POST-COMMUNIST PARTY SYSTEMS

Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation

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structural components of the diversity among the old communist regimes and associated pathways toward institutional change in the critical window of regime breakdown. In chapter 2, we then propose hypotheses explaining how diverse experiences and strategic configurations among actors before and during communist rule as well as in the transition to a new order affect the patterns of party competition and political representation that create qualitatively different processes of interest aggregation and collective decision making across the new democracies.

Accounts of political change that invoke path dependence often appear to command a compelling persuasiveness only because they seem to presuppose nothing more than a good narrative constructed around a linear chronology in which later events and institutional arrangements somehow follow from earlier ones. With the benefit of hindsight, a skilled storyteller may always identify attributes and episodes associated with the old regimes that foreshadow subsequent developments. In order to avoid such opportunistic theorizing and the related penchant toward idiosyncratic accounts geared to individual cases, arguments from path dependency must meet at least two standards to achieve explanatory bite. First, its advocates must formulate them at a level of sufficiently high conceptual generality to be testable against the experience of a variety of unexplored cases. This requires that we abstract from numerous historical particularities of each case and focus on attributes that vary systematically across classes of cases. Second, accounts based on path dependency must lay out a parsimonious logic detailing how and why actors with a capacity to process information, to define preferences, and to deliberate about alternative pathways choose particular strategies resulting in observable collective outcomes.

In this chapter, we propose such a logic for the subject of communist regime breakdown in three steps. First, we distinguish three variants of communist rule and discuss how these variants are themselves steeped in social and political-institutional antecedents, although we refrain from pursuing the causal chain further into the past, let alone explore the cultural correlates they are associated with. Next, we explore how these three configurations of communist rule opened up alternative strategic pathways of regime transition in the late 1980s. Finally, we sketch how the distinctive patterns of regime transition influenced the choice of new democratic rules of the game. After outlining the logic that connects resources, institutions, and political choices to alternative pathways of post-communist transformation, we discuss how our theoretical model applies to empirical cases in the communist hemisphere and justify the design of our empirical research in that light.

It is a matter of course that a logic of institutions and calculated strategic choices constructs an idealization not fully reflecting any particular historical case. Observers of political and economic regime change are therefore quite right to insist on the contingency of regime transitions in which actors must make choices under conditions of great uncertainty because unique constellations of institutions and actors, faced with a far-reaching breakdown of economic activity and political order, make it difficult for participants to define their preferences and collective identities or to select strategies that advance their objectives in light of their opponents’ choices. Nevertheless, theory involves the construction of logically connected generalizations about the causal linkages between actions, events, and macro-institutions. If we endorse this epistemology of social science, then theory aims at highlighting the non-contingent, least probabilistic connections among elements within political processes at the expense of purely contingent choices that can be reconstructed only by a historical narrative.1

THREE MODES OF COMMUNIST RULE AND THEIR HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

While communist polities vary in many respects, two properties characterize alternative communist regime types that appear consequential for the transition to democracy and ultimately the quality of the democratic process in post-communist polities. The first dimension concerns the extent to which communist regimes rely on a formal-rational bureaucratic state apparatus that rules out corruption and clientelism, as opposed to a patronal administration based on personal networks of loyalty and mutual exchange, combined with patronage, corruption, and nepotism. The existence of formal bureaucracy may have lasting consequences for the construction of citizen-party linkages at the time of suffrage extension and on opportunities for rent seeking by members of the incumbent elite in the process of reassigning property rights. A good measure of formal-bureaucratic rule is the extent to which the state administration relied on corruption under communist rule. While a few scholars have attempted to determine practices of corruption under communism in comparative terms (Willerton 1992; Goetz 1995; Middlen 1995), we lack a broad and reliable data base in this regard. Nevertheless, comprehensive assessments of corruption in post-communist countries conducted by investment risk analysis firms may provide us with clues about administrative practices under the old regimes, as long as we accept the premise that such administrative practices are unlikely to have fallen simply out of the blue sky at the time of regime change in the late 1980s.2

The extent of communist systems’ reliance on formal-bureaucratic rule depends on older patterns of state formation, economic development, and political mobilization. Where capitalist market economies had begun to take off before the advent of communism, they were intertwined with the development of more secure property rights hastened by and contributing to the development of a

