UCIAS Edited Volume 3
The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines

Year 2002 *Article* 7

Eastern Europe or Central Europe? Exploring a Distinct Regional Identity

Ellen Comisso* Brad Gutierrez†
ecomisso@weber.ucsd.edu

*University of Calfiornia, San Diego
†University of California, San Diego

EASTERN EUROPE OR CENTRAL EUROPE? EXPLORING A DISTINCT REGIONAL IDENTITY

Ellen Comisso and Brad Gutierrez
University of California, San Diego

Perhaps even more than area studies in other regions of the world, East European studies in the United States developed as an artifact of the Cold War. As an object of study, the area was, in effect, the poor cousin of Soviet/Slavic studies, emerging as a distinct field just as detente was getting under way.[1] Thus, despite the very different prewar traditions and concerns of the two areas, postwar East European and Soviet studies developed in tandem with each other in the United States, sharing both funding sources and institutional bases. If 1991 saw the "disappearance" of Soviet area studies, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 had analogous consequences for East European studies, and major questions were raised as to what the boundaries of a region called "Eastern Europe" were and indeed, whether it existed at all.

Local colleagues, some at home and some residing abroad, led the charge here, arguing that the postwar definition of Eastern Europe was little more than an intellectual legitimation of the Yalta agreements.[2] The movement to recast the region as "Central Europe" took on major proportions in the 1980s; while the view of what Central Europe included varied according to the particular intellectual espousing it, there was broad agreement as to what Central Europe was not--namely, the Soviet Union and Russia.

From the perspective of a field which, in the United States, had always recognized--and even had a vested interest in recognizing--a distinction between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, it might well be argued that simply changing an adjective makes little difference. Yet it is worth beginning an analysis of contemporary area studies with the debate on Central Europe, since that discussion often seems to imply a different boundary to the area as well as a novel set of features that would link its parts together, issues any overview of regional studies must confront. I shall try to show here that the fact that such a debate exists at all is itself a sign of a distinct regional identity, that the "Central Europe" appellation is no less (and no more) a political construct than the former "East European" title was, and that the factors that defined Eastern Europe as a distinct region in the postwar period continue to define Central East Europe today.

Once establishing the contours of a distinct regional identity, I review the field's evolution prior to the Great Political Landslide of 1989, and conclude by exploring the main changes and challenges in the study of the region that have taken place since then.

---

[1] See Gordon Turner, "The Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, 1948-71," in ACLS Newsletter 23 (Spring 1972):6-25.

[2] See Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," The New York Review of Books, April 26 1984: 34-8; Ferenc Feher, "Eastern Europe's Long Revolution Against Yalta," East European Politics and Societies 2 (No. 1, Winter 1988): 20-41.

What is Eastern--or Central--Europe?

The boundaries of Eastern Europe which defined American postwar studies of the area were indeed based on its political features. They thus included all of the European socialist states outside the Soviet Union itself: East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania. Greece was conveniently placed in Western Europe--despite its social and historical affinities with the rest of the Balkan peninsula--while Austria, the center of many of the cultural characteristics and continuities nowadays considered classically "central" European, was typically treated in isolation from its former hinterland. As for the Baltic states, they were confided to Soviet studies, again reflecting political realities. While such a division of the region surely created difficulties for historians and students of the arts, it raised few problems for the core social science disciplines of sociology, political science, or economics.

As for the notion of Central Europe, it had certainly enjoyed some currency in the interwar period. Yet even then, it carried no less political baggage than the postwar definition of the area. On the one hand, there was Friedrich Naumann's "Mitteleuropa," in which the area's defining characteristic was its ties to Germany, whether through settlement, trade, hegemony, or conquest.[3] On the other, there was the central Europe Tomas Masaryk looked to: a region of small states, from which Germany and Germans were excluded.[4] Both conceptualizations captured important aspects of this "problem" area, and each led to diametrically opposite political conclusions. Yet in classically East/Central European fashion, what nominally appeared to be identities totally at odds with each other turned out to be entirely complementary. It was precisely the Central Europe of small states, each competing with the other and allying against its neighbor in pursuit of its "national" interest that provided the opportunity for the economic and then political hegemony a newly aggressive Germany was able to establish for itself in the area as World War II approached.[5]

Nor was the convergence of the two prewar incarnations of the Central European idea accidental. Both stemmed from the same basic premise: that people had a unique "national identity" and therefore deserved a "national territory" in which they could express it, preferably without other peoples getting in their way. It was this premise that dropped out of the 1980s discourse on Central Europe, a discussion which highlighted the region's cultural interactions and shared sensibilities.[6] Yet the notion of Central Europe in its new incarnation was also a

[3] See Friedrich Naumann, Central Europe, trans. By Christabel Meredith (New York: Knopf, 1917); Henry Meyer, Mitteleuropa in German Thought and Action, 1815-1945 (The Hague: Njihoff, 1955); Egon Schwartz, "Central Europe--What It Is and What It Is Not," in George Schopflin and Nancy Wood, eds., In Search of Central Europe (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 143-56/

[4] See Thomas Masaryk, The New Europe (The Slav Standpoint), Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1972); Roman Szporluk, The Political Thought of Thomas G. Masaryk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

[5] See Joseph Rothschild, East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1974).

[6] See essays in Schopflin and Wood, eds., In Search of Central Europe; Timothy Garton Ash, The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe (Cambridge: Penguin, 1989); Ference Feher, "On Making Central Europe," East European Politics and Societies 3 (No. 3, Fall 1989),:412-448. Gyorgy Konrad's portrayal of Eastern v. Central Europe is typical in this regard: when discussing nationalism, it is a phenomenon which occurs in Eastern Europe,

Central Europe of political aspirations, this time of the intellectuals who loosely made up the political opposition. From their point of view, Central Europe became "the eastern border of the West," whereas Russia was a "foreign" civilization.

The "West" to which Central Europe now belonged was a peculiarly reconstructed one, its colonial empires, nasty flirtations with various forms of dictatorship, and periodic indulgences in religious persecution, not to mention its shattering wars or crass materialism, omitted. It was a West moving towards an ever more convinced affirmation of liberalism, respect for the individual, and reciprocal cooperation, a civilization that has always been inherently pluralistic, tolerant of differences, and open to experimentation and change. It was a Europe whose political tradition was founded on the limitation of power and at the heart of whose "value system is the proposition that society is creative and the state is reactive."[7] Or, as Mihaly Vajda puts it, "The leading value of Europe is *freedom*, conceived--more and more--in a very simple and understandable way: namely as the freedom of the individual limited only by that of others."[8]

That westerners, peering over mountains of consumer goods while speeding along six-lane highways on their holidays, might not recognize themselves in this rather flattering picture is quite irrelevant. For the historical and cultural tradition ascribed to Europe is not necessarily the one apprehended by those who enjoy its benefits, but on the contrary, the one appreciated by those who have been deprived of them. Thus, the features attributed to Europe are less a realistic account of the characteristics belonging to it than a selected and idealized listing of properties perceived as antithetical to the Soviet Union and all the Soviet system had come to represent by the mid-1980s. In such circumstances, Central Europe was not--and could not--be a political entity. Rather, it was above all a cultural one, with its boundaries varying according to the cultural and "spiritual" affinities said to link it with the West.

For some, the religious divide was the key. Where Central Europe was distinguished by its adherence to western Christianity, be it Catholic or Protestant, Eastern Europe remained faithful to Orthdoxy despite--or, in the Balkans, even because of--the strong Islamic pressures generated by Ottoman influence. Unlike the West, where religious institutions limited secular authority, in the East they were a means through which the state penetrated and controlled the underlying society--much as Leninism was to do with its own version of sacred doctrine in the twentieth century. [9]

---

when discussing democracy, it takes place in Central Europe. See The Melancholy of Rebirth (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994).

[7] See his "Central Europe: Definitions Old and New," in Schopflin and Wood, eds. In Search of Central Europe, p. 23.

[8] In "Who Excluded Russia From Europe?" in Schopflin and Woods, eds., In Search of Central Europe, p. 148.

[9] See Gale Stokes, Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe (New York: Oxford, 1997); Hugh Seton-Watson, "What is Europe, Where is Europe? From Mystique to Politique," in Schopflin and Woods, eds., In Search of Central Europe. pp. 30-46; Michaly Vajda, "East Central European Perspectives," in John Keane, ed., Civil Society and the State (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 291-333. The theme is also taken up in the non-area studies literature; see Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations? (Cambridge: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993).

For others, Central Europe had far more secular roots, planted in its historic oscillation between and amalgamation of elements derived from a "West" that stopped in Germany and an "East" that began at the Russian frontier. As Jeno Szucs notes, Central Europe's medieval development followed lines roughly similar to those of the West--with feudal institutions, nobles powerful enough to constrain the monarch, estate-based representation, commercial towns with German charters. Yet the unfortunate combination of new external military pressures and changed economic conditions after the discovery of the New World saw "defensive" structures acquire an "eastern" cast: peasants fell into serfdom, trade languished, and kingdoms became absorbed into centralizing dynastic empires.[10] In this version, Central Europe is less the eastern border of the West than a less successful appendix to it.

A third variant of this approach nominally relies on geography, defining Central Europe as a "Danubian" region in the "heart" of the continent. In practice, this is a view that roots central Europe in the Habsburg Empire and the cultural tradition it is seen as embodying, whether it be the architecture of opera houses and railroad stations, the *kavehaz* as a locus of intellectual life, the distinctive mixing of ideas and talents emanating from all the small nations colliding within its borders, or a monarchy that sought to centralize and ensure uniformity within its domains but never quite managed to do so as thoroughly as its neighbors.[11] If state domination of society and illiberal institutions are the hallmarks of "Eastern" Europe in the first two characterizations, intolerance is its leading characteristic in this one.

The accounts described above by no means exhaust the field. Yet what is quite fascinating about them is how a history long despaired of has been recast and re-edited to reflect the aspirations of late socialist and early post-socialist intellectual elites. For example, the historical forces that for most of the twentieth century were commonly accepted as the source of the region's social, political, and economic problems--the Catholic Church, the local nobilities determined to preserve their "rights" (aka privileges), the Habsburg "prison of nations"--are now reclaimed to show the area's ties to the west and the key to its progress. Nor is the selective reviving of past memory to argue that "we deserve something better" a phenomenon unique to the past decade; it was quite typical in the national movements at the turn of the century and a not insignificant factor in the appeal (now forgotten) that socialism drew on in the 1940s.[12]

Like any discussion seeking to define a region--even one of the spirit--this one, too, distinguishes between the "ins" and the "outs." Clearly, all accounts converge in exluding the Soviet Union (and Russia in particular) from Central Europe. Austria, in contrast, is "in" now--

[10] See Jeno Szucs, "Three Historical Regions of Europe," in John Keane, ed., Civil Society and the State (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 291-333; Ivan Berend, "The historical evolution of Eastern Europe as a region," International Organization 40 (No. 2, Spring 1986): 279-99; Istvan Bibo, Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination, ed. by Karoly Nagy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[11] See "The Return of the Habsburgs," The Economist, November 18, 1995; Jacques Rupnik, The Other Europe (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Dan Chirot, "Ideology, Reality, and Competing Models of Development in Eastern Europe Between the Two World Wars," East European Politics and Societies 3 (No. 3, Fall 1989): 378-412..

[12] See Marci Shore, "Engineering in the Age of Innocence: A Genealogy of Discourse Inside the Czechoslovak Writers' Union, 1949-67," East European Politics and Societies 12 (No. 3, Fall 1998):397-429; Czeslaw Milosz, The Captive Mind, trans. by Jane Zielonko (New York: Knopf, 1953)' Katherine Verdery, National Ideology Under Socialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1o95).

despite recent electoral showings indicating that Central Europe is not an area its population wishes to have all that much to do with. And unlike the interwar vision of Central Europe, Germany, too, is included, albeit only, to quote Vaclav Havel, "with one leg"--and it is presumably the western, not the eastern, one.[13] By the same token, the Baltic states, lying on the periphery of even Cold War Eastern Europe, have now gravitated close to the continent's center, together with, of course, the core members of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Far more ambiguous is the status of the Balkans. For Szucs, Byzantium may well have been the heir to the Roman tradition, but the territory it included quickly dropped into a peculiar no man's land, not even a "historical region of Europe" at all once "swallowed up by the Seljuk advance." The peninsula fares equally poorly if the religious divide is the boundary, with only Catholic Slovenia and Croatia qualifying as "Central" European. The "Danubian" definition turns out to be more forgiving: after all, more of current day Serbia, Romania, and the Ukraine than of Poland came under Habsburg rule--not to mention all of Bosnia. But finding Galicia once again as "the end of the world,"[14] sharply reminds us that imperial pretensions and Great Power ambitions did not pause to consider cultural sensibilities in the past any more than today. With this in mind, serious questions can be raised about the fundamental assumption underlying the current "rediscovery" of Central Europe--namely, that cultural identities trump political ones.

