try to address these timely and important questions. Larry Diamond recently observed: “It is a cardinal principle of empirical democratic theory that hard economic times are supposed to mean hard times for democracy, particularly when it is new and fragile.”⁶ This article will endeavour to test this proposition by examining the new and supposedly fragile democracies of Central and Eastern Europe.

We will first try to establish benchmarks for assessing democratic regress and progress. Should we apply rigid normative standards in evaluating the democratic

performance of Central and Eastern Europe? (And if so, which ones?) But if old democracies such as Italy or Greece fail to live up to these standards, can we realistically expect Poland or Bulgaria to do so? Is a comparative study a better way to assess democratic performance? And is it better to compare democratic performance across space or time? In other words, does history matter in democracy building, and if so, how?

Second, we will analyse the evolution of democratic developments and of the study of democracy over the past twenty years following the fall of communism in the region. How have different political and economic challenges impacted on the process of democracy building? And how have these different stages of democracy building impacted on the academic agenda of the study of democracy?

Third, we will identify gaps in our understanding of democratic developments in the region. For instance, political scientists have devoted considerable attention to the study of formal institutions in the region such as parties, parliaments, or courts. However, informal institutions and practices appear to be equally important in shaping and in some cases eroding democracy, and we know little about them. Similar comments can be made about the politics of memory and historical justice or regarding the role of the media, topics on which this introduction (and volume) will focus.

The conclusions will try to set a balance between hope and despair in assessing democratic fortunes in the region. The picture is not uniform across the region, and there are many examples of democratic resilience amidst all the troubling economic and political developments. So far, electorates in new European democracies have shown more patience, endurance and flexibility in coping with the crisis than electorates in old European democracies. Maybe this is because they have plenty of experience in coping with crises rather than because their democratic institutions enjoy greater legitimacy. In fact, it has often been argued—and probably correctly in some cases—that Eastern Europeans applied Western democratic models in an opaque manner and never fully assimilated long-established Western practices, which now seem to be functioning poorly. Consider, for instance, the increased cartelization of traditional political parties or the eroded representative function of parliaments in some new democracies. However, because Eastern Europeans are less attached to traditional democratic institutions, they may be in a good position to embrace democratic innovation and experimentation. In other words, they may well prove to be trendsetters in Europe, although one should be quick to add that not all of these new trends are likely to be beneficial for democracy.

How to Assess Democratic Progress and Regress?

The notion of democracy, like all major concepts in the social sciences such as class, state or nation, is fuzzy and open to contention. There are hundreds of different definitions of democracy in use today which list a variety of factors that allow a

given regime to be classified as democratic or not. Contemporary authors often qualify the term *democracy* by adding adjectives such as liberal (or illiberal), deliberative, representative, participatory, delegative, façade, direct (or indirect), electoral, hybrid, Western, Islamic, and so on.⁷ Some of the adjectives used are value laden. In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, the adjectives “new,” “post-communist,” and “transitory” imply that these democracies are supposed to move towards the model of “old” or “established” democracies in Western Europe. But does a “young” democracy automatically become “old” after a certain number of free and fair elections? If not, what are the prerequisites of an established or consolidated democracy? How many years or reforms are required for a formerly communist country to become “normal” rather than just “post-communist”? (For instance, today the Spanish or Italian democracy is hardly ever labelled post-fascist.)

Obviously, it is not easy to navigate through this maze of definitions and to assess democratic progress and regress. However, getting definitions and assessments right is important as many decisions regarding business investments or diplomatic negotiations depend on them. Public opinion in individual states is also being influenced by assessments produced by leading international institutions, think-tanks and research centres.

Students of Central and Eastern Europe usually apply normative standards in evaluating democratic performance in individual countries. Laws (especially constitutional laws) are scrutinized together with their implementation. Major institutions, their structure, procedures and performance are also examined. Basic democratic ideals such as the rule of law, freedom of the press or electoral participation are being monitored and assessed at regular intervals. However, there is no general agreement on the number of crucial qualities or dimensions of democracy that need to be taken into consideration. For instance, some assessments or ratings put emphasis on basic democratic freedoms, and others on policy responsiveness or levels of public participation.⁸ Some focus on democratic procedures, others on democratic content, and yet others on democratic satisfaction. Moreover, normative standards are by their nature somewhat arbitrary in a world of competing norms and values. The nature of democracy evolves over time. And even the most advanced democracies fail to live up to some of the normative expectations. This is why normative approaches to democracy are often combined with comparative ones.

Comparisons can be made across time and space. Three main patterns have emerged from the transitions of the last twenty years. In Central Europe (the Visegrad four plus the three Baltic countries and Slovenia), the widely shared consensus has been that the transitions led to the consolidation of democracy, that is, the acceptance by all major players of the constitutional order and the alternation in power: an election in Warsaw or Prague is about changing the government, not “regime change.” The same cannot be said of Belgrade or Kiev. The capacity to co-opt post-communist parties into this process on the one hand and the logic of institutional changes deemed as prerequisite for EU accession on the other hand were

among the main ingredients of the Central European “success story.” Whatever reservations one can and should have about the “scientific” status of the different attempts to provide a precise measure of democratization (they are too precise to be true!), these evaluations can at least help to identify a trend and provide a point of reference for comparison. If the same group of countries appears over some twenty years at the top of best practice rankings for free and fair elections, for the freedom of the press and the development of NGOs (by several major institutions such as Freedom House, Bertelsman Index, or the EBRD), we may take this into account in assessing developments over time and regional differences. By no means, of course, is a careful examination of the gap between the institutional design and actual political practice, which widens the further you move from East and South, thereby dispensed with: the rules of the game become highly unstable and are subject to an unpredictable implementation with, as a consequence, an uneven playing field. However, such generalizations about the Central European countries need to be qualified, as we have recently also witnessed setbacks in some Central European countries (in Poland under the Kaczynski twindom, in Hungary under Viktor Orban, or in Romania under Victor Ponta).

The second broad pattern concerns the Balkans where democratic transitions were delayed or side tracked by nationalist agendas of nation-state building and by the Yugoslavian wars of dissolution. A democratic transition is unlikely to be successful so long as the territorial framework is not established. Institutions need a consensus about the state, and they need time. In the Balkans they had neither. The combined legacies of backwardness, communism, and the war helped to bring about authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes (under Milosevic in Serbia or Tudjman in Croatia). Although the nation-state building process is by no means completed, the past decade has seen 1990s’ nationalist agendas gradually replaced by those of belated democratic transitions and European integration. The question that remains is whether the differences between Central Europe and the Western Balkans have been deeply impacted by historical legacies and the above-mentioned contrast or if in retrospect they will be seen as merely a time lag?

The case of Bulgaria and Romania is mixed. Geographically located in the Balkans, Bulgaria and Romania found themselves over the past decade moving politically closer to the Central European pattern. The prospect of joining the European Union helped democratic forces to reform institutions and reduce levels of corruption. Yet formal democratic institutions have continued to work in the shadow of informal “networks” and persistent patterns of political culture.⁹ After EU accession, the motivation to observe democratic rules has weakened and so has the external monitoring and pressure from Brussels. Romania’s democracy has been put to the test by PM Ponta’s attempt to impeach the President and to curb the independence of the Constitutional Court.

The third pattern concerns the periphery of the former Soviet Union, the lands between the Eastern borders of the EU and the Western borders of Russia. In these

lands, both neighbours influence democratic change. Russia in recent years has seen a “transition to autocracy” (Pierre Hassner)¹⁰ or towards “authoritarian power” (Mikaïl Gorbachev)¹¹ which paradoxically goes hand in hand with a persistent weakness of state institutions.¹² Democratization in the countries between Poland and Russia has obvious geopolitical implications not unrelated to the intermediate character of hybrid regimes whose authoritarian features of government often coexist with meaningful democratic institutions. In Levitsky and Way’s categorization, these countries a decade ago belonged to “diminished forms of authoritarianism.”¹³ Would not, in the aftermath of the “colour revolutions” in Ukraine and Georgia with their democratic changes and setbacks, a more fitting placement be under “diminished forms of democracy”?

Evolution of Democratic Preoccupations

The agenda of democracy building evolved over time, and this obviously had an impact on the study of democracy. In the first years following the democratic breakthrough, politicians were primarily concerned with the construction of a new constitutional order. Academics subsequently debated optimal constitutional products, although some scholars have pointed out that the process of constitution making is as important as the product.¹⁴ For instance, if the process of adopting a constitution is consensual and legitimate, then it is likely that the product will be too. However, some of the constitutions have been rushed (e.g., in Romania or Lithuania), leaving little space for public consultation and deliberation. Some were adopted amidst major political infighting. (The new Bulgarian constitution was accepted only after fifty delegates walked out of the constitutional assembly. The new Hungarian constitution, although adopted in 2011 by a two-thirds majority in parliament, is seen as politically highly divisive.). The merit of holding constitutional referenda has also been hotly debated.

The politics of constitution making was never smooth and free from conflict because actors have had principles to defend, goals to realize, and prejudices to express. Moreover, constitutions re-distributed governmental powers with winners and losers in both institutional and political terms. The 1993 violent clash between the Russian parliament and president had a powerful negative demonstration-effect across the entire post-communist region.

Politics aside, analysts have been trying to cope with one fundamental question: do certain constitutional designs guarantee better prospects for democratic consolidation? The choice between presidentialism and parliamentarism was initially at the centre of academic discussions because it proved fundamental in the wave of transitions in Latin America.¹⁵ However, presidentialism in Central and Eastern Europe has not produced the “winner-takes-all” syndrome that proved so damaging in certain Latin American countries. Although the trend has been to introduce direct

election of the president (first in Poland, later in Slovakia, and most recently in the Czech Republic), the constitutional powers of the president have not been altered to match her or his enhanced legitimacy and thus potential ability to challenge the prevailing parliamentary system. Super-presidentialism tends to be characteristic of post-Soviet Eastern Europe rather than Central Europe. Moreover, contrary to expectations, presidentialism in Central Europe has not produced a two-bloc system with cabinets composed solely of members of the governing party. Most presidents in the region are not linked to any single political party, and in some countries they are even legally obliged to abandon party membership before assuming office. This does not mean that presidents in Central and Eastern Europe have had no autocratic temptations, but equally there have been problems related to a *sui generis* parliamentarianism. In the 1990s, the Slovak parliamentary republic began under Prime Minister Vladimir Mečiar to slide towards semi-dictatorship, and a similar situation recurred with Victor Orban returning to power in Hungary in 2010. Clashes between the president and parliament were also frequent. President Basescu of Romania was twice suspended from office by his parliament, first in 2007 and again in 2012.

In the early stage of transition, academics also tried to establish which electoral system favoured the development of democracy most, but again their findings proved inconclusive. Both “weak” and “strong” proportional representation (PR) systems were employed in Central and Eastern Europe, but a clear-cut correlation between the choice of electoral system and the overall progress of democracy has not emerged. Clearly, factors other than electoral systems have had significant impacts on democratic progress in the region. PR remains a must as the only means to secure representation of national minorities. Interestingly, the British-style “first past the post” system is occasionally discussed in the region, but there is little chance that anybody will actually adopt it.

The institutional debate has become more refined with the passing years and geared more specifically to the Central European context.¹⁶ New constitutions have been adopted across the region offering charters of government and fundamental rights. Even imperfect constitutions in terms of substance and adoption procedures have managed to curb the ongoing institutional power struggle and create legal and political conditions in which democracy has had a chance to assert itself. Today debates are about legal interpretations of certain institutional powers or rights, and not about the fundamentals of democratic order. Studies of parties, parliaments, or courts proliferate and they very much resemble similar studies conducted in the long-established democracies. Yet, as the article in this volume by Peter Bajomi-Lazar shows, constitutional debates re-emerge with efforts to revise the basic law. The Hungarian case clearly shows that curbing certain constitutional prerogatives is no longer a practice without cost in the region.

The relation between democracy and markets was also a hot topic of academic debates in the early 1990s. This was because democracy building went hand in hand with constructing capitalism out of the ashes of the communist command economy.

