

thoughtful study of the 'complexity' of the complexity paradigm in world politics 'beyond anarchy'.

Monika Nalepa, *Skeletons in the Closet: Transitional Justice in Post-Communist Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

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In her first and very promising book Monika Nalepa presents an entirely new approach to the study of lustration policies in Eastern Europe. The starting point of her enquiry is a simple but intriguing thought: during negotiated transitions, promises of amnesty (i.e. not holding the former political elite accountable for their past actions) made by the opposition are not credible. On the basis of this observation, she identifies three puzzles which constitute the backbone of the book. "Why did opposition parties keep their promises of amnesty? Why and when were those promises broken? Why did the successors of former autocrats break them?" (p.4)

With respect to the first puzzle, she questions the viability of many other explanations referenced in the literature relying on game theoretic models. She demonstrates that a basic model of pacted transitions can only give insufficient answers to the questions above. The simple argument is that the peaceful nature of regime change rests upon the promise of the opposition which guarantees immunity from prosecution to former autocrats who, in exchange, allow free and fair elections to be held. However, as Nalepa explains, such promises are simply not credible because once the opposition ascends to power, nothing prevents it from adopting harsh transitional justice measures. Thus she outlines her own "skeletons in the closet" model as a more informative alternative. In her view, the long tenure of communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe has enabled autocrats in most countries to infiltrate the underground opposition with their own informers. As dissidents were mostly uncertain about the gravity of this problem, the asymmetric information at the roundtables about the identity of these informers and about their level of infiltration was an important bargaining chip in the hands of the well-informed autocrats. The informers are the skeletons in the closet of the opposition and their existence makes the adoption of lustration particularly harmful to the dissidents themselves, which in turn ensures the credibility of the promise of amnesty. She illustrates the different equilibria of this game by the cases of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland using evidence from archives, analytic narratives, and data aggregated from numerous elite interviews.

In order to answer the second question, she uses a statistical model based on survey data to show that demand from the electorate cannot explain the adoption of lustration policies. Furthermore, she asserts that these laws had more to do with strategic political choices and thus the reason for their implementation can be better explained by analyzing the development of party systems with special attention to pro-lustration parties. Nalepa approaches the third puzzle with an agenda-setter model and concludes that lustration initiated by former communists may be a pre-emptive strategy against the adoption of more stringent policies. Finally, she describes possible extensions of the “skeletons in the closet” model.

This work is unique in the transitional justice field in many ways. In the vast social scientific literature on lustration in Eastern Europe, it is hard to find studies which address these fundamental questions using such a sophisticated combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. Case studies, analytic narratives, elite interviews, the statistical analysis of aggregate data and various other ways of interpreting empirical evidence all make her game theoretic models especially convincing. Most importantly, while paying attention to details, Nalepa keeps her focus on these essential questions and attempts to specify something close to a general theory about lustration policies following Eastern European transitions.

While Nalepa’s argument is undoubtedly novel, well-founded, and convincing, there are some problems which are worth noting. First, the choice of cases is poorly explained and the degree of generalization of her argument is unclear throughout the book. The few paragraphs devoted to supporting the case selection are far from satisfactory. Additionally, Nalepa only examines three transitions closely but, as she constantly makes references to other countries, it is not at all clear to what degree she claims her theory to be applicable to other transitions. Some may now say that she does not consider the generalization of her argument important and that her only concern is to find good illustrations for the equilibria of her model. Truly, evaluating the acceptability of this defense would take this review to the slippery soil of the critiques and defenses of rational choice (to discussions about issues such as post-hoc model building and the acceptability of considering only cases that fit while disregarding “atypical” ones at the same time). But no witty riposte from the supporters of game theory can explain why Nalepa dismisses some alternative theories with counterexamples with which she does not confront her own model.¹

Another class of serious problems concern the assumptions of her model which seem to be highly improbable in real life situations. Although these simplifications can be argued for as necessary for the parsimony of the model, what is nevertheless problematic is that these unrealistic assumptions rely on thin or no justification at all. Firstly, the assumption of unitary actors completely excludes the possibility that

1 This dubious practice is present in sections 4.7 and 6.5.

former communists with no informer pasts may stand to gain politically from the revelation of the secrets of incriminated co-members of the former ruling party (the same process may be true for the opposition). The use of unitary actors goes hand in hand with other questionable assumptions like extreme party discipline and the belief that the surfacing of incriminating evidence against one member means the equal loss of face in a political sense for all the other members of the party. Moreover, Nalepa assumes that former communists are hurt in the same way by informers in their ranks as the opposition, and that actors are risk neutral, which is hard to imagine in times as turbulent as transitions.

A few methodological problems² and factual inaccuracies³ are also present in the book, but generally they are not of such importance so as to endanger the validity of the main argument. There is one crucial issue which I believe that Nalepa overlooked, namely the credibility of the autocrats at the roundtable negotiations. If they know the informers in the ranks of the dissidents, they can reveal this information any time to discredit the opposition even without a legal framework for lustration. In Nalepa's model, the autocrats have perfect information about the secret pasts of the dissidents, thus they should be able to exert considerable influence not only in the adoption of lustration legislation, but in all the other political moves of the opposition. Therefore, the communists would also need to make a credible promise that the secret information in their possession would not be released.

Despite these shortcomings, this book is definitely an important work with a theory of high promise in the field of transitional justice. Certainly, it should be read by all those interested in the empirical analysis of the institutions of transitional justice or in the history of Eastern Europe in general.

Roland Erne, *European Unions: Labor's Quest for a Transnational Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008)

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Roland Erne's *European Unions* examines the potential role of trade unions in democratizing the European Union (EU). Those interested in the evolution of a pan-European labor movement can gain much from this elegantly designed study that

2 For example, in the analysis of elite interviews, even though only one fifth of the respondents gave answers to a certain question, Nalepa makes use of this data without any reference to the possible bias involved.

3 For instance, the information about the governing party in Hungary in 2001 is incorrect (Table 1.1) and about the voting share of FiDeSz in 1990 (Appendix D).