That is, once we realize that cultures are fluid and dynamic and that influences from one direction by no means preclude equally strong influences from others, it is hardly a surprise that boundaries defined by cultural attributes constantly shift. Centralized rule in Russia may well have been a response to specifically Russian conditions, but it also reflected the influence of France and Prussia as models for state building. Katherine the Great was, after all, a German princess, engaged in extensive dialogue with Voltaire.[15] So it is not clear that even Russia can be written off on account of its lack of exposure to western intellectual and political currents.

Nor does history do a very good job of establishing clear and fast distinctions that define a new Central Europe taking in only a privileged segment of postwar Eastern Europe. For here, one must immediately ask, "which history? And what about the other one?" in an area marked by historical discontinuities and abrupt turnarounds. Thus, whatever similarities the area north of the Sava River shared with the western Roman Empire prior to 1500, it is quite unclear why those features should be more important in defining a regional identity today than the many dissimilarities that emerged after that time, as Szucs is also careful to note. That Bulgaria's recent economic reforms were as radical and neo-liberally inspired as Poland's is perhaps a graphic reminder that history is no more destiny for states and nations than anatomy is for individuals.

Religion is equally problematic as basis for distinguishing the eastern border of the west from the western border of the east. If the Catholic Church allied with and sheltered the

[13] Cited in Timothy Garton Ash, "The Puzzle of Central Europe," New York Review of Books, March 18, 1999, p. 18.
[14] Joseph Roth, The Radetsky March, trans. Eva Tucker (Woodstock: Overlook Press, 1974).
[15] See Larry Wolff, Inventing Easter Europe: The Map of civilization on the Mind of the Enightenment (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

opposition in socialist Poland, it also collaborated with fascist regimes in Slovakia and Croatia in the 1940s. Jews survived the holocaust in the Soviet Union, but not in Bohemia or Moravia with their liberal traditions and large middle classes. And Bulgaria, with its eastern Orthodox church and Ottoman background, was the only state in the region to reject German pressures to deport its native Jewish population.

The selective account of culture, religion, and history supplied by the Central European discourse highlighted above makes somewhat more sense attached to an explicitly political program. As described by Jacques Rupnik, it is a program that calls on "societies in the Soviet bloc...to think of themselves as subjects, not merely objects of history" and which combines a rejection of an "imposed ideological identity...with a critical reassessment of the limitations of nationalism."[16] In the 1980s, it meant "living in truth," "antipolitics," and "self-limiting revolution," a political program fashioned along classically liberal lines whose essence was to deny it had a political content at all.[17] Its most articulate and well-known exponents were in Poland, Hungary, and, in a more muted mode, Czechoslovakia, and for them, the Central European umbrella provided a convenient rubric for cross-border communication and coordination. As a result, Central Europe necessarily included their societies yet also had to be defined in the purely cultural, non-political terms a nominally anti-political program required. But what rendered the concept of Central Europe both plausible and attractive was its political subtext more than the empirical or intellectual validity of the distinctions it sought to capture.

But if the Central European idea essentially originates in a political--or anti-political--program, then adhesion to it is presumably voluntary, the same way adherence to any set of ideas should be. As Egon Schwartz proposes, one can support Central Europe as a utopian program ("universalism, antiracism, sympathy for all ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences, the right to criticize, the renunciation of aggression, " etc. etc.) even while openly acknowledging that there is no such definable region in fact. In that sense, anyone can be a Central European. So it would seem to follow that a priori exclusion due to an inappropriate historical, cultural, or religious pedigree is quite inconsistent with the effort to establish a Central European regional identity--unless the explicit "search for an alternative to the partition of Europe" is actually an implicit search to repartition it along new lines, as those outside the magic circle fear.[18]

Nevertheless, if one cannot define a Central European "identity," one can outline a Central European geography that recognizes the area's many commonalities as well as its distinctive contrasts. Such a Central Europe, ironically, turns out to be remarkably similar to the "Eastern Europe" that marked postwar American scholarship on the area.

---

[16] Jacques Rupnik, The Other Europe (New York: Pantheon, 1989), pp. 4-6.

[17] See Adam Michnik, Letters from Prison and Other Essays (Berkeley: UC Press, 1985); Gyorgy Konrad, Antipolitics (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1984); Vaclav Havel, The Power of the Powerless (London: Hutchinson, 1985); Tony Judt, "The Dilemmas of Dissidence: The Politics of Opposition in East-Central Europe," East European Politics and Societies 2 (No. 3, Spring 1988: 221-245. See also the essays contained in the special issue of Daedelus 119 (no. 1, Winter 1990), "Eastern Europe...Central Europe...Europe."

[18] Rupnik, for example, explicitly sees the "Central European idea" as a way of detaching intellectuals in Zagreb and Ljubljana from the "southeastern, backward, orthodox part" of Yugoslavia. In Other Europe, p. 8. For the rebuttal, see Maria Todorova, Imagining the Balkans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

One might begin with Milan Kundera's original posing of the question. He writes:

> What is Central Europe? An uncertain zone of small nations between Russia and Germany. I underscore the works: *small nation*....Central Europe longed to be...a reduced model of Europe conceived according to one rule: the greatest variety within the smallest space.[19]

Far from the Balkans being outside the pale, then, pre-1990 Yugoslavia was arguably the most Central European political entity on the continent, and the Baltic states are part of the region not despite but because of their Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian populations.

Moreover, if we look at the "small nations between Germany and Russia," one can define the geographical boundaries of Central Europe fairly precisely. In the north, it is bounded by the Baltic Sea, in the south, by the Aegean; in the west, central Europe begins at the Elbe River, while in the East, it more or less peters out at the Dniestr. What makes such boundaries intellectually meaningful is less a common cultural sensibility or homogeneous "longing" to join "western civilization" than three major historical problems all of the "small nations" within this area have shared. Significantly, those problems long predated the arrival of Leninism in the area, and they persist even as it disappears.

The first problem was that of state formation, a process which followed a trajectory quite different from the one in Western Europe or Russia. Certainly, medieval kingdoms were as common in this area as in the west. Even within the Byzantine Empire, there were Bulgarian and Serbian kingdoms, Bosnia enjoyed a short period of sovereignty, and Croatian nobles on the empire's edge had a crown they were able to offer the Hungarian king in 1100. Bohemia/Moravia had its own monarch, and more spectacularly, so did Hungary and Poland, controlling large expanses of territory in their respective heydays. Yet as medieval kingdoms were being refashioned into modern states under centralized forms of rule and, more importantly, with centralized militaries, in the west of Europe, the more decentralized and noble-dominated kingdoms of the East were being absorbed into larger empires, a process that ended only when Poland was completely partitioned by Prussia, Russia, and Austria in 1795.[20]

---

[19] Kundera, "Tragedy," p. 35. Ernest Gellner describes a "third zone" of Europe in similar terms. See Conditions of Liberty:Civil Society and Its Rivals (London: Pneguin, 1994), esp. pp. 119-25.

[20] On the turbulent pattern os state formation in Eastern Europe, see Jelavich, History of the Balkans; Norman Davies,God's Playground: A History of Poland , 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), Piotr Wandycz, The Price of Freedom (London: Routledge, 1992); R. W. Seton Watson, A History of the Czechs and Slovaks (London: 1947), among many other fine histories. On the early Balkan kingdoms, see John A. Fine, The Early Medieval Balkans and The Late Medieval Balkans (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987).. The non-area state building literature also deals, albeit peripherally, with Eastern European examples. See Perry Anderson Lineages of the Absolutist State (London: Verso, 1974); Brian Downing, The Military Revolution and Political Change (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Thomas Ertman, Birth of the Leviathan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The way in which the territories of the region came to be absorbed into empires is also, of course, dealt with in the various imperial histories; of particular interest is Robert A. Kann's A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918 (Berkeley: UC Press, 1974), but it can be supplemented by the many histories of Prussia/Germany and Russia in the seventeenth through twentieth centuries.

Thus, unlike Western Europe, populations east of the Elbe River entered the nineteenth century from within large, multinational imperial orders. As a result, national consciousness emerged prior to state formation, the opposite of the French and English experience .[21] Even then, it was not until national states arose to homogenize populations that nationalism assumed genuinely exclusive forms. The process thus began earlier in the Balkans, spreading north only after World War I. And if national identities were in large part the creation of urban intellectuals, they were often rooted in the peasant traditions of the countryside.

The relationship between urban and rural populations in the east was also different from the west. Certainly, in both regions cities were sites of commercial, and later industrial, development. But in Central Eastern Europe, urban areas prior to industrialization were dominated by groups invited to the area by early monarchs for the specific purpose of engaging in trade and crafts. Commerce and urban life in such a context easily came to be seen as the preserve of "foreigners"--for the most part, Germans and Jews--a factor explaining why nationalist movements in the area often took an anti-modern and anti-Semitic form.

This brings us to the second longstanding problem that makes the area distinct, namely its "lagged" economic development. Nowadays, it is popular to attribute differences in living standards between Western and Central/Eastern Europe to the peculiar features of state socialism. Yet with the exception of Bohemia, Central East Europe lagged behind Western Europe in the traditional indices of economic development throughout the period following the discovery of the New World. Indeed, one of the initial appeals of socialism in the region was precisely the hope that it would be a viable catch up strategy in an area where modern development had always been state-led. [22]

Note that "states" are distinguished from "empires" first and foremost by their governance structure and only secondarily by the homogeneity of their populations or the geographic contiguity of their territories. In a state, individual subjects and subnational units (e.g., provinces, departments, states) bear a uniform relationship to the central sovereign—a legal and political status which, of course, facilitates (but may not necessitate) cultural homogenization. The legal and political status of various subgroups and/or provinces in an empire, in contrast, often varies quite widely and individual provinces may well have rather different rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the central sovereign, depending on the terms of their incorporation and other factors. The difference between the two political forms is thus institutional, not simply one of "discourse," as has been argued.

[21] Compare, for example, Miroslav Hroch, The Social Preconditions of National Revival (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) with Rogers Brubaker, Citizenship and nationhood in France and Germany (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) or Eugene Weber, From Peasants into Frenchman (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976). See also Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer, eds., Nationalism in Eastern Europe (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969); Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); oscar Jaszi, The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy (chicago: University of Chicago press, 1929).

[22] While the "lag" in economic development is widely recognized, there is little consensus on its causes. Not surprisingly, disagreements are informed as much by political concerns as by scholarly ones. For some, the lag is due to unequal terms of trade between Central Eastern Europe and more advanced economies, reinforcing the area's "peripheral" status; for others, the problem has been a paucity of trade on whatever terms were available. For some, the state (whether Iimperial or national) was so strong it choked off economic initiative from below, while for others, it was only the rise of a political authority able to maintain order and build infrastructure that allowed development to take place at all. One cannot do justice to the variety of perspectives in a brief essay, but they parallel many of the analyses proposed. for the less developed world more generally. See Andrew Janos, The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982); Kenneth Jowitt, The Leninist Reponse to National

In fact, economic development on the European continent as a whole moved broadly from northwest to southeast, [23] marking relationships between Central European powers as well as within them. Germany was more developed than Austria-Hungary, with Russia following third and the Ottoman territories lagging significantly behind all three. Yet within post-1871 Germany, the Polish areas in the east were less developed than the German areas in the west, while the more industrialized parts of the Romanov Empire were in western areas with a Polish population. In the Habsburg realm, too, industrialization began in Bohemia and Austria, gradually spreading east and south in the last half of the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire, in contrast, never succeeded in modernizing its administration or adapting its economic policies to achieve modern economic growth, creating the basis for the Balkan exceptionalism so characteristic of the Central European discourse described earlier.[24] As a result, modern economic development began only when nation-states emerged in the Balkans, in contrast to the area to the north, where development was initiated under imperial auspices.[25]

Nevertheless, even as modern economic growth began to make itself felt, it was never robust enough to absorb excess labor from the countryside, and the persistence of a peasantry mired in poverty and engaged in subsistence agriculture was characteristic everywhere.[26] The disruption of trade links that came after World War I hardly helped, as industries built to serve large imperial markets suddenly found themselves producing for much smaller domestic economies and facing protectionist barriers to their previous outlets.[27] The large proportion of the population remaining in agriculture meant the Great Depression--characterized above all by a huge drop in the price of agricultural commodities--hit the area especially hard. In this context, the offer of a newly aggressive Germany to purchase agricultural goods at above world market prices in exchange for the export of Germany industrial goods turned out to be too good to refuse, and the region moved increasingly within the German sphere of influence in the 1930s. [28]

Dependency (Berkeley: Insitute of International Studies, 1978); Michael Palairet, "Fiscal Pressure and Peasant Impoversihment in Serbia before World War I," Jrnl. Of Economic History 39 (1979):719-40; Ivan Berend, Decades of Crisis (Berkeley: UC Press, 1997), as well as sources cited below..

[23] See David Good, The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914 (Berkeley: UC Press, 1984).

[24] How "exceptional" the Balkan states actually were is sharply contested by Diana Mishkova, "Modernization and Political Elites in the Balkans Before the First World War," East European Politics and Societies 9 (No. 1, Winter 1995): 63-90. See also N. Mouzelis, Politics in the Semi-Periphery (London, 1986).

[25] See John Lampe and Marvin Jackson, Balkan Economic History, 1550-1950 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); John Lampe, "Imperial Borderlands or Capitalist Periphery? Redefining Balkan Backwardness, 1520-1914," in Daniel Chirot, ed., The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe (Berkeley: UC Press, 1989), pp. 177-210. Lampe, however, suggests that industrialization actually made little progress in the Balkan territories of the Habsburg Empire also prior to World War I.

[26] See Rothschild, East-Central Europe; Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918-1941 (Hamdon: Archon Books, 1962); Ferenc Donath, Reform and Revolution: Transformation of Hungarian Agriculture, 1945-70 (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1980); David Mitrany, The Land and the Peasant in Rumania (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968); Jozo Tomasevich, Peasants, politics and economic change in Yugoslavia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955).

[27] See Ivan T. Berend and Gyorgy Ranki, Economic Development in East Central Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

[28] Rothschild,East Central Europe ; Berend and Ranki, Economic Development; Albert Hirschman, National power and the Structure of Foreign Trade (Berkeley: UC Press, 1945).

This brings us to the third problem that has historically characterized Central East Europe, namely, the position of the small nations within it as takers rather than makers of the international order around them. It is this feature, not cultural attributes, that disqualifies both Russia and Germany from Central Europe. As Great Powers, their internal and external dynamics were necessarily different from those of the territories between them and over whose control they competed--or colluded, as the case may be.

In fact, rivalries between major powers have been at least as important in shaping the area as have the aspirations of the domestic populations within it. This is not to say that domestic forces were unable to use those rivalries in their own interests, but it is to say that competition between domestic actors was often a proxy for the external powers backing them. The story of state formation in the Balkans is exemplary, as what began as peasant uprisings or local conspiracies against Ottoman authorities became defined as national movements by major powers seeking to counter each others' influence in the peninsula.[29]

World War I was fought as much on the political as the military front, as each belligerent attempted to utilize the other's minorities on behalf of its own efforts. Thus, Germany could sponsor an independent Poland on Russian territory and support Irish struggles in Britain, while the Western allies gave sanctuary and support to nationalist leaders in Austria-Hungary; that the Balfour declaration was issued in 1917 indicates that even the Jews were not overlooked in these efforts.

Interwar arrangements reflected these trends as well, as the creation of national states was designed as much to fashion a *cordon sanitaire* between Germany and a now Bolshevik Soviet Union as to satisfy notions of national serf-determination.[30] On the domestic front, new states initially sought to adapt institutions modelled on those of the victorious European powers, England and France. But once Germany reasserted itself as the regional hegemon in the 1930s, a new model rapidly presented itself and authoritarian regimes quickly became the norm.[31] Viewed over the *longue duree*, then, the region's entrance into the Soviet sphere of influence after World War II is hardly as inconsistent with previous trends as those despairing of the Yalta accords would have us believe.

Problems of state formation, lagged economic development, and dependence on the power relations and rivalries of major powers based outside the area itself thus define a region, which we can call "Central East Europe," that existed well before the Yalta accords. Its boundaries are quite similar with those of Cold War Eastern Europe, and the main adjustments that can legitimately be made now is simply to extend them southwards to include Greece and

[29] See Jelavich, History of the Balkans; for a more general over view, see Joseph Held, ed., The Columbia History of Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); John Lukacs, The Great powers and Eastern Europe (Chicago: Regnery, 1953)..

[30] See Rothschild, East Central Europe; Katherine Verdery and Ivo Banac, eds. National character and national ideology in interwar Easter Europe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Michael kaser and Hugo Radice, Interwar Policy, the War and Reconstruction (New York: Oxford, 1986).

[31] See Rothschild, East Central Europe; Andres Janos, The Politics of Backwardness (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987);Stephen Fischer-Galati, Twentieth Century Romania (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Peter Sugar, ed., Native Fascism in the Successor States 1918-45 (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971).

northeast to take in the Baltic states. In that context, Austria in the West and Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldava in the East become the borderlands. And as for Russia, if its size and Great Power status exclude it from Central East Europe, they by no means exclude it from Europe as such--either geographically or culturally.

Certainly, such a region is far from homogeneous. If the entire area shared the experience of being absorbed into empires, *which* empire one came to be included in had, to put it mildly, non-trivial consequences for everything from literary production and economic development to the social composition and platform of nationalist movements. Regional heterogeneity continued into the era of nation-state creation, as distinctive national traditions and institutions came to be superimposed on former imperial ones, and each country sought to distinguish itself above all from the states and societies with which it shared a common border.

Thus, while we can define a coherent region in terms of Kundera's "small nation" paradigm and the three longstanding historical problems described above, virtually any other generalization has at least one exception. For example, even as one of the area's leading journals runs under the title *Slavic Studies,* neither Romanian, Hungarian, Albanian nor the Baltic tongues are Slavic languages. In religious terms, it may be convenient to think of the region as split between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, but to do so would be to ignore the Uniate Churches, the Moslem population, the Protestant confessions, and the historic importance of the Jewish population. Nobles may have led the national movements in Hungary and Poland, but not in Serbia or Czechoslovakia. The "proletariat" was small throughout the area, but the Czech working class made its interwar Communist Party one of the largest parties in the country.

The post-World War II socialist interlude by no means eliminated these differences, although it did see the imposition of a common set of political and economic institutions creating a kind of uniformity in the area. Even then, Greece fell outside the fold, the Baltic nations were within the Soviet Union, and both Albania and Yugoslavia developed very different models out of a shared Leninist commitment. Yet leaving Greece aside, it was precisely the distinctiveness of socialist institutions and the variations between them that created an extremely fertile field for comparative research: in effect, one could follow a kind of controlled experiment conducted in conditions that varied over time and place. It was in this context that East European area studies in the United States was given its initial impetus. We now turn to how the field evolved until the experiment came to what--with the disastrous exception of Yugoslavia--was a surprisingly peaceful conclusion.

"East" European Studies in the State Socialist Period

A review of postwar East European area studies should probably begin with the problem of access to the area itself. Similar to the situation in the Soviet Union, conducting primary research in post-1948 Eastern Europe often faced insurmountable political hurdles, especially prior to the 1960s. Even afterwards, however, receptiveness to foreign scholars could vary widely, both by place and time. Yugoslavia and Poland were perhaps the first to support scholarly exchanges; they were followed by Hungary, Romania and the rest of the Warsaw Pact

countries.[32] Albania, in contrast, was always quite closed, a prime cause for the paucity of scholarship and knowledge about its society. Czechoslovakia enjoyed a brief period of openness before the Prague spring; after 1968, exchanges continued but politically sensitive topics rarely pursued, as intellectuals of all types came under a cloud. Likewise, Romania's decision to follow a more independent course in the late 1960s was accompanied by a flurry of attention, especially in the social sciences. The contacts formed in those years allowed established scholars to continue their work even as "socialism in one family" assumed its pathological forms, but under deteriorating and increasingly constrained conditions.

Openness to foreign scholars and to the creation of networks among intellectuals and academics was a major factor explaining why some countries were more fully studied than others. The availability of language instruction was another. Polish, Serbo-Croatian, and of course, German, were the most widely offered languages in American universities; other languages were either unavailable altogether, or taught only at the few institutions with a critical mass of area experts on their faculties. Both limited funding and a lack of economies of scale were responsible for the situation: for an area consisting of eight small countries with at least 13 distinct languages spoken in various parts of them, enrollments in language courses were inevitably small and instructional resources difficult to come by. Language training, as we shall see, remains a critical problem, despite recent attempts to organize it in a way accessible to the wider scholarly community.

The size of emigrant communities in the United States also influenced language availibility and the degree of attention devoted to a particular state or nation. At the same time, emigres also made extremely important contributions to scholarship on the region. Unlike the Soviet field, East European studies did not have to wait for substantial numbers to arrive in the United States. Starting with the establishment of full-fledged "People's Democracies" in 1948, each crisis in the area (Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1981) saw a fresh "East Europeanization" of the scholarly community concerned with the region.

Access to primary research sources in Eastern Europe, the availability of language training, and the presence of an emigre community well represented in academic circles in the United States were all factors affecting the relatively extensive intellectual attention accorded Yugoslavia, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. Equally important was the size, intellectual integrity, and sophistication of the academic and research community within them, a reflection of both larger official cultural policy (from control over intellectual discourse to willingness to engage with the West in a wide variety of spheres) and long established intellectual strengths. For example, while the expansion of institutions of higher education and research occurred throughout the socialist bloc, in Poland and Hungary it took place on the basis of already distinguished traditions in sociology and economics. As a result, American scholars working in such areas found that, far from having to reinvent the wheel, they could rely on a rich set of domestic analyses, debates, and secondary sources within which to seat their own research. Formal collaboration in the form of joint projects or coordinated studies in several countries around common problems remained limited prior to 1990, partly due to political constraints and partly because the structure of funding in both East and West favored a country-by-country

[32] See Yale Richmond, U.S.-Soviet Cultural Exchanges, 1958-86: Who Wins? (Boulder: Westview, 1987).

approach. Nevertheless, the growth of these types of efforts in the past decade is integrally related to the research ties that had already been established in previous years.

Finally, the interaction between disciplinary priorities and developments within Eastern Europe itself had a deep impact on which areas and topics came to the attention of American scholars. Particularly in the post-World War II social sciences, how societies changed was a major focus of intellectual inquiry, and the peculiar features of the Leninist order offered a distinctive contrast to the logic of "modernization" in societies less subject to wholesale social engineering. Understanding that logic was necessarily an interdisciplinary effort, given that in Easterm Europe, everything from the structure of society to the organization of economic activity and subtexts of literary and artistic production was in one way or another related to political priorities adopted at the highest levels of the state and party. Moreover, it was an international effort as well, as East European intellectuals often contributed some of the most penetrating analyses of both the logic of change--and the logic of stagnation--in their respective countries.

Typically, coming to terms with postwar Eastern Europe involved elucidating the distinctive structural features of the Leninist order, i.e., those characteristics without which it could not be considered "socialist," and then analyzing how and why change could and was produced, accommodated, and experienced within those constraints. The first task--defining the key structures of rule--invariably brought East Europeanists closer to their colleagues in the Soviet field, partly because postwar regimes in Eastern Europe were smaller scale adaptation of the larger Leninist model and partly because Soviet policies and priorities were so important in maintaining these structures within Eastern Europe itself. The second task, however, was what made East European studies distinct, insofar as changes and adaptation to local conditions and pressures that were absent in the USSR (e.g., the limited role of collectivized agriculture in Poland, the Hungarian economic reforms) were common outside Soviet borders. Moreover, it was within this second realm of analysis that disciplinary oriented research had its greatest intellectual payoffs. If political scientists had a comparative advantage in exploring patterns of cleavage and consensus within the elite and between it and the opposition, economists shed great light on the causes and consequences of the resulting decisions on patterns of production, investment, employment and trade, while sociologists and anthropologiests were well positioned to examine the impact of such processes on social development and interaction at macro and micro levels.

The result of these efforts was, over the years, a quite nuanced and accurate picture of the basic features of the East European socialist systems, the variations they were capable of, and the ways in which they adapted to the distinct societies in which they were seated. There was considerable consensus on the key structural features of "actually existing" socialism. Politically, its hallmark was a single, hegemonic party organized hierarchically along Leninist lines. It faced no electoral constraints, operated according to democratic centralism, and claimed an exclusive right to monopolize the means of collective action, be they lower units of government and administration, the media, or mass organizations and secondary associations. Construed in

principal-agent terms, the party was invariably the principal; the state, the mass organizations, and even the population to varying degrees, its agents.[33]

The economic trademark of the socialist economy, in turn, was a distinctive set of property rights, whereby the ownership of assets by private individuals was severely restricted and the dominant share of property is owned *de facto* or *de jure* by the state or "society." As such, socialism was first and foremost an ownership system, one that was invariably accompanied by a low degree of differentiation between the state and the economy As a result, economic units were unable to fully internalize either the costs or the risks of their activities, both of which were born by the state. Budget constraints were "soft," such that enterprises were able to compromise on the achievement of economic objectives for the sake of accomplishing the political priorities of their communal owner. And since prices did not--and indeed could not--govern the allocation of resources, a key task of the party was managing the shortages created by uncontrolled demand--be it for capital, labor, or other inputs.[34]

The "leading role" of the party and the lack of differentiation between state and economy were characteristics East European variants of socialism shared with other socialist systems in different parts of the world. In Eastern Europe itself, however, a third "core" characteristic was specific to the area and was critical to maintaining the first two: namely, the dominant role of the Soviet Union. Certainly, how Soviet influence was exerted varied considerably over time and place, but Soviet actions and preferences--both manifest and anticipated--were invariably a major factor conditioning even purely domestic decisions within Warsaw Pact members and, albeit far less directly, Yugoslavia. Much of the homogeneity between states and societies which, left to their own devices, would have differed substantially from one another was explained by the Soviet military, political, and economic role in the area.

Nevertheless, the core structures of socialist rule were necessarily found in specific states, whose practices could not help but reflect the national context in which governing occurred and economies functioned. Thus, there were important differences between states and societies in the region, and documenting and accounting for them were important contributions area studies made to our understanding of how state socialism functioned in practice and how it was experienced by individuals and social groups. Yugoslavia, for example, quickly revealed itself as a deviant, with a foreign policy that played off West against East, a peculiar adaptation of consociationalism that saw a "leading role" played by eight parties, each hegemonic within its own republic, and a "self-managed" economy that relied on market mechanisms enough to lead even investment planning to be abandoned after 1965. If state or social ownership was the norm

[33] On the role of the party, see among others Stephne Fischer-Galati, ed. The Communist Parties of Eastern Europe (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), Karel Kaplan, The Communist Party in Power: A Profile of Party Politics in Czechoslovakia (Boulder: Westview, 1987); M. K. Dziewanowski, The Communist Party of Poland (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); April Carter, Democratic Reform in Yugoslavia: The Changing Role of the Party (London: Pinter, 1982); Kenneth Jowitt, Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development (Berkeley: UC Press, 1971); Paul Lewis, Political Authority and Party Secretaries in Poland, 1975-86 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[34] The "shortage economy" model was pioneered by Janos Kornai and adopted widely in the area. See Janos Kornai, The Economics of Shortage (Amsterdam; North Holland Publishing, 1981); idem, The Socialist Economy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

throughout the region, tolerance for the private sector varied considerably; neither Yugoslavia nor Poland collectivized agriculture to a significant degree while small scale private ventures became common in Hungary by the 1980s. The degree to which markets could be used to guide resource allocation within an economy based on public ownership had long been a major theoretical debate in economics; by the 1960s, it became a practical one in East European studies, as several states experimented with economic reforms devolving substantial discretion to individual enterprises, often with quite different and unexpected results. [35]

Political differences were no less important. Most parties followed the Soviet Union into "collective leadership" after 1956, but Romania returned to the "cult of personality" by the 1970s along with a more independent, yet strongly nationalistic, foreign policy agenda. Likewise, parties were often more hegemonic in theory than in practice, as the important political role Poland's Catholic Church came to play indicated.
Relations with the Soviet Party also came to be quite differentiated, both politically and economically.[36] In foreign trade, the Soviet Union may have been the single most important trading partner of every state within CMEA, but the terms of trade changed quite dramatically over the years. The immediate postwar period saw resources flowing out of Eastern Europe to the USSR; by 1980, a major debate arose around the degree to which the Soviet Union was subsidizing its East European trading partners by supplying them with oil at below world market prices.[37] Meanwhile, borrowing patterns differed greatly, with Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and, to a lesser extent, Bulgaria running up large hard currency debts in the 1970s---while Czechoslovakia chose to stay out of credit markets entirely.

The differences noted above give only a flavor of the variety possible within a common structural format. Meanwhile, however, the 'core' characteristics of East European socialism

[35] The original debate between Ludwig von Mises and Oskar Lange on whether or not socialism and competitive markets are compatible is reproduced in Morris D. Bornstein, ed., Comparative Economic Systems (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1974), pp. 119-160. The literature on economic reform, especially in Hungary and Yugoslavia is too extensive to be cited here; a good early summary of the considerations involved appears in Deborah Milenkovitch, Plan and Market in Yugoslav Economic Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); a "final" summary of the issues and experiences is contained in the essays in J.M. Kovacs and M. Tardos, eds., Reform and Transformation in Eastern Europe (London: Routledge, 1992). An interesting discussion of the issues is also contained in Wldodzimierz Brus, Socialist Ownership and Political Systems (London: Routledge, 1971).

[36] See Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, 1967); Ronald Lindon, Bear and Foxes: The International Relations of the East European States (New York: Columbia University press, 1979) Chistopher D. Jones, Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe (New York: Praeger, 1981); Paul Marer, Soviet and East European Foreign Trade, 1946-79 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); William Reisginer, "East European Miitary Expensditures in the 1970s: Collective Goods or Bargaining Offer," International Organization 37 (Winter 1983): 137-55; David Holloway and Jane Sharp, eds., The Warsaw Pact: Alliance in Transition? (Ithaca: Cornell Univeristy press, 1984); Willima Zimmerman, "Hierarchical Regional Systems and the Politics of System Boundaries International Organization 24 (Sprig 1972): 18-36.

[37] See Michael Marrese and Jan Vanous, Soviet Susidization of Trade with Eastern Europe (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1983); for some rejoinders, see Josef Brada, "Soviet Subsidization of Easter Europe: The Primacy of Economics over Politics?" Journal of Comparative Economics 9 (March 1985): 80-92; Paul Marer, "The Political Economy of Soviet Relations with Eastern Europe," in Sarah M. Terry, ed., Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1984); idem and Kazimierz Posnanski, "Costs of Domination, Benefits of Subordination," in Jan Triska, ed., Dominant Powers and Subordinate States (Durham; Duke University Press, 1986), pp. 371-400.

made societies, economies, and states there distinctly different from non-socialist counterparts in other regions and at similar levels of development; inevitably, they also imparted a distinct quality to area studies as well. In particular, the applicability of discipinary tools and frameworks developed in the context of non-socialist societies was often highly problematic. For economists, the dilemma was particularly acute, since the absence of *bona fide* markets made it impossible to employ many of the most sophisticated econometric and modeling techniques that came to be at the mainstream of the discipline. Similar problems arose throughout the social sciences and even the humanities. On the one hand, phenomena central to disciplinary discussions--such as electoral behavior in political science--were utterly uninteresting in the socialist context. On the other, activities and texts which would be of marginal significance or of second rate quality elsewhere were of great interest to East Europeanists because of the political alternative or challenge they represented to the dominant regime discourse. In addition, even where the study of East European socialist regimes proved amenable to the use of models and frameworks developed in other contexts, the choice of which framework to employ was often complicated by underlying normative and political dimensions. For example, utilizing hypotheses about socialist systems drawn from studies of Nazi Germany clearly implied a very different evaluation of the systems themselves than, say, analyses applying pluralist theory to the same material.

Another set of problems in the relationship between students of Eastern Europe and their disciplines concerned generalizing research findings. That is, even as concepts and methodologies imported into area studies from the disciplines increasingly came to be employed, findings based on them seemed to apply only to other socialist countries.[38] While this presented fewer difficulties in the humanities, in the social sciences it could easily lead to a kind of ghettoization. Intellectually, the compromise was to seat area studies within a larger theoretical discourse on "communist systems," such that more light could often be shed on, say, Hungary by comparing it with China than with its geographically and culturally more compatible neighbor, Austria.[39] As we shall see, the collapse of socialism in 1989 did not so much put an end to this tradition as renew it under the rubric of "societies in transition."

The rise and decline of the various models and frameworks employed in East European area studies reflected these conflicting political and disciplinary pressures, as well as changes within Eastern Europe itself which shifted attention to new actors and new phenomena, the analysis of which required fresh approaches. Thus, the earliest approach to inform analysis of the region was to view it as an example (or examples) of totalitarianism.[40] The heyday of this

[38] Nevertheless, a significant literature comparing capitalist and socialist systems developed. See, for example, Frederick Pryor, Public Expenditures in Communist and Capitalist Nations (London: Allen and Unwin, 1968); idem, Property and Industrial Organization in Communist and Capitalist Nations (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1973); Peter Wiles and Stefan Markowski, "Income Distribution under Communism and Capitalism," Soviet Studies 22 (Jan. 1971):344-70; Paul Gregory and Bert Leptin, "similar Societies under Differing Economic Systems: The Case of the Two Germanies," Soviet Studies 29 (Oct. 1977): 519-43.

[39] See Andrew Walder, ed., The Waning of the Communist State (Berkeley: UC Press, 1995); David Stark and Victor Nee, eds., Remaking the Econoic Institutions of Socialism (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1989).

[40] See Carl Friedrich, ed., Totalitarianism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954); idem and Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956); Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951); Bertram Wolfe, Communist Totalitarianism (Boston; Beacon Press, 1961)..

approach was in the early 1950s, when it captured important realities about the area as it underwent the rapid transformation that marked its entrance into the Soviet bloc. Yet the school's emphasis on the centrality of terror caused it to be brought into question after 1956, as regimes routinized and local parties brought the police under control. Likewise, the adoption of "collective leadership" and the "stability of cadres" policy that came with it, the relative "demobilization" of society, and the waning of "campaign methods" of economic management and social change also suggested that the applicability of the model was limited.[41]

Yet even as totalitarianism fell into disfavor among Western social scientists, the term gained new currency among opposition movements in Eastern Europe.[42] In this context, the term acquired the same mythic value in domestic politics that it had attained earlier on the international level at the height of the Cold War; analogous to Sorel's vision of the general strike, it proved to be a potent mobilizer of a mass public.

Reconciling a theory of totalitarianism with the existence of a domestic opposition able to apply it required no small sleight of hand. Totalitarianism was consequently redefined from a description of the actual political order into a tendency that Leninist parties aspired to but were necessarily unable to realize in practice. Political life in Eastern Europe could thus be described as a process in which an organization with a totalitarian ideology adapted to a nontotalitarian situation. As such, it consisted of a series of skirmishes and battles between a party-state seeking to maximize its control over a society bent on expressing its incipient pluralism.

As a theory, the "new" totalitarianism provided a far more nuanced interprestation of life in Eastern Europe than did the older version. It could accommodate and explain changes in the pattern of rule (from "terror" to "socialist legality"), the rise of social movements, the impulse for and frustration of attempts at economic reform, the switch from "moral" to "material" incentives and the consequent emphasis on improving supplies of consumer goods that took place in the 1970s. At the same time, it highlighted the ideological barriers to the party's relinquishing its claim to control state and society even as the reality of that control began to decline substantially in the 1980s.

The rise of the "new" totalitarian analysis coincided with the decline of another form of theorizing that enjoyed some currency among "left" intellectual circles on both sides of the Elbe, namely, analyses based on Marxist theory which made class its central category.[43] In this account, socialism differed from capitalism in that its class lines were drawn not on the basis of property ownership, but on political control. Accordingly, political power defined class lines in

[41] See, for example, Richard Lowenthal, "Development v. Utopia in Communist Policy, In Chalmers Johnson, ed., Change in Communist Systems (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1970);Kenneth Jowitt, "Inclusion and Mobilization in european Leninist Regimes," in J. Triska and P. Cocks, Political Development in Eastern Europe (New York: Praeger, 1977), pp. 119-47.