The latter amounted to some painful economic adjustments and a severe crisis in the first years of transition. A sharp fall in production led to an immediate surge in unemployment that, except in the Czech Republic, rose from virtually zero in 1990 to double-digit levels in less than three years. Economic stabilization programmes also led to a sharp fall in living standards. Wages fell by around 26 percent in Hungary; 17–22 percent in Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia; and 45–65 percent in the Baltic States and Bulgaria. A dramatic growth of poverty and an unprecedented increase in social differences followed. Not surprisingly therefore, academics debated whether such painful economic adjustments could harm democracy building. They again recalled the Latin American experience, where economic reforms had put democracy under an enormous strain. As Adam Przeworski put it,

Forget geography for a moment and put Poland in the place of Argentina, Hungary in place of Uruguay. You will see states weak as organizations; political parties and other associations that are ineffectual in representing and mobilizing; economies that are monopolistic, overprotected, and overregulated; agricultures that cannot feed their own people; public bureaucracies that are overgrown; welfare services that are fragmentary and rudimentary. And will you not conclude that such conditions breed governments vulnerable to pressure from large firms, populist movements of doubtful commitment to democratic institutions, armed forces that sit menacingly on the sidelines, church hierarchies torn between authoritarianism and social justice, nationalist sentiments vulnerable to xenophobia?¹⁷

Despite all the economic hardship, the democracies of Central and Eastern Europe did not fall prey to populist agitation. Nor did a widespread Latin-style public rebellion take place in any of these countries.¹⁸ There were only sporadic strikes and the usual electoral pressures on successive government coalitions.

No plausible explanation for the persistence of social peace at a time of economic hardship has been offered so far.¹⁹ True, successive governments and industrial actors have worked hard in some countries in the region to maintain social peace by skillful institutional engineering in the form of tripartism.²⁰ External actors have also played a role. Economic stabilization programmes and market reforms, however painful, were required by Western financial institutions as a precondition for any financial or technical aid. However, it remains quite puzzling how the social peace held despite all the odds and academic predictions regarding the region, even in countries that were hit very hard by the crisis such as, for instance, Latvia.²¹ There was no significant reaction against globalization, capitalism, or the European Union. The puzzle remains particularly relevant today as several economies in the region are now faced with another period of economic hardship, and this time with greatly reduced external assistance and no generally accepted blueprint of reform to follow.

Although there is no single all-encompassing explanation one can suggest a combination of factors that secured the relative social peace that prevailed from the great transformation of the 1990s all the way through to the present crisis. The first is that,

until recently, the winners have outnumbered the losers of the transition in Central Europe. The second concerns the weakness of social actors: the trade unions are perhaps only now recovering from the widespread discredit inherited from their role as “transmission belts” during the communist period. Thirdly, there was something sociologists had not anticipated: the remarkable resilience and capacity of adaptation of the societies of Central Europe, where skills and networks inherited from the pre-1989 period, not to mention old family ties to the countryside, played their part. Finally, the possibility for a couple of millions to leave to seek work in Western Europe and send remittances back home acted as a safety valve. The question is, How sustainable will these factors be if the crisis becomes prolonged?

The international and transnational factors affecting democracy have been linked both to economics (the region’s integration into the European market) and to the politics and institutional architecture of the post-1989 Europe. Peace and security was seen as a prerequisite for successful democratic consolidation. In this context the pacifying role of the United States of America and its key institutional pillar, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), were regarded as the most crucial by both politicians and academics, especially in the early years of democratic transformation.²² In time, however, preoccupation with the EU became central. As the geopolitical center of gravity of the continent moved eastward, the institutional center of gravity moved to the West. Eastern enlargement of both NATO and the EU became the response to this new situation. Both institutions had democracy as the first condition for admission and both have been seen in the literature as providing the complementary external anchors for the new democracies. Paradoxically, in East-Central Europe it was initially NATO that was primarily associated with democratic values, whereas the EU was primarily associated with the markets and legal norms. In reality, NATO’s democratization contribution was important for the military institution and its clear subordination to an elected government, but it was the EU that developed its broader and deeper “transformative power” during the long pre-accession decade and became the main external democratizer for the region. But there are two important caveats: the EU’s leverage and conditionality work best before countries join and have, of course, a considerably reduced effect on countries without a prospect of joining. Hence, the more recent debates about the purpose and scope of the European Neighbourhood Policies.²³

Today the focus of political and academic debates is no longer on democratic transition or consolidation but on the quality of democracy.²⁴ Democracy is no longer seen as threatened by the collapse of the communist economy but rather by the collapse of the capitalist one.²⁵ And Europe is no longer seen as a panacea for democratic problems in the region. In fact, whether EU membership enhances or hampers democracy is openly debated.²⁶ These debates are very much aligned with similar ones in Western Europe, which suggests not only a democratic maturity but also an academic convergence across the former East–West divide. Yet, old habits die hard in university circles. The leading journal on European Comparative Politics

is still called *West European Politics*, even though it regularly includes articles on “new” European democracies. And only a handful of academics from Central and Eastern European universities manage to publish articles about their region in the leading international journals. Usually, they are merely asked to provide research projects conceived and financed in the West with their country case study.

Blank Democratic Spots

Despite all the progress made in the study of democracy, it is increasingly evident that the knowledge acquired is inadequate for grasping the rapidly evolving political developments in Central and Eastern Europe. In recent years, scholars have had particular problems in plausibly explaining three issues at the centre of the political debate across the region: (1) the role of informal politics in undermining formal laws and institutions; (2) the prominence of the mass media in shaping the nature of democracy; and (3) the sustained importance of the politics of memory and historical justice.

The role of informal politics in shaping the fortunes of democracy has become most apparent in Poland with the rise to power of the Kaczynski brothers. It was the promise to trace and eliminate secret networks of “anti-democratic” and “anti-patriotic” forces that secured their ballot box victories in both presidential and parliamentary elections. Although the Kaczynskis never delivered on this promise, they managed to divert Poland’s democratic agenda from reforming the formal institutions to haunting informal networks: “układ” as they call it in Polish. The Polish case seems extreme, but informal networks are at the centre of political discourse in all Central and Eastern European countries, albeit in different forms and intensities. In some countries, especially the Baltic ones, Russian networks are chiefly the prime “suspects.” Jewish, Hungarian, German, Polish, Ukrainian, and Turkish minorities are also said to form secret networks in various countries. Beyond conspiracy theories and the “paranoid style” of politics, the role of networks, either “post-communist” (especially communist secret services) or “neo-liberal” (especially new oligarchs), has become in most countries an important ingredient in the public perception of ties between political and economic elites. Much of this political discourse reflects a mixture of xenophobia, populism, and conspiracy phantasm. PM Kaczynski and his justice minister Ziobro persecuted alleged networks through the mass media relying on rather patchy evidence that would not have stood up in courts of justice.

