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Review Article

POST-POSTCOMMUNISM
Transition, Comparison, and the End of "Eastern Europe"

By CHARLES KING*

Valerie Bunce. *Subversive Institutions: The Design and Destruction of Socialism and the State.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 206 pp.

Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds. *Democratization and Authoritarianism in Postcommunist Societies*, 4 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Vol. 1, *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*, 389 pp.; Vol. 2, *Politics, Power, and the Struggle for Democracy in South-East Europe*, 472 pp.; Vol. 3, *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova*, 386 pp. ; Vol. 4, *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 423 pp.

Richard Sakwa. *Postcommunism.* Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999, 153 pp.

Daniel S. Treisman. *After the Deluge: Regional Crises and Political Consolidation in Russia.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 262 pp.

THERE are two ways to speculate about the future of Russia's ongoing transition. One is to know a great deal about the behavior of overpowerful executives and divided legislatures in environments where credible commitment is low, huge incentives for free riding exist, institutional anarchy encourages self-serving political and economic behavior, rent seeking and patronage networks among central and peripheral entrepreneurs prevent broad cooperation, and social cleavages along ascriptive lines such as ethnicity overshadow both ideology and class as a basis for political mobilization. The other is to know a lot about Russia.

The gap between these two ways of thinking about eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was long considered a gulf between stu-

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dents of the region and their colleagues in other areas of political science. East European specialists worried about their estrangement from "mainstream" comparative research; comparativists denounced the area studies tradition for a host of sins, including failing to predict the end of Soviet-style socialism.[1] In the 1990s debates raged in area studies journals and the newsletters of professional associations, as regional scholars attempted to fend off assaults by colleagues calling on them to produce generalizable hypotheses rather than accounts stressing cultural uniqueness or historical contingency.[2] The monumental changes in the field were evident in the renaming of scholarly journals, a phenomenon that paralleled the rechristening of streets and squares across the former communist lands: *Soviet Studies* became *Europe-Asia Studies*; *Soviet Economy* became *Post-Soviet Affairs*; *Problems of Communism* ceased to existed, before being resurrected as, simply, *Problems of Post-Communism*.

The major question that long preoccupied students of the communist world was how to integrate theories from mainstream political science into the study of eastern Europe; that is, how might the theoretical or conceptual insights of comparative politics enrich the study of communism? The question was not easy to answer, since communist political systems seemed so utterly different from the west European liberal democracies that formed the basis for much of the existing comparative model building. A question that was less frequently asked was how the study of eastern Europe could contribute to comparative politics in general. Although regional specialists strove to fit their work into research programs generated by the field, it was rarer to find empirically grounded work on eastern Europe that influenced how those research programs were shaped. It is difficult to think of a single book on communism, in fact, that had a major impact outside the regional subfield.

Ten years after the end of Soviet-style socialism, the second question can now be answered. The once acrimonious debates between "area

[1] See the exchanges in Robert H. Bates, Chalmers Johnson, and Ian Lustick in "Controversy in the Discipline: Area Studies and Comparative Politics," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 30 (June 1997); Robert Bates, "Theory in Comparative Politics?" *APSA Comparative Politics Newsletter* 8 (Winter 1997), 1–3; Christopher Shea, "Political Scientists Clash over the Value of Area Studies," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 10, 1997, A13–A14.

[2] See the special issue of *Post-Soviet Affairs* 8, no. 3 (1992); Jack Snyder, "Science and Sovietology: Bridging the Methods Gap in Soviet Foreign Policy Studies," *World Politics* 40 (January 1988); Peter Zwick, "The Perestroika of Soviet Studies: Thinking and Teaching about the Soviet Union in Comparative Perspective," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24 (September 1991); Martin Malia, "From under the Rubble, What?" *Problems of Communism* 41 (January–April 1992); Michael Cox, "The End of the USSR and the Collapse of Soviet Studies," *Coexistence* 31 (1994); Charles King, "Post-Sovietology: Area Studies or Social Science?" *International Affairs* 70, no. 2 (1994), 291–97.

studies" and "the discipline" have largely subsided: area studies has become more rigorous, and comparative politics has turned toward reevaluating the role of contingency, midrange theorizing, and case-based narratives.[3] Comparativists have come to value the same scholarly attributes that area studies specialists have long prized, including sensitivity to problems of concept stretching and cross-regional model building.[4] Postcommunist Europe and Eurasia are fertile ground for testing theories that were developed in other geographical contexts—theories of democratization, institutional design, interest-group interaction, and identity politics. The reinvigorated study of the region has also produced new work that promises to enrich the general study of the political economy of reform, federalism, transitional justice, and nationalism and interethnic relations.[5] The one-lane dirt road that used to wend between area studies specialists and comparativists has, at last, become a multilane interstate.

This article focuses on one of the most significant areas of research to emerge for comparativists over the last ten years: accounting for variable outcomes in the systemic transitions across the region. Compared with the relative homogeneity of outcomes in earlier transitions in southern Europe and Latin America—extrication from previous regimes followed by long periods of consolidation—the record in the east looks profoundly more varied: a handful of successful transitions and easy consolidations, several incomplete transitions, a few transi-

[3] See, for example, Robert H. Bates et al., *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

[4] Marc Howard Ross, "Culture and Identity in Comparative Political Analysis," in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ruth Lane, *The Art of Comparative Politics* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), esp. chaps. 5, 6.

[5] Christopher Shea, "New Faces and New Methodologies Invigorate Russian Studies," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 20, 1998, A16–A18. On the political economy of postcommunism, see Steven Solnick, *Stealing the State: Control and Collapse in Soviet Institutions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Thane Gustafson, *Capitalism Russian-Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David M. Woodruff, *Money Unmade: Barter and the Fate of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman, *Without a Map: Political Tactics and Economic Reform in Russia* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000). On federalism, see Mary McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997). On transitional justice, see Kathryn Hendley, *Trying to Make Law Matter: Legal Reform and Labor Law in the Soviet Union* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996). On nationalism and interethnic relations, see David D. Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Tone Bringa, *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870–1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, *The Tenacity of Ethnicity: A Siberian Saga in Global Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

tions followed by reversion to authoritarian politics, even some transitions that never really began at all. Why the extreme differences? And what light might the answer shed on systemic change in general?

Section I presents an overview of the study of communism and its development before the early 1990s. Understanding the development of the subfield is important to appreciating the new relationship between the east European cases and comparative analysis today. Section II reviews the shape of transition politics across the region since 1989 and underscores the variable progress that countries have made in implementing reform. Section III illustrates the ways in which intimate knowledge of particular cases has been coupled with serious theorizing about political problems of broad interest. Section IV hazards a few suggestions about where "post-postcommunist studies"—if there can be such a thing—might go in the early years of this century, as the countries of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union become increasingly differentiated.

I. From Totalitarianism to Comparative Politics

In its earliest incarnation "communist studies" was not so much scholarly research as studious propagandizing. Sidney and Beatrice Webb's paean, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation*?, is the best known of these early works, but the Webbs' enthusiastic endorsement of the Soviet experiment was echoed in many other memoirs and travel books from the 1920s and 1930s.[6] These early on-the-spot narratives were produced by and large by Europeans, but the Second World War made the Soviet system—and its new avatars in Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere—a matter of strategic concern to the United States. The new centers of teaching and research that sprang up within the American academy contributed two new features to the study of communist Europe: a focus on formal language training for nonnative speakers and the introduction of social scientific methods into the study of the region. Whereas previously the typical east European specialist was the leftist traveler or émigré historian, after the war a growing generation of American-born social scientists began to join the communist studies field.[7]

[6] Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *Soviet Communism: A New Civilisation?* (London: Gollancz, 1935). Some travelers, especially Panait Istrati and Nikos Kazantzakis, were far less enthusiastic about the Soviet experiment than many of their contemporaries. Istrati, *Russia Unveiled*, trans. R. J. S. Curtis (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1931); Kazantzakis, *Russia: A Chronicle of Three Journeys in the Aftermath of the Revolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: Creative Arts Book Company, 1989).

