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1

Introduction: Representation, Political Parties, and the Quality of Democracy

Representation, secured through routine, regular competitive elections, lies at the heart of parliamentary democracy, the main institutional framework of European political systems. Elections provide the mechanism for selecting those who will act *on behalf* of their electorates. One 'free election' is predicated upon the notion of a subsequent free election, ensuring that power continues to reside with the people, providing them with both a means for judging the quality and responsiveness of their representation and a method of orderly succession in government. It is this assumption of continuation that builds representation and accountability into the liberal democratic system: the electoral mechanism becomes a continual process for ensuring that representatives act for those whom they were elected to serve and are accountable to them (with accountability tested at the next election). Elections 'implant uncertainty in the minds of representatives'.[1] Thus the routinisation of the electoral process is a condition of modern democracy.

The role of elections

The role of elections in new or aspiring post-communist democracies differed however from that of an established democracy. The first reason for this is that the conditions of democratic elections needed to be established simultaneously and in parallel with their implementation. With the gradual democratisation of Western Europe, by the time the concept of 'free, democratic elections' gained currency, a whole series of these prior conditions was already in place for their realisation, if only imperfectly. 'Free, democratic elections' do not occur in a vacuum. An ideal-typical free election is a microcosm of democratic process and practice, both confirming and sustaining 'democracy'.

A free election requires a capacity for public administrative efficiency and integrity to establish a register of eligible voters, to demarcate constituency boundaries, to confirm candidacies, to set up polling stations, to print ballots,

to count votes, and apply electoral formulae. It requires the capacity for free expression and public debate to ensure that the electoral mechanism embodies competition, that is, that issues have been aired and choices are meaningful. It requires freedom of association and assembly to develop some set of organisational linkages with society in order that candidates may be trawled/extracted and offered as 'representative'. Historically political parties provided such linkages and evolved and developed with major extensions of the franchise.[2]

A free election requires sufficient sense of political community and consensus to ensure acquiescence in, if not positive acceptance of the results. The rule of law must be embedded to ensure that rules are upheld impartially, that disputes are resolved non-violently, and that the winners take their seats. If elections are free and democratic, then governments generated by the electoral process constitute the effective decision-makers for society. Authoritative control of a territory, the rule of law, and the enjoyment of civil liberties are all fundamental features of the democratic state.

Historically in Western Europe the gradual constitutional embodiment of liberalism – with its emphasis on the rule of law, limited government, and individual rights – provided these prior conditions. Gradually the ensuing challenge of democracy – with its stress on popular sovereignty – to liberalism – emphasising the autonomy of the individual citizen and the need for limited government – created representative liberal democracy, replete with both philosophical and practical tensions.

Although the growth of 'democracy' was closely associated with the extension of the franchise, in states where liberalism was weak the 'democratic institutional context' making representation 'fair' and 'meaningful' was not necessarily in place: there were many 'electoral non-transitions'. The franchise was quite wide for the Russian Duma in 1906, but the Duma had virtually no power. Prussia had universal adult male suffrage from 1867, but again, parliament had little authority. Neither could be regarded as a democracy. The prerequisites were not in place and élites were not committed to democratic processes. This is also why contemporary concepts such as 'electoral democracy', 'delegative democracy' or 'illiberal democracy' are not very useful. Such polities are not democracies, though they share some features with democratic polities. Rather they are what used to be called 'quasi-democracies' or 'facade democracies'. Elections are a necessary but insufficient condition of representative democracy, which must be liberal *in order to be* representative.

In some respects, this basic condition of routine competitive elections was indeed rapidly met in all the countries of the former Soviet 'bloc' and in a number of European Soviet successor states. Over the first post-communist decade, elections generally improved in regard to the efficiency of their administration and in providing the necessary conditions for genuine electoral choice. Electors also demonstrated their ultimate sanction by frequently

failing to re-elect the parties of incumbent governments. However, the fact of routine competitive elections does not ensure the quality of democratic representation. Elections only ensure that identifiable persons are elected to parliament to serve as the people's representatives, legitimised by the very fact of the competitive electoral process. But that process has remained badly flawed in certain countries and it has presented continuing problems for many.