[42] See Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, Dictatorship Over Needs (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Vaclav Havel, "Anti-Political Politics," in Keane, ed., Civil Society, pp. 361-81; Leszek Kolakowski, "Hope and Hopelessness," Survey 17 (1971)..

[43] See Milovan Djilas, The New Class (New York; Praeger, 1958); Charles Bettelheim, The Transition to Socialist Economy (Sussex: Harvester, 1975); Rudolf Bahro, The Alternative in Eastern Europe London: New Left Books, 1973); Gyorgy Konrad and Ivan Szelenyi, The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power (Sussex: Harvester, 1979).

socialism, such that the political leadership (also defined as the "bureaucracy") emerged as a "ruling class" with a set of interests of its own, distinct from and in contradiction with those of subordinate groups in the society.

Politically, using Marxism to unmask Marxism-Leninism was a popular project. On the right, it allowed hypocrisy to be added to the vices of socialism, while on the left, if allowed acknowledging the more unpleasant and authoritarian features of the East European regimes without having to abandon Marxism itself. For the social scientist, the contributions of "ruling class" paradigms were also significant, insofar as they drew attention to what were rather rigid limits to economic and political change in Eastern Europe and to rather striking and well-institutionalized political and social inequalities there.[44] And unlike totalitarian theories, ruling class analyses suggested that authoritarianism did not grow out of a comprehensive ideology, but rather from the power generated by bureaucratic coordination of economic activity, control of which was easily captured by "partial" (i.e., ruling class) interests who then utilized ideology as a rationalization for continued rule.

Yet ruling class analyses had several problems as well. First, though such analyses posited the political leadership as a class, they often failed to specify a class mission, leaving us in the dark as to what leaders would do with the power they have. Given the frequency with which policies would be reversed under the same "class" leadership, it was unclear what exactly was gained from calling socialist political elites a "class."Alternatively, some theories defined a class mission in ways that reality seemed to contradict; "state capitalist" theories, for example, typically failed to explain how leaders bent on maximizing accumulation or the extraction of surplus routinely selected such inefficient economic strategies. Likewise, characterizing elites as "intellectuals" dedicated to "rational redistribution" ran up against the relative paucity of intellectuals in the leadership--and their overabundance in the opposition.

Finally, if class analyses have had some utility in explaining major regime changes, their ability to account for incremental and nonrevolutionary change was always rather weak. Yet it was precisely such incremental changes, varying from state to state and from society to society, that characterized the evolution of the socialist systems in Eastern Europe after the initial period of wholesale "socialist transformation." Explaining these kinds of changes required some theory of intraclass cleavages and coalitions, and for this, social scientists again turned to frameworks and methods of analysis initially articulated in the context of liberal capitalist systems.

In political science, two paradigms came to dominate the field for some time: group politics and organizational-bureaucratic politics. Let us deal with each in turn.

[44] A large literature on various forms of inequality exists. See, among others, K. Slomczynski and Tadeusz Krause, Class Structure and Social Mobility in Poland (White Plains: Sharpe, 1978); A. Matjko, Social change and stratification in Eastern Europe (Praeger, 1974); T. Kolosi and E. Wnuk-Lipinski, Equality and inequality under socialism (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983); Walter Conner Socialism, politics and inequality (Mew York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

Theories based on group politics rested heavily on the "behavioral revolution" and the work done on interest groups in western systems.[45] They called attention to the cleavages and conficts within the various political elites of socialist states, suggesting that these conflicts were related in some systematic way to the social differentiation present in the society such elites governed. For example, the various welfare state features common even the least developed socialist systems, and especially their job security/full employment guarantees, were explained by positing an implicit "social compact" between the regime and the population or at least between the regime and its industrial working class. Likewise, decisions to raise purchasing prices for agricultural goods while subsidizing the sale of foodstuffs to households was seen to be a way of juggling pressures from peasants and collective farms against those of urban consumers.

The main problem with this form of theorizing, however, was a serious lack of empirical support for its key assumption, namely that social groups had either the autonomy or political resources needed to press their claims on political leaders effectively or hold them accountable for decisions.[46]Yet if group politics could not explain political and economic decisions in socialism, it proved to be an enormously fruitful framework for research, simply because it pushed scholars to examine aspects of life in socialism that were wider than the top bodies of the party and state. Moreover, once Solidarity made its entrance onto the East European political scene, a new, indigenous version of the group politics approach emerged, this time under the rubric of "civil society versus the state." Popular among sociologists and East European opposition movement, the scholarly impulse behind this approach lay in a healthy reaction to what was felt to be too exclusive an emphasis on the "high politics" of the leadership and the established organizations and an underestimation of significant developments and changes in the larger society.

Unlike the earlier group politics approach, however, the issue in "civil society" studies was not so much whether groups could influence policy but how they were able to form and operate regardless of the will of the elite and whatever prevailing policy happened to be. The framework thus placed heavy emphasis on the unintended consequences of central decisions, pointing to real limits to the control political leaders were thought to have and showing a great deal of social ferment occurring beneauth the surface of a population that appeared outwardly passive and apathetic. The growth of the second economy, the rise in nominally apolitical associational activity (from rock groups to environmental discussion clubs), the shop floor activities of workers, the circulation of samizdat manuscripts, and changing patterns of social

[45] The pathbreaking essay here is H. Gordon Skilling's "Interest Groups and Communist Politics," World Politics 18 (1988): 435-61; see also Roger Kanet, ed., The Behavioral Revolution and Communist Studies (New York: Free Press, 1971); idem,"Political Groupings and Their Role in the Process of Change in Eastern Europe," in Andrew Gyorgy and James Kuhlmann, eds., Innovation in Communist Societies (Boulder: Westview, 1978), pp. 41-58; Alex Pravda, "East-West Interdependence and the Social Compact in Eastern Europe," in M. Bornstein, Z. Gitelman, and W. Zimmerman, eds., East-West Relations and the Future of Eastern Europe (London: Allen & Unwin), pp. 162 91; Jan Triska, "Citizen Participation in Community Decisions in Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary and Poland," in Jan Triska and Paul Cocks, eds. Political Development in Eastern Europe (New York: Praeger, 1977).

[46] See Andrew Janos, "Group Politics in Communist Society: A Second Look at the Pluralist Model, " in S. Huntington and C. Moore, eds., Authoritarian Politics in Modern Society: The Dynamics of One-Party Systems (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

stratification and attitudinal behavior among youth were all topics explored by a view anxious to "bring Society back" into our understanding of Eastern Europe.[47]

Politically, the "civil society" approach was the natural complement to the new totalitarianism paradigm. If the political elite's instinctive tendency was totalitarian, society's impulse was pluralistic. If the political elite's ideal was the One Big Factory of the centrally planned economy, society's counter was to insist on creating "private spaces" for itself which the political elite could restrict only at great cost to its own control, the second economy being a case in point. The result of efforts to create a self-governing sphere outside the established order, it was hoped, would be the emergence of a full fledged "civil society" that "totalitarian" elites could no longer suppress.

The civil society paradigm proved both intellectually and politically powerful, and shed an enormous amount of light on the activism thoughout Eastern Europe that gathered steam in the 1980s. While this line of thinking was closely associated with the "Central European" idea, grass roots activism was far from absent in the Balkans as well. As a tale of the triumph of pluralism and democracy over monolithic tyranny, of the "people" taking their fate into their own hands, it became the standard version of the collapse of socialism that occurred everywhere by 1990. How complete an account it was, however, must be weighed against other explanations, to which we now turn.

The second influential paradigm drawn from the western literature on policymaking was the bureaucratic-organizational model. Here, rather than stress social groups in the decision-making process, the importance of established organizations as political actors was highlighted. Accordingly, conflicts among institutional interests for survival and expansion and among organizational elites representing these interests were considered the central factors in policy choices and changes.[48]

---

[47] See David Ost, Solidarity and the Politics of Anti-Politics (Philsadelphia: Temply University Press, 1990); David Stark, "Rethinking internal labor markets--new insights from a comparative perspective," American Sociological Review 51 (1986): 492-504; Ivan Szelenyi, et. al., Socialist Entrepreneurs: Embourgeoisement in Rural Hungary (Madison: University of Wisconsin press, 1988); Jadwiga Staniszkis, Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Christopher Hann, A Village without Solidarity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Sharon Wolchik and Alfred Meyer, ed., Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985); Gale Kligman, The Wedding of the Dead (Berkeley: UC Press, 1988); Rudolf Tokes, ed., Opposition in Eastern Europe (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Jane Curry, ed., Dissent in Eastern Europe (New York: Praeger, 1988).

[48] See, for example, T. H. Rigby, "Politics in the Mono-Organizational Society," in Andrew Janos, ed., Authoritarian Politics in Communist Europe (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1976); Jiri Valenta, Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia 1968: Anatomy of a Decision (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Terez Laky, "Enterprises in Bargaining Position,' Acta Oeconomica 22 (No. 3-4, 1979): 227-46; Jean Woodall, The Socialist Corporation and Technocratic (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Attempts to apply corporatist theory to the policy-making process represented an adaptaion of the approach; see Valerie Bunce, "The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era: the Rise and Fall of Corporatism," British Jrnl of Political Science 13 (1983):129-48; David Ost, "Towards a Corporatist Solution in Eastern Europe: The Case of Poland," East European Politics and Society 3 (1989): 152-74.

The bureaucratic politics approach proved a powerful tool for unravelling the complexities of "cryptopolitics" in socialist systems, leading to a wealth of rather sophisticated and illuminating case studies. Empirically, bargaining and haggling were endemic to socialism; indeed, the lack of an active price mechanism itself meant that they were often the only techniques available for allocating resources among competing claimants in a socialist economy. Moreover, with the routinization of the East European regimes that came in the 1960s, bureaucracy seemed all pervasive and its well-known dysfunctions seemed to explain many of the contradictory qualities of East European life and the ways in which the population adapted to its exigencies.

Yet to the degree the bureaucratic/organization politics approach focussed almost entirely on the bargaining process, it gave short shrift to the constraints within which the process occurred That is, not only were the arenas within which bargaining went on strictly limited, but even the issues up for discussion were tightly restricted. Nor did the bargaining partners (e.g., enterprises and ministries) themselves determine those limits and restrictions; rather the political leaders outside and above them did.

For example, if one asked why the president of the Academy of Sciences in, say, Czechoslovakia lobbied for improved vaction resorts for research workers, the bureaucratic politics approach not only had an explanation but could even predict what strategy he was likely to use to achieve such goals. But were one to ask why the same figure did not seek greater intellectual freedom and an end to censorship--clearly a benefit for an academy of sciences--the bureaucratic politcs paradigm had no ready answer. Likewise, organization politics accurately told us that the Hungarian steel industry would lobby ferociously to minimize the size of investment cutbacks in a period of austerity; it could not, however, explain why the industry did not seek to reduce employment or wages instead. It thus proved difficult to explain how "strong" ministries, industries, or mass organizations ever "lost" if political changes were simply the outcome of organizational competition. Yet enterprise associations (VVBs) did lost their autonomy in East Germany, the Ministry of Industry was cut back and reorganized in Hungary, and even the Polish Party saw its apparatus reduced and streamlined in the 1970s.

Hence, bureaucratic politics came to be supplemented by a focus on patterns of political conflict and cleavage within the leadership itself, where conflict was partly over power (in Lenin's terms, "*kto-kovo*") but equally over how power was to be wielded and for what ends (Lenin's "*shto djelat'*"). In those conflicts, organizations and constituencies did not so much 'choose' among leaders as they were invited into the policymaking process by leaders seeking to buttress their own positions. The *nomenklatura* was thus a critical means by which leaders defined the interests of organizations (as opposed to those interests being 'given' by the nature of the organization), and was simultaneously a source of allies in making policy and a way of controlling its implementation.[49]

[49] See essays in Ellen Comisso and Laura Tyson, eds., Power, purpose, and Collective Choice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Carl Beck, et. al., Political Succession in Eastern Europe (Pittsburgh: Center for International Studies, 1976); Judy Batt, Economic Reform and Political Change in Eastern Europe (Houndsmills: Macmillan 1988); Paul Lewis, "Political consequences of the change in party-state structures under Gierek," in J. Woodall, ed., Policy and Politics in Conemporary Poland (London: Pinter, 1982).