[7] The contribution of British scholars—especially Leonard Schapiro, Hugh Seton-Watson, Alec Nove, and later, Archie Brown, Stephen White, Mary McAuley, and others—was central. For an

If the writings of the Webbs and their contemporaries were overly uncritical of Soviet socialism, early Sovietology was perhaps too tendentious in the opposite direction, characterized by denunciations of communist systems as rigid, totalitarian dictatorships ruled by the iron hand of the party. Interestingly, both groups tended to take communists at their word; they differed only in which words they chose to take seriously. The Webbs and others in their cohort believed the Soviet rhetoric of social justice and equality; postwar Sovietologists tended to believe the rhetoric of party discipline and the plan.[8] During the era of high Stalinism, from the war through the early 1950s, this latter vision of Soviet and even east European politics prevailed. However, the "totalitarian model" of communist politics was never really much of a model at all. It did not explain (nor, to be fair, did its adherents claim to explain) precisely how the system held together, since it was assumed that brute force was the key variable.[9] In the 1960s and 1970s a more complex vision of Soviet and east European politics began to emerge, a result both of changes in the region and of developments within academe. The communist bloc was hardly the monolith that some totalitarian theorists portrayed it to be, and even the Soviet Union itself clearly witnessed intraparty struggles and elite rivalries. In response, a variety of new conceptual tools and techniques—from an increasing concern with Soviet society (rather than just the state) and elite-level disputes—made their way into writing on Soviet and east European politics.[10] As Jerry Hough wrote in 1979, in his rewritten and renamed edition of Merle Fainsod's 1953 *How Russia Is Ruled*, "research and

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impressive survey of British scholarship, see Archie Brown, "The Study of Totalitarianism and Authoritarianism," in Jack Hayward, Brian Barry, and Archie Brown, eds., *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[8] For important examples of this scholarship, see Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956). See also Carl J. Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); Leonard Schapiro, *Totalitarianism* (London: Pall Mall, 1972). Schapiro was no less committed to straightforward institutional analysis, but his work did mark a shift toward trying to understand process as well as structure in the Soviet state; see Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1960).

[9] For analyses of the role of the totalitarian model in shaping both academic debate and foreign policy, see Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience: Politics and History since 1917* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[10] For an overview of this literature, see Gabriel A. Almond and Laura Roselle, "Model Fitting in Communism Studies," in Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., and Erik P. Hoffman, eds., *Post-Communist Studies and Political Science* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993). For examples, see Archie Brown, *Soviet Politics and Political Science* (London: Macmillan, 1974); Archie Brown and Jack Gray, eds., *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (London: Macmillan, 1977); Archie Brown, ed., *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1984); Susan Gross Solomon, ed., *Pluralism in the Soviet Union: Essays in Honour of H. Gordon Skilling* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

writing about Western governments has centered on the policy process and the factors associated with responsiveness in political systems, and meaningful comparative political science requires that a conscious attempt be made to ask the same questions about the Soviet Union."[11] By the mid-1980s, when the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev remade the study of Soviet politics as much as Gorbachev's own perestroika would change the Soviet system, the study of Soviet-style communism had become a diverse field with competing visions of the key characteristics of the state. New writing on interest-group politics, patronage networks, leadership, generational change, ideology, and political culture transformed the understanding of communist politics.[12]

In retrospect, it is clear that many of the major debates in the field, from the 1960s forward, involved at base a kind of competitive naming. Was the Soviet system under Stalin "totalitarian" or just "authoritarian"? Did it become "pluralist" under Brezhnev? Was Gorbachev a "transformative" leader or merely a "reformist" one? It is difficult to know what difference the label might really have made in explaining how Soviet politics worked. But in a system in which real data were difficult to obtain, being clear on the framework of analysis was a crucial step. The labels were part of an ongoing conversation among Western academics about the degree to which communist systems could be studied with the same conceptual tools used to understand other systems, such as those of advanced liberal democracies or third world authoritarian regimes.

Given the extent of these conceptual and methodological debates, it is not just unfair but also simply wrong to assert that communist studies was wholly divorced from "mainstream" political science. The main criticisms of the field—that it was insular, that it reified geographical boundaries into analytical ones, that it was overly fixated on institutions, that it failed to consider serious disputes among rival interests within the party and state apparatus—are caricatures of what most folks were actually writing. At nearly every turn, from the 1940s through the 1980s, students of communism were, in general, solidly in

[11] Jerry F. Hough and Merle Fainsod, *How the Soviet Union Is Governed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), vii.

[12] For important work, see Ronald J. Hill, *Soviet Politics, Political Science and Reform* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1980); T. H. Rigby and Bogdan Harasymiw, eds., *Leadership Selection and Patron-Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983); Stephen White and Alex Pravda, eds., *Ideology and Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Archie Brown, ed., *Political Leadership in the Soviet Union* (London: Macmillan, 1989); T. H. Rigby, *Political Elites in the USSR: Central Leaders and Local Cadres from Lenin to Gorbachev* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990); idem, *The Changing Soviet System: Mono-organisational Socialism from Its Origins to Gorbachev's Restructuring* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990).

step with developments in the broader social sciences. The early totalitarian model was not a great deal more rigid than similar institutional analyses that dominated other areas of political science in the 1940s and early 1950s. Descriptive institutionalist treatments gave way to analyses that tried, as far as possible, to differentiate distinct interest groups within the Soviet and east European elite and to begin to see communist states—most of which had been largely peasant economies and backward societies before the advent of communism—as evolving, modernizing polities.[13] These in turn gave way to more sophisticated accounts of Soviet politics that, by the 1980s, analyzed contests within the party leadership, generational changes among party and state elites, emerging trends in Soviet society, and center-periphery struggles between Moscow and the republics.[14]

That is not a bad record for research on a political system in which survey data were nonexistent, archival access severely restricted, elite interviews either impossible or unreliable, preference falsification prevalent, and official dissimulation the norm. Plenty of criticisms can be leveled at Sovietology; for example, the first major scholarly work on the politics of interethnic relations did not appear until 1986.[15] But that Soviet studies concerned itself solely with interpreting the arcane rituals of party congresses and Politburo sessions is not one of them. It was, in fact, U.S. government analysts and journalists—not academic Sovi-

[13] The work of historians and economic historians was essential in the shift from the totalitarian model to elite-conflict and modernizationist models. See Theodore H. Von Laue, *Why Lenin? Why Stalin? A Reappraisal of the Russian Revolution, 1900–1930* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1964); Alec Nove, *Economic Rationality and Soviet Politics, or Was Stalin Really Necessary?* (New York: Praeger, 1964); Roger Pethybridge, *The Social Prelude to Stalinism* (London: Macmillan, 1974).