Democracy and democratisation

In examining the electoral process and its implications for the quality of democracy, we deliberately eschew much discussion of democratic 'consolidation'. In a broad sense the concept may be useful to suggest a process of the institutionalisation and routinisation of democratic rules and practices. But the distinction often made between transition and consolidation appears to have become hopelessly confused. The widely quoted study by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, for example, sees 'tasks of consolidation' as including the development of the autonomy of civil and political society, constitutionalism and the rule of law[3] when surely these are tasks of democracy-building itself. Nor is there agreement on how consolidation should be measured or assessed.[4] Clearly there is no single indicator of consolidation. It is an aggregate concept that involves judging when a variety of institutions and attitudes at various levels are both 'democratic' and 'stable' (yet not static).[5] Yet serious disagreements remain about just what institutions and just whose attitudes are crucial.

The role of political parties provides an example: stable parties are not part of Linz and Stefan's widely cited consolidation menu, but they are often attributed a key role in consolidated democracy.[6] The underlying premise of this book is that the nature of the parties and the party system is absolutely fundamental to modern democracy. Parties are the agents of democratic representation, and we agree with Gábor Tóka that 'the influence of parties and party systems on the quality of democracy can hardly be overstated'.[7] Despite assertions of party decline in Western democracies[8] and parties' often ineffective performance of their functions, no institution challenges their centrality to the democratic process. In the circumstances of post-communism, where alternative mechanisms of representation such as pressure groups remained undeveloped or ill-linked to national decision-making processes, parties were virtually the sole agents of representation.

Political developments in post-communist Europe

Although our focus is on representation, the argument that parties are central to democratisation means that we need some attention to the factors that explain the development of political parties. Traditionally three types of

explanation have predominated, none of which are mutually exclusive and all of which are relevant in the post-communist context. Historical factors are vital for explaining the socio-economic and political circumstances in which parties develop. No one studying Central and Eastern Europe can remain in any doubt that 'history matters', though 'what history' and how it matters remain hotly disputed. A second type of explanation stresses the significance of institutional factors. The overall structures of the political system itself and the type of electoral system establish rules of behaviour and provide incentive structures within which political actors operate. Thirdly, the nature of the actors themselves have been given primacy, especially where socio-economic structures are breaking down and institutions are in flux. This stress on élites characterised wider studies of democratisation, as well as studies of party development. Rational choice approaches also focus on élite interests, often with little attention to how they themselves have been shaped. We will make use of all three, while also assuming the importance of their interaction and no uniform direction of causality. It is worth a brief detour to suggest at the outset the significance of institutional factors. The significance of history and legacy for institutional development and political behaviour and the role played by élites will recur throughout this book.

The dominant form of political system adopted in Central and Eastern Europe was the parliamentary system. Inter-war experiences of democracy, however short-lived, had been based on parliamentarism; and in a formal sense the communists also maintained the supremacy of parliament. In most states constitutional amendments had already taken place when the first free elections were held; and subsequent institution-building occurred in parallel with the development of political parties. While many presidents were directly elected (Poland, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Slovakia after 1999), and some had considerable powers of legislative initiation and veto (the first three are often regarded rather misleadingly as semi-presidential or premier-presidential[9]), the basic parliamentary principle of government accountability to parliament remained intact. Russia and the Ukraine constituted exceptions to this, with far stronger presidencies and concomitantly weaker parliaments than those elsewhere.

Parliamentary systems are party-friendly because parties structure both parliament itself and the government. Where government is accountable to parliament and (at least in part) drawn from it, parties have proved the only effective organisational mechanism for constructing the necessary support, whether to generate and sustain a government or to criticise and evaluate it. Parliaments provide powerful office-seeking incentives for political parties. In the post-communist parliamentary systems many constitutions such as the Czech and Lithuanian explicitly noted the importance of parties and provided their legal legitimacy. In the Czech Republic the political system is 'based on the free and voluntary establishment of democratic political parties and their right to compete freely' (Article 5).

The position was rather different where strong presidencies emerged, and presidentialism proved less conducive to party development in both Russia and the Ukraine. Indeed, Steven Fish has been the most vigorous advocate of the view that that these states should be viewed as 'super-presidential': A large executive apparatus overshadowed other state agencies and also parliament in its size and resources. The president enjoyed powers to legislate by decree and controlled most levers of public expenditure, as well as exercising considerable influence over the judiciary; impeachment rules made removal difficult, if not impossible.[10]