Yet the issue is more complex. Populist campaigns against mystical networks would have fallen on deaf (electoral) ears had there not been ample anecdotal evidence that informal rather than formal arrangements were predominant in the region. True, not all informal structures and practices are detrimental to democracy. Formal democratic institutions perform well but differently in different political cultures

because of informal codes and habits. Moreover, building informal alliances and coalitions is the daily bread of democratic politics. Lobbying by NGOs or interest groups also tends to be informal. In other words, the term *informal* is not a synonym for the term *illegal* or *undemocratic*. However, informal practices and structures are particularly potent in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe because of the relative weakness of formal practices. Informal practices and networks gain importance when the state is weak, political institutions are underdeveloped, and the law is full of loopholes and contradictions. As a result, actors without democratic legitimacy secure unjust, disproportional, or even illegal advantages on behalf of particularistic interests. The rule of law is replaced by the rule of informal ad hoc arrangements orchestrated by people who have no accountability operating in a mode of dirty togetherness.²⁷ And one should keep in mind that communism collapsed in a chaotic and obscure manner, producing surprising winners and losers both in terms of wealth and access to political decision making.

The state in Central and Eastern Europe has liberated itself from the grip of one single party, but it has not become a strong independent actor able to regulate the rules of the political and economic game. Instead, it has become a hostage of various groups and interests trying to dominate its institutions and extract resources from it.²⁸ These groups are not formally organized, but operate along cultural rather than administrative codes. Access to them is restricted and reflects social or family bonds rather than official institutional affiliations. There is virtually no public control over their functioning. Administration and law in Central and Eastern Europe is often shaped by the instrumental needs of these informal political and economic agents rather than by a priori policy objectives that aim at providing public needs. Legal enforcement favours partisan political interests, whereas policy favours resource extraction for private ends. Corruption may not be a norm, but it occurs and is tolerated. The rule of law is seriously undermined when informal rules and habits are more important than formal laws. The state becomes weak, unfair, and volatile when partisan interests prevail over the common good. This leads me to another major challenge to democracy caused by the assertion of informal politics: the cartelization of political parties.

The chief parasites within state structures appear to be political parties. These parties often resemble informal coteries rather than formal institutional structures known in the western part of the continent. Parties in Central and Eastern Europe have few members and suffer from weak local structures. They do not have coherent comprehensive political programmes, and there is a considerable turnover of new single-issue parties that lack a distinct ideology. To add to the confusion, the cultural Right in Hungary and Poland (Kaczynski's Pis and Orban's Fidesz) tends to be economically Left (statist) while the post-communist Left (allied with liberals) was economically on the right (pro-market). One can also identify the formation (or the re-formation) of older cultural and geographic divides. There are two Polands as there are two Hungaries. A brief look at the electoral map of Poland reveals a clear

geographical and cultural divide between the national conservative electorate of PiS in the eastern part of the country that was part of Russia and the more urban, educated, and pro-European electorate of the liberal Civic Platform. A similar divide can be identified in Hungary: nationalist conservatives of Orbán's Fidesz versus the liberal/socialist opposition revives the familiar divides of the pre-war period or even going back to the late nineteenth century between "populists" and "urbanists."

The political parties in Central and Eastern Europe lack loyal and stable voters. They are also short of a sound independent financial basis. Their key strength comes from the ability to extract significant resources from the state and to staff state institutions with their own people.²⁹ This is manifested by comparatively high levels of state subsidies for parties, a high degree of political appointees within the civil service, the striking partisanship of state decisions regarding individual laws and economic contracts, and party clientelism within semi-state agencies of government. Minimum regulation of rent seeking, covert and informal state financing, and an increase in the size of public administration are the key instruments helping parties to benefit from the state. The above-described mechanism is largely confined to the informal sphere, with formal laws and institutions being bypassed as a matter of routine.

Of course, cartelization of parties has also been identified in many Western democracies, where complex structural social changes characterized by the weakening of stable collective political identities and a secular process of individualization has led parties to lose ground as channels of interest aggregation and vehicles of social integration.³⁰ This is why many of the Western parties became simply "parties in office" dependent more on the state than on the citizens. Similar social changes are taking place in post-communist Europe, but they are accompanied by the process of rapid political and economic change that has significantly weakened state structures and their ability to keep parties in check. Although each Central and Eastern European country has experienced a different pattern of party patronage and rent seeking, the overall picture is similar throughout the entire region.

Over the years, students of Central and Eastern Europe have acquired a comprehensive set of data on formal laws and institutions, but their knowledge of informal rules, arrangements, and networks is rudimentary at best. This is partly related to the research methods used in the study of democracy. Observatory participation rather than the analysis of formal laws and documents is needed to obtain some evidence about informal politics. In other words, cultural anthropologists are probably more suited than political scientists to study social networks.³¹

Informal politics is linked to another poorly understood factor in the new democracies: the media. The media have proved to be among the most influential political forces, yet they are neither fully transparent nor accountable. In countries such as Bulgaria, it is still unclear who owns individual media outlets. In countries such as Romania, the media have been involved in corruption cases. In Poland, the so-called Rywin Gate scandal (implicating the editor of the major daily and the Prime

Minister) revealed informal channels of negotiations between the media and political elite that fuelled the Kaczynski brothers' campaign against the "układ."³² In Slovakia, the so-called Gorilla scandal also revealed a vast area of informal if not clientelistic relations amongst politicians, journalists, and media owners.³³

The last twenty years of democracy in the Central and Eastern region have witnessed numerous media "wars." The media have been either a victim or predator—or both—in these wars. There is plenty of evidence showing that the political and business elite have tried to assert control over the media. However, the media have not just been a helpless fatality in these wars, but also an active and powerful player seeking material gains and political influence in a manner detrimental to democracy. Rather than acting as an independent watchdog and provider of non-biased information, it has often sided with its business or political patrons indulging in propaganda, misinformation, or even smears. The weakness of civil society across the region has left the media relatively free from public scrutiny. The weakness of state structures has given the public media a chance to extract material resources from the state, while the private media have benefitted from inadequate regulation of its market. Journalists as such have not been willing or able to build a strong professional identity that would have enhanced their independence. They have usually acted in defence of their corporate interests with little regard for journalistic values and professionalism. For instance, codes of ethics, when they exist, do not appear to be clear or unanimously recognized by professional journalistic bodies. An overlap between journalism and other professional activities, such as public relations, appears to be widespread and frequent. Forms of recruitment seem not to be properly defined and stable, and frequently depend on networks of family or friends. Nor is professional education reflected in the recruitment process in any significant way.

The role of media owners is even more controversial. Ownership concentration in the region is conspicuous and growing. Local media tycoons such as Irena Krasteva and Krasimir Gregov (Bulgaria), Jaromir Soukup (Czech Republic), Hans Luik (Estonia), Andrejs Ekiš (Latvia), Zdeněk Bakala (Czech Republic), Ivan Kmotrik (Slovakia), or Zygmunt Solorz (Poland) are gaining prominence across different business sectors. Some of them are actively engaged in politics. For instance, the Lithuanian media tycoon Bronislovas Lubys next to being the richest man in his country used to be the prime minister. The Romanian media tycoons Dan Costache Patriciu and Dan Voiculescu used to be members of parliament. The Hungarian tycoon Gábor Széles is an important sponsor of the Fidesz governing party. Those tycoons who do not directly engage in politics tend to treat the media as a vehicle for generating profits in their other businesses, with detrimental implications for the independence of their media outlets.

The existing (patchy) evidence does not point to a coherent "fourth political force" that could be tackled by specific media regulation. Instead it suggests a symbiotic, but informal if not obscure, set of relationships among the media, politics, and business circles. There is continuous, diffused overlapping of various functions and

interests between the media, business, and political circles. Businessmen and politicians both need the media to sell their “products” to the public, and the media professionals need financial resources and political backing in return. Because political parties in Central and Eastern Europe lack a sound social and ideological base, they are particularly dependent on the media, hence their attempts to colonize the media.³⁴ The business elite need the media not only to attract consumers for their services or products but also to influence politicians charged with making laws and regulations. Some media scholars talk about business and political “parallelism” to describe these developments.³⁵ Others talk about the emergence of “mediacracy”: “undercover skills of media management and heavily manipulated, aggressively sensationalist and fast-changing publicity cycles in politics.”³⁶ Both groups of scholars point to the existence of a notable informal network of politicians, lobbyists, celebrities, media owners, and journalists determining the functioning of modern democracy. These networks operate differently in diverse sociopolitical settings, but they are never transparent, institutionalized, or subject to accountability. Loyalty is based on common interests, history, and social networks in these networks rather than on common ethical, professional, or political values. They operate by exchanging favours, fencing off competition, and promoting partisan regulatory standards. Mediocracy has gained importance in the era of internet-dominated mass communication. Today the key political discourse takes place in a heavily diversified media environment rather than in parliaments, monitoring of politicians by the media is widespread and permanent, and basic media features such as spin, spectacle, and entertainment shape the nature of public participation and deliberation. Mediocracy is poorly understood by students of democracy, especially in the Central and Eastern European context.

In short, in the 1990s, the privatization of the media and even their being associated with the emergence of tycoons was seen as a necessary part of the pluralization of the media landscape. Over the last decade, the latter often appeared involved in state capture with strong ties to the political establishment and presiding over the commercial transformation of the media. In this context, the fate of public broadcasting, and its independence from government interference, became a major issue for the preservation of pluralism in the public space. Mediocracy in East-Central Europe has indeed specific features, but this is clearly a transeuropean issue with important implications for the quality of democracy.

The Politics of Memory

Another complex, controversial, and insufficiently understood factor shaping democracy in the region is the politics of memory and historical justice. Any new political order after a dictatorship is confronted with difficult dilemmas concerning the legacies of the old regime, which is the reason why the experiences of Central

and Eastern Europe prompt comparisons with other parts of the world beyond the post-communist space. The comparisons entail two main lines of enquiry: the first centres on transitional justice, confronting the crimes and misdemeanours of the old regime, bringing (or not) their perpetrators to justice, the dismantling of the repressive apparatus, and purging their collaborators from public office (lustration). The second concerns the tension between history and memory in trying to account for what happened and formulate a new historical narrative suitable for the democratic present. Both have contributed to the emergence of a sub-field of democratization studies with numerous books and articles devoted to these topics. Yet even with the help of this impressive body of literature, we are still uncertain as to exactly how the communist legacies and the ways of coming to terms with these legacies have shaped democratic polities in the region.

The political, constitutional, and ethical questions associated with transitional justice between retribution and the drawing of a “thick line” (Mazowiecki) have received a great variety of responses and are best approached with a comparative perspective. Comparisons can and have firstly been made with the immediate post-war situation.³⁷ The short conclusion has been that the scale of the retribution (trials and purges) against the main protagonists and their “willing accomplices” is not comparable. Authors in Eastern Europe have occasionally pointed out the contrast between the thoroughness of denazification and superficiality of decommunization. However, they rarely dwell on the brevity of the process: “the identification and punishment of active Nazis in German-speaking Europe effectively ended by 1948 and was a forgotten issue by the early fifties.”³⁸ Twenty years after the fall of communism, “lustration” is still in place and former communist officials responsible for repression are occasionally—though not very successfully—tried in courts.

The second line of comparison has concerned transitional justice in other parts of the world.³⁹ Post-Franco Spain has most often been singled out by “transitologists” as a model of a successful democratic transition based on an elite consensus. Comparison with Hungary and Poland was an obvious case in point. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was another point of comparison, usually associated with concerns to avoid destabilizing the democratic transition. By contrast, comparisons with transitions in Latin America suggest that not punishing the military who perpetrated violent crimes in the aftermath of a coup against democratically elected governments can well mean preparing the ground for a relapse.

