# Introduction

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> For the peoples of Central Europe, the past, to use Faulkner's phrase, "is never dead. It's not even past."
>
> Jacques Rupnik, 1989: 36

> Whatever the results of the current turmoil in Eastern Europe, one thing is clear: the new institutional patterns will be shaped by the "inheritance" and legacy of forty years of Leninist rule.
>
> Ken Jowitt, 1992: 285

> Post-communism ... deserves its name. Its character is an uneasy mixture of elements of the past and of the different visions of the future that are on offer.
>
> George Schöpflin, 2000: 169

> Social structures, types, and attitudes are coins that do not readily melt. Once they are formed they persist, possibly for centuries, and since different structures and types display different degrees of ability to survive, we almost always find that actual group and national behavior more or less departs from what we should expect it to be if we tried to infer it from the dominant forms of the productive process.
>
> Joseph Schumpeter, 1947: 12–13

The collapse of the East European communist regimes and the ensuing end of five decades of Cold War in Europe has often been described as a revenge of history. The dramatic unraveling of party-states, centrally planned economies, and the Soviet-centered international regime was as consequential as it was unanticipated. From East Berlin to Murmansk and from Gdańsk to Tirana, massive political, economic, and social transformations, described by Jowitt (1992) as the "Leninist extinction," repudiated and fundamentally

reshaped inherited institutional structures that had been in place for most of the century. This "great transformation" was testimony not only to the failure of communist policies but also to the fact that societies shaped by their particular histories, cultures, and geographic locations ultimately failed to succumb to the most brutal and persistent efforts at unification and homogenization implemented by communist rulers. Various old and new countries and regions of Central and Eastern Europe, despite decades of communist *uravnilovka*, have been able to reassert links to precommunist identities and, in view of many observers, "return" to their specific historical trajectories interrupted by communist rule.

From this perspective, it should not be surprising that postcommunist political and economic transformations and regionwide experiments with democracy and the market economy have produced such starkly contrasting outcomes. Despite seemingly similar domