Postcommunist Capitalism and Democracy: Cutting the Postcommunist Cake

The postcommunist world is of interest for several reasons. First, it covers a substantial part of the world’s surface and of its population, even if one excludes China. Second, we are always told that the reason why the social sciences have an inferiority complex in relation to the natural sciences is that we are inferior, as in the psychiatrist’s joke, and that this is in large part because we can’t rely on experiments. Thus the forty-year or, in the Soviet case, seventy-year experiment with communism, followed by the twenty-year experience of postcommunist ‘transition’, can hardly fail to interest us. For anyone, like myself or readers of this journal, with an interest in the prospects for democratic socialism, the experience of undemocratic socialism, or whatever one calls the societies ruled by monopolistic communist parties in the twentieth century, is surely relevant. Finally, the re-establishment of capitalism and the establishment or re-establishment of democracy (where this has occurred) might have implications for our understanding of these institutions and their interrelations.

The continuing relevance of the terms postcommunist or postsocialist may require some justification. We no longer speak of post-fascist Italy or post-Nazi Germany except perhaps to refer to the immediate postwar years, and some people have argued that it is time to pension off ‘postcommunism’ as well. I shall suggest here that this would be a mistake, both because the legacies of communism can be shown to persist and because the parts of Europe which experienced communism continue to be subject to differential dynamics in the development of Europe since

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1 Earlier versions of this article were presented to a work-in-progress seminar at Newcastle and to the International Consortium of Social Theory Programs conference at Sussex in summer 2010, and to a Citizenship in South-East Europe (CITSEE) seminar at Edinburgh in December 2010.
1989. (The sharpest expression of this is captured in Iván Berend’s description of Eastern and Central Europe’s ‘Detour from the Periphery to the Periphery’ (Berend, 1996), and the development of Europe, and of the European Union in particular, has done little to defuse the provocative phrase.)

By ‘cutting the postcommunist cake’ I am referring to the way in which parts of the postcommunist world are differentiated in academic analysis and public discussion. The first cut is that just mentioned, between the postcommunist world and the rest of, here, Europe and Eurasia. As everyone recognizes, though, the postcommunist world, or even postcommunist Europe and the former Soviet Union, do not form a homogeneous entity. There is less agreement however on where the most important dividing lines are to be drawn. Here is a list of some of them:

1) Even a basic regional division, such as the tripartite one used by the EBRD, between Central Europe (including Slovenia) and the Baltic States (CEB), South-Eastern Europe (SEE) and Commonwealth of Independent States and Mongolia

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2 See Stenning and Hörschelmann (2008); also the volume discussed below, edited by David Lane and Martin Myant, in which ‘The contributors were asked to consider how far the societies in transition from state socialism carry a common footprint from their communist pasts…’ (Lane and Myant, 2007: 1).

3 The pejorative use of the adjective ‘Balkan’ both inside and outside the region would be one example. There are of course echoes in my analysis of what is called ‘constructivism’ in International Relations, though I shall not pursue these connections here. See also Klaus Eder, (2006) ‘Europe’s Borders: The Narrative Construction of the Boundaries of Europe’, European Journal of Social Theory, 9, 2, May, pp. 255-271.

4 As Joseph Rothschild wrote of the difference between western historians in the 1950s and those more recently, ‘To our predecessors and teachers, the Stalinist imposition of monopolistic communist rule appeared - quite understandably – to be a profoundly revolutionary rupture with earlier patterns, traditions, and histories. Today, we are more impressed with the survival and resurgence of political continuities from the interwar period in such dimensions as the styles and degrees of political participation, the operational codes and cultures of political elites, the process of recruiting new political elites, their definitions of economic priorities, and so forth. (Rothschild and Wingfield, 2000: 223)
(CIS+M) is loaded with political and economic baggage, such as EU membership discussed below.\(^5\)

2) The simplest and most arbitrary division, though of course politically consequential, is that between the states which are currently or are about to become members of the EU and those which are not. Although the location of the dividing line at a given moment may be contingent, however, there is a good deal of interest in following the processes by which potential members such as postcommunist Slovakia in the 1990s, become acceptable, \textit{salonfähig}, or remain excluded.