Part of the explanation of post-Soviet presidentialism lies in the absence of a clear break with the previous regime, making for institutional continuity but also providing a context of ambiguous relations between president and parliament. Mikhail Gorbachev had introduced the Soviet presidency in 1990 as part of his efforts to shift the locus of power from the Communist Party to the state, and many constituent republics of the USSR followed suit. In Russia, Boris Yeltsin won the first direct presidential election in June 1991 and by December had spurred the final break up of the Soviet Union. Conflicts between president and parliament developed throughout the following spring, with mounting political crisis culminating in the bombardment of parliament. These events enabled Yeltsin to effectively impose a highly president-centred constitution, confirmed in a referendum held simultaneously with the parliamentary elections in December 1993. The Duma retained little role in determining either the prime minister[11] or the composition of government. Indeed, President Yeltsin changed prime ministers frequently and with alacrity. Even the Duma's legislative function was weakened because all laws also needed the support of the Federation Council (initially an appointed body), while the president had extensive decree powers. The effect of elections was limited, argued Vladimir Gelman, and they provided 'no more than a façade for the real process of decision-making'.[12] This was not an isolated view: others too saw elections as 'largely worthless, in so far as their results determine neither the composition of the country's government, nor the internal and external policies that it carries out. The absence of real plenary powers makes deputies more radical and irresponsible'.[13] Although there were some signs that the Duma expanded its prerogatives,[14] it is more difficult to sustain the view that Russian legislators and parties could check or tame executive power.

In the Ukraine the 1996 Constitution also established a more clearly presidential system, which President Kuchma sought to shift still further in favour of the presidency. As in Russia, the Supreme Council (*Verkhovna Rada*) did not play a genuine role in appointing the government but was merely required to confirm the president's nomination for prime minister and the government's annual programme. In both cases presidential vetoes also undermined the strength of parliament. The broad institutional framework affected both the type of parties that emerged and their evolution. Political

parties remained weak, and in both countries strong presidents attempted to hinder their development and to maintain their own local patronage networks. Parties could not ensure channels of access to decision-makers; indeed those seeking influence had other means, both direct and indirect, of gaining access to power.

In neither Russia nor the Ukraine, however, should strong presidencies be associated with strong states. In the Ukraine in particular what remained of the state under Communism were elements that as a constituent Soviet Republic had never functioned autonomously or with full responsibility. Yet in both cases the rapid decline of state capacity was one of the startling features of post-communist development.[15]

So parliamentarism is party-strengthening, although a parliamentary system does not guarantee strong parties. Of course, even a weak parliament such as the Duma or the Rada may have some party-fostering impact because of the advantages and privileges associated with parties, especially larger parties. Positions such as those of speaker or chairs and membership of parliamentary committees are usually determined on the basis of party, and so too are some patronage opportunities and resources such as offices, equipment, and funds. Committees of parliamentary party leaders may determine the parliamentary agenda. Independents may sit in parliament, but they lack both benefits and influence; in consequence they may also form parliamentary groups (caucuses, clubs, or factions). In Russia parliamentary factions' organisational resources were crucially important to their members' electoral interests; thus factional status was a resource for both ideologically motivated and office-seeking parliamentary factions.[16] Yet in Russia and the Ukraine, party or faction membership did not give automatic access to the patronage resources enjoyed by parties on whose support the governments in parliamentary systems depended. Such patronage was dispersed by the president and his chosen associates.

The type of electoral system[17] also affected party development, though its independent effect is hard to determine when other factors are working in a similar direction[18] (we shall explore this further in later chapters). In parliamentary systems based on proportional representation (PR) parties became the central vehicles of representation and recruitment and, where permitted to stand, the number of Independents fell with successive elections. Governments were formed largely from among the governing parties' own deputies. Independents played no political role in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, or Slovenia.

In Russia and the Ukraine the combination of presidentialism and the new mixed-parallel electoral systems proved detrimental to political parties. The mixed electoral system encouraged both independent candidates and locally popular parties to stand in the single-member districts. Different parties often stood in the PR and single-district elements, leading to an overall increase in the numbers of parties represented in parliament.[19] At the same

time Independents retained a presence in the single-member element. In Russia in 1999, half (51.3 per cent) the candidates in the single-member districts were Independents, and they won 105 of the 225 seats (46.7 per cent). Regional élites in Russia had little incentive to engage in party-building, since they could secure access to power by mobilising their resources for the single-member constituencies, through their own personal connections, as well as through lobbies and other channels.[20]

Party development in the Ukraine was affected by similar factors. But whereas Russia had a mixed system from 1993, the Ukraine used a wholly majoritarian system for the 1994 election, and in addition made it extremely difficult for parties to nominate their candidates.[21] Half the deputies elected to the Ukrainian parliament in 1994 had no party affiliation. The use of a mixed system in 1998 and 2002 meant that half the deputies now automatically owed their election to a party label, but the single-member element still provided scope for large numbers of Independents. In 1998 Independent deputies still won more than half the single-member seats, and in 2002 they won 41 per cent.