A third comparison among the countries of post-communist Europe seems to have been the most relevant for assessing the democratic changes of the past two decades. While most countries promptly opted for rehabilitation of the victims and the restitution of confiscated property, clear differences appeared on the issue of lustration.⁴⁰ While the East Germans and the Czechs immediately adopted lustration and other methods of “decommunization” (i.e., “political and legal strategies, the aim of which is the eradication of the legacies of communism in a social and political system”⁴¹),

Hungary and Poland avoided the issue for most of the first decade after 1989. How to account for these differences? In his study of the “Third Wave” of democratizations, Samuel Huntington offered the following hypothesis:

In actual practice what happened was little affected by moral and legal considerations. It was shaped almost exclusively by politics, by the nature of the democratization process and by the distribution of political power during and after the transition. . . . Justice was a function of political power. Officials of strong authoritarian regimes that voluntarily ended themselves were not prosecuted; officials of weak authoritarian regimes that collapsed were punished, if they were promptly prosecuted by the new democratic regime.⁴²

The second part of the statement is debatable, but the first part does fit the Polish and Hungarian cases, at least in the early stages of the process. The transitions negotiated among the moderate elites in Poland and Hungary in the so-called round tables at that time clearly precluded retribution against those who were involved in the process. By contrast, the sudden and radical break in East Germany and Czechoslovakia did not provide “immunity” for the retreating representatives of the old regime.

A second explanation concerns the nature of the old regime (the “degree of nastiness” to use a non-scientific concept) and the opposition to it. The transition clearly confronted different legacies of the prior regime in Poland and Hungary than in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, not to mention Romania and Bulgaria. One may even suggest that “decommunization” (mostly rhetorical and legal) was inversely proportional to the degree of resistance to communism.

Finally, it was the elite competition in the new democracies which perhaps provided the main explanation for the timing and the scope of lustration and more generally the emphasis on “decommunization.”⁴³ According to Aleksander Smolar, it divided the political sphere into roughly three groups: radicals, liberals, and old-timers.⁴⁴ Although derived from the Polish case, the implications were obviously broader. The radicals questioned the legitimacy of the negotiated transition and demanded justice/retribution as a condition of the democratic transformation. The liberals invoked constitutionalism and the rule of law warning that retribution would be seen as retroactive justice. Settling accounts with the past would also detract from the urgent tasks of the present and a future-oriented agenda. The ex-communist old-timers obviously preferred banalization and believed time would also bring forgetting. This is where they have been proved wrong. The post-accession populist backlash in East-Central Europe⁴⁵ came with a vengeance in the second decade precisely in those countries where attempts had been made to avoid the issue in the first decade. Both the Kaczyński brothers in Poland (2005-2007) and Orban in Hungary questioned the “corrupt bargain” of 1989 and advocated belated decommunization as part of their two-pronged challenge (anti-corruption being the other)

to the liberal elites who were in power after 1989. In other words, avoiding retribution out of concern for the new democratic system's constitutionalism and inclusiveness does not mean it will not return later with a vengeance as part of an illiberal challenge to consolidated democracies.

This is also where the studies of decommunization and lustration converge with state-sponsored attempts to formulate alternative narratives, not just of 1989 but of the communist period as a whole. The Institutes of National Memory, which have been established over the past decade in several countries of the region, highlight this dual concern as the depositories and disseminators of the archives of the communist secret police, and as institutions aimed at formulating a revised historical discourse.⁴⁶ The search for a usable past and the rewriting of history became a part of the democratic legitimation of the new regimes and of a redefinition of national identity. Was communism merely a parenthesis imposed from above and from outside on innocent nations of East-Central Europe or were there indigenous factors that help account for the adaptability of the societies to the regime over four decades? Was dissent the tip of the iceberg of a social discontent (the Polish model) or an intellectual ghetto? A new generation of scholars has recently shown the cultural and political significance of the phenomenon but they also challenge some of the heroic narratives that prevailed in the immediate aftermath of 1989.⁴⁷ Does confronting the communist past dispense with critically exploring the (not always democratic) pre-communist past? The new generations of historians in and of East-Central Europe are confronted with these difficult issues in the rather favourable conditions offered by the "privilege of late birth" and a proper distance from the traps of politics of memory that had too often prevailed earlier.

Conclusions: Democratic Transition, Consolidation, Regression

Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe faces numerous challenges. Is it mature enough to survive the current economic crisis and possible disintegration of Europe? The answer depends to a large degree on our interpretation of the past two decades of democratic transformation. Academics have identified a variety of important factors shaping post-communist trajectories such as initial conditions, institutional choices, the timing and sequencing of reforms, the learning and quality of policies, the strength of the state apparatus, the ethnic composition, geographic proximity to the West, and external support.⁴⁸ They all refuted the kind of optimistic determinism, suggesting that the collapse of communism and the victory of Western liberalism would make a swift convergence between the east and west of Europe the most natural development. Nevertheless, they failed to establish a plausible set of casual relations between these factors. Moreover, the contribution of individual factors to the successes and failures are also unclear and hotly contested. In other words, political engineering of domestic actors mattered, but so did cultural and

historical legacies as well as external pressures, transnational and international alike. The single-factor theories have clearly failed to explain the successes and failures in the region and we must struggle with complex and often conflicting evidence explaining the scope and paths of reforms there. Today, it is increasingly evident that different countries in the region respond differently to the crisis, partly because of their different structural characteristics and partly because of the different policy choices of their respective governments. A comparison between Hungary and Poland is instructive here. Poland was not a leader in liberalizing its economy over the past decade. Nevertheless it is now working hand in hand with the EU and the International Monetary Fund to keep its budget under control and to maintain its economic growth. The discourse of national economic sovereignty is not pronounced within the current governing coalition. Hungary has liberalized its economy profoundly over the years, but this seems to have been a mixed blessing in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, hence a much more reluctant policy towards external financial institutions on the part of the Fidesz government combined with efforts aimed at curbing the independence of the Hungarian Central Bank. According to official rhetoric, Hungary ought to forge an economic policy decided by its democratically elected government and not dictated by rating agencies and banks.