3) Thinking still of institutional membership, there is an important difference in the postcommunist world between eastern Germany and the rest. The GDR, in the form of its newly created five states, was wholly absorbed into the Federal Republic. This had an upside (massive transfers of resources) and a downside (the virtual destruction of the East German economy).\(^6\) Three other questions of national boundaries might be mentioned here. The early and relatively painless secession of Slovenia after its ‘ten day war’) reinforced the special economic position which it had always occupied within Yugoslavia and was reflected in its accession to the European Union in 2004. The break-up of the Soviet Union created a line between regions remaining within Russia (including the Kaliningrad area as an exclave) and the republics which became independent, including of course the Baltic states now in the EU. Thirdly, the velvet divorce between the Czech and Slovak Republics made the former appear somewhat

\(^5\) See Jon Elster et al, \textit{Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies}, CUP 1996. pp. 46-7: ‘In the literature an “invisible map” drawing a distinction between East Central and South East Europe plays a prominent part…[but]…this distinction with its familiar discriminatory connotations is a rather shaky basis for comparative research on East European transitions.’ The authors recall in a footnote that they were rebuked by Czechs and Hungarians for also including Bulgaria in their four-country study.

\(^6\) For a comparative discussion, see Offe (1995).
more attractive as an accession candidate and the latter much less so, even before the Mečiar dictatorship ruled it out.

4) A more informal membership pertains to what has become known as the Visegrád group, established at Havel’s instigation at a meeting in Bratislava between Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary and foreshadowed by trans-border contacts between dissidents (Havel, 2008: 154-6). As Havel notes, it served as an example to other postcommunist states; its members formed the core of the 2004 EU enlargement - as well as the main focus of academic studies of postcommunism.

5) Havel and others in the Visegrád group were of course conscious of the historical links between its three, later four members. Another historical legacy which has served some commentators as an important dividing-line is the Habsburg Empire, which included Slovenia and Croatia in the west, Transylvania in the east and parts of modern Poland and Ukraine. Others point more to the line between ‘Western’ Christianity and Greek and Russian Orthodoxy or to that between predominantly Christian and Muslim parts of Europe: orthogonal to the Western/Orthodox line is the boundary of the Ottoman Empire, separating the south from the north of Eastern Europe. Even the internal ‘Western’ division between Catholic and Protestant has played a part in post-1989 politics – for example in Czechoslovakia or on the German-German border between protestant Hesse in the west and Catholic Eichsfeld in the east (Berdahl, 1999). To these long-standing historical divisions one should add the economic one from the eighteenth and nineteenth and separating regions like Bohemia, plugged into Western European circuits, from the ‘rest of the east’, providing essentially raw materials and agricultural products (Stokes, 1997: 21-2).

7 These differences tend not to show up in comparative value surveys, such as that by Miller, White and Heywood (1998), which found little difference on socialist, nationalist, liberal and democratic values, except that they call ‘external
6) Then there is the division between pacted or negotiated and revolutionary transitions, which arguably separates Poland and Hungary from Czechoslovakia, with Germany, as always, a special case.\(^8\) This division in turn may be argued to reflect an earlier difference between what Kitschelt et al (1999: 23-6) call ‘national-accommodative’ and ‘bureaucratic-authoritarian’ communism. All communist regimes were of course bureaucratic and authoritarian, but in Poland and Hungary, and also in Slovenia and Croatia (and possibly the rest of Yugoslavia), these features were moderated by elements of compromise with local social groups or civil society organisations (independent peasants and the Catholic Church in Poland, small-scale private enterprise and intellectuals in both Poland and Hungary, as well as the Yugoslav republics). Kitschelt et al. (2009: 23) distinguish a third variant, ‘patrimonial communism’, which ‘relies on vertical chains of personal dependence between leaders in the state and party apparatus and their entourage, buttressed by extensive patronage and clientelist networks’. This type is represented in their study by Bulgaria but also includes Romania, Albania and the rest of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Without going into the details of this analysis, one can see that differences of this kind cannot but affect the type of transition and its outcome.\(^9\) In Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, the diagnosis and dating of transition itself becomes contentious, shading off into the later obscurities of the break-up of Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union and the colour revolutions which continue sporadically to the present (Lane, 2009). Whether these should be seen as aftershocks of 1989, clearing

\(^8\) An early comparative analysis which remains useful is that by Judy Batt (1991). More recently, a Bulgarian commentator, Boyko Vasiliev (2010) has provided an ironical gloss on these differentiations.

