Post-Communist Transformation and the Problem of Weak States. Reconceptualizing the Legacy of Communism

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Reconceptualizing the Legacy of Communism and the Problem of Weak States Post-Communist Transformation
Abstract

In the transformation processes in post-communist East Central Europe and in the processes of integration with the West the legacy of dysfunctional state structures and state-society relations is confronted by reform. In countries with legacy of authoritarianism, in countries with a legacy of hybrid-authoritarianism, in the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions. In this paper, the analysis is focused on economic and political systems by political authority, the scope and nature of economic and political systems by political authority, and in the development of democratic institutions.
Post-Communist Transformation and the Problem of Weak States

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Introduction

As emphasized by several authors, government shortcomings are the order of the day in all modern societies. Governments in the West systematically fail to carry out policies as intended despite long traditions as modern complex states. This is not only troubling for the efficiency of policy making and the ability of the political sphere to control future societal development but it is also a democratic problem. If politicians manage to carry out their political agenda, it is greatly exceeded by the wide gap in post-communist countries between intended and actual change (Nunberg, 2000). The former communist states have in the integration with the West and the process of transformation of the former communist regimes have turned to be one of the gravest problems in the transformation processes and in the processes of integration with the West. In spite of the efforts made in the post-communist period to fill the gap, the spread of rent-seeking behavior among party-state officials during the last decades of communism has come to realization that the former communist states started the reform processes with inherently different legacies. Countries like Poland and Hungary were in 1989 endowed with less dysfunctional state structures than for example Romania and Albania where totalitarian features were in place until the very end of the previous regimes. In the paper I will analyze how the states in East Central Europe (ECE) have developed and I will do this in order to understand the differences between the countries and how these differences affect state capacity. Scholars and practitioners often find it hard to develop an understanding of the legacies in the different countries affecting the outcomes for reform and policy recommendations.

My analysis rests on two assumptions: firstly, that the historical development and the antecedents of today’s states are vital for understanding how the states in ECE and the state-society relations are functioning and second, that the states in ECE and the state-society relations are functioning and second, that the sources of today’s government failures are the sources of today’s government failures. In the paper I will analyze how the states in ECE have developed and I will do this in order to understand their different states and the differences between the countries and how these differences affect state capacity. Scholars and practitioners often find it hard to develop an understanding of the legacies in the different countries affecting the outcomes for reform and policy recommendations.
Post-Communist Transformation and the Problem of Weak States

Post-communist transformation process is the immediate post-communist period, where the communist state is replaced by a non-communist state. The problem of weak states is particularly pronounced in the former Eastern Bloc countries, where the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy has been accompanied by significant political and economic challenges.

1. The first assumption rests on a historical institutional perspective where path dependence is emphasized (Steinmo et al., 1992). Institutions do not develop as an efficient response to changes in the environment, but they are characterized by "stickiness." Path dependence implies that current institutions are shaped by past institutions and that previous experiences influence future developments. In the context of social transformation, this means that the legacy of the communist era is still evident in the current institutional structures, and efforts to transform these institutions require a deep understanding of their historical origins.

2. The second assumption is based on the view that the importance of the state or the public administration has generally been underestimated in the analysis of post-communist transformation. In the struggle against the communist regimes, a discourse developed that emphasized "civil society versus the state" (Linz & Stepan, 1996:9). As practically all political opposition was repressed, civil society groups played a decisive part in the resistance against the communist regime. The all-powerful Soviet State was seen as the cause of all problems in the communist countries. The legacy of these cognitive maps seems to persist, influencing the current institutional structures.

3. One reason why the importance of state transformation in post-communist countries has been underestimated is due to the transition discourse. In the struggle against the communist regimes, a discourse developed that emphasized "civil society versus the state." This discourse has influenced the way in which the reform process was understood and implemented. The emphasis on the importance of civil society has led to a neglect of the role of the state in the transformation process.

4. In analyzing the legacies of communism, the former Eastern Bloc countries have generally been classified in terms of totalitarian, post-totalitarian, sultanistic, authoritarian and other regimes. To facilitate a comparison between the countries and a historical account, I will develop two concepts for state transformation.

5. One reason why the importance of state transformation in post-communist countries has been underestimated is due to the transition discourse. In the struggle against the communist regimes, a discourse developed that emphasized "civil society versus the state." This discourse has influenced the way in which the reform process was understood and implemented. The emphasis on the importance of civil society has led to a neglect of the role of the state in the transformation process.
Post-Communist Transformation and the Problem of Weak States

2 Conceptualizing state structures

In studying the state we have to analyze both the internal workings of the state apparatus and state-society relations. In this paper I focus on the ECE countries, although often being more general in scope. ECE is used as a generic term for the Eastern Bloc excluding the Soviet Union, that is East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, among others. The concluding parts of the paper deal with the post-communist development and cross-national differences.

The degree of legality is vital for the functioning of the state and for political decision-making. It is defined as the adherence to laws and regulations, where administrative action is governed by rules. A state with a high degree of legality is a rule-governed state, whereas an arbitrary state is characterized by the absence of laws and regulations. Legalism has to do with the style, and étatization with the scope, of political authority. All states, independent of political regime, might be classified according to the presence of these two variables. The concepts can also be used in analysis of pre-modern governing systems that predated the development of the modern state.

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Actions are not ordered by formal rules, i.e. it affects the potential for state autonomy. Lack of transparency and accountability makes it difficult, also in a democratic system, for most citizens and interest groups to obtain access to actual policy-making.

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Authoritarian states are characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual or group. In such states, the state can adopt policies that are not necessarily in the best interest of the citizens, but serve to maintain their power and control. This can result in poor governance and economic stagnation.

Authoritarianism in turn has to do with the penetration of the social and economic systems by political authority, i.e. the scope and intrusiveness of political authority. In an ideal type manner we could think of political authority as a blanket that covers society. This is why the state is often referred to as the "all-powerful" state.

Unlike totalitarian regimes, authoritarian ones leave the economic and sometimes also the social sector without major interference (Lundqvist, 2001:14). Democratic regimes vary quite considerably in their approach to state intervention, and the discourse typically centers on the desirability of a welfare state. State intervention in democracies is, however, not a simple political left-right issue. The "New Right" political movements in the West have for example often been strongly against state intervention in the economic sector, while at the same time they advocate state intervention in order to uphold traditional moral values in society (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1987:7).

Why then is the tradition of'étatization' important in order to understand how the state functions today in ECE? And what is the connection between the degree of étatization and government effectiveness? The answer to these questions is that the degree of étatization is optimal under different regimes depending on regime goals and the particular political formula. The concept of étatization is often used to describe this total domination of the state. Totalitarianism has, however, come to be a much more restrictive and absolutist concept of the state.

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were devastating for the presence of cooperative relations between the state and society and for the level of trust (Rose, 1994; Smolar, 1996).

3 The Communist State

We now turn to the analysis of the communist state. The political systems all over communist Europe were constructed after the model of the Soviet Union. This model was shaped by the particular conditions in Russia and the ideas of Marx and Engels. When applying these ideas to the entire world, however, it was necessary to make adjustments to the model. The fundamental purpose of the Leninist State was to create a state that would be able to implement the social revolution. The state had to be strong enough to suppress any resistance from the capitalist class and to carry out the planned changes. The state was to be a tool for the realization of the socialist revolution.

Marxist-Leninism was a reinterpretation of Marxism by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in order to adjust it to Russian conditions (Gerner, 1991:25). The fundamental purpose of the Leninist State was to create an all-powerful state that would be able to implement the social revolution. The political and administrative system resembled the state of a modern capitalist country in many respects, but it was characterized by a high degree of centralization and control. The state was able to control all aspects of life and to implement its policies effectively.

As we all know, the Bolshevik strategies and the Comintern failed to create a communist revolution in the advanced capitalist countries. Lenin's death in 1924 brought with it a fierce debate about the goals and means of the state. The state had to be able to handle these classical [Marxist] principles through the filter of étatism. 