1For this reason, authors such as Levine (1988), Remmer (1991, 1997), and Kitschelt (1992a, 1992b) have pointed out that the correct intuition of analysts who emphasize contingency – such as O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986) or DiPalma (1990) – unfortunately does not help us to make theoretical advances.

predictable formal-bureaucratic state apparatus. Moreover, in the more industrial economies powerful socialist and communist parties formed outside the state apparatus. Particularly the radical, communist working-class organizations had no access to state patronage and developed practices of citizen-elite linkage without clientelist material rewards to constituencies (cf. Sheffer 1994). Consistent with the Leninist vanguard party model, these practices favored formal-hierarchical and rational-bureaucratic governance structures later on when strong communist parties assumed political rule. Conversely, where market economies and radical socialist parties were feeble before the advent of communist rule and where the state apparatus relied on patronimial governance, later governing communist parties could resort to patronimial techniques in their own governance structures.

The second dimension of variability among communist regimes concerns the mechanisms communist parties employed to instill compliance in the population or the extent to which communist rulers after Stalin's death and during the "post-totalitarian" transformation tolerated a modicum of economic or political pluralism under communist tutelage.4 The two main compliance mechanisms are repression (the stick) and co-optation (the carrot), negative or positive incentives to promote cooperative conduct. While all communist regimes relied on a mix of both, the emphasis on each varied contingent upon the parties' bargaining power vis-à-vis actual or virtual opponents. This bargaining power, in turn, is linked to the skills and experiences of different political forces in the pre-communist period that constituted a virtual threat potential to the new incumbents of state power, once communist rule had been installed. Political and economic conditions preceding communist rule thus began to shape the feasible strategies of communist politicians after Stalin's death.

Different propensities for communist rulers to rely on repression, co-optation, and toleration of dissent come in at least three configurations characterized by different balances in the distribution of organizational resources. First, where socialist and communist parties as well as their bourgeois opponents were well organized in mass parties before the advent of communist rule, later communist governments primarily relied on repression and tolerated little dissent. Second, where the socialist-communist left was weak in numbers and organization, but bourgeois and agrarian opponents strong, communist governments from the 1950s onward relied on direct bargaining or indirect tacit trades with a virtual and sometimes real opposition to find a modus vivendi. Third, where both the socialist-communist left as well as bourgeois political organizations were weak and only agrarians were able to mobilize a mass following around civic associations in the

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4In contrast to the pluralism debates in the sociology of the 1970s and 1980s where the key question was whether organized economic special interests (classes, sections, regions) articulate conflicting demands and shape the policy process (cf. Haugh 1977; Skelting 1985), we are returning here to the classic notion of pluralism concerned with free and voluntary political mobilization and contestation of elite positions (cf. Dahl 1971, 1989).

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4Strategies of Democratization

pre-communist era, communist rulers employed both strict repression and inducements of co-optation but did not tolerate dissent. Based on our two dimensions—formal bureaucratic rule and the balance of power between communists and their adversaries in pre-communist political regimes—we can now characterize three different modes of communist rule and their historical origins.

The first type of communist rule is patrimonial communism. It relies on vertical chains of personal dependance between leaders in the state and party apparatus and their entourage, buttressed by extensive patronage and clientelistic networks. At the apex of patrimonial regimes, political power is concentrated around a small clique or an individual ruler worshiped by a personality cult. The level of rational-bureaucratic institutionalization in state and party remains low because the ruling clique penetrates the apparatus through nepotistic appointments. In extreme cases, such regimes give rise to the "sultanistic" role of an individual and his family (cf. Linz and Stepan 1996: 51-54). In patronimial systems, rulers firmly repress any stirring of opposition demanding rights to participation or they co-opt potentially resourceful challengers through selective incentives (office, material privilege).

Patrimonial communism was likely to emerge in historical settings where a traditional authoritarian regime,5 assisted by compliant religious leaders, ruled over societies of poor peasants (whether they were free men or serfs), weak cities, a thin layer of ethnic pariah immigrant entrepreneurs and merchants, a small and geographically concentrated industrial working class, and a corrupt coterie of administrators dependent on the personal whims of the ruler. In such settings, communist insurrectionists were political entrepreneurs without a proletarian mass following who built political power on the mobilization of dissatisfied elements of the intelligentsia whom they were able to recruit from the offspring of the political and economic elite. Moreover, they sought support from the poor peasantry by promising to break up large estates and to give property rights to the peasantry, or, where peasants were a class of poor smallholders, to redistribute resources to the countryside from the ruler's fiscal apparatus in the capital city.