Similar mixed-system effects were also seen in parliamentary Lithuania, but they were rather more muted. The small size of the country may also have been a factor hindering the development of local fiefdoms; though parties' support varied widely from region to region, Independents found little purchase. However, the availability of single-member districts for small parties with popular leaders did contribute to party fragmentation. Small parties tried to remain in contention since winning even a few seats could be important in coalition formation.

The existence of separate direct presidential elections in Russia, the Ukraine, and Lithuania (and also in Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria) may also be relevant here. When presidential elections are not held simultaneously with parliamentary elections, parties must reorient themselves to a different type of competition. In Russia and the Ukraine strong presidentialism, separate presidential elections, and the mixed-parallel electoral system all worked together to promote personalism and hinder institutionalisation,[22] with serious implications for the development of political parties.

Representation and the electoral process

Most studies treat representation primarily as a *relationship* between the representative and his or her constituents. Mostly the relationship has been conceived as that between an individual voter and his/her member of parliament or between the voter and a political party. The focus is on parliament itself and what representatives actually do during their time there. This is certainly appropriate for the study of mature, stable democracies. Here, however, we take a far broader approach. We aim to demonstrate that for

post-communist countries the whole of the electoral process bears on both the development of political parties and the quality of representative democracy.

Of course, parties are not simply vehicles of political representation. Clearly the recruitment of candidates by political parties is a crucial party activity; candidates provide the pool from which representatives are chosen. However, other roles identified by (idealised) functional approaches to parties are also closely related to the process of 'acting on behalf' of those they represent. Parties set the political agenda through their aggregation of interests, their priorities, and their policies. They actively seek to structure public choice. Parties are also mechanisms of integration, bringing people into the political process by providing channels of communication between society and political leaders. They may also articulate certain moral or social values or a concept of the wider community. When their role is effective, the legitimacy of the political system is enhanced and the likelihood of violent social conflict is reduced.

In well-established parliamentary democracies, political parties are fundamental as mechanisms for structuring the institutions of parliament and government. The 'party in public office' constitutes the decision-makers of executive and legislature in parliamentary systems. Governing parties govern and opposition parties offer a critique of their performance. The mettle of party accountability is tested in the electoral cauldron.

Although we do not equate democracy with periodic free elections, we do argue that each stage of the electoral process is relevant to the quality of representative government. The nature of electoral competitors determines the choices available to voters. Representation is affected by electoral strategies of contenders and by their number and type. Voters need to distinguish them and to know what they stand for. In addition, numbers are important. Large numbers of individual politicians and large numbers of parties mean more participants in the legislative bargaining process, 'making it harder to initiate and sustain collective action in pursuit of public goods'.[23]

Nomination regulations and candidate selection procedures determine the pool of potential representatives; but these are also affected by the readiness of individuals to offer themselves as candidates. In circumstances of constant upheaval and dislocation certain types of people may be more prepared than others to seek political office. This is often deemed a particular problem for women's political participation (see Chapter 8). The nature of the choice offered on the ballot is part of this sequence, as are factors such as turnout, electoral volatility, and voters' learning about the effects of the electoral system. How elected deputies act in parliament is another dimension. Where parties are weak focuses of loyalty, important collective goods may be undersupplied or not supplied at all.

Finally, there is the question of how voters can call their elected representatives to account. Accountability is not automatically ensured at the

time of each successive election. Voters may be constrained in their choices, particularly when parties disappear or reconfigure themselves. Voters may misunderstand the workings of the electoral system in particular or the political system in general. Radosław Markowski has argued that civic education and socialization are crucial dimensions of developing citizens' capacity to make use of elections as mechanisms of accountability;[24] but few governments carried out such programmes. Nor should one assume that accountability mechanisms apply only to incumbents, judged by the voters with a broad retrospective evaluation. Of course, if the government loses an election, then something clearly has gone wrong. Indeed, voters in post-communist states have not hesitated to 'throw the rascals out'. But accountability may be undermined or obviated by other institutional arrangements. As Przeworski and Cheibub put it, 'Rulers are accountable if the probability that they survive in office is sensitive to government performance; otherwise they are not accountable.'[25] However, electors are not simply evaluating governments or governing parties but also the effectiveness and competence of the opposition. Indeed, poorly functioning governments may win simply because the opposition looks weak or incompetent; and doubtless there are also examples where reasonable governments are displaced by more convincing opposition forces.