[14] For important interpretations of the early transition period from the perspective of the 1990s, see Philip G. Roeder, *Red Sunset: The Failure of Soviet Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); M. Steven Fish, *Democracy from Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); and Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[15] The 1987 Ralph E. Bunche Award of the American Political Science Association was awarded to Rasma Karklins, for *Ethnic Relations in the USSR: The Perspective from Below* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1986). Karklins's work was followed by a flood of other books, as the ethnic dimensions of Soviet politics became increasingly evident. See Lubomyr Hajda and Mark Beissinger, eds., *The Nationalities Factor in Soviet Politics and Society* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990); Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990); Alexander J. Motyl, *Sovietology, Rationality, Nationality: Coming to Grips with Nationalism in the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Graham Smith, ed., *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union* (London: Longman, 1990); Gail W. Lapidus and Victor Zaslavsky with Philip Goldman, eds., *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *The Great Challenge: Nationalities and the Bolshevik State, 1917–1930*, trans. Nancy Festinger (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1992); idem, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations*, trans. Franklin Philip (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

etologists—who spent their time divining trends in communist politics from who stood next to whom on top of Lenin's mausoleum during May Day parades. Serious students of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, especially those who recognized earlier than others the power of the "nationalities question" across the region, can be proud of their scholarly pasts.

Students of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are keenly aware of how their subfield was perceived by the wider discipline, and the transition to broad comparison has presented three challenges. The sudden opening of the states and societies themselves generated a flood of new empirical information. The last ten years produced an embarrassment of riches, as archives were flung open, surveys were carried out by local and Western researchers, and—crucially—younger east Europeans were educated in the United States and western Europe, individuals who have both the local knowledge and the formal methodological training to conduct truly pathbreaking research. These developments have revealed what may have been the chief irony of the old area studies: despite the repeated criticisms from colleagues outside the subfield about the naïveté of its modeling, the real deficiency of communist studies was often the paucity of its empirical evidence. According to Peter Rutland, of the eighty-seven doctoral dissertations on Soviet politics completed in American universities between 1976 and 1987, the authors of only seventeen had actually spent time conducting research in the Soviet Union.[16] A similar statistic would be unthinkable today.

Furthermore, students of postcommunism, even if they were inclined to insularity, cannot afford to be separated from the wider social science world. Grant-making bodies increasingly demand cross-regional comparative research. There is far less money available now than there was a decade ago to fund research aimed at elucidating politics in a single country or region. Even organizations that continue to fund yearlong research visits to individual countries—such as the Fulbright Commission, the Social Science Research Council, and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX)—have redefined exactly what "region" they cover. Fulbright now offers some multicountry research and teaching grants, such as the new Aegean Initiative in Greece and Turkey. IREX, once dedicated exclusively to Soviet and east European studies, now administers grants to Turkey and Iran.

[16] Rutland, "Sovietology: Notes for a Post-Mortem," *National Interest*, no. 31 (Spring 1993), 114–15.

Perhaps most importantly, though, the collapse of communism and the disappearance of communist studies came at the same time as the ascendance of deductive theorizing, especially rational choice modeling, as one of the major paradigms in American political science (Bunce, 162–64). If not all political scientists have become rational choice theorists, they have at least been forced to become more rigorous in their research design and to think more carefully about problems of causation and hypothesis testing. One wonders, in fact, whether the shape of postcommunist studies and the sometimes acrimonious debates of the early 1990s might have been different had the Soviet system disappeared at some other time in the history of American social science.

All of this poses a unique challenge for students of postcommunism: to take advantage of the overwhelming wealth of new empirical information while presenting work in a way that will be meaningful to the wider field. As the books under review here demonstrate, this tension can be a creative one.

II. The Varieties of Postcommunist Experience

In the last decade European and Eurasian "transition countries"—all twenty-seven of them, from the Czech Republic to Kazakhstan (one might also include Mongolia)—have had highly variable success in the move away from one-party rule and planned economies. Some have rejected authoritarian governments, refashioned state institutions, and begun the process of integrating into Euro-Atlantic structures. Others have rejected authoritarian regimes without managing to build authoritative governments. Still others have done little more than exchange the mantras of international socialism for those of nationalist authoritarianism.[17] In central Europe, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and now perhaps Slovakia and Croatia seem squarely on their way to becoming solid members of the community of stable Euro-Atlantic democracies. The first three are already NATO allies, the fourth the leading candidate in the next round of enlargement, the fifth and sixth important contenders after sloughing off a megalomaniacal prime minister and president in 1998 and 1999. Along with the Baltic countries, most are among the leading candidates for EU membership, and if present trends continue, most will probably join the EU in the next five or six years.

[17] For an overview of postcommunist diversity, see Valerie Bunce, "The Political Economy of Postsocialism," *Slavic Review* 58 (Winter 1999).

Not surprisingly, most comparative work on the collapse of communism and its aftermath has focused on these states. Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania still rarely figure in comparative discussions. Russia is most often treated as a country apart, more the focus of comparative-minded case studies than of genuinely cross-national research; likewise for most of the remnants of socialist Yugoslavia. Central Asia and the Caucasus are barely on the comparativists' map. The reason for the exclusion of these countries, it is often said, is that they have lagged behind others in terms of political and economic reform and are thus less propitious venues for testing theories of regime change, institutional design, and the political economy of transition. But these "laggards" in fact constitute the majority. The countries of the northern tier—roughly from Slovenia northeast toward the three Baltic countries—are the exceptions, not the norm, in postcommunist politics. More broadly, as Valerie Bunce argues, regime collapse that ends in long periods of difficult transition and even bloodshed, as in Yugoslavia, may be the more general historical norm, not just the regional one (p. 142).

Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott's rich four-book series is a notable exception to the excessive concentration on the small number of successes in the transition: it provides the best one-stop survey of the diverse and generally dismal politics of the postcommunist world, up to the mid-1990s. The four edited volumes treat each of the transition countries (except Mongolia) in detail, with each chapter written by one of the leading specialists on the country concerned on the basis of years of deep engagement with a specific place and culture. The contributions will continue to be mined by comparativists. The Dawisha and Parrott volumes may well be the last of their type, though, since the chapters assay a range of countries, from central Europe to central Asia, that are now highly differentiated on just about every possible dimension. The situation on the ground is changing rapidly. Is Croatian democracy now really as "embattled," as Lenard Cohen wrote, as it was in 1996? Is Azerbaijan really struggling toward democracy, as Audrey Altstadt wrote, rather than rushing back toward authoritarianism? The chapters must be supplemented by more recent reportage to arrive at an accurate picture of the fluid politics of the postcommunist world.

As each chapter makes clear, the differences across the region today are striking. According to the annual Freedom House surveys, some countries (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine) have actually regressed on the democratization scale since the early 1990s.[18] The story

[18] Freedom House, *Annual Survey of Freedom Country Scores, 1972–73 to 1998–99*, www.freedomhouse.org/ratings/ (accessed February 10, 2000).

recounted by Kathleen Mihalisko in her chapter on Belarus (3:223–81)—of hesitant national revival, fitful liberalization, authoritarian backlash—now seems the typical path, at least in the former Soviet Union. Corruption and political cronyism have followed from these incomplete, or even retrograde, transitions. On Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, a measure of corrupt business practices in ninety-nine countries, most transition states fall in the bottom half of the list (among the most corrupt) along with such countries as Colombia and Uganda. All the transition states of northern Europe (except, interestingly, Latvia) cluster in the top half.[19] In human rights, too, most of these countries are part of the "laggard" class. The annual surveys by Human Rights Watch, the United States Department of State, and Amnesty International catalog a range of abuses, from periodic violence against minorities to police torture and extrajudicial killing.[20]

The countries of postcommunist eastern Europe and Eurasia have indeed experienced a "return to diversity," as Joseph Rothschild's masterful history once put it—but perhaps in a rather different sense from what Rothschild anticipated.[21] There have been valiant attempts to pull out similar strands from this tangled skein and to characterize "postcommunism" in general. Leslie Holmes, in the first introductory survey to be published on the phenomenon, elaborated a "fourteen point model . . . that makes it possible to distinguish post-communist countries from others with which they might initially appear to have much in common."[22] (Holmes's points, however, are slippery, ranging from "moral confusion" to "temporality" to "unfortunate timing.") In a new textbook Richard Sakwa narrows the number to thirteen, from the "emergence of pluralistic societies" to "various facets of identity politics" (pp. 5–6)—and that, he says, is postcommunism "narrowly defined."