The principle of "democratic centralism" was already formulated under Lenin. It came to be characterized by extreme centralization with strict hierarchical authority chains. In the "ideal type" of the Stalinist system horizontal relationships between institutions were eliminated and vertical structures with narrow specialization dominated. Just as characteristic was the fusion between the state and the ruling Communist Party, creating a new type of state-party coalition. The state was the key to the political system. The Party was the key to the state. The state was the key to the economy. The economy was the key to the state. The state was the key to the party. The party was the key to the state.

State structures were not only hierarchically centralized but also deliberately disordered. The separation and insulation of different state institutions became a principal control strategy. The result was a highly complex organization of the state. In the post-Stalin years the goals of the regime became more concrete. The state was to be used as a tool for the implementation of the policies of the state. The state was to be used as a tool for the implementation of the policies of the Party. The state was to be used as a tool for the implementation of the policies of the state.

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3 The Communist State
The State in ECE

But what about the socialist countries of East Central Europe? The features of the Soviet State were present to different degrees in these countries. The strongly centralized state was implemented at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s throughout ECE. Khrushchev’s destalinization in the mid-1950s allowed differences between the countries to come into the open. The spread of democracy, the growth of the sufficient, and the concentration of the nation towards the core of the Soviet block, were determined by the countries and their states. The spread of the term “socialism” towards the East European countries is evident in the late 1980s, when the social movements of the Eastern European countries could also be observed in the development of Communist Party-state networks. The spread of some Eastern European parties and political movements could be observed in the development of Communist Party-state networks.
In Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia the scope and intrusiveness of political authority was narrowed down in the destalinization period. In these countries – although only explicitly stated in Hungary – the leaders, whether in power or in opposition, or as a result of their leader’s death, maintained control over their political systems by evicting political opponents. They were still exercising power over the people. However, they also gave the task to open political competition and to avoid the monopolizing power of political authority, which was the case in the former countries. The leaders, whether in power or in opposition, or as a result of their leader’s death, maintained control over their political systems by evicting political opponents. They were still exercising power over the people. However, they also gave the task to open political competition and to avoid the monopolizing power of political authority, which was the case in the former countries.

Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany remained faithful to the Soviet Union and to a large extent followed the same development as the imperial center. Political authority remained the most powerful and controlled by the harshest regime of the three towards adversaries and the strictest discipline inside the party.

Romania and Albania both chose to distance themselves from the Soviet Union and pursued an independent foreign policy. The major difference between these two countries was that the Romanian regime became more open to dissent and more permissive to political competition, whereas Hoxha’s regime was more repressive and less tolerant of political differences. It is argued that the Romanian regime became more open to dissent and more permissive to political competition, whereas Hoxha’s regime was more repressive and less tolerant of political differences.

Janos has concluded that Romania’s subsequent enormous economic and developmental problems have to do with Romania’s subsequent enormous economic and developmental problems have to do with...
procedures for the application of the law and the regimes were still not prepared to limit themselves within the rules that they prescribed. There were, however, important differences between the law enforcers: proportioned by ideas of God, those in the field of religion were co-opted to fit the narrow cultural tradition of the church of state, whereas in the field of economics those who tried to comprehend the economic system and could see beyond the church were less effective. The arbitrariness of the leadership, and brought with it a degree of predictability of political authority.

4 State structures in a long term perspective

Before turning to the post-communist development in the region we will briefly look into the longer traditions of the region. Before turning to the post-communist development in the region we will briefly look into the longer traditions of the region. Following Kojève (1969) and Kojève’s interpretation of the West, Western Christianity developed in close and highly interconnected with the Eastern. Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodox Christianity have more or less coincided with the so-called Western European tradition where the idea of law, political community, the church, and the power structure were clearly defined and institutionalized in the code. The idea of a legal and humane society was more or less developed in the church, which was considered to be the ultimate guarantor of the legal order. Western Christianity, with its emphasis on the importance of the church, has been a source of political and legal power, whereas eastern Europe has been characterized by the dominance of the state, which was seen as the ultimate guarantor of the legal order. The arbitrariness of the leadership, and brought with it a degree of predictability of political authority.