In sum, we are concerned first with what is offered to the electorate. Parties and candidates not only reflect but also themselves structure public opinion; their nature affects the range of different choices from which the voter must select. Secondly, we are interested in who is offered to the electorate. The nature of the candidates determines the social composition of parliament, as well as its views. Thirdly, we examine the electorate's response to these offerings. Then we look at the behaviour of deputies themselves, particularly in regard to faction formation and party discipline. Finally, we look at how voters have called their representatives to account at successive elections. Representation is affected by the process through which it takes place and is renewed.

Elections, parties, and representation

The task, then, is fundamentally analytical and empirical: identifying the ways in which relevant aspects of parliamentary elections are pertinent and exploring how they have operated in the first decade since the fall of communism in Europe. It is theoretically grounded, but it is not a work of theory-building. Indeed, for all its centrality to the concept of liberal democracy, political science has little theory of representation. There are diverse *concepts* of representation, based on more or less explicit normative principles; but there is no theory explaining its genesis or evolution or establishing the conditions of its effectiveness. This book contains a great deal of thick description.

This should not be taken to imply that we have no points of departure. This is an area of rich philosophical debate and numerous explanatory insights about the effects of certain historical conditions and institutional developments. Traditionally, much of this debate centred on questions about the appropriate basis of representation, what type of persons would best represent their electorates, and how those elected should behave once in parliament. In the following chapter we first examine the development of the idea and practice of representation from the point of view of the Western European historical experience and explore some implications of the way parties developed. We also explore the rather different concept of representation used by the communist regimes. This provides some reference points and conceptual markers.

Chapter 2 also reviews the ways in which the post-communist departure point differed in significant respects from earlier European experiences of democratization. All these countries began with some fundamental similarities arising from their shared communist experience. However, there were also profound regional and country-specific differences. The initial conditions arising from the 'revolutions' of 1989–90 on the one hand and the disintegration of the USSR on the other gave rise to very different circumstances of democracy-building. This also affected how representation was viewed in the initial debates on electoral systems and the particular systems devised for the first fully free, competitive parliamentary elections.

The first free elections were seminal occurrences in all countries, but not all countries had 'regime-choice' elections. Both the timing of these elections and the wider institutional context also varied substantially, as well as the electoral mechanism itself. The contenders in this proto-democratic phase also determined the early shape of political parties in the subsequent period. Most, but not all, emanated from within parliaments following the semi-competitive elections of the dying days of the *ancien régime* or the first fully competitive elections that marked a break with communist mono-partism. In Central Europe the key factor in the first stage of party development was the nature of anti-communist opposition movements and the manner in which they later split. All these movements gave rise to some enduring political parties.

This was not the case in Russia or the Ukraine, where the first elections were delayed for several years and opposition movements had already crumbled. In Russia, Yeltsin's dissolution of parliament eliminated many advantages to incumbent deputies, including media access. Parliament was not the central site of initial party formation, but neither were there conditions for a 'bottom-up' process of party formation. The residual organisation of the Communist party provided a partial exception. While the Ukraine escaped the trauma of violent intra-élite confrontation, there too parliament was an unpropitious arena from which to launch new political parties. The communists were again in the best position to mobilise the electorate, and

fragments of the opposition movement also survived. We have already alluded to the weakness of parliament and the importance of the majoritarian electoral system in strengthening the role of powerful individual candidates with entrenched bases of local support. These differences provide us with some intra-regional comparative benchmarks.

Chapter 3 investigates the kinds of parties that emerged in the first post-communist decade or so. It does so on the basis of their 'electoral' appeal and the array of choices offered to the voters. Maurice Duverger observed that in 'countries new to democracy', parties were normally generated from within parliament, and thus maintained the greater role of the parliamentary party.[26] This was certainly true of post-communist politics. Parties remained essentially top-down creations, though they essayed different strategies for wooing voters. Many parties fit neatly into the ideological 'party families' characteristic of Western Europe's development. However, divisions and mergers shaped the configuration of parties, and so too did the challenge of outsiders. By no means all parties assumed (some) ideological or philosophical underpinnings.