Enlightening comparisons can be made between various countries in the region, but also between the “new” and “old” democracies in Europe. Is democracy in Central and Eastern Europe prepared better or worse than that of Western Europe to cope with the crisis? Is democratic regress more of a danger in the “old” or “new” democracies? After how long do you cease to be a “new democracy”? The answer to the last question may be: when you suffer the same ills as the old ones. And there is no shortage of shared symptoms of democratic fatigue in what Rumsfeldians used to call “old” and “new” Europe. The current economic, financial, and democratic crisis is a trans-European one and should be treated as such. The countries of East-Central Europe provide an interesting insight into its nature and diffusion.

One of the frequently discussed assumptions two decades ago was that a transition to a market economy entails major risks of destabilization for the societies of East-Central Europe which could jeopardize the chances of the post-1989 democratic transitions. That fear did not materialize and in the following decade we witnessed uneven levels of democratic consolidation. Today it is the crisis and the markets that threaten to undermine consolidated democracies (in Southern Europe as much as in Eastern Europe).

Another frequent assumption was that EU accession and its “transformative power” were the best way to make the lands of East-Central Europe safe for democracy. But what if the EU itself under pressure from global financial markets is facing centrifugal disintegrative tendencies? What if the pressures of the financial markets help to undermine not just the economic prospects, the social fabric, but the very legitimacy of democratic institutions inside the EU? The two dominant responses to the crisis have recently been the parallel rise of technocracy (as a substitute for

elected governments in Greece or Italy) and of populism (against technocratic elites, in defense of national sovereignty with varying degrees of xenophobia). To be sure, older and more established democracies (British, French, and German), with all their weaknesses, so far contain the trend and so does Poland. Nevertheless, we are witnessing the erosion of the EU as a democratizing constraint on its old and new members with implications for its possible enlargement to the Balkans. The discovery that Greece, the first Balkan country to join the EU, does not have, after thirty years of membership, a functioning state is becoming a major deterrent against attempts to extend the alleged transformative powers to a region where nation-states are still in the making.

The disturbing question is the ease with which consolidated democracies such as Hungary can experience “democratic regression,” reminding us that democracies by their very nature are never “definitely established.” As Poland was under the Kaczynski twins, Hungary today is probably an explicit version of the possibility of democratic regression and populist temptation in established democracies. Perhaps more interestingly, East-Central Europe displays again some of the features of the “lands in between”: a magnifying glass for the crisis of democracy in Western Europe but also a bridge to the authoritarian drift in the East of the continent: an axis of authoritarian regression going from the (milder) slide into authoritarianism in Orbán’s Hungary to a more pronounced one in Yanukovich’s Ukraine, to definitely authoritarian features under Lukashenko in Belarus and Putin in Russia. East-Central Europe remains a laboratory of both patterns in the current crisis of democracy in Europe. Perhaps the post-communist experience also has some relevance for a post-colonial experience in North Africa or the challenges of democratization brought about by the “Arab Spring.” A broader comparative European framework can provide new insights into democratic theory and the complex relationship between markets, states and democracy in a globalized world.⁴⁹

Notes

1. Editorial article (no author), July 17-18, 2011, p. 1.

2. Spiegel on-line international, July 9, 2012. Source: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/eu-concerned-over-romanian-parliament-impeachment-of-president-basescu-a-843382.html>.

3. Karel Hvizdala, “Je v Česku ohrožena parlamentní demokracie?” Radio CR6, April 4, 2012. The author, a highly respected commentator and the author of two books of interviews with Vaclav Havel. The article is one among many concerned with the degree of interpenetration between business and the political sphere. See also “Attempt at a Legal Coup (So Far) Averted,” which is the title of a piece by a former dissident and 1990 Civic Forum leader, Jan Urban, “Pokus o ustavní puc (zatím) neprošel,” *Aktualne.cz*, February 2, 2012.

4. Jiri Priban, “Zijeme v kritické době: bude u nás poloautoritarský režim nebo demokracie?,” *Aktualne.cz*, April 22, 2012.

5. It should be noted that according to The Freedom House, the economic slump in Latvia has generated democratic erosion. Its Survey for 2010 has downgraded Latvia’s civil liberties rating because of the impact the controversial sale of one of the country’s leading newspapers had on freedom of the press.

(The link between the economic and democratic downturn in Latvia [and also in Hungary] has been underlined by the director of research at Freedom House, Arch Puddington, in his article in the *Journal of Democracy*. See Arch Puddington, "Democracy under Duress," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 1 (January 2011): 27.

6. Larry Diamond, "Why Democracies Survive," *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 1 (January 2011): 17. See also Martin Seymour Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1960).

7. See David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (April 1997): 430–51.

8. Compare, e.g., indicators used by the Freedom House, Polity IV, and Polyarchy. See <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2012/methodology>; <http://www.nsd.uib.no/macrodataloguide/set.html?id=32&sub=1>; and http://www.prio.no/sptrans/-1460568725/file42501_introduction.pdf.

9. See Venelin Ganev's contribution to this issue.

10. Pierre Hassner, "Russia's Transition to Autocracy," *Journal of Democracy* (April 2008): 5–15.

11. M. Gorbatchev commenting on V. Putin's third presidential mandate on French television A2, March 11, 2012.

12. Marie Mendras, *Rusian Politics: The Paradox of a Weak State* (London: Hurst, 2012).

13. S. Levitsky and L. Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy*, 2 (2002): 52. The authors have further elaborated concept in their recent book *Competitive Authoritarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

14. Stephen Holmes, "Back to the Drawing Board," *Eastern European Constitutional Review* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 21–25. Also Jon Elster et al., *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

15. Juan J. Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (1990): 51–69; and Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 273–87.

16. Jon Elster, Claus Offe, and Ulrich Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies: Rebuilding the Ship at Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Jan Zielonka, ed., *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, *Institutional Engineering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

17. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 180, 190. See also Claus Offe, "Capitalism by Democratic Design? Democratic Theory Facing the Triple Transition in East Central Europe," *Social Research* 58 (1991): 886–87.