...
In the countries of western Christianity a legal state gradually developed where law and contract regulated the relationship between kings and estates, and to a certain degree, between lords and peasants. The further to the east, the weaker the civil societies and the more intrusive and arbitrary the states (Janos, 2000:116).

Looking at the cross-national differences in ECE under communism these historical paths seem indeed to have been of importance. In Romania and Albania the maintained totalitarian state structures with resemblance to the western legal state and the scope of political authority was somewhat restricted.

It is obvious, however, that to fully understand the different development paths in the communist satellite countries, elite choices are of importance. One of the most evident examples of this is the post-Stalin difference in Romania. In 1989/1990, Romania and Hungary were, in theory, identical: both were centrally planned economies, both were under communist rule, both were under Ceausescu and his predecessor. Fundamentally, therefore, the differences between these two countries, as well as between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, were based on the difference between the political, social and economic contexts of the two countries. Hungary, with its relatively strong democratic traditions and its relatively weak communist regime, was able to implement economic and political reforms in a relatively short period of time, whereas Czechoslovakia, with its relatively weak democratic traditions and its relatively strong communist regime, was unable to implement economic and political reforms in a similar period of time. This difference in economic and political outcomes can be attributed to the difference in the political, social and economic contexts of the two countries.

Looking at the cross-national differences in ECE under communism.
After the fall of the communist regimes, the countries are still engaged in complex reform efforts, not least in terms of adaptation to the European Union. Despite dramatic transformation since 1989, many fundamental problems remain (Nations in Transition 2000). Academic and practitioners alike have come to emphasize the fact that the functioning of the state is still characterized by a number of persistent issues. In particular, the ability of the European Union to carry through complex reforms. Also, the weak states are characterized by their inability to implement democratic reforms effectively, not least because of the lack of a degree of legal rationality. The degree of legalism is important for reform capacity today because, as discussed earlier, it affects the efficiency of policy-making both within and between state institutions and internationally. A great problem in many of the countries where political authorities were less restricted and predictable, was the lack of trust between different actors and institutions. The degree of legalism is also important for the quality of the economic sector and the civil society. Efficient and democratic policy making requires an autonomous economic and civil society. In the most weak states, all forms of independent activity were repressed, leaving very weak economic and social sectors today.

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In the countries with the least favorable starting points like Romania and Bulgaria, the reform process has been marked by a lack of political will and the absence of a clear vision of the future. High personnel turnover and frequent changes in leadership have resulted in a lack of continuity and commitment to the reform agenda. The state apparatus is highly fragmented and the lack of institutionalized procedures and rules has hindered coordination and strategic planning. The transitional flux and great uncertainty in the system characterize the state apparatus in transition and have blocked any real change.

Attributes and Organization of the State

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6 Concluding remarks

Conducting remarks

Links between State Institutions and Societal Groups
The state constitutes the apparatus of government independent of level (municipalities, the nation-state etc) and is in this paper used interchangeably with the public administration. State strength has to do with freedom of action (from specific societal forces) and capacity for action (efficiency in policy-making) (c.f. Weiss, 1998).

2. The all too common neglect of state factors in post-communist transitions is of course also affected by the fact that the state is still left out in many influential social science schools. There is a tendency to assume that all states are alike which makes the state uninteresting in comparative research (Dunleavy & O'Leary, 1993).

3. The idea of a dichotomy between civil society and the state is of course not new and can be traced back to antiquity and was taken up by the first liberal thinkers.

4. As proven by history highly étatized and arbitrary states can be very efficient at mobilizing for short term specific tasks, like massive militarization. Stalin's totalitarian system was, as put forward by Janos ... kept for six decades. This is an important explanation of the subsequent enormous inefficiencies in the Soviet system.

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