\(^9\) eg the early development in Hungary of a multiparty system
up unfinished business, or whether, conversely, 1989 should be seen as exceptional, is
the question at the back of my reflections here.\textsuperscript{10}

I am concerned here however with a slightly more specific question: whether
there is something distinctive about the forms of capitalism and democracy which
have developed in postcommunist Europe and what account we should take of them
in rethinking the relation between capitalism and democracy. At the back of these
reflections lie essentially two themes. First, the diversity of forms of capitalism
discussed explicitly by the ‘Varieties of Capitalism’ literature.\textsuperscript{11} To the ‘Varieties of
Capitalism’ literature one should add the more oblique but complementary treatment
of these issues in world-system theory, globalisation theory and Marxist political
economy and the more Foucauldian theories of governmentality (Brenner, Peck and
Theodore, 2010).\textsuperscript{12} In relation to democracy, I have been inspired particularly by the
excellent recent book on *Multiple Democracies* by Paul Blokker (2010: 1), and by the
paradox he notes, that ‘while 1989 is generally regarded as the „hour of
democracy“...the imagination of democracy seems to have been hardly affected by the
events and their consequences.’\textsuperscript{13}

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\textsuperscript{10} In a suggestive comparison of Poland and Romania, Alina Mingiu-Pippidi (2005: 234) suggests that in postcommunist democracies ‘...the main indicator of...success became the distance between the formal institutions adopted – which were the same everywhere – and the informal practices in politics and society...The greater the difference between the past and the present formal institutions, the larger the distance between current formal and informal institutions’. She concludes (p. 235) that ‘...there is an “unbearable lightness” to democracy: Only after you have it do you realise how many other things are needed for a government to be able to provide quality of life to its citizens’.

\textsuperscript{11} For a critical application of this approach to postcommunist varieties, the
fundamental contribution is the book edited by David Lane and Martin Myant (2007). See also, more recently, the excellent overviews by Dorothee Bohle and Béla Greskovits (2009a) and Katharina Bluhm and Vera Trappmann (2010).

\textsuperscript{12} For an extremely interesting application of the last of these, see Aihwa Ong (2006).

\textsuperscript{13} See also Auer (2010).
It can of course be argued that there is nothing in these diversities to be explained by the postcommunist condition or by the geography of eastern or central Europe. 1989 was, or turned out to be, essentially a triple return to ‘Europe’, democracy and capitalism. Everyone had had enough of qualifying adjectives for democracy such as the pleonastic ‘people’s democracy’ (‘mensonge par pléonasme’, as Raymond Aron aptly described it. It seemed inappropriate to go on speaking of eastern Europe now the curtain was down, and even central raised uncomfortable memories and seemed to drive a wedge through the Visegrád cluster or what were to become the 2004 accession states. Capitalism had not been at the top of the menu in 1989, even where the idea of markets had been, but it rapidly became a fait accompli. Vaclav Klaus brushed aside the ‘social market economy’, saying he preferred to drop the adjective. And yet it would be odd if nearly forty years of state socialism (and nearly seventy in the former USSR) had not left important traces. Even where Western forms were adopted wholesale, it remains the case, as Claus Offe (1996: 216) pointed out, that ‘no Western political, social or economic institution has been invented for the purpose of extricating an entire group of societies from the conditions of state socialism and its ruins.’ (my emphasis)

To begin, I should rapidly mention two paths not taken. The first is that of a ‘third way’ between capitalism and state socialism; the second that of a new type of democracy reflecting and building on the civil society activism of the 1980s. There are three prime sites in which an observer in late 1989 or early 1990 might have looked for signs of a third way. One is Germany, where it seemed for a time that there was the option of a confederation of the two German states and, at least for the