Such competition among purely political actors over the direction of change and adaptation was most transparent in Yugoslavia, but it was present in other countries as well. In Poland, both policy and personal rivalries were behind the various succession crises that occurred after 1970, and the disagreements in the leadership over how to respond to a g rowing economic crisis plus the propensities of individuals to use the threat of spontaneous group protest to protect their own claims were critical in the rise of Solidarity. In Hungary, too, if the 1956 trauma taught political leaders the importance of managing internal conflicts within their own ranks, splits over the pace and scope of economic reform were nonetheless common. In Czechoslovakia, the post-1968 purges kept the range of disagreements narrow, while in East Germany, close Soviet supervision and what seemed to be relatively satisfactory economic performance also confined the scope of disagreement. Only in Romania were such internal debates avoided entirely by jettisoning "collective leadership" altogether--with the result that policy in the Ceaucescu years became increasingly arbitrary.

Focussing on internal conflicts within the political elite proved quite illuminating in explaining both the domestic factors that led to political and economic reform in Poland, Hungary, and Yugoslavia as well as the absence of such factors in Romania, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. In effect, just as economic competition lowers the cost of commodities, political competition came to reduce the cost of political involvement. Thus, the secular trend in the parties that followed the Soviet example of "collective leadership" even before the 1980s was to widen the circle of political consultation, as experts, bureaucracies, territorial officials, and the like were deployed as political resources by rival factions.

What kept the circle relatively narrow, however, was basic agreement among top elites that the party should resolve conflicts within its own ranks and thereby monopolize the all important "last say." In Poland, that consensus broke down when the party proved unable to extract the country from its prolonged economic crisis; in Hungary, it broke down as leaders split on the desirability of retaining the party's political monopoly; in Yugoslavia, leaders disagreed more and more openly not only on a strategy for economic adjustment but also on how the federation should be altered to pursue one in the 1980s. In these cases, the regime collapses of 1989-90 followed a dynamic quite similar to that of Latin America: the ruling group split, and society entered the political arena. Perhaps ironically, it was precisely those states that had been in the forefront of economic reform and liberalization that had the most serious macroeconomic imbalances--and consequently, the greatest internal divisions within the elite over how to stabilize the situation. In effect, "society's" activation prior to the winter of 1989 was at least partially politically induced from above.

In East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria, however, no such split occurred in the political leadership, and so leaders did not by themselves seek to mobilize support in the larger society for the path they favored. The economic situation in these countries in 1989 was not nearly so serious as in the heavily indebted others, nor was the top leadership of East Germany or Czechoslovakia seriously divided over the undesirability of liberalization. Accordingly, the dynamics of regime change in those states were cases of "external push" rather than "domestic pull,"and if a split in the elite was to come, it had to be engineered from outside. It was here that

Mikhail Gorbachev provided the spark--whether by supporting the Hungarian decision to allow East German vacationers to go to Austria and then pushing a deeply conservative party to replace Erich Honecker with a more "progressive" leader, or by pushing the Czech party to permit the student demonstration that started the opposition ball rolling and, once it was in motion, suddenly publishing Soviet apologies for the 1968 invasion.

Thus, while there is no denying the importance of broad social forces in sweeping away the *ancien regime*, forces within the communist parties also played key roles in eliciting and channelling those pressures. Bulgaria was perhaps the extreme case: there, the Communist party literally abandoned its "leading role" even before the opposition requested it to do so. In this sense, the decision of the Soviet Union to relinquish its hegemony over the area and the repercussions that decision had for the power structure's ability to maintain itself was as important as the ability of political oppositions to articulate social claims. That East Europeanists were as surprised as others when the final collapse came is not because they had a weak grasp of social, political, or economic conditions in Eastern Europe. Rather their failure to predict these events is traceable ultimately to their inability to anticipate what was essentially a Soviet decision to abandon its longstanding security concern with the political contours of the area.[50]

From East European to Central East European Studies: Post -Communism and Area Studies

Area studies inevitably reflect their region, and the political earthquake that occurred in Eastern Europe with the collapse of socialism had its aftershocks in area studies as well as in the area itself. Whereas previously, East Europeanists had struggled along at the margin of their disciplines, the unprecedented novelty of the "transition from socialism" and the end of the Cold War suddenly made the area into a focal point of all the social sciences. Indeed, one of the major questions the change raised was whether or not the scholars who had labored long and hard to acquire a deep understanding of the area under socialism still had skills relevant in the new situation, especially at a time when policymakers and intellectuals alike were rushing to repudiate precisely the experience with which they had been so familiar.

Scholarship on Eastern Europe thus became the purview of a far wider community of academics than had been the case for the previous 40 years. The influx was faciliated by English becoming the second language *de rigeur* of university graduates throughout the region, by the collection and publication of statistical information in formats accessible to academics trained in western quantitative techniques, and by the search by local scholars to train themselves in the methods and frameworks popular in West European and American social science.

[50] Accounts of the collapse of socialism are numerous. See Ivo Banac, ed., Eastern Europe in Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Gale Stokes The Walls Came Tumbling Down (New York: Oxford, 1993) for two of the better accounts.

The benefits of this sudden burst of intellectual interest were not negligible for the area studies community. The insight of major theorists observing the area "from outside" were often extremely valuable in informing the work of those analyzing it from within.[51] Since many of the newcomers relied on the work of area experts for their factual information, the careful, on-the-ground analyses the field had so heavily relied on in the past received a much wider readership as well. Indeed, the number of publications dealing with Eastern Europe appearing in non-area, purely disciplinary journals rose tremendously. A survey of articles dealing with Eastern Europe appearing in non-area social science journals (e.g., *American Economic Review, American Political Science Review, American Journal of Sociology*, etc.) gives a quantitative indicator of the change. Whereas a total of 27 articles dealing with Eastern Europe were published in such mainstream journals during the 5 year period 1983-8, 87 articles appeared in the same journals between 1991-6, a threefold increase. Finally, graduate student interest also increased, and departments in all fields--even in universities without traditionally strong area programs--often found their most promising applicants planning to specialize in East European affairs. The establishment of the Central European University in Budapest also provided training for students from the area itself, many of whom went on to pursue programs in the United States, as well as a new source of colleagues able to collaborate with American and West European counterparts in teaching and research..

At the same time, there were also some significant costs to area experts as they suddenly found their region catapulted into the limelight, not the least of which was the identity crisis described at the start of this essay. Symptomatic here was the renaming process not only of the region itself, but also of the major journals devoted to it: Soviet Studies was transformed into Europe-Asia Studies, Studies in Comparative Communism turned into Communist and Post-Communist Studies, and Problems of Communism into Problems of Post-Communism. More problematic for the integrity of East European area studies itself were pressures to merge it entirely into a more general "European" framework within universities, efforts which rarely came to fruition in the end, largely because it (quite predictably) turned out that the problems that characterized the region--including eastern Germany--after 1990 remained quite different from those in Western Europe.

Thus, the three historical problems that had long defined the region continued to do so in the 1990s. The problems of state formation reappeared as democratization studies and analyses of nationalism, lagged economic development as how state socialist economies would be transformed into competitive markets--and with what effects on social structures, labor relations, income distribution, and social welfare. And the problem of the dependency of small states on richer and more powerful states on their borders reappeared as rivalries over who would "join" Europe--and what this entailed for traditional notions of sovereignty, international alliance behavior, trade relations, and cultural norms.

[51] See, for example, Adam Przeworski, Democracy and the Market (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, Problems of Democratic Transition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Claus Offe, Varieties of Transition (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997); Arend Lijphart, "Democratization and Constitutional Chices in Czechɵ slovakia, Hungary, and Poland, 198991," Journal of Theoretical politics 4 (April, 1992): 207-223.

In what follows, we briefly review the main debates and themes that emerged around each of the three main area problems. As we shall see, scholarship continued to reflect both the particularities and similarities of the Central East European states. At the same time, insofar as states and societies were now responding to changes and processes that were occurring throughout the world, the thrust of comparisons broadened from states within the area or within the "socialist community" to allow Central East European studies to be seated within a global context.

The study of democratization actually emerged before the collapse of socialism, and had focussed on regime changes in Southern Europe, Latin America, and finally Asia. Hence, there was already a significant body of theory that could migrate to East Central Europe in search of an application. The question, of course, was whether expectations about party competition, the establishment of the rule of law, the protection of civil liberties, and the stability of newly elected governments drawn from the experiences of countries outside the area could also be generalized to East Central European states.

A lively debate over the appropriateness of inter-regional comparisons ensued.[52] In practice, the issue was resolved pragmatically.[53] In some ways, the authoritarian experience in East Central Europe was quite different from that in Latin America. For one thing, it was "transitioning" from a Leninist one-party system rather than a military regime, such that the former ruling party not only remained a competitive political force in the emerging political order but its electoral strategy and positioning was a key factor affecting the entire political spectrum. For another, the difference between economies that combined capitalism with a large state sector and those in Eastern Europe meant the latter's transformation was not only a quantatively greater task but also a qualitatively different one. The socio-demographic characteristics of the populations were also different: on average, Central East Europeans were better educated, more urbanized, accustomed to a rather extensive network of social services, and even ten years into the transition, characterized by a higher degree of economic and social equality. Finally, what the post-socialist states were transition to was different, reflecting their geographical position on the European continent and the revival of geopolitical relationships that had characterized the area in the first half of the twentieth century. In political-institutional terms, this difference was reflected in the tendency of the Central East European states to opt for basically parliamentary systems, in contrast with Latin American countries, which typically returned to relatively powerful, directly elected chief executives as the head of government.

---

[52] See Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl, "The conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?" Slavic Review 53 (Spring 1994): 173-85; Valerie Bunce, "Should Transitologists Be Grounded?" Slavic Review 54 (Spring 1995): 111-127; Sarah Terry, "Thinking about post-Communist transitions: How Different are they? Slavic Review 52 1993): 333-337..

[53] See, for example, Arend Lijphart and Carlos Waisman, eds., Institutional Design in New Democracies (Boulder:Westview, 1996); Adam Przeworski, Democracy and the Market (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); L. Bresser-Pereira, J.M. Maravall, and A. Przeworski, Economic Reforms in new Democracies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Joan Nelson, et. Al., Intricate Links: Democratization and Market Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America (New York: Transaction Press, 1994); Bela Greskovits, The Political Economy of Protest and Patience (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998). The East European transitions have also been compared with the establishment of democratic governments in postwar Europe; see, for example, Geoffrey Pridham and Paul G. Lewis, eds. Stabilising Fragile Democracies (London: Routledge, 1996).

At the same time, however, the exchange of comparisons and contrasts between East Europeanists and Latin Americanists showed there were indeed some critical similarities between the two regions in the 1990s. If the creation of property rights guarantees was, for the most part, unique to Eastern Europe's abandonment of socialism, the processes of liberalization and stabilization were not. While privatization of state-owned firms may have been more extensive in Eastern Europe, such events were common enough in Latin America as well: debtor governments all over the world sold assets in the 1990s. Explaining why populations and governments in Eastern Europe reacted differently to "de-statizing" the economy from populations in Latin America came to form an intriguing line of research for area experts in both regions, and showed that "globalization" could have quite different political and economic local ramifications.