18. Béla Greskovits, *The Political Economy of Protest and Patience: East European and Latin American Transformations Compared* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998). (For a contrasting view see Ekiert and Kubik's *Rebellious Civil Society*, 1993).

19. Jeffrey S. Kopstein and David A. Reilly, "Explaining the Why of the Why: A Comment on Fish's 'Determinants of Economic Reform in the Post-Communist World,'" *East European Politics and Society* 13, no. 3 (1999): 613–26. Also Leszek Balcerowicz, ed., *Socialism, Capitalism, Transformation* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995).

20. Elena A. Iankova, *Eastern European Capitalism in Making* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

21. Anders Aslund and Valdis Dombrovskis, "How Latvia Came Through the Financial Crisis," Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011.

22. Zoltan Barany, *The Future of NATO Expansion: Four Case Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Richard McAllister and Roland Dannreuther, *The EU and NATO Enlargement* (London: Routledge, 2005); Wade Jacoby, *The Enlargement of the European Union and NATO: Ordering from the Menu in Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

23. Jacques Rupnik, ed., *Les Banlieues de l'Europe, les politiques de voisinage de l'UE* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007).

24. Andrew Roberts, *The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). Also the special issue of *Central European Political Science Review* 12, no. 44 (2011), titled "The Qualities of Democracies."

25. Mitchell A. Orenstein, "What Happened in East European (Political) Economies?: A Balance Sheet for Neo-liberal Reform," *East European Politics and Society* 23, no. 4 (2009): 479–90. Also Dorothe Bohle and Béla Greskovits, *Capitalist Diversity on Europe's Periphery* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

26. See the special issue of *Eastern European Politics and Society* 21, no. 1 (2007), on "Democracy in the Post-Communist World."

27. The term "dirty togetherness" was coined by Adam Podgórecki. See his book *Social Oppression* (London: Greenwood, 1993), 95. For an overview of informal politics in two countries under consideration, see Gerd Meyer, ed., *Formal Institutions and Informal Politics in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Russia and Ukraine* (Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2008).

28. Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Political Competition and the Politicization of the State in East and Central Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 10 (2003): 1123–47.

29. Petr Kopecný, "Political Parties and the State in Post-Communist Europe: The Nature of Symbiosis," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 22, no. 3 (2006): 251–73.

30. Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 5–28.

31. See Piotr Sztompka, "Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Post-Communist Societies," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 22, no. 2 (1993): 85–95. Also see Jan Kubik and Amy T. Linch, eds., *Justice, Hegemony and Mobilization: Views from East/Central Europe and Eurasia* (New York, New York University Press, 2012).

32. Paweł Smoleński, "Ustawa za łapówkę czyli przychodzi Rywin do Michnika," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 27, 2002. <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,1237212.html>.

33. See <http://www.praguepost.cz/news/11701-region-gorilla-case-grips-slovakia.html>.

34. See Peter Bajomi's contribution to this issue.

35. Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26ff.

36. John Keane, <http://theconversation.edu.au/the-hidden-media-powers-that-undermine-democracy-3028>.

37. See Istvan Deak, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt, eds., *The Politics of Retribution in Europe, World War II and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

38. *Ibid.*, 297.

39. For a most comprehensive treatment, see Neil J. Kritz, ed., *Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*, vols. 1-3 (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1995). For a thoughtful exploration of the legal, moral, and political issues, see Martha Minow, ed., *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); also see Ruti Taitel, *Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

40. For a discussion of the legal and political implications of the lustration process, see Adam Czarnota, "Lustration, Decommunisation and the Rule of Law," *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 1 (2009): 307–36. Also Adam Czarnota, Martin Krygier, and Wojciech Sadurski, eds., *Rethinking the Rule of Law after Communism: Constitutionalism, Dealing with the Past, and the Rule of Law* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005).

41. Czarnota, Krygier, and Sadurski, *Rethinking the Rule of Law*, 309.

42. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 228.

43. Cf. Noel Calhoun, *Dilemmas of Justice in Eastern Europe's Democratic Transitions* (New York: Palgrave, 2006); Natalia Letki, "Lustration and Democratisation in East-Central Europe," *Europe-Asia Studies* 4 (2002): 529–52; Jacques Rupnik, "Coming to Terms with the Communist Past: The Czech Case

from a Comparative Perspective,” in *Atlas of Transformation*, ed. Z. Baladran and V. Havranek (Prague: Ringier, 2010), 129–43.

44. Aleksander Smolar, “Les Radicaux au pouvoir et la transformation de la Pologne,” *Pouvoirs* 118 (2006): 101–12.

45. Jacques Rupnik, “From Democracy Fatigue to Populist Backlash,” *Journal of Democracy* 18, no. 4 (2007): 17–25.

46. The Polish IPN was the first soon followed in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and more recently in Bulgaria and Romania. In the Czech Republic, the criticism of the somewhat Orwellian overtones of a state institution as guardian of “national memory” embodied by the tons of police archives of the old dictatorship led the legislators to rename it as Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. Cf. P. Kolar and M. Kopecek, “A Difficult Quest for New Paradigms: Czech Historiography after 1989,” in *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, ed. S. Antohi, P. Apor, and B. Terencsenyi (Budapest, Central European University Press, 2007), 171–245. Istvan Rév explores the Hungarian case in *Retroactive Justice, prehistory of post-communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005). “Politics of Memory in Post-Communist Europe,” in *History of Communism in Europe 1* (2010), published by the Institute for the Investigation of the Communist Crimes and for the Memory of the Romanian Exile, Bucharest. The Institute was disbanded by the government in July 1012.

47. Among the numerous studies, let us mention Jonathan Bolton’s *Worlds of Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Paulina Bren’s *The Greengrocer and His TV, Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010); and F. Kind-Kovacs and J. Labov, eds., *From Samizdat to Tamizdat: Transnational Media during and after Socialism* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

48. Grzegorz Ekiert, Jan Kubik, and Milada Anna Vachudova, “Democracy in the Post-Communist World: An Unending Quest?,” *East European Politics and Society* 21, no. 1 (2007): 7–30.

49. Though not devoted to East-Central Europe, that is the attempt of Dani Rodrik’s *The Globalization Paradox: Why Markets, States, and Democracy Can’t Coexist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

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