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14 A third is the neutralisation of the postcommunist region as opposed to its polarisation between EU/NATO and Russia (Sarotte, 2009; for the economic dimension see Lane, 2007: 462).
East, an intermediate economic path. We know how quickly that was overtaken by events: the slogan ‘We are one people’, whether or not it began as an appeal to the East German security forces not to shoot their fellow citizens, rapidly became a demand for reunification under Kohl’s ample wings. A second candidate is Poland, where the transformation had after all been driven by what stated off as a trade union. Here too, however, the incoming Solidarity government rapidly initiated capitalist shock therapy and called on what remained of the union to bring the working class into line with the new course. Finally, Hungary, like Poland but more substantially and over a longer period, had already gone some distance towards a form of market socialism of a Yugoslav kind.

Was socialist self-management without communist monopoly rule (which had already gone in Hungary by the summer of 1989) a possibility? No-one much seemed to think so, and local analyses probably paralleled that of Nigel Swain (1992: 31-2): ‘The reintroduction of capitalist economic relations in Hungary...was probably inevitable’. In Hungary and Yugoslavia, as in Germany, a bird in the hand (Western capitalism) looked a better prospect than a pig in a poke. (Kornai, 1992)

As for democracy, a striking feature of dissident activity in the 1980s had been an approach which Konrád called anti-political. Havel’s ‘living in truth’ and the practice of operating openly as if under conditions of freedom was also far removed from the instrumentalism of conventional politics. The eclipse of civil society movements and of the broad anticommunist alliances which had been such a feature of 1989 was as rapid, by western standards, as had been their rise. In part this was intended. As Havel (2008: 78) put it, ‘...the Civic Forum was a body created for a single purpose: to peacefully push aside the previous regime and mediate the transition to democracy. It was meant to exist for a couple of weeks and then dissolve
into normal political parties.’ There was disappointment both inside and outside the region at the rapid disappearance of innovative moments and their replacement by something like a ‘Western’ party system, distinguished only by its volatility and the understandable intensity of political antagonisms rooted in the old regime. The process was however inevitable.  

In any case, it must be remembered that what was meant by democracy was primarily social and political freedom rather than a particular set of political arrangements. Constitutions had to be rewritten – more in some countries than others - but many institutions remained in their previous form, freed of the communist content which had denatured them. As Havel (2007: 72) wrote in his memoir interviews:

There was not a lot that was specifically communistic in what you call the ‘technology of power’ once the leading role of the Communist Party no longer applied, and things were no longer decided first in the Politburo. The government simply meets on certain days; there’s an agenda, there are procedural rules, the ministers have to receive their briefing materials in time, and so on…

There could be no question of just ‘dismantling’ the existing structures. Instead, ‘We tried to fill existing posts with new, uncompromised people and then, by democratic

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15 The weakness of civil society, in the sense of associational life, remains a striking feature of the postcommunist world. As Marc Morjé Howard (2003: 13-14) notes, ‘Although the breakdown or survival of democracy may not be at stake, the quality of post-communist democracy suffers as a result of the weakness of civil society, as post-communist citizens become increasingly alienated from the political process, while simultaneously lacking the institutional leverage that organizations might provide.’
means – that is, by passing constitutional and ordinary laws - to carry out the systemic changes we were able to agree on as the most necessary and the most important.’


The US historian of the Balkans Gale Stokes, in a short article of 1993 entitled ‘Is it Possible to Be Optimistic about Eastern Europe’ concluded that, with the exception of Albania and former Yugoslavia (apart from Slovenia):

Eastern Europe is not in transition. To one degree or another, every East European political system is already pluralist. What we are seeing now is what we are going to get in the future – bitter political struggles, nasty elections, corruption, and fights over the media. This is what it means to have a normal political life…Each of these countries in its own way has committed itself to the pluralist adventure and has embarked on it. If we compare this commitment and the progress made in what is, historically speaking, a very short time with the situation these societies faced in 1983, or 1953, or 1933, is it not possible to be at least a little bit optimistic about Eastern Europe?