If one major change in the research agenda was opening up East European studies to comparison with other areas outside the advanced industrial world, another major debate concerned the impact of the socialist experience on the new political order. This debate coincided with an emerging trend in the social sciences stressing the importance of institutions in explaining political, social, and economic behavior. On the area expert side, Kenneth Jowitt made a strong case--then picked up by others--that the "legacies" of socialism meant that establishing democracy in any other than the most formal sense of the term was likely to be a long and difficult process for societies that had little experience or memory of an open and competitive political order from which to work. Others--often, but far from exclusively, those "trespassing" in the region from the realm of general disciplinary theories--stressed the importance of new institutions and rules in eliciting and motivating behavior consistent with democratic norms.[54]

Again, the issue was resolved pragmatically. Clearly, in many ways, social and political patterns of behavior did not undergo a radical alteration even as political institutions changed; in other ways, behavior changed, but in a distinctly undemocratic direction; and yet in other ways, the new formally democratic institutional arrangement did have the effect of creating significant social and political forces with strong interests in preserving them. Thus, even a decade after the socialist regimes collapsed, the jury is still out on the Legacies v. Institutions question. It does appear that formal procedural democracy is now fairly well institutionalized everywhere in the region with, of course, the exception of the ex-Yugoslav states involved in wars. Elections occur regularly, they are relatively fair, the media is lively and alternative sources of information available, parties peacefully alternate in office, laws are passed by legislatures and (more or less) enforced by authorized administrative agencies and courts, oppositions are able to organize and propagate their views. That even this procedural democracy has survived an economic downturn at least as serious as that of the Great Depression is no insignificant accomplishment, and explaining how such institutions stabilized under adverse circumstances has been a major topic

[54] See Kenneth Jowitt, New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction (Berkeley: UC Press, 1992);. Daniel Chirot, "National Liberations and Nationalist Nightmares The consequences of the End of Empires in the Twentieth Century," in Beverly Crawford, ed., Market, States, and Democracy (Boulder: Westview, 1995), pp. 43-71. For a rejoinder, see Giuseppe Di Palma, "Why democracy can work in Eastern Europe," ournal of Democracy 2 (No. 1, 1991): 21-31; Barbara Geddes, "A Comparative Perspective on the Leninist Legacy in Eastern Europe," Comparative Political Studies 28 (July 1995): 239-75.

of area and non-area analysts alike. Nevertheless, how deeply democratic norms have penetrated the population as a whole and the degree to which support for the new institutions and actors in governments is based on non-democratic impulses or simply the lack of a viable alternatives is still unclear.[55] Thus, while political parties appear extremely active, the non-party secondary associations that engage in interest-based politics in western systems appear weak and fragmented, while electoral turnout has generally been much lower than expected. Likewise, the frequency of corruption scandals suggests that at the elite level, too, politics is not simply about serving the public interest or even broad partisan constituencies.

The "thinness" of democratic norms brings us to another major theme of post-socialist studies in Eastern Europe, namely, studies of nationalism and national identity. Eastern Europe has historically been a major source for theorists of nationalism, and some of the classic studies of the phenomenon have been based on the rise of "nations" in this area. In the post-socialist period, the violence that accompanied (and continues to accompany!) the disintegration of Titoist Yugoslavia was a dramatic reminder that the mobilization of ascriptive forms of identity remains very much with us, and of how democratization could as easily unleash the forces of exclusive nationalism as produce idyllic multiethnic cooperation. In this regard, it was symptomatic that the smoothest regime changes to date tend to have occurred in ethnically homogeneous states.

The distintegration of Yugoslavia itself created a cottage industry exploring the relationship between democratization and nationalism. In examining the roots of conflict there, area experts played a critical role; frequently, they were virtually the only source of reliable information in a context in which elites and intellectuals of all types set about embellishing history to provide a basis for claims that were often weakly founded in reality and were difficult for newcomers to evaluate.[56] Nor was Yugoslavia the only source of new states emerging in the area: the Soviet Union dissolved into its component republics and in 1992, Czechoslovakia passed through its velvet divorce. Comparisons between the three helped to highlight the importance of federal structures in facilitating the mobilization of ethnic bias in periods of economic downturn, the discrediting of class-based popular organizations, and the weakening of the political center.[57]

---

[55] See G. M. Tamas, "Victory Defeated," Journal of Democracy 10 (January 1999):3-8; V. Tismaneanu, ed., The Revolutions of 1989 London: Routledge, 1999); W. L. Miller, S. White, P. Heywood, Values and Change in Post-Comunist Europe (London: St. Martins, 1998); Ralf Dahrendorf, After 1989: morals, revolution, and civil society (New York: St. Martins, 1998); richard Rose, William Mishler, and Chrstian Haerpfer, Democracy and its Alternatives: Understanding Post-Communist Societies (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[56] See Susan Woodward, Balkan Tragedy (Washington: Brookings, 1995); Leonard Cohen, Broken Bonds (Boulder: Westview, 1993, 1995, 1997); John Lampe, Yugoslavia as History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Branka Magas, The Destruction of Yugoslavia (London: Verso, 1993; Bogdan Denitch, Ethnic Nationalism (Minneapolis: University of Minnestoa Press, 1994); this is, of course, only a small sampling of the literature appearing in the past decade.

[57] See, for example, Valerie Bunce, Subversive Institutions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Veljko Vujacic, "Historical Legacies, Nationalist Mobilization and Political Outcomes in Russia and Serbia: A Weberian View," Theory and Society 25 (December 1996): 763-81; Ellen Comisso, "Federalism and Nationalism in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe," New Europe Law Review 1 (spring 1993): 489-503.

Studies of nationalism and national identity were not limited to the more spectacular cases of state dissolution and emergence. Appeals to national loyalty were part and parcel of partisan mobilizations throughout Central East Europe, even if building such support occurred at the expense of minority populations. Moreover, perceptions of national identity were often colored by religious overtones, as confessional institutions assumed new positions of prominence. Scholarship on the ramifications of these developments for minorities (national and religious), regions, and social groups was thus common even among scholars dealing with Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria--not to mention the Baltic states with significant Russian-speaking minorities. Such work both drew on as well as making critical contributions to the larger literature dealing with the "construction" of identities more broadly.[58]

Yet the attention given to nationalism and cultural identity may have exaggerated the "dangers" such loyalties posed. In many ways, what was most interesting about East Central Europe in the 1990s was how relatively weak the tendency toward ethnic exclusivity tended to be--especially compared with the resurgence of "national" pressures in the nominally more cosmopolitan and tolerant "civil societies" of western Europe. Even in Latvia and Estonia, external pressures from Russia and the European Union pushed reluctant, multiparty but monoethnic national governments to work out some means of accommodating large "non-titular" Slavic minorities.

The second dimension of prominence in post-socialist East European studies was, of course, the massive economic changes that occurred. Analyses tended to run along two lines: prescriptive (what should be done) and descriptive (what policies were adopted, why they were chosen, and with what consequences for economic performance and welfare). Both were heavily colored by a great deal of initial skepticism that the twin transformations--from authoritarianism to competitive politics and from socialism to capitalism--could be accomplished simulataneously.

Among the prescriptions, the most important early debate concerned the pace and scope of economic reform, dubbed as "big bang" v. gradualism.[59] Analogous to the Institutions v. Legacies debate, this one also saw non-area and area experts on different sides. Viewed with hindsight, experience proved both sides could be wrong and right at the same time, perhaps symptomatic of just how unprecedented the situation was. Thus, one of the strongest arguments for immediate, rapid and wide ranging economic reform urged moving quickly during the "honeymoon" period before political opposition could block major change. On the other side,

[58] See, for example, Katherine Verdery, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania," Slavic Review 52 (Summer 1991):179-203; Michael Kennedy, ed.,Envisioning Eastern Europe: Postcommunist Cultural Studies (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 1994); Christopher Hann, "Postsocialist Nationalism: Rediscovering the Past in Southeast Poland," Slavic Review 57 (Winter 1998): 840-64; Sharon Wolchik, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Post-Communist Czechoslovakia," East European Politics and Society 8 (Winter 1994): 153-89; Laszlo Kurti and Juliet Langman, eds., Beyond Borders: Remaking Cultural Identities in the new East and Central Europe (boulder:Westview, 1997).

[59] See David Lipton and Jeffrey Sachs, "Privatization in Eastern Europe--The Case of Poland," Brookings papers in Economic Activity 2 (1990):293-3441; Peter Murrell, "'Big Bang' versus Evolution:East European Economic Reforms in the Light of Recent Economic History," Plan-Econ Report 6 (No. 26, June, 1990):1-11; idem, "What is Shock Therapy and What did it do in Poland and Russia," Post-Soviet Affairs 9 (April-June 1993):111-40.

"gradualism" was defended on the grounds that a private sector could only emerge in the context of a functioning economy, and since radical reform necessarily entailed massive output losses, high interest rates, and diminished purchasing power, its impact would be to undercut exactly the objectives it was striving to achieve.

Experience--especially in Poland--indicated that the consequences of the "big bang" strategy initiated in 1990 were precisely what produced political opposition, as the Polish Sejm fragmented into competing proto-parties unable to find common ground. It did, however, greatly facilitate the creation of a vibrant private sector, with new start ups leading the recovery that began in 1993. In contrast, experience elsewhere--Romania and Bulgaria being the major examples--indicated that delaying reforms and seeking to find a gradual method that avoided severe and sharp austerity measures resulted in continued budgetary outlays to state-owned enterprises that quickly came to be a major burden and obstacle to private sector expansion. Yet unlike shock therapy, it allowed ruling parties to be re-elected and govern, at least until economic problems became so large reforms literally could no longer be put off.

Meanwhile, close country studies of economic policy in individual states indicated that the theoretical debate among strategies corresponded only weakly to what states in the region actually did, since once the rhetoric was stripped away, strategies claimed to be "gradual" actually turned out to have quite a number of the elements (e.g., opening borders to trade, liberalizing prices, maintaining a balanced budget) "radical" strategies included, while policies initially adopted as "radical" measures would quickly be modified back to a "gradualist" model.[60]

Descriptive accounts of the policy process focussed much more on explaining why policymakers chose the strategies they used and what the consequences were. The major surprise here was a fairly robust finding that far from competitive politics being undermined even in the face of draconian measures--such as Poland's initial "Big Bang" reforms, Hungary's Bokros Plan, and Bulgaria's establishment of a currency board--the vitality of representative systems seemed to be the main condition allowing such reforms to be made and implemented.[61] The theoretical ramifications of such findings actually went far beyond East European area studies, as they confirmed much of the newer work in institutional economics that stressed the establishment of efficient property rights as the key to economic performance--and explained the evolution of such rights as directly related to the bargaining power of constituents.

Legalizing private ownership, liberalizing prices and foreign trade, bringing budgets into balance, and establishing relatively independent central banks were the norm throughout the region; major differences, however, characterized privatization strategies and the pace and scope of social service reform. Not surprisingly, a great deal of creative work was done in seeking to explain the differences. Critical variables include the relative positions management and labor had carved out for themselves in enterprises during the last phase of socialism, the level of

[60] See David Bartlett, The Political Economy of Dual Transformation (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Kazimierz Poznanski, Poland's Protracted Transition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[61] See M. Steven Fish, "The Determinant of Economic Reform in the Post-Communist World," East European Politics and Societies 12 (Winter 1998):31-790;Joan Nelson, "Linkages between Politics and Economics," Journal of Democracy 5-4 (October 1994): 50-1.

indebtedness of the state, and the commitments of the positical leadership that came to power in the immediate aftermath of the regime change.[62]

How labor and management adapted to the new economic conditions--and with what consequences for microeconomic performance--was another important theme in East European studies. While abstract models positing rational actors making choices under a variety of incentive structures proved important in providing a set of hypotheses and expectations, the on-the-ground observations of area experts turned out to be the only means to empirically test these models. The result was a plethora of rich case studies of state and privatized enterprises, labor relations, sectoral adjustment patterns, and, of course, of new private sector start ups and greenfield foreign ventures that burgeoned in the area.[63]

Nor were manufacturing activities the only object of attention. The reorganization of agriculture in a region in which close to a third of the population was typically employed in that sector was also a major field of study, showing that the rural-urban division that had always been so prominent in the region as a whole was far from disappearing.[64] Moreover, such studies revealed the often ambiguous benefits of privatizing land and equipment in a context in which subsidies were removed and domestic markets were invaded by western exports.

The impact of new economic relations on non-economic groups was also of great concern to many in the area. Women'sand gender studies more broadly came into their own as altered family relations, the possibility of female engagement in at-home private businesses, the increase in joblessness among both males and females, and the crumbling of many of the social services important for working mothers began to reshape gender relations throughout the region.[65]

---

[62] The literature on privatization is huge. Some major works include Roman Frydman and Adam Rapaczynski, Privatization in Eastern Europe; Is the State Withering Away (New York:Oxford University Press, 1994); M. Ernst, M. Alexeev, and Paul Marer, Transforming the Core (Boulder:Westview, 1996); Ivan Major, Privatization in Eastern Europe (Aldershot, U.K.: Elgar, 1993); Jozef Brada, "Privatization is Transition--or Is It?" Journal of Economic Perspectives 10(Srping 1996):67-85. David Stark, "Privatization in Hungary: From Plan to Market or From Plan to Clan?" East European Politics and Societies 4 (Fall 1990):351-93.