In some cases the pattern of electoral competition influenced the reconstitution of broad disparate *electoral parties* that mimicked earlier opposition umbrella formations. New and old élites in Russia and the Ukraine mobilised their manifold resources in nefarious ways, but the electoral party was also the favoured format of those in power: their 'parties of power' appealed on the basis of patronage relations and broad promises of security and continuity. In most countries communist successor parties also played a significant role, but they too adapted to new circumstances in different ways. Ideological parties vied with electoral parties and various types of populist parties, with a broad anti-establishment appeal. What becomes clear from this evaluation is just how unsettled the political landscape remained in many countries even after three, four, or even five elections. The menu of choice was often confusing and it frequently changed from one election to another, muddying not only electoral choice but electoral accountability.

Chapter 4 explores the ways in which voters responded to the novel experience of electoral competition. It is not concerned with voting behaviour in relation to support for particular parties but rather with the mechanics of the electoral process. The major indicators used here are turnout, the casting of valid ballots, the level of vote 'wastage' in party-list voting, and the use voters made of preference voting in open or semi-closed list systems of proportional representation. Voting is the fundamental act of political participation for many voters, but voters also need to know how to use their vote and to assess the implications of their choice.

Turnout fell in Central and Eastern Europe over the first decade or so, but the decline was neither steady nor uniform. The most persuasive explanations focus on contextual factors rather than institutional ones to explain changes

in turnout. When voters did go to the polls they generally cast valid votes from the outset, but this was not always the case. This raised the question of the role of institutions such as the Permanent Electoral Commission but also had implications for civic education in several countries.

Electoral volatility presents particular problems of analysis. Rational-choice views of voters' behaviour are limited in their usefulness because they often depend on some basic assumptions of environmental stability: they assume that voters have a sense of what follows from their actions. In the post-communist context voters often found it very difficult to judge outcomes, and few countries offered them a stable framework for their choices. Electoral systems and political parties changed. Voter learning was harder in a dynamic context and the pattern of wasted votes was difficult to interpret.

Finally, Chapter 4 explains and examines the various complex mechanisms of preference voting available to voters. Choice may have given voters an increased sense of efficacy, but optional preference voting made little difference to electoral outcomes, except in Latvia, where voters' choices did determine the winners from each party. Slovenia, Poland, and Estonia made candidate-choice compulsory, but often with unexpected and unintended outcomes.

Chapter 5 analyses the act of voting from this perspective of outcomes. With the partial exception of certain communist-successor parties, voters failed to develop affective attachments to political parties. In Western Europe, where many parties had arisen to serve and represent certain sections of the community, much of the electorate retained a sense of party ownership, with loyalty transmitted from generation to generation through family and party socialisation processes. In Central and Eastern Europe the top-down creation of political parties created a situation more like a market stall where voters could choose from diverse offerings. Voters neither liked nor trusted their political parties much, and electoral volatility remained high throughout the region. Incumbency did not prove an advantage in circumstances of profound transformation. Time and again voters punished governing parties by removing them from office and even from parliament.

Yet some parties were markedly more successful than others, both in their electoral results and in their participation in government. Successor parties were notable in this respect, especially in Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, and Lithuania. But not all countries had a clearly defined successor to the ruling communist party and some communist parties sought to retain a 'communist identity', stressing their links with the communist past more emphatically than their adaptation to new political and economic circumstances. The electoral success of the communist parties of Russia and the Ukraine was not rewarded by government positions or decision-making influence.

At the same time anxieties that (other?) anti-system parties would gain credibility, while not unfounded, did not have the consequences that many had feared. Support for such parties was considerable, but their sheer numbers

invited a dispersal of their support and it was often fragmented. With a few notable exceptions they too proved unable to retain enduring support.

Chapter 6 examines the interaction of political parties. The concept of the 'party system' is central to this discussion, but it is not one that can be applied to all countries. Many factors combined to lead to an absence of systematic party interaction. These included changing numbers of parliamentary parties, rapid alteration of their relative strengths, the introduction of new, often ill-defined actors, the lack of party cohesion, and the concomitant phenomenon of 'party tourism'. Many party configurations lacked coherent patterns of interaction, and all were dynamic. Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia appeared to have moved in the direction of greater stability and a degree of predictable interaction, that is, to have party systems. Elsewhere, as in Poland, Estonia, and Romania, there was also a measure of continuity-within-change and a measure of partial predictability. Other countries had more fluid party configurations, more uncertainty, and little sign of 'systemness' in party interactions.