(Stokes, 1997: 202-3)

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What then is distinctive about postcommunist capitalism and postcommunist democracy, and do they have lessons for those of us living further west? Both transitions were both easier and more difficult than expected. The German case is particularly striking. Chancellor Kohl’s ‘10-point programme’ with which he startled the Bundestag on November 28th, 1989, envisaged a gradual approach to unity via a ‘treaty community’ (Vertragsgemeinschaft). Just over 10 months later, unification
was complete. In between these two dates, on July 1st, 1990, the President of the Bundesbank congratulated himself on the smoothness of the GDR’s switch to the D-Mark. Looking at the wave-like motion of federal election statistics, the only sign of unification (apart from a larger electorate) is the appearance of two new minority parties: the PDS and Bündnis 90. The devil was of course in the detail: monetary union decimated the East German economy, and the ‘rush to unification’ (Jarausch, 1994) left many East Germans feeling the victims of an Anschluss or a colonial takeover (Christ and Neubauer, 1991). This is one of the issues on which there remains a really significant difference of opinion between East and West Germans: the former agreeing two to one that East Germany was ‘overwhelmed and taken over by West Germany in the process of unification’, while in the West the proportions are almost inversed (59% to 38%) (Pew, 2009: 47).

The German situation was particularly extreme, despite massive transfers from West to east, because of Kohl’s encouragement of unrealistic expectations (‘blooming landscapes’) on the one hand and the shock of monetary union on the other. The whole region, however, experienced a ‘transition shock’ which was partly inevitable and partly due to the excesses of neoliberalism. Ernest Gellner described the pre-industrial European state in terms of dentistry, operating by means of ‘extraction’, but the metaphor fits even better the strategy adopted in postcommunist transitions, whose protagonists argued that ‘of course, if you haven’t been to the dentist for forty or, in the worst case, seventy years, the necessary treatment will be extensive and expensive’. To shift the image from one orifice to another, postcommunist capitalism had a difficult birth, as the appalling waste of the communist planned economies was followed by a similar waste of economic and human resources in often chaotic and ill-conceived (and often criminal) privatisations.
And yet, somehow or other, there emerged in the more favoured parts of the bloc, and the more favoured sectors, something recognizably like Western capitalist economies, showing the same sort of variation between neoliberal and more corporatist styles of economic governance that can be found in the West. It is time to ask whether Berend’s image of the detour of Eastern Europe from the periphery to the periphery is too pessimistic. One Škoda doesn’t make a summer, but the prospect of a gradual catch-up, at least for parts of the former bloc and for favoured sectors in them, began to seem realistic.

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Do postcommunist Europeans (many of whom are also of course postcommunist in the sense that they were born after the end of communism) like their capitalism and their democracy? The bad news for anticapitalist democrats is

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16 An important alternative approach which deserves fuller treatment is that by Andreas Nölke and Arjan Vliegenhart (2009), following the approach of Bohle and Greskovits. They argue that East Central Europe, and a fortiori other postcommunist states, should be assigned to a third category of ‘dependent market economies’, dependent on foreign investment, ownership and export markets. This leaves them in a subordinate position in the world economy but one which has enabled substantial relative progress. The Baltic states, by contrast, with their more neoliberal approach, ‘might still be caught in a “postsocialist developmental trap” that hinders structural economic development.’ (pp. 692-3). Greskovits (2010: 10) also argues for a ‘triadic’ model consisting of ‘a neoliberal type in the Baltic states, an embedded neoliberal type in the Visegrád states, and a neocorporatist type in Slovenia’. (Bulgaria and Romania, he adds, have also tended towards neoliberalism.) As for their structural location, he assigns the Visegrád states and Slovenia to a ‘semi-core’ and the others to a ‘semiperiphery’ (pp. 5-6). Lucian Cernat (2006: 18), following David Lane and others, also offers a third category of ‘developmental capitalism’, where ‘state and business collaborate positively’. He suggests (p. 29): ‘There is at present a lack of consensus as to whether the processes of institution building in post-socialist Europe reflect the development of a well-defined European capitalist model or contribute to the creation of a “cocktail capitalism”.’ These debates will of course continue on a country, regional and sectoral basis (see, for example, Crouch, Schröder and Voelzkow 2009). What is crucial in all this, I think, is to attend to both dimensions: domestic variation as analysed in the Variety of Capitalism literature, and global position.