Sakwa's text is the most thoughtful and readable of the several introductory volumes on the postcommunist condition to have emerged in the last decade.[23] It has the supreme value of being short, about 150

[19] Transparency International, *1999 Corruption Perceptions Index*, www.transparency.de/documents/cpi/index.html (accessed February 11, 2000).

[20] Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2000*, available at www.hrw.org; and U.S. Department of State, *1999 Human Rights Report*, available at www.state.gov/www/global/-human_rights/hrp_reports_mainhp.html; *Amnesty International 2000 Report* (London: Amnesty International, 2000). See also the comparative assessment of all OSCE member states in *Torture and Inhuman Treatment or Punishment in the OSCE Region* (Vienna: International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2000).

[21] Joseph Rothschild and Nancy M. Wingfield, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[22] Holmes, *Postcommunism: An Introduction* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 15.

[23] For comparison, see Holmes (fn. 22); Stephen White et al., *Communist and Postcommunist Political Systems: An Introduction*, 3d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1990); Michael Mandelbaum, ed.,

pages, which, one hopes, will encourage wide use in the classroom. As in his work on Russia,[24] Sakwa here too has an eye for the multifarious nature of the transition, as well as a sensitivity to the philosophical meaning of the passing of communism. He is not alone in reflecting on the deeper significance of the end of "really existing" socialism for the future of the left in Western liberal democracies,[25] but he is one of the few writers who has done so without a predetermined political agenda, on either the left or the right.

Sakwa provides a helpful *tour d'horizon* of the intricacies of the transition. Yet the very complexity of the subject at points makes for a strange read. The book is included in the respected Open University Press series on "Concepts in the Social Sciences," along with Bernard Crick on socialism, Robert Nisbet on conservatism, and, curiously, Mark Smith on something called "ecologism." The Sakwa volume sits uneasily in this lot. There may be a national distinction here, however: British comparative politics courses are structured in the main to introduce students to politics as competing "isms," rather than to convey the neofunctionalist or problem-driven approaches of the most popular American texts. The problem is that postcommunism is, of course, not just one thing (as Sakwa himself demonstrates), much less an ideology, set of behaviors, or style of politics that can usefully be compared with, say, socialism or conservatism. Although Sakwa's book deserves wide use as an entrée into the challenges of postcommunist reform, its main function may well be to convince both students and professional academics of how genuinely useless the idea of "postcommunism" really is. The label, ten years into the transition, now seems bizarre as a moniker for governments, societies, and economies as vastly different as those of Poland and Tajikistan.

III. Comparison and Differential Outcomes

The chief task, then, is to explain in general terms the different forms of extrication from communism and the massive changes in the zone,

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Postcommunism: Four Perspectives (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1996); Stephen White, Judy Batt, and Paul G. Lewis, eds., *Developments in Central and East European Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998); Stephen White and Daniel N. Nelson, eds., *The Politics of the Postcommunist World: From Communist to Postcommunist Politics* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2000).

[24] Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 1996).

[25] For perspectives from the left and the right, respectively, see Alex Callinicos, *The Revenge of History: Marxism and the East European Revolutions* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991); and Robert Skidelsky, *The Road from Serfdom: The Economic and Political Consequences of the End of Communism* (London: Allen Lane, 1996).

not only in the rolling revolutions of 1989–91 but also in the relatively short period since. How, in other words, did similar systems become transformed in such radically different ways? Communist states were, of course, diverse entities. But there was something called the "communist system"—or, in Bunce's usage, the "socialist system" (p. 165, fn. 1)—and the countries normally included under this rubric did share a host of comparable institutions, economic relationships, and foreign policy orientations that make it worth asking why the divergence among them has been so astronomical in the last ten years.

The temptation, especially for scholars intimately familiar with particular cases in the former communist lands, is to attribute botched transitions and stagnant economies to the idiosyncrasies of the cases themselves: leadership, public commitment, external support, political culture. But things did not necessarily turn out the way one might have predicted based on these variables. The most politically liberal and economically open European socialist state—Yugoslavia—produced the bloodiest of all the transitions, spawning four (or more) full-scale wars. Some states that are broadly culturally homogeneous, such as Poland, have had a far easier time than more heterogeneous countries such as Romania. But other, equally homogeneous states, such as Albania and Armenia, have been among the least reformed and the most violent. No one would have expected the transitions to be exactly alike; after all, twenty-two of the transition countries are also new states, facing problems of state and nation building as well as regime change and systemic reform. However, unlike the transitions in southern Europe and Latin America, the postcommunist states did come from similar starting points—a common ideology (albeit with variants), state-controlled economies, single-party systems, and a sense of being part of an international movement—which throws into even sharper relief the differences today.

The books by Valerie Bunce and Daniel Treisman shed light on these issues in three senses. First, they engage with the problem of comparison itself, in particular, the degree to which the experience of southern Europe and Latin America has been useful in accounting for differences across eastern Europe and Eurasia. After ten years of discussing transitology, scholars can now offer a reasonable assessment of how well the transition models have adapted as they have traveled east. They address especially the problem of institutions—not simply the challenge of institutional design (which has been a focus of the transitology literature) but also the complex interaction among postcommunist institutions and the communist substrate on which they have been

constructed. Second, they deal with the problem of stability and state power, the extent to which the formal institutional arrangements and informal political bargains struck in the early years of the transition have set in place particular incentives and habits of behavior that can either further or—more frequently—freeze genuine reform. Third, they wrestle with the problem of identity, an overstudied and undertheorized topic in the postcommunist literature, especially the origins of the so-called ethnic revival. As the authors demonstrate, it is essential to ground discussions of identity politics in far more nuanced interpretations of the real politics of postcommunism. On all these dimensions the works under review have significance far beyond the understanding of transition politics.

Comparison and the Record of Transitology

Valerie Bunce was perhaps the most important early skeptic of the wholesale migration of transitologists into the field of east European studies. In a series of spirited exchanges with Latin Americanists and other comparativists in several major journals, Bunce argued that good comparative studies were those that were not only sensitive to the surface similarities among cases but that also took account of the real differences among them.[26] Postcommunist systems did come from somewhere, and the particular legacies of the past might have some bearing on the nature of politics afterward. Some of these arguments are repeated in her new book; they are even more powerful now than in the past, given the experience of the last decade. How well have transitological models fared in that time? The short answer is not very well.

The transitions literature is highly varied, but as Bunce argues, one can distill from it several general lines of argument, if not firm conclusions (pp. 158–59). First, there is a stress on what she calls "proximate politics," that is, the form of extrication (pacts between old elites and the opposition, full-blown revolutions) and the design of new institutions (electoral systems, constitutions). Second, the newest wave of democratization—of which southern Europe, Latin America, and eastern Europe are all a part—is amenable to "crafting," in Giuseppe Di

[26] Valerie Bunce, "Can We Compare Democratization in the East versus the South?" *Journal of Democracy* 6 (July 1995); idem, "Should Transitologists Be Grounded?" *Slavic Review* 54 (Spring 1995); idem, "Paper Curtains and Paper Tigers," *Slavic Review* 54 (Winter 1995); idem, "Regional Differences in Democratization," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 17 (July 1998). See also Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, "Thinking about Post-Communist Transitions: How Different Are They?" *Slavic Review* 52 (Summer 1993), 333–37; Philippe C. Schmitter with Terry Lynn Karl, "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far East Should They Attempt to Go?" *Slavic Review* 53 (Spring 1994); Karl and Schmitter, "From an Iron Curtain to a Paper Curtain: Grounding Transitologists or Students of Postcommunism?" *Slavic Review* 54 (Winter 1995), 965–978.

