

The Dynamics of Transition in East Central Europe

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History

- Buffer zone between empires
- Religious divide (Catholic – Orthodox)
- From core to semi-periphery
- New states: authoritarian nationalist reg.
- WWII.: „Bloodlands”
- Communist takeover, totalitarianism
- Satellite status in the Cold War
- Post-totalitarianism, different trajectories

Nature of Communist regimes

- Soviet Bloc

Post-totalitarian, open: Poland, Hungary

Post-tot. closed: Czechoslovakia, GDR, Bul.

Sultanistic, closed: Romania

Occupied & sovietized: Estonia, Latvia,
Lithuania

Non-Soviet Bloc

Supranationalist, open: Yugoslavia

Totalitarian, closed: Albania

Strategies of survival

- **Exit:** emigration waves to West (GDR: continuously, Hungary: 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968-71, Poland: 1968, 1970s, 1980s, Romania: 1980s)
- **Voice:** 1953, 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1977, 1980-81
- **Loyalty:** passive acceptance of the regime (in different degrees)

Strategies of opposition

Failed strategies:

- Violent revolution: Hungary 1956.
- Non-violent reform: Czechoslovakia 1968.

Winning strategy:

„New evolutionism” (Adam Michnik, 1976)

i.e. non-violent resistance movement based
on autonomous civil society (Solidarity)

External impacts

- Helsinki accord (1975)
- Human rights based US foreign policy
- Election of a Polish Pope in the Vatican (John Paul II.)
- The decline of Soviet economic & military capacity to control the satellites
- New Cold War rhetoric in the 1980s
- The „Gorbachev factor” (Archie Brown)

Modes of transition (1989-90)

- **Negotiated revolutions:** from below and above (Poland, Hungary)
- **Non-violent mass protests:** from below and outside (GDR, Czechoslovakia)
- **Follow-up coup d'état:** from above and outside (Bulgaria)
- **Violent revolution and coup d'état:** from below, above, and outside (Romania)
- **Liberalization & disintegration** (Yugoslavia)

Triple transition (Claus Offe)

- **Political regime:** from dictatorship to democracy
- **Economic regime:** from command economy to market economy
- **Political community:** the collapse of all non-democratic federal states (Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia), and the rise of new states (Czech Rep. post-Yugoslav states, Slovakia, Baltic states)

Post-transition settings in the 1990s

- **Liberal democracies** with externally supervised consolidation (EU, NATO): Poland, Hungary, Czech Rep., Estonia, Slovenia, Lith., Latvia
- **Electoral democracies** or hybrid regimes: Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria (until 1996-98)
- **Hybrid regimes** in war: Croatia, Bosnia-Herz., (small) Yugoslavia

Western integration & problems of democratic deficit

- **Membership** in the EU (10 countries), in the eurozone (3 countries), and in NATO (all but some post-Yugoslav states)
- **Democratic deficit**: the rise of elitist/populist cycle in domestic politics
- **Signs of deconsolidation** (Romania 2000-4, Poland 2005-7), (Hungary 2006), and the danger of **de-democratization** (Hungary 2010-2). Successful transition can never be irreversible.

Thank you!