Once having assumed power with or without foreign help, communist parties easily crushed weak urban middle-class organizations. Patrimonial communists then constructed an industrial society at an initially dizzying pace by squeezing the peasantry and subsidizing the emerging heavy industries.6 Patrimonial com-

5On the significance of clientelism and patronage in communist bureaucracy, see Goetz (1995) and Mihalek (1995). To gauge the extent of patronage and clientelism administration in communist times, the best guide may be to rely on current estimates of corruption in post-communist bureaucracies. Such corruption scores highly correlate with our three types of communist rule. See note 2.

6Such regimes often did not impose constitutional restraints on the ruler. In addition to regimes without constitution, this also applies to policies where constitutions de facto cannot limit the exercise of political power.

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This pattern of industrialization represents an extreme form of import substituting industrialization (ISI) which far exceeded the milder Latin American cases, where the peasantry and the rural landlords were weakened but not wiped out.
munism presided over a prolonged era during which the peasantry’s offspring enjoyed upward mobility into industrial jobs and the technical-administrative strata. Rapid economic growth due to the substitution of low-productivity agricultural jobs by employment in higher-productivity industrial manufacturing generated the resources to co-opt these new societal groups into the communist power structure and reinforce clientelist networks, an administrative practice assimilated from previous regimes.

An important cognitive legacy of the political-economic modernization under patrimonial communism is the lack of a popular memory of an urban middle class or of a proletariat that would have played a decisive role in the advancement of economic welfare before the advent of a modern industrial order created by communist party rule. Thus, patrimonial communism never had to confront an alternative vision and practice of modernization whose carriers had been crushed by the communist takeover. Once firmly entrenched in power, the patrimonial communist parties’ mixture of repression and clientelist co-operation kept the emerging new urban industrial and white-collar middle strata compliant and preempted the rise of opposition forces that could have cultivated a new vision of modernity and challenged the party’s exclusive claim to represent the only viable path to progress. On the eve of the communist collapse, patrimonial regimes therefore faced no significant internal opposition movements, except dispersed, isolated dissident intellectuals, unable to produce a sustained discourse or organize a professional cadre advancing a new vision of political-economic modernity. As a consequence, communist parties enjoyed not only the support of the country-side and of the industrial working class, but also of many new urban industrial and administrative strata that looked back on a lifetime of upward social mobility and improving living standards, at least until the end of the 1970s.

The second type of communist rule, national-accommodative communism, produced regimes with more developed formal-national bureaucratic governance structures that partially separated party rule and technical state administration. Moreover, such regimes evidenced a greater propensity to permit modest levels of civil rights and elite contestation at least episodically, while relying more on co-optation than repression as ways to instill citizens’ compliance. When Soviet support for Stalin’s direct representatives in the leadership of communist parties throughout Eastern Europe waned by the mid-1950s, a number of East European regimes discovered they could govern only by broadening their societal support base. As a consequence, after sometimes bloody internal confrontations and even Soviet military interventions, indigenous communist rulers attempted to craft a tacit political and economic accommodation with their domestic challengers. They conceded modest steps toward economic or political liberalization in the hope of eliciting a modicum of popular acceptance of single party rule. To make such arrangements more palatable, they intimated that tacit mutual accommodation between ruling party and potential civic challengers was the only way to preserve an element of national autonomy from the Soviet hegemon. This modus vivendi of somewhat relaxed party control entailed a good deal of patronage, politics and a sectorization of the state apparatus into competing interests vying for resources.

National-accommodative communism prevailed in countries of Soviet republics that emerged from semi-democratic and semi-authoritarian inter-war politics with rather vibrant political mobilization around parties and interest groups. Such countries had already undertaken significant steps toward industrialization but were saddled with inefficient state bureaucracies over-staffed by the offspring of a state-centered educated middle stratum unable to find work in private business. In these settings, urban-rural conflicts were particularly salient and congealed around intense party divisions, while industrial class conflict played a comparatively minor role in the crystallization of political divides. In the inter-war period communist parties were marginal operations led by urban intellectuals, whereas middle-class nationalist and pseudo-liberal parties, together with powerful peasant parties, vied for political power. These contests often took place under the tutelage of semi-authoritarian leaders who maintained power through rigged elections that sustained the dominance of the urban centers with its administrative middle class over the countryside. After the installation of communism, the new rulers lacked a strong working-class movement as a natural power base. At the same time, they faced potentially mutinous urban and peasant constituencies. The existence of Catholic or Protestant churches, which had always insisted on their internal autonomy from political meddling and had on occasion actively shaped inter-war politics, gave communist regimes another reason to seek mutual societal accommodation.