[63] See for example, S. Estrin, J. Brada, et. Al., Restructuring and privatization in Central Eastern Europe: Case Studies of Firms in Transition (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1995); Simon Johnson and Gary Loveman, Starting Over in Eastern Europe (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1995);; Saul Estrin, ed., Foreign Direct Investment in Central Eastern Europe: Case Studies of Firms in Transition (Armonk: Sharpe, 1999); Yudit Kiss, The Defence Industry in East Central Europe (new York: osford, 1997). David Stark and Laszlo Bruszt, Post-Socialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and property in East Central Europe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Wendy Carlin, John van Reenen, and Toby Wolfe, "Enterprise Restructuring in Early Transition: the case study evidence from Central and Eastern Europe," Economics of Transition 3 (December 1995): 435-60.

[64] See Ivan Szelenyi, ed., Privatizing the Land: Rural Political Economy in Post-socialist Societies (London; Routledge, 1998); G. W. Creed, Domesticating Reform: From socialist reform to ambivalent transition ina Bulgarian village (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); Peter and Sandor Agocs, "'The Change Was but an Unfulfilled promise': Agriculture and Rural Population in Post-Communist Hungary," East European Politics and Society 8 (Winter 1994): 32-58; J. Davis, "Understanding the process of decollectivisation and agricultural privatisation in transition economies: the distribution of collective and state farm assets in Latvia and Lithuania," Europe-Asia-Studies 49 (December 1997): 1209-32.

[65] See Tanya Renne, ed. Ana's Land: Sisterhood in Eastern Europe (Boulder: Westwood, 1997); Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller, ed., Gender Politics and Post-Communism (Routledge, 1993); Ellen Berry, ed., Postcommunism and the Body Politics (New York: NYU Press, 1995); Susan Gal and Gale Kligman, eds., Reproducing Gender: Politics, Publics, and Everyday Life After Socialism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Likewise, the end of socialist *uravnilovka* and the tendency for economic activities to site themselves on the basis of comparative advantage suddenly made regional differentiation, both within and between the various states in the region, a major problem. Corresponding to this emphasis came a new stress on emerging patterns of social stratification and the growth of poverty. One of the key issues that emerged here was again, how determinative one's position in the old order was for one's position in the new. [66]

Much of the theory used in these inquiries was imported from the discipline in which a scholar worked, whether it was economics, political science, sociology, or anthropology. At the same time, empirical work was often theory generating as well, since the parameters of post-socialism were so unprecedented there was often little in the way of existing theory that could guide inquiries. New journals (e.g., *The Economics of Transition*, *East European Constitutional Review*) and new sources of information (e.g., the Economist Intelligence Unit's country studies, analyses commissioned by international organizations like the OECD, the World Bank, or the IMF) also appeared, facilitating intra-regional comparisons as well as providing new venues in which scholars of the area could air their findings. Interestingly enough, much of this academic activity was either privately funded or funded by agencies (governmental or non-profit) outside the traditional research funding community. Ironically, such developments coincided with a trend in the disciplines that moved them in exactly the opposite direction: towards increasingly narrowly specialized work employing highly esoteric mathematical techniques and towards an emphasis on theory and lawlike generalization at the expense of more applied and contextual work. The paradoxical result was that just as the demand for area skills grew outside universities and governments, the disciplines that dominated training seemed to be less and less interested in generating a supply with which to satisfy it. From this perspective, the earlier insulation of East European studies within the "communist studies" project may well have been what preserved its integrity in the 1990s, as the internal logic of the transition as viewed in the field continued to offer a compelling set of intellectual puzzles to which the mainstream of many disciplines spoke only tangentially.

This brings us to the third dimension of East European area studies in the 1990s, a dimension which again, turned on the region's "historic" problem: namely, what was to be the relationship of a now increased number of states and societies in the region to the major powers outside its borders. Economic conditions provided an immediate answer, as the collapse of CMEA forced all the states in the region to reorient their foreign trade westward. It was no small irony here that the radial pattern of trade that had characterized East European-Soviet arrangements under socialism now reproduced itself--but with Germany at the hub of the wheel.[67] Affiliation with western institutions became a sought after commodity, too, with

[66] See, for example, Sue Bridges and Frances Pine, eds., Surviving Post-Socialism: Local Strategies and Regional Responses in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union (ondon: Routledge, 1998); Michael Bura2oy and Katherine Verdery, Uncertain Transitions (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield. 1999).

[67] The impact of the massive reorientation of trade is examined in the essays in John Zysman and Andrew Schwartz, eds., Enlarging Europe:The Industrial Foundations of a New Political Economy (Berkeley: Institute for International Studies, 1998); see also Andras Koves, Central and East European Economies in Transation; The International Dimension (Boulder:Westview Press, 1992); F. Stolze, "Changing foreing trade patterns in post-reform Czech industry," Europe-Asia Studies 49 (November 1997): 1209-35; Laszlo Csaba, "A decade of transformation in Hungarian economic policy," Europe-Asia Studies 50 (December 1998): 1381-91.

membership in the European Union being the ultimate target. At the same time, much of this orientation and activity reflected the traditional tendency of the small states in the area to gravitate towards and imitate the leading power of the day. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of first the Soviet and then the Russian economy, there was little choice about "joining Europe," regardless of whether a given state was "Central," "Southern" or "Eastern" European.

Thus, integration of Eastern and Western Europe, together with its economic, political, and cultural ramifications forms another major thread of inquiry in East European studies in the 1990s. At the same time that western influence has stabilized representative forms of government, pushed leaders to observe minority rights, and provided substantial amounts of aid to facilitate changes in everything from infrastructure, environmental protection, curricula, military organization, and property rights, it has also had major cultural implications that have, on occasion, been greeted with some unease. Intellectuals, traditionally the repository of national cultural life, have found themselves struggling as universities cut back budgets, and media--from newspapers to film--cater to mass markets in search of profits. Signficantly, western imports have come to compete on cultural as well as capital and commodity markets. Equally important, elected political leaders now compete with the intelligentsia as articulators of the national will, and the "opposition" is no longer a province inhabited by intellectuals writing sophisticated critiques of the existing order but of professional politicians seeking to be elected to office. One suspects here that a longstanding theme in area studies of the area in the last two centuries, namely, the role of intellectuals as a distinct group in cultural and political life, may well be receding in importance.

Last, but certainly not least, what security arrangements would look like in the area once the Warsaw Pact dissolved became an issue debated by area and international security specialists alike. Newly elected governments were quick to announce their hopes to join NATO, and began shifting forces from their western to eastern borders--despite the absence of any real threat on either. Interestingly enough, while a "Scandinavian model" a la Sweden or Finland was floated as a possible target of domestic reform efforts, it was never given any serious consideration as a security option. The opportunities for expansion and leverage such requests presented to an organization whose mission had been made, in the eyes of many, quite obsolete in a post-Cold War world proved irresistible. Within a few years, the "Partnership for Peace" was launched; by 1999, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic were admitted to NATO, and within a month of their accession, NATO was engaged in its first war.

Debating the implication of NATO expansion for the region as a whole has, perhaps unfortunately, fallen outside the area studies community; rather, it tends to be a much more central concern of security studies experts and even post-Soviet studies scholarship. In that context, whether NATO's new life as the nominal upholder of human rights on the European continent and the United States' willingness to extend a nuclear umbrella up to the borders of the former Soviet Union are actions likely to deter threats and avoid international conflict or create threats and produce international conflict is still a very open question. Yet at the time of this writing, the pattern of alliance adhesion and action suggests very much that the assertion of a "Central European" identity is no longer a purely cultural phenomenon.

With this, we return full circle to the "What is Eastern Europe?" question with which we began. As indicated, renaming the area has not by any means eliminated its distinctive regional identity any more than calling it "Eastern Europe" in the socialist days eliminated major differences within and between the states and societies that made it up. Intellectually, the vibrancy of work in the area studies tradition during the past decade and the need non-area scholars have had to become acquainted with it is some evidence here. Certainly, the collapse of socialism opened Central East Europe to new forms of inquiry and topics for analysis--at the same time making other debates obsolescent. Equally important, it has made it possible for specialists in the area to place their work in the center of their disciplines, both as consumers and contributors, far more than in the past. In fact, the end of the Soviet bloc has allowed comparative work, be it in economics, political science, sociology, anthropology or the humanities, to broaden its focus beyond the socialist group of countries to include other states--be they in Latin America, the former Soviet Union, or southern Europe--undergoing related, if less dramatic, changes. The result is not that there is no longer a need for area experts, but simply that area experts need no longer be *only* area experts, since their research now sheds light on democratization, nationalism, economic stabilization and transformation, the impact of cultural competition and change, and the nature of sovereignty not only within Central East Europe, but in the world at large.

Such work could not be done had Central Eastern Europe been prematurely merged within West European studies, as many proposed in 1990. Nor has the area's past or present given it a trajectory similar to that of Russia: East Central Europe--from the Baltic to the Adriatic--remains the land in between, and must be approached as such. Institutionally, then, the recognition of the area as a distinct region remains critical to the field, yet funding for area-based centers continues to be problematic. Initially, Central East European studies were relatively fortunate, being in the unusual position of being able to draw from many West European as well as its traditional "East European" funding sources. While such possibilities may remain for the five states on the "fast track" accession to EU, it is unclear where funds will come to support work dealing with the states in less fortunate positions--which are nevertheless critical to comparisons and the understanding of the "fast track" states themselves. The barriers created by "Yalta" were widely resented even if they were not nearly so ahistorical as asserted; it would be a shame were the integrity of the region as an object of scholarship to be divided again by the European Union and NATO--equally "artificial" lines drawn by major powers.

The limited availability of language instruction remains a major obstacle to training future scholars, and the emergence of a large number of small, independent states in the region has certainly not helped. Whereas knowledge of Serbo-Croatian was once (more or less) sufficient for field work in Slovenia or Macedonia, this is no longer the case; nor is knwledge of Czech adequate for work in Slovakia, or Russian or Polish for study in Lithuania. The difficulty of finding adequate instruction in the languages of states with small populations remains substantial, and it is critical that access to these languages be improved in an efficient and hopefully cost-effective way, whether in the United States itself or in the host country.

Further, there is great interest and need for collaborative research between scholars based in American institutions and colleagues in Central East Europe. As should be clear from the work already cited, East European area studies has always been characterized by reciprocal influences on both sides of the Atlantic. But the decade of the 1990s has created much greater opportunities for open and long term research collaboration, and it is important that funding sources recognize such possibilities.

In addition, while significant funding from both governmental and private sources has been devoted to training younger East European scholars in the norms and methodologies of western social science, similar efforts have not been devoted to funding American graduate students and researchers seeking to embark on research in the field. Title VIII funds, critical to academic research, have gradually been cut back, and "project funding" is no replacement. Symptomatic here is the change in the activites of the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX). Once primarily an administrator of academic exchanges, the bulk of IREX's activities are now as an administrator of USIA and USAID programs in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, with only a small budget devoted to its earlier foci.

Finally, how area experts relate to their individual disciplines is also a challenge confronting the field. Although in some institutions, area studies has been considered a field for the humanities only, simply the brief summary of recent work given above indicates that the social sciences are central to the understanding of Central East Europe today. Certainly, the thrust of area studies, with its focus on the particular and distinct, runs somewhat against the grain of much contemporary social science, with its stress on quantification, highly abstract and decontextualized models, and a search for general "laws." Yet social science cannot rely on theory alone. Every good hypothesis needs a test, and for this, only empirical work will do: one cannot use Slovakia as a case unless one knows what it is a case of, and only the dirty empirical details can tell a theorist whether a case is appropriate for the theory at hand. The widespread use of game theory in political science is a good example; highly stylized games of strategic interaction lead to accurate predictions and expectations only if the stylized description fits the empirical context. While it is thus quite correct for area experts working on, say, ethnic conflict to be trained in the tools of their discipline appropriate for studying it, methodology is not a substitute by itself for substance. Yet if departments marginalize their area specialists--or eliminate such positions altogether, as is already the case in economics--it means that area studies will be doomed to being completely atheoretical, while the disciplines become incapable of shedding light on empirically important problems.

All in all then, the changes caused by the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe have indeed changed its name--but not its distinctive characteristics or longstanding historical problematique. As a result, the area studies tradition in East Central European studies is alive, well, and thriving, although its continued health will clearly depend heavily on whether funding sources match the high level of interest in the area its transformation has engendered in so many fields of inquiry and practical endeavor.

EASTERN EUROPE OR CENTRAL EUROPE? EXPLORING A DISTINCT REGIONAL IDENTITY

Ellen Comisso and Brad Gutierrez
Dept. Of Political Science
University of California, San Diego

Paper prepared for a project on "Revitalizing Area Studies"

September 1999