17 In the circles in which I am lucky enough to move, everyone is (as far as I know) a convinced democrat, while there is much more mixed attitude to capitalism. For a
that there is generally much stronger support for the market economy than for actually-existing democracy. The Pew (2009) survey asked respondents in eight postcommunist countries (plus East Germany) whether they agreed that ‘Most people are better off in a free market economy, even though some people are rich and some are poor’. Support for markets was higher in Poland (70%) than in West Germany (65%), Britain (67%), France (61%) and Spain (59%). These Western figures are comparable with those in much of the East (63% in the Czech Republic, 56% in Slovakia, 52% in Russia and 50% in Lithuania. Opinion in Ukraine was evenly balanced, with 46% agreeing and 43% disagreeing, and only in Bulgaria and, interestingly, Hungary, was there majority disagreement (58% in Bulgaria and 65% in Hungary) (Pew, 2009: 41). This compares strikingly with support for democracy. In all the postcommunist countries surveyed except Ukraine there was a majority in favour of the change to multiparty democracy, but with a range from 85% in East Germany and 80% in the Czech Republic to figures in the fifties in Hungary, Lithuania, Russia and Bulgaria, which all recorded substantial declines since 1991 (Pew, 2009: 1).¹⁸ Most dramatically, perhaps, a 2009 poll found a majority of East Germans saying that life in the GDR had ‘more good sides than bad sides’ and 8% saying it was better than in the reunified Germany.

A recent Polish survey cited by Stefan Garsztecki (2010: 9), though less up-beat about Polish opinion, strikingly illustrates the anomalous state of that in Hungary. Asked whether democratisation since 1989 should be considered ‘a success or a defeat’, Poles, Czechs and Slovaks recorded more or less clear majorities for

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¹⁸ Sometimes the relation is the other way round. Bohle (2011) cites the 1997 Eurobarometer figures for Hungary and Latvia: the market economy seemed ‘right’ to no Latvians and only 6% of Hungarians, while democracy satisfied 30% in Hungary and 24% in Latvia.
‘success’, whereas two thirds of Hungarians opted for ‘defeat’. On the other hand, when asked how important it was to them to live in a democratically ruled country, only half of Poles found it ‘very important’, as compared to over three quarters in Germany, France and Britain (Garsztecki, 2010: 12). The figures for Ukraine and Russia were 36% and 16% respectively, though with a clear majority in both countries when those replying ‘rather important’ are added.

Figures like these raise once again the question of a line of division between the former Soviet Union (perhaps excluding the Baltic states) and Eastern and central Europe. The best survey evidence is probably that provided by Richard Rose and his associates, who have run for nearly twenty years the New Europe Barometer and New Russia Barometer series. Rose (2009) concludes that this is significant. Although one of his comparative tables, in which respondents were asked where they would like their political system to be, on a scale from dictatorship to democracy, and where they put it at present, does not show striking differences between the former Soviet states of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus and the new EU states (Rose, 2009: 165), he points out that ‘in new EU member states an average of 57 per cent say that democracy is always preferable; in Russia only 25 per cent are so strongly committed to democracy’ (Rose, 2009: 188). And although there is no significant difference in opinion on these issues between Russia and central Asian states such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, or between Russian Orthodox and Muslims in those states, ‘the divergence of institutional development between CEE [Central and Eastern Europe] and post-Soviet countries means that both Russians and Muslims have learned to adapt to very different types of political regimes’ (Rose, 2009: 190).