The cognitive legacy of national-accommodative communism is the experience of multiple conflicting visions of modernity, one represented by the anti-communist urban and rural elites of the inter-war period, another by the communists themselves. The communist ruling parties thus could never claim the exclusive capacity to promote modernity. They therefore never ascended to the same ideological hegemony as in the patrimonial communist countries. Instead, national-accommodative communist regimes tolerated low-level dissident activities and sometimes even networks of dissident communication that congealed around liberal, rural-populist, or Christian conceptions. Under national-accommodative regimes, the Marxist-Leninist ideology began to wither earlier than in other communist regimes.

In the third type of communist rule, bureaucratic-authoritarian communism, opposition forces encountered a much harsher and more hostile climate than in national-accommodative communism, but for different reasons than in patrimonial communism. Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism came closest to the

*Rogowski (1989: 84) is somewhat ambiguous in his characterization of the cleavage structures in inter-war Eastern Europe. He wishes to claim that the dominant division is a class cleavage between capitalists and landowners, on the one side, and workers, on the other. Yet the “workers” are mostly poor peasants who mobilize against urban elites that are often difficult to characterize as capitalist entrepreneurs.
totalitarian model of a party state with an all-powerful, rule-guided bureaucratic machine governed by a planning technocracy and a disciplined, hierarchically stratified communist party. It relied on a tier of sophisticated economic and administrative professionals who governed a planned economy that produced comparatively advanced industrial goods and services. Bureaucratic professionalism and strict party discipline, however, were inimical to political bargaining with and mutual interest accommodation to potential outside challengers. Bureaucratic authoritarian communism resorted more to the repression and exclusion of sometimes vocal opposition movements than national accommodative communism. Given these characteristics, we have consciously chosen the Latin Americanists’ concept of bureaucratic-authoritarianism to characterize this variant of communist rule. In fact, bureaucratic authoritarianism may be a more adequate description of certain communist regimes than of most Latin American authoritarian polities. It is a form of political rule that coincides with a relatively advanced stage of capital intensive industrialization and relies on a technocratic governance structure that tolerates no political diversity.

Bureaucratic-authoritarian communism occurred in countries with considerable liberal-democratic experience in the inter-war period, an early and comparatively advanced industrialization, and a simultaneous mobilization of bourgeois and proletarian political forces around class-based parties beginning in the late nineteenth century. In the inter-war and immediate post–World War II democracies, strong disciplined communist parties either directly organized the working class or eventually took over such organizations from rival social democratic parties when the latter ceased to lead an independent life with the subordination of the East European satellite countries under Stalin’s Soviet Union. The discipline of a revolutionary party created outside of and against existing political institutions and the rise of a modern professional state machinery under pre-communist rule made the new communist regimes more resistant than other modes of communist rule to patronage and clientelist policies.

Under bureaucratic-authoritarian communism, the ruling party’s internal organizational strength and firm entrenchment in a broad industrial working class decreased its tolerance for political deviations. The balance of forces thus tilted in favor of repressive communist rule even in countries where pluralistic civic and political mobilization in the inter-war period posed the potential challenge of an anti-communist insurrection later on. Whereas in patrimonial communism weak pre-communist pluralism, and above all the absence of urban political mobilization, accounts for the feeblesness of the anti-communist opposition in the 1980s.

in bureaucratic-authoritarian communism it is rather the organizational discipline and encapsulation of the working class that allowed ruling communist parties to prevail over a potentially strong challenge by opposition forces and to resist the temptation of seeking societal peace through accommodation with potential opposition forces.