Palma's term.[27] There is a "best practice" in democracy building that can be applied across regions. Third, countries in transition are defined more by where they are headed—toward open societies and democratic governance—than by where they have come from. Drawing comparisons based on the future trajectories of these states is more useful than attributing their problems to inherited legacies.

Transitologists might fault Bunce for being unduly cavalier with their body of literature, since throughout the 1990s Latin Americanists have themselves come to question much of the older transitions writing from the 1980s.[28] (Bunce has herself gone into these issues in more depth elsewhere.)[29] Still, she is right to ask whether the early hegemony of transitology may have blinded scholars to key variables and taken them down explanatory cul-de-sacs. The eastward migration of comparative transition studies tended to ask what the experience of other regions could tell students of eastern Europe, rather than to ask how theories derived from other historical experiences could be enriched in the postcommunist context. They underestimated the difficulties of crafting new regimes in multiethnic contexts and overestimated the usefulness of civil society as an explanatory variable (especially in circumstances in which vibrant, deep-rooted, nonstate associations are decidedly uncivil). They focused on how the choice of institutions shaped political outcomes, rather than on why elites chose particular institutions in the first place.[30] And they were perhaps too ready, as recent work by Thomas Carothers and Janine Wedel has shown, to believe that Western assistance in institution building and party development could ensure the growth of stable democracies and sustainable civic orders.[31]

Bunce engages with these issues in a series of what she terms "cascading comparisons" (p. 129) centered around three research questions.

[27] Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[28] See, for example, Deborah J. Yashar, "Democracy, Indigenous Movements, and the Postliberal Challenge in Latin America," *World Politics* 52 (October 1999); and Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, Latin America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

[29] For an analysis of the problems of transition modeling in a particular case, see Valerie Bunce and Maria Csanadi, "Uncertainty in the Transition: Post-Communism in Hungary," *East European Politics and Societies* 7 (Spring 1993).

[30] For an examination of this issue, see Gerald M. Easter, "Preference for Presidentialism: Postcommunist Regime Change in Russia and the NIS," *World Politics* 49 (January 1997); and Anna Seleny, "Old Political Rationalities and New Democracies: Compromise and Confrontation in Hungary and Poland," *World Politics* 51 (July 1999).

[31] Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999); Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe, 1989–1998* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998).

First, why did socialism end across the entire communist bloc? She proceeds by comparing socialist regimes with one another, as well as with other authoritarian bureaucratic systems. Second, what accounts for the divergent paths taken since the collapse of the regimes? The method here involves comparison across the transition states. Third, why did the three socialist federations—Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia—break up in such radically different ways, the first peacefully, the second less so, and the third in fratricidal war? Here the comparison involves a detailed look at the dynamics of center-periphery relations in each of the three states.

Put most broadly, Bunce's response to these questions is that starting points matter. Unlike some transitologists, who argued strongly that the obstacles to democratization "everywhere . . . are determined by a common destination, not by different points of departure,"[32] she holds that analysis of initial conditions is a crucial part of sorting out the vast variety of postcommunist outcomes. But initial conditions are not understood here as demographic factors, levels of economic development, traditions of democratic governance, or the other variables most often used to explain regime instability, reform, and collapse. Rather, Bunce focuses on the institutional structure of the communist state and the ways in which the reforms of the 1980s, working within the institutional constraints imposed by the system, provided new incentives and opportunities for both political actors and publics.

The communist system was institutionally rich but organizationally weak. The regimes constructed an elaborate network of state institutions that insinuated themselves into almost every aspect of society, from trade unions to chess clubs. In most instances, an array of multilevel party structures mirrored those of the state. The institutional density of communist systems was meant to serve as a mobilizational instrument, a surrogate for class, economic interest, religion, or other mobilizational stimuli that might be found in more open, pluralistic societies. Moreover, they were meant to work in a single direction, mobilizing economic, political, social, and even cultural resources to achieve the ends of state planning, not as channels for assessing the public mood and for enabling elites to make policy accordingly.

The totalitarian school of communist studies did pay attention to institutions, but what the early analysts missed was that the system, although organized as a hierarchy, became increasingly feudal over time.

[32] Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xii.

Administering the various domains and levels within this institutional network depended not on central command and control (which would have been impossible as the systems aged and the societies became more diverse after the Second World War) but rather on the distribution of power and resources to institutional agents throughout the state. As time passed the central party and state apparatus displayed increasing "redistributive tendencies" (p. 32): buying off restive allies in the Soviet bloc by allowing some degree of autonomy in foreign policy; buying off regional bureaucrats by turning a blind eye to economic overreporting; buying off publics by producing cheap consumer goods. More than in other authoritarian states, communist elites thus had at their disposal a vast body of instruments, both coercive and redistributive, but rather few feedback mechanisms for assessing how well or poorly those institutions were functioning.

The problems that these institutions faced by the 1980s came from both internal and external forces. The institutional density and overlap created competing institutional interests; unlike the bureaucracies of pluralistic societies, however, there were no extrainstitutional forums in which these rivalries could be mediated. Elites became increasingly divided, often as a result of the passing from the scene of the first and second generations of post–Second World War bureaucrats who had consolidated the system. Publics became more autonomous and demanding. Efforts to reform the system from within merely opened up channels for the expression of discontent without simultaneously enabling the institutions to respond to demands from below. The result was a series of multilevel defections from the institutional arrangements that had defined the communist system for forty years or more. Opposition groups across the communist bloc created autonomous avenues of interest articulation and insisted that they be represented by the state. Regional elites in socialist federations claimed ever greater autonomy from central governments. National leaders in the Soviet Union's outer empire asserted full independence from Moscow. It was in this sense that the institutions were self-subversive. Although originally designed to ensure state control over wide swaths of territory and deep into society, the institutions of Soviet-style socialism "functioned over time to divide and weaken the powerful, homogenize and strengthen the weak, and undercut economic performance" (p. 131).

Bunce's story is a complicated one, but that, in fact, is part of the message of her book: that parsimony in explaining macrolevel historical change may come at the cost of cutting out precisely those variables that need attention. (To be fair, though, most theorists would not dis-

agree. As Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune argued, parsimony and accuracy are usually incompatible; the quality one stresses depends on the research question being asked.)[33] The real value of her account is its concretizing exactly what the much-discussed "communist legacies" really are. Many scholars of eastern Europe have written, usually defensively, of the peculiarity of the region and the reasons that models of political change imported from abroad are unlikely to fit exactly. The reasons given usually have to do with social atomization, weak civil society, or (the favorite obstacle to reform cited by postcommunist politicians) residual communist "mentalities." Looking more closely at the design of the communist state, though, provides one key to understanding why some regimes went gently while others took the state with them.

Federalism and Stability

In *After the Deluge*, Daniel Treisman performs an immensely valuable service not only for the study of Russia but also for the study of federalism and ethnicity more broadly. Throughout the 1990s there was a tendency to focus on problems of identity and interethnic relations as the sole variables in accounting for the stability of multiethnic and ethnofederal states. The reciprocal grievances—historical, economic, psychological—of majorities and minorities have figured heavily in the literature. What is striking for its absence from many of these accounts, though, is politics: the activities of central and peripheral elites, their political interests, and the strategies of political survival that each pursues in relation to the other.[34]

Treisman is interested in explaining the relative stability of Russia's federal order, especially during the crisis period of the early 1990s. His overarching concern is to account for how the Russian Federation—faced as it was by an array of centrifugal forces at least as powerful as those that tore apart the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia—managed to remain intact at the height of center-periphery tensions. His answer, in brief, is that a policy of "selective fiscal appeasement" (p. 3) allowed the Yeltsin leadership to garner support from

[33] Przeworski and Teune, *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* (New York: John Wiley, 1970), 22–23.