In all the postcommunist countries except East Germany, where opinion was evenly divided, there was majority support in the Pew survey for the view that a
strong economy is more important than a good democracy, with figures in the fifties in Poland and the Czech and Slovak Republics and in the mid-seventies in the others (Pew, 2009: 25). Satisfaction with the current working of democracy showed a similar pattern: massively negative except in the same three countries, with a substantial positive majority only in Poland (Pew, 2009: 32). A recent issue of the *Journal of Democracy* records ‘Deepening Dissatisfaction’ (Krastev, 2010) and the need for ‘a New Model’ (Rupnik, 2010). A Freedom House report describes 2008 as ‘Democracy’s Dark Year’ (Shkolnikov, 2009: title) and the Central European University in Budapest has a ‘Center for the Study of Imperfections in Democracy’.

Germany is a good place to look for comparative data. A survey in 2000 asked whether the social market economy ‘had proved itself’ (sich bewährt). Two thirds overall said it had, but with a third of eastern and a quarter of western respondents disagreeing. Asked whether its future development should tend to more market and free competition or to more social security, around half chose the latter as against a quarter for the former. Eastern opinion was much more emphatic: 67% to 20% (Bürklin and Jung, 2001: 691-2). More recently, the Pew survey of 2009 shows rather more Eastern than Western Germans (39% as against 31%) disagreeing with the suggestion that ‘Most people are better off in a free market economy, even though some people are rich and some are poor’; the East German figure is however equal to that in France (40%), while support for markets is higher in Poland than in West Germany (Pew, 2009: 41).

Survey evidence suggests a majority perception in east central Europe that there are ‘strong’ or ‘very strong’ conflicts between managers and workers and that

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19 Andrew Roberts (2010) uses objective rather than subjective indicators of ‘accountability’ and ‘responsiveness’, including detailed case studies of policy areas (pensions and housing) in the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary.
income differentials are ‘too great’, and a relation between the perception of conflict and objective inequality as measured by Gini coefficient (Delhey, 2001: 203-5). Post-communist electorates remain more egalitarian in their attitudes than Western Europeans, to a degree more closely related than in the West to the actual levels of inequality in their societies (Delhey, 2001). As Paul Blokker (2009: 174) notes, ‘Contrary to exaggerated claims of a prevalent neo-liberal discourse in the region, discourses oriented by a clear ethic of distributive justice or social solidarity have been present in all three societies [Poland, Hungary and Romania RWO] throughout democratization.’

The traditional expression of egalitarian attitudes, in Europe and to some extent elsewhere, has been social democratic politics, but the scissor effect in the post-communist countries of the local demise of socialist/communist political and economic policies and the general reorientation of social democracy into third way or ‘new’ politics has tended to restrict this development. Instead, we find a more inchoate ‘politics of anger’ (Ost, 2005), rather like that of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ extreme right in Western Europe, the former arguably represented by the BNP, FN, Republikaner etc. and the latter by Jörg Haider and Pim Fortuyn and their successors (Guibernau, 2010).20

Poised between the old West and the old East, Germany is an interesting case. Although the SPD experienced in 2009 its worst result since the establishment of the Federal Republic, the combined support for SPD, Greens and the Left Party is currently running at just over 50%. The Left Party, formed out of the old East German PDS (ex-SED) and a small West German grouping, got nearly 12% in 2009 and is currently on 8%, better than the long-established FDP. Its support is overwhelmingly

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20 I should say that this is my distinction rather than Guibernau’s, though she also addresses these differences of political style.
in East Germany (and the eastern districts of Berlin), but it has become a serious player in an increasingly volatile pattern of national and local politics. (Just before the Federal elections of 2009, only a quarter of voters described themselves as determined to vote for a particular party (Jung, 2009b; see also Jung, 2009a).) The dilemma for the SPD, as for other social democratic parties, is whether to adopt a sharper political profile at the risk of abandoning the centre to the parties of the Right (Jung, 2011).

Overall, the effects of social structure on political preferences are not, or not yet, particularly significant in postcommunist Europe. As Szelényi and his colleagues (Eyal, Szelényi and Townsley, 1997: 212) suggested, ideological issues tend to predominate in the earlier period of transition, with class issues tending to emerge only some time later. Mateju et al (2005: 233-4) identify a similar shift from political attitudes polarised between ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, or people perceiving themselves as such, to a more objectively determined interest-based politics.