The final chapters of this study shift our attention to the character of individual candidates and deputies. The emphasis here is on social representation, and they address three rather different dimensions of generating representation through the electoral process. Chapter 7 focuses on the nature of those standing for office. Although studies often centre on the social composition of parliaments, we analyse the occupations not just of deputies but the wider candidate pool for a number of post-communist countries. If democracy is to work, individuals must contest elections, though most will fail. Although the deputies' occupational profile was by no means uniform, it showed a very rapid shift away from the diverse composition of communist parliaments. The candidate pool was far more socially diverse. Political parties fielded candidates with rather different occupational profiles.

Chapter 8 is also concerned with 'who' represents the electorate. It focuses explicitly on the issue of women's political representation, the reasons for its rapid decline, and the changes that occurred over successive elections. In the absence of strong women's movements, gender too was addressed from the top down by some responsive party élites. Increasing numbers of prominent women politicians provided evidence of women's competence in many Central European parties. More often the issue was not addressed, with traditional male power centres in the economy and in the state administration echoed also in the political arena. Social democratic parties proved particularly receptive to quota arrangements for strengthening women's presence. The 'parties of power' remained overwhelmingly male.

The issue of minority representation is the last to be considered. The first section discusses the issues raised for democracy by minority rights and the evolution of international provisions. It then examines the constitutional frameworks in Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on citizenship issues. There were two basic strategies for ethnic minorities, either forming an ethnic

party or seeking accommodation with others capable of serving as a vehicle for minority interests. Ethnicity formed the basis of significant political parties in Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia. Yet these should not be regarded as societies divided along ethnic lines. All three ethnic parties found common ground with other parties not only on minority issues (urged by international bodies including the crucial European Union) but on wider issues of democratic development and the economy. In all cases they participated in government – in 2002, two of them, in Bulgaria and Slovakia, were full coalition partners, while the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania supported the minority social democratic government. The Roma, by contrast, remained an excluded minority. Though placed firmly on the political agenda by the European Union, this had little initial impact on their political representation.

In the Baltic states, with thorny and difficult issues of nation-building in an uncertain international environment, Latvia and Estonia followed an exclusionist path, limiting the citizenship of their large Russian minority (and other small ones). Nationalist fears dominated the early period of restored independence, and minorities remained largely excluded from national political representation. Yet as virulent nationalism waned there were some signs of accommodation and integrative processes, to ease naturalisation and to bring (citizen) Russians into existing political parties.

The concluding chapter focuses on some of the broader themes discussed earlier. The first section reviews the electoral process and the extent to which one can identify general characteristics. This is important because the format of the individual chapters does not match the sequence of questions posed earlier – What and who are offered to the electorate? How did the electorate respond? How did deputies behave once elected? and how did voters call their representatives to account?

It places greatest emphasis on the overall institutional structures of governance, especially the differences between the parliamentary and presidential systems. It reaffirms the view of those who have stressed the workings of presidentialism as an impediment to democratic development, including the development of political parties. Parliamentary government requires the winning of elections as the key to political power. It mitigates, though it does not remove, the persistent elements of patronage and clientelism. It strengthens, though it does not ensure, the functioning of elections as crucial mechanisms of accountability.

The combination of presidentialism and the mixed-parallel electoral system proved mutually reinforcing in hindering the development of political parties and maintaining patronage politics. Indeed, electoral systems were of major significance in shaping the contours of representation. They did not act as a uniform causal mechanism, but they provided an array of differing incentives in parliamentary systems too. Similarly, the communist legacy and the dislocations of transition also remain powerful explanatory factors

in both presidential and parliamentary systems. Popular disillusion with democratic institutions, if not with democracy itself, helped create a cycle of electoral and party volatility.