[34] For early exceptions, see Motyl (fn. 15); Philip G. Roeder, "Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization," *World Politics* 43 (January 1991); Robert Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism in the Formerly Yugoslav Republics," *Slavic Review* 51 (Winter 1992); V. P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19 (Winter 1994–95). Today, the pendulum has perhaps swung too far in the opposite direction, stressing the manipulative role of unscrupulous elites to the exclusion of social factors.

the most restive republics and regions, thereby preventing bandwagoning against the center. Fiscal disbursements were targeted precisely at those regions most prone to disruptive protest actions, from strikes to voting against establishment candidates in national elections (p. 22).

Treisman is not concerned with democratization as such. (In fact, one of his major themes is the difficulty of building genuinely democratic structures in fragile ethnic federations.) But his work does touch on competing explanations for the shape of Russian reform, in particular, the relationship between center and regions. Why did Russia not go the way of other socialist federations? One might point to culture and ethnicity, but any putative commitment of Russia's citizens to a unifying "Great Russian" culture did not prevent major protest behavior and the growth of protosecessionist movements. Moreover, there was no clear correlation between republics, regions, or districts with the most homogeneous or cohesive ethnic mix and their opposition to the center's policies. The fear of the center's use of force was also not a powerful motivator. The October 1993 attack on the Russian parliament might have had a chilling effect on the demands of the regions, since the Yeltsin leadership showed itself willing to use brute force against opponents. But both before and after 1993 the Russian military came to depend more and more on regional elites, as the central budget was cut, and the armed forces could not be relied upon to implement the center's orders to clamp down on the regions. The first Chechen war (1994–96) also illustrated the impotence of the military to deal with committed separatists.

Treisman brings politics back into the picture, an especially noteworthy achievement in a field that often attributes differential political outcomes to cultural proclivities or long historical trajectories. Treisman argues that Russia's central and peripheral elites were locked into playing the same political game but for different stakes. Central elites needed to garner and maintain the loyalty of regional voters in order to win in national elections; regional governors needed constituent support to win in local races. Both sets of elites thus shared an interest in increased fiscal disbursements from central coffers. The former hoped that payment of wage arrears and entitlements would buy regional votes, while the latter hoped that a record of making the center pay up would translate into greater support in the next regional election. "Whether or not they shared philosophical convictions, personal sympathies, or political networks, Yeltsin and his governors shared an interest in nurturing support with which to face future elections. And voters, by apparently holding incumbents at both levels responsible for

declining state services, made it difficult for one to achieve his aim without also assisting the other" (p. 119).

The argument is elegant, but there is a potential difficulty with the causal arrow. Treisman's main indicator for regional support for the Yeltsin leadership is the voting record of the regions in the April 1993 referendum on the constitution, the December 1993 parliamentary elections, the December 1995 parliamentary elections, and the 1996 presidential elections. However, it is difficult to know whether central appeasement produced desirable regional electoral outcomes because local voters responded to financial incentives, as Treisman wants to argue, or because the financial incentives caused regional bosses to "deliver" the vote for Yeltsin in each of these instances. Treisman clearly recognizes the potential problem, and in an appendix he analyzes the record of State Duma deputies and their votes for or against Yeltsin. "The delegates from regions where voters' approval of Yeltsin had recently increased were very significantly more likely to vote on the side supported by Yeltsin on roll-call votes in the Congress" (pp. 216–17). Treisman sees this outcome as "quite impressive evidence of democratic influences at work" (p. 217). Nevertheless, as he mentions in a footnote (p. 240), things could have worked in the opposite direction: the record of State Duma deputies may have been the cause of regional voting behavior, not the result.

This issue does not affect Treisman's overall contention that appeasing the most aggressive anticenter leaders can be an effective strategy in weak federations. It does matter, though, for the contrast that he draws with other cases. As he argues in his stimulating conclusion, the Russian case seems to offer a sharp contrast with other examples of imperial behavior. The Romans and Ottomans worked to bring potentially aggressive peripheral leaders into an imperial hierarchy of incentives—making bandits into bureaucrats, in Karen Barkey's suggestive formulation.[35] But Yeltsin seemed to succeed by co-opting not the regional elites but their constituencies, providing increased federal funds to pay wages and pensions in order to secure constituents' votes in national elections, and simultaneously to hedge against the ability of regional elites to mobilize those same constituents against the hands that fed (p. 167).

This view depends on the idea that the regional governors are at least minimally responsive to their electorates. That, though, may be a heroic

[35] Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994).

assumption. As Jeffrey Hahn notes (Dawisha and Parrott 3:162), electoral participation in many regions has been low, especially in the cities (precisely the area where the increased disbursements from the center would be expected to have the greatest effect). The early 1990s also witnessed the continued growth of regional executive authority over the power of local legislatures, the forums in which the voice of the electorate would be most readily heard. The center may have provided disbursements not so much to placate regional voters, as Treisman argues, as to provide rent-seeking regional elites with sufficient funds to deliver the votes themselves—whether through legitimate channels of increased social spending or less savory methods of electoral engineering. In the latter case, Russia's strategy of ensuring the compliance of peripheral elites looks far more similar to the Roman and Ottoman experience than Treisman perhaps would want to acknowledge.

Institutions and Identity Politics

Treisman includes a brief chapter comparing Russia with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia. Why did the last three federal systems shatter whereas Russia, faced by peripheral challenges no less severe than the others, managed to hold together? The answer, for Treisman, lies in the political decisions taken at the height of federal crises. In the Russian case Yeltsin worked to redistribute resources to peripheral elites who, in turn, distributed resources to their own constituents, a form of cascading conciliation that enhanced public support for integration and discouraged cross-regional bandwagoning. The Soviet, Czech, and Yugoslav elites behaved differently. In the Soviet Union the Gorbachev leadership had a decreasing ability to enforce fiscal agreements and used fiscal resources as a stick rather than a carrot by meting out punishment to the most restive areas; even if the Soviet center had been willing to buy off regional leaders through disbursements, there would still have been little ability to appeal to the publics in the regions, since there were no truly representative institutions at the center. In Czechoslovakia the strong commitment to liberal reforms in Prague ruled out fiscal profligacy; the refusal of the Václav Klaus government to lessen the economic shock of reform in the less-developed Slovak half of the federation provided ample opportunity for populist mobilization there. In Yugoslavia an institutionally weak and resource-poor federal government sought to impose fiscal austerity throughout the federation. Rather than further empowering regional elites through budgetary payoffs, the Belgrade government sought to recentralize the federal system; it ignored the demands of the most

likely secessionists and early on demonstrated its willingness to use force against the periphery. In all these cases the policies pursued by the center exacerbated the centrifugal forces in the federation and pushed the countries farther along toward dissolution.

Treisman notes that his comparative argument is meant only to be suggestive (others, such as Susan Woodward, have made the argument in greater detail).[36] But his account does provide an intriguing contrast with Bunce's. Bunce highlights the major institutional differences among the four cases. In both Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia central institutions were unusually weak; power had been significantly decentralized as early as the 1960s to a far greater degree than in the Soviet Union or post-Soviet Russia. The crucial differences in the Yugoslav case were structural. Yugoslavia was even more decentralized than the others. It had a politically weak republic (Serbia) at its center, a republic that took on the task of trying to keep the federal state together, eventually by force. That republic, moreover, came to control the one institution whose legitimacy and privileged position were predicated on the existence of a Yugoslav state: the Yugoslav National Army (p. 121). For Treisman, the key issue is the strategy pursued by political actors; for Bunce, it is the logic of institutional arrangements. (Bunce does give attention to the strategic games among central and peripheral elites [pp. 120–25], but her major concern is the institutional framework in which these games were played.)