In the early periods of the transformation, the role of subjective factors (subjective mobility, relative deprivation, perception of change in life-chances, and so on) in the determination of voting behaviour is likely to be stronger than the role of objective class. As the new post-socialist class structure emerges and the politics of symbols is transformed into the politics of interests, however, objective class is becoming a more and more important factor in voting behaviour.
As this example shows, economics and politics, or capitalism and democracy, are even more closely interdependent in the postcommunist context than elsewhere,\textsuperscript{21} and I turn in conclusion to the analysis of postcommunist democracy. Once again, it was both the best of times and the worst of times. On the plus side, one has to note the surprisingly rapid emergence of something like western party structures and party competition – albeit at the expense of the more informal social movements which had helped to undermine or overthrow the communist regimes and had initially seemed well placed to succeed them. On the other hand, the party competition has been exceptionally volatile and often violent, harking back to the Leninist dictum that politics is about who screws whom (кто кого). In the case of Poland, the polarization has led one sociologist to suggest a more formal separation between the enlightened-western PO-land and catholic-nationalist PiS-land.\textsuperscript{22} Corruption has been endemic, not just in the ‘wild east’ but also in the west of the region, and even leaving aside the appalling civil war in former Yugoslavia and the dictatorships of Mečiar and Lukashenka (and others further east), the antics of the Kaczynskis or (in a rather different way) of Klaus are not encouraging. The current situation in Hungary is also extremely depressing, not just for democratic socialism but for democracy as a whole, with an extreme right party out-polling the socialists and the governing party introducing restrictions on media freedom.

Once again, it is not clear whether these should be seen as infantile maladies of postcommunism or something more entrenched and more similar to what has been

\textsuperscript{21} Gil Eyal (2000) has pointed to an underlying elective affinity between Czech political dissidence and neoliberal monetarism, focussed particularly on a shared commitment to the truthful representation of political and economic affairs.

\textsuperscript{22} See Jacek Żakowski, ‘POland and PiSland’, \textit{Polityka} 2010-11-19; PaD (\textit{Polityka auf Deutsch}) 87, referring to and extending the argument of an article by Radislaw Markowski. See also Greskovits (2010) on the polarisation between neoliberal and antiliberal-nationalist politics. Also Bale (2003).
called postdemocracy. And this is of course a problem for Europe as a whole, since a united Europe now exists in a more or less complete form in the European Union, even if its quantitative or extensive growth has not been matched by qualitative or intensive growing together. Looking on the bright side, whereas a lot of people (including me – Outhwaite 2009) have worried about the ways in which democracy might threaten capitalism or, more seriously, capitalism might threaten democracy, there seems to be a clear affinity between them in the postcommunist region, with economic reform and democratization going together like a horse and carriage.\(^{23}\) On the other hand, new democracies are inevitably less robust than older ones and, as Rupnik (2010: 106) points out, ‘…it is clear that democracy can no longer derive its legitimacy from 1989…’

What I suggest in conclusion, obviously enough, is that we should be concerned about the vulnerability of democratic politics in both East and West,\(^{24}\) but without falling into the temptation of double standards and stereotypical condemnation of the East or, for that matter, the South.\(^{25}\) The ‘digested read’ of this paper might be the truism that postcommunist capitalisms and democracies will be pretty much like others, except where they are different. The important point is to be able to judge where the differences are insurmountable and where they are not (See Bunce et al, 2010; also Mungiu-Pippidi, 2010). The lessons of 1989 and the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007 suggest some modest degree of optimism. But as the late Fred Halliday (2010:16) pointed out,

\(^{23}\) Frye (2010) argues that both autocracies and excessively polarized democratic systems are inimical to economic reform.

\(^{24}\) On Western Europe see, for example, Mair 2006.

\(^{25}\) As Monica Ciobanu (2009) argues, it is important that models such as ‘quality of democracy’ be used flexibly and with attention to local institutional contexts.
Communism was not just a utopian project, it was a dramatic response to the inequalities and conflicts generated by capitalist modernity; the continuation of some of these same inequalities and conflicts today suggests that further challenges…will result.

Communism may be dead; the challenge to democratic socialism remains, in both East and West.
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