In cognitive terms, the legacies of bureaucratic-authoritarian communism incorporate not a shortage but an abundance of competing models of socio-political modernization advanced by conflicting political actors in the inter-war period. Where declining growth rates showed the communist model of modernization to run into trouble, technocratic experimentation with economic reform, for example in the Prague Spring of 1968, were short-lived because they triggered an almost instant reawakening of a massive political opposition to communism. Unlike technocratic reformers under national-accommodative communism, the economic reformers under bureaucratic-authoritarian communism faced a party elite unwilling to make concessions for the sake of greater popular inclusiveness and economic efficiency. Communist parties in bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes remained more wedded to proletarian rhetoric and ideological orthodoxy than in national accommodative communism and, in some ways, even in patrimonial communism. Under the hegemony of orthodox Marxist-Leninist doctrines, bureaucratic authoritarian communist countries developed like pressure cookers with a muted and clandestine but potentially powerful opposition, building up steam that could blow the lid off the communist regime whenever the party’s containment of opposition through repression showed signs of weakness.

Each of the three different communist regime types chose unique policy strategies to cope with the economic slowdown in the 1980s. These strategies had important consequences for economic liberalization and stabilization policies after 1989. Elites in national-accommodative communism had the strongest incentives to placate the population and maintain a modicum of political stability by increasing the supply of consumer goods. In these countries, foreign debt owed to Western banks and governments ballooned more than in other communist regimes in the 1970s and 1980s (cf. Comiso and Maier 1986; Poźniak 1986). In patrimonial or in bureaucratic-authoritarian communism, by contrast, the incumbent elites could afford to avoid major concessions to their citizens and therefore took fewer Western loans, kept tighter control of their external debt, and engaged in harsher economic retrenchment in the 1980s.

At a superficial inspection, our argument concerning the origins and types of communist rule appears to invoke a model of political development very much akin to modernization theory, emphasizing the influence of economic affluence and growth as a determinant of political regime patterns. Indeed, we believe that modernization should not be considered merely a bad word, as long as theorists...
properly spell out the linkages between economic resource mobilization and institutional change. In the inter-war period, political regime forms and the development of civic political associations in Eastern Europe closely correlate with the relative size of the peasantry and the industrial sector. Differential industrial growth, however, may itself be grounded in institutional and cultural variations unexplored by modernization theory. Were we to pursue the origins of inter-war regional economic inequality in Eastern Europe backward before 1850 when most of the region was about equal in terms of poverty and dominated by agriculture, good candidates to explain subsequent differential growth rates would be the geographic incorporation into the divergent governance structures of the Prussian, Russian, Habsburg, or Ottoman empires, agrarian property rights, proximity to major trade routes, and even religious beliefs, together with associated practices of church-state relations (cf. Janos 1989; 1994; Schöpflin 1993; Offe 1994; Berglund and Aarebrot 1997).

More importantly for us, there is no longer a close relationship between economic modernization and the type of communist rule by the 1970s or 1980s. Patrimonial communist countries that began with a more “backward” economy in the 1940s often had pretty much caught up with their initially more advanced neighbors in national-accommodative or bureaucratic-authoritarian communist polities. For this reason, the political institutions of communist rule, not levels of economic development, are the key determinants of political transformation strategies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The resulting institutional differences in the post-communist polities may, however, influence subsequent differential pathways of economic reform and successful market liberalization in turn, thus translating institutional diversity again into varying levels of economic “modernity” (cf. Hellman 1996; Stark and Bruszt 1997).

**REGIME CHANGE BEYOND COMMUNIST RULE**

A leading structural cause for the collapse of communism was the Eastern bloc’s declining economic and technological performance throughout the 1970s and 1980s and its inability to stay abreast of an arms race with the United States paced by technological innovations difficult to nurture in a planned economy. Moreover, the Soviet Union’s military defeat in a low-technology guerrilla war in Afghanistan weakened the governing elite. Once the dominant group of the Soviet elite began to opt for economic and institutional reform, its decision to abandon the Brezhnev doctrine of intervention in the domestic affairs of subsidiary communist countries and its willingness to grant more political autonomy to individual

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11 See, for example, O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986), Przeworski (1986), Karl (1990), and Shain and Linz (1995).


13 These linkages are relatively short-lived interruptions of democratic or semi-democratic regimes amounting to less than ten or twenty years, the relationship between type of rule and process of transition may be quite random because the regime types themselves are not well established and may permit a variety of transition modes. For comparative Latin American polities, it may therefore be less promising to search for a linkage between regime form and mode of transition than for sets of countries with long-term entrenched authoritarian regimes.

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15 For a discussion of modernization theory and political change in Eastern Europe, see also Lewis (1997: 9–15).

16 Our argument here is akin to Putnam’s (1993: 152–62) in that we reverse the role of economic modernization and see it as a dependent variable affected by institutional and cultural arrangements.