The two accounts do share an important commonality, though: a focus on the institutions of communism and their impact on the politics of identity under postcommunism. Through the lens of the late 1980s, in which communism seemed more a brake on national development than its catalyst, it is easy to forget that the early Bolsheviks and their heirs elsewhere in Europe's east saw themselves and their mission as fundamentally modern. One of the basic elements of their modernizing project was the creation of self-conscious nations. Nationalism was not merely an unintended by-product of the Soviet system; it was central to the Bolshevik message. Communists were not always nationalists, but they were without exception nation builders. As Ronald Suny has noted in the case of the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks' rhetorical commitment to the fading away of national affiliations notwithstanding, the Soviet Union was not a melting pot for old na-

[36] Woodward, *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia, 1945–1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), esp. chap. 10.

tions but an incubator for new ones.[37] The irony is palpable: a state committed to creating a supraethnic "Soviet people," dominated by a party that saw classes rather than nations as the main motors of history, may well be remembered by future historians chiefly for its contribution to the growth of national consciousness across Eurasia. The same could be said for similar nation-building projects throughout eastern Europe, where communism came to be seen not so much as a break with a previous "bourgeois" national past but rather as its apotheosis.

The lesson for students of postcommunism and of interethnic relations more broadly is that they need to examine in greater detail the particular institutional incentives for the mobilization of ethnic issues. In the last several years growing research on interethnic conflict has reaffirmed the ways in which ethnic mobilization, far from being an atavistic resurgence of primordial identities, is often a rational response to a given set of incentives or a strategy consciously pursued by self-interested elites.[38] Philip Roeder has argued that national heterogeneity—multiple, self-conscious cultural groups living in the same state and usually tied to a particular piece of real estate—can be a serious impediment to democratization. As uncomfortable as it may be to admit, multiculturalism may be a luxury in established democracies but an obstacle in democratizing states.[39] One message of the work of Bunce and Treisman is that heterogeneity is only one piece of the puzzle. The institutional arrangements inherited from previous regimes and the decisions that policymakers take in the early years of systemic reform are crucial regardless of whether the state is culturally homogeneous or plural. Countries with more languages, more cultures, and more historical grievances obviously face a host of problems unknown in less diverse polities, but diversity itself need not impede democracy building.

There is, however, also a less optimistic dimension to Bunce's and Treisman's accounts. If the institutions and early decisions of political elites create a particular trajectory from which it is difficult to deviate

[37] Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993), 87. On the history of nation making in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, see also Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23–54; and Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53 (Summer 1994).

[38] Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995); Brubaker (fn. 37); Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[39] Roeder, "Peoples and States after 1989: The Political Costs of Incomplete National Revivals," *Slavic Review* 58 (Winter 1999).

later on, then the politics of accommodation and appeasement may have an unwelcome outcome: rewarding ardent peripheral elites by recognizing their control. Such a strategy may lead to a decline in center-regional tensions and even a halt to armed conflict, as it did in Russia in the early 1990s and in several post-Soviet separatist disputes by 1994. However, the price in some cases has been to legitimize pockets of authoritarianism in return for professed loyalty to a single central government—the strategy of old empires now pursued within new and allegedly democratizing states. It is a dark bargain, but one that has been struck frequently across postcommunist Eurasia.

IV. Toward "Post-Postcommunist Studies"

The books under review represent some of the best examples of the work produced in the first postcommunist decade: empirically rich, theoretically engaged, and designed to bridge the divide between accurate accounts of real-world politics in exceptionally complex environments and general theorizing about the determinants of political behavior. The books do not claim to offer a view on how the study of eastern Europe and Eurasia should develop in the second decade after communism, although both Sakwa and Bunce, toward the end of their books, deal in passing with what it is that scholars of postcommunism should be studying. Still, the books implicitly raise several sets of issues about the nature of scholarship beyond the postcommunist horizon.

Theory Building and Snapshots

Bunce argues that treating institutions in a historically aware and detailed way means viewing them "as films, not snapshots," that is, "acknowledging that institutions can appear to have one set of consequences, but in practice and over time, quite different, if not opposing ones" (p. 143). The same might be said about the transition itself. In few areas of political research are dependent variables as skittish as in the study of postcommunism. The rapidity of change in eastern Europe and Eurasia has meant that speaking of "outcomes" is inherently slippery. What seems to be an unusual outcome in need of explanation one year can deliquesce into an uninterestingly commonplace one the next, and vice versa.

For example, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Moldova have long been the hopeful cases in an otherwise disappointing Eurasian array. All three experienced devastating economic crises, and two were threatened by

wholesale dissolution and separatist wars. Yet they were normally seen as relatively successful instances of democratization. Multiple elections were held with minimal irregularities, presidents won by less than unanimous votes, and new governments were peacefully formed after shifts in parliamentary representation. However, by 2000 none of the three looked nearly as positive as earlier enthusiastic assessments had held. Kyrgyzstan's 2000 parliamentary elections did not comply with democratic norms.[40] Research on Georgia had illustrated the degree to which the country's democratic governance was, at least in part, an illusion of Western governments and international nongovernmental organizations with a vested interest in perpetuating that image.[41] The view was confirmed in the April 2000 presidential elections, which were deemed unfair by international observers.[42] In Moldova a power-hungry president and his supporters in a fractious parliament threatened to rewrite the constitution and introduce a system that was strongly presidential and potentially authoritarian.[43]

What scholars need to explain, then, can depend on when they get around to explaining it. There is little sign that the dependent variables in this field will become any less mercurial as time passes—unless, unhappily, the "authoritarian reactions" that Dawisha and Parrott catalog in three of their four volumes become an even more solid end state along the southern tier. For theorists, this means that a certain degree of humility is still in order. East European and Eurasian studies is better than ever before at elaborating the ways in which systemic change across the region is consonant with and differs from similar phenomena in other parts of the world. However, the ability to predict the direction in which change is likely to go, solely from deductive theorizing rather than on the basis of intimate familiarity with the facts on the ground, is still as limited as in most other areas of political science. Even so, establishing the limits of the knowable, as Timur Kuran reminded scholars at the beginning of the east European transformations, is itself part of science.[44]

[40] OSCE Election Observation Mission to the Kyrgyz Republic Parliamentary Election, "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions," Bishkek, February 21, 2000.

[41] Stephen F. Jones, "Democracy from Below? Interest Groups in Georgian Society," *Slavic Review* 59 (Spring 2000).

[42] "Foreign Observers Criticize Lopsided Shevardnadze Vote," *New York Times*, April 11, 2000, A12.

[43] Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 161.

[44] Timur Kuran, "Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989," *World Politics* 44 (October 1991), 47.

New Area Studies

There was a time when experts on eastern Europe and Eurasia—all of it—might have existed. But today, as the individual countries move in different directions, consolidating forms of government ranging from prosperous social democracies to sultanistic or even dynastic regimes, there is little utility in continuing to treat all twenty-seven (or more) transition countries as a natural set. Pace Sakwa, we have probably already reached the half-life of this particular method. Postcommunist studies, if it continues to keep within the same geographical boundaries as its predecessor, cannot last.