The data

Finally, we need a comment on our case-selection procedures and on the data used in this study. Those countries with some claim to democratic elections have been included, but not those where war or violent upheaval occurred (as in the Caucasus and most of former Yugoslavia) or where the boundaries of state territory remained contested (as in Moldova). Albania's upheaval was of a rather different order than that elsewhere. Its first elections were seen as reasonably fair, but by the mid-1990s the position deteriorated. Not only was the 1996 election blatantly fraudulent, but the collapse of an infamous pyramid scheme led the country into several months of virtual anarchy.[27]

These exclusions leave a rather lopsided selection. It includes all countries of the former 'Soviet bloc': Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. It includes only one country of the former Yugoslavia, namely Slovenia, and only five from the former Soviet Union, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, the Ukraine, and Russia. Eight of these countries were well-nigh universally regarded as democratic by the end of the twentieth century: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. These eight were confirmed in December 2002 as meeting the requirements for membership of the European Union, including stable democratic institutions and safeguards for human rights.

Romania and Bulgaria attracted more mixed assessments, while Russia and the Ukraine were even more problematic. Steven Fish regarded Romania as democratising in 2000, with Bulgaria, Russia and the Ukraine viewed as 'backsliders'.[28] But Zoltan Barany called Bulgaria 'a robust democracy' by the standards of the region, with élites genuinely committed to the constitution and a 'record of democratization . . . far superior to that of Bucharest'.[29] Certainly both Romania and Bulgaria enjoyed unquestionably free elections. The institutional mechanisms of the separation of powers functioned, not only in the capacity of the opposition to oppose the government, but also in respect of judgements of the Constitutional Court. As of late 2002 both governments appeared to be seeking to implement genuine anti-corruption strategies. Romanian dissatisfaction with the functioning of its institutions led to serious constitutional debate (not always well informed).

There was rather more consensus regarding Russia and the Ukraine. Presidential candidate and leader of the Yabloko party Grigory Yavlinski effectively concurred with Fish that 'political time in Russia is flowing backward . . . (by 2001 Russia) had become an artificial, formal, sham democracy'.[30] Indeed, Russia was widely viewed as mired in some protracted

and uneven process of transformation, witnessing a 'transition from Communism but not yet a transition to *democracy*'[31] – a 'state of uncertainty',[32] 'an unstable electoral democracy',[33] not electoral democracy but 'electoral clanism',[34] or 'bureaucratic quasi-authoritarianism'.[35] Judgements about the Ukraine were not dissimilar. For example, it was seen as a variant of 'semi-authoritarianism' coexisting with 'vibrant elements of a nascent civil society'.[36] Russia and the Ukraine were both dominated by personalistic government, with elements of the Soviet bureaucracy, though disintegrated into various clans, still holding sway.[37] Much of our discussion also provides support for such judgements.

It must be stressed, however, that coverage of these countries remains rather uneven, in part depending on the accessibility of data. Most data utilised here are electoral data (see http:\\www.essex.ac.uk\elections) but they are often patchy, with gaps for certain countries for certain elections or in certain respects. Sometimes these lacunae appear unavoidable. The University of Essex datasets gathered national election results for all elections, but constituency results and candidate data varied widely in their availability. It also proved impossible to gain full election results for the first competitive elections in Bulgaria (1990) and Russia (1993), where these were never published and do not (apparently) exist in any archive collections. The complete results for Czechoslovak elections also appear to be officially 'missing'. All national-level election results are available for Romania, but not all constituency data, nor all candidate data. Restrictions of time and resources also played a role. Generally if I have data, I have tried to include them, even where they are not always strictly comparable. Candidate data are available for all elections only for Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and independent Slovakia. Countries varied widely in the information collected from candidates and its availability.

The picture that emerges is one of many flaws in the quality of democratic representation. In the context of multiple transformation political leaders faced enormous challenges, but transformation also provided exceptional opportunities for political entrepreneurs. Political parties were shaped not by their societies but by élites, who were repeatedly weighed in the balance and found wanting. Parties split and re-formed, and new parties appeared overnight in a way that would not have been possible without modern media communications. Party-strengthening incentives operated, but they were not sufficient to produce stable party systems across the region. Social insecurity did not manifest itself in a backlash against democracy, but party membership and sustained party support remained low, and turnout declined. Voters continued to search for politicians and parties of integrity and efficacy.

At the same time the gap between the two giants of the former USSR and the rest widened. On virtually every dimension Russia and the Ukraine were different from the others.[38] The issue there was not one of the quality of

democracy but of fundamental obstacles to democratic practice. Both countries had competitive elections, but their élites did not ensure their democratic functions. Elsewhere the new democracies had the basic institutional framework of democratic governance in place and operating according to the rules. The main difficulties lay in developing a quality of democratic representation and diffuse political support to ensure the legitimacy and further deepening of the democratic process.

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