There are different ways of dividing up the transition world, and these divisions may make more sense in the future. As Bunce notes, "The impact of region, far from being fixed, depends on the research question being asked" (p. 163). Poland and most of the northern-tier states can now be properly considered nearly consolidated democracies; the study of policy-making, electoral systems, public administration, legislative politics, transnational integration, and other subjects that occupy students of western Europe can now properly apply there as well. Will we really want to think of Poland and Estonia as uniquely "postcommunist"—and, therefore, meaningfully distinct from Greece, Portugal, and other economically comparable, formerly authoritarian EU members—a few years hence?

Some research questions that are meaningful in the north make little sense farther south and east. There seems little reason to include Azerbaijan, with its rigged elections, in a study of comparative voting behavior. Students of center-periphery relations are unlikely to be enlightened by a study of Albania, where the center does not hold. Models of democratic consolidation may have little to gain from Turkmenistan, which has transited only from one form of authoritarianism to another. Instead, depending on the research focus, there might be fruitful comparisons to be drawn with neighboring countries that come from quasi-Leninist, but not communist, traditions. Turkey and Iran might be brought into discussions about politics in the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Asia, not simply in the foreign policy arena (where their influence is clear) but also in domestic politics. Students of the Balkans and the Caucasus, for example, will be struck by the similarities between identity politics, patronage networks, and state-sponsored violence in Turkey and some of its neighbors to the north. Likewise, countries that have experienced state crises, violent territorial separatism, and collapsing central institutions might be more usefully

compared with similar cases in Africa than with other postcommunist states that have not experienced such crises.[45] Comparison is crucial, but students of the former communist world should consider the possibility that the sets they compare today may be less useful than they were a decade ago. Professional journals, regional studies associations, and graduate education programs still do not fully appreciate the impact of the last decade's changes on how they go about their tasks. In large part, research is still oriented along the same geographical lines, conducted in the same languages, and published in the same kinds of journals as during the cold war. At least in political science, those divisions surely cannot long endure.

There is no need to throw out regional peculiarities altogether. Very few researchers have really taken up Adam Przeworski's admonition to "forget geography"[46]—if for no other reason than that the silent majority of comparativists still value foreign languages, enjoy getting their hands dirty in empirical research, and think both are important to understanding political life. The real challenge is to recast what counts as the geographic area (or, more likely, areas) that post-postcommunist studies will aim to cover. Today, "Eastern Europe," with two capital E's, is really no longer serviceable, except as anything more than a quick tag for all points east of the Oder River. Even "Eurasia" will be meaningful in the future only if it seriously admits Turkey, Iran, and perhaps Pakistan and Afghanistan into the mix. The "area" in the new area studies need not disappear, but it cannot be the same as it was a decade ago.

The Meaning of "Method"

After the late 1980s there developed a strong consensus among political scientists about the need to bring methods from the study of American and west European politics into the study of postcommunist Europe and Eurasia. Even scholars skeptical about the migration of transitologists eastward stressed the need to be more comparatively minded and methodologically sophisticated, which normally meant being versed in the techniques used to study the politics of Western liberal democracies. Just as a focus on where transition countries are headed has determined which kinds of comparisons are thought to be most valid, the same idea has tended to govern which methods are seen to be most useful for comparativists interested in postcommunism.

[45] A valuable contribution to this sort of comparison is made by Mark Beissinger and M. Crawford Young, eds., "The Quest for the Efficacious State in Africa and Eurasia" (Book manuscript, 2000).

[46] Przeworski (fn. 32), 161.

The broader exposure of postcommunist studies to rigorous methods has been an unequivocally positive development. But given the real character of politics in most parts of the former communist world, defining "research methodology" in overly narrow terms—as the ability to run regressions, say—can actually diminish the quality of research and graduate education rather than improve it. Today, most of the states that east Europeanists and Eurasianists study are still poor, weak, and relatively unfree. Some have central governments whose writ does not run far outside the capital's city limits. Almost all are multinational, not just multiethnic, with distinct cultural groups now exercising considerable control over their own affairs in the absence of effective state power. Several have become the unwilling hosts of de facto independent but unrecognized states on their own territory. To explain political outcomes in these contexts, researchers need a whole battery of methodological skills that are probably not captured in traditional definitions of what constitutes "good methodology."

The issue is not one of qualitative versus quantitative research but rather concerns the kind of expertise that researchers need to hone in order to answer interesting and important questions about political behavior. In eastern Europe and Eurasia, facility in (several) foreign languages is often required, as is a sensitivity to the ways in which the results of surveys and interviews can change depending on the language in which questions are asked. In edgily multicultural states as much as in totalitarian ones, dissimulation and preference falsification can still be the norm. Researchers need to know where to find and how to judge archival sources, official statistics, and indigenous scholarship. They still need to root out short-run newspapers or underground publications and to cart back in overloaded suitcases invaluable work by local scholars that can be found only in streetside kiosks. These are, of course, the same skills that characterized the communist period—learning to read between the lines and squeeze the most out of a limited and often skewed array of numbers, documents, and personal testimonies. For most of the postcommmunist region, outside the small coterie of democratic and prosperous states in the northern tier, they will continue to be essential for some time to come. How other scholars deal with these methodological problems in similarly underdeveloped countries and semiauthoritarian polities ought to be a more valued component of graduate education than a focus on the American and west European experience has so far allowed.

The Ethics of Research

The old area studies was particularly attuned to the ways in which cultural diversity and historical trajectories can make a difference in political life, an approach that is now clearly represented in the mainstream political science literature, in both its more historically grounded and its more deductive strains. This was not, however, just a methodological peculiarity of interdisciplinary research. It had two ethical dimensions as well.

First, interaction with individuals, in their own languages and often around their own kitchen tables, predisposed scholars to consider how woolly things such as identity, history, and personality could condition political behavior. Explanations for why individuals behaved the way they did had to take seriously their own accounts and understandings of their actions. Second, interacting with local scholars and everyday citizens on their own turf—what is called, condescendingly, research in "the field"—encouraged scholars to package the results of their work in such a way that they would be intelligible to those whose actions the research was supposed to explain. The attention given to the ethics of scholarship, either implicitly in the way it was conducted or explicitly in the discussions that took place within area studies associations, was at times profound.[47]

Of course, no one any longer suggests that savoring a glass of rakija in a Belgrade apartment or a bowl of fermented mare's milk on the steppe is crucial to "really understanding" east European and Eurasian politics. But the old area studies' consideration for the ethics of research design and presentation has been one of the unfortunate casualties of the field's demise. People, especially in the extreme situations in which they find themselves across the postcommunist zone, are more than data generators. The unspeakably brutal wars, the crushing poverty, and the human rights abuses that many men and women continue to face are the stuff of what political scientists study. They are not just propitious social scientific testing grounds or "natural experiments," as more than one writer has averred over the last ten years. Especially in the dire straits in which most east Europeans and Eurasians find themselves, it is perverse to see them as primarily test cases for broad theories of political behavior and only secondarily as purposive, suffering agents.

[47] For discussions of the ethical dimensions of post-Soviet studies, see Robert T. Huber and Susan Bronson, "The August Revolution and Soviet Studies," in Frederic J. Fleron, Jr., and Erik P. Hoffman, eds., *Post-Communist Studies and Political Science* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993); and the discussion of the "commercialization of scholarship" in *Slavic Review* 52 (Spring 1993).

They are equally both. Given the gaping lacuna in professional debates and graduate education concerning the ethics of data collection and analysis,[48] the old communist studies and its post-postcommunist progeny may find yet another way to contribute to the comparative study of politics in general: bringing issues of responsibility and sensitivity out from the shadows and raising questions about what makes the social sciences an inherently social activity.

[48] The most widely used text in the methodology of qualitative comparative research makes no mention of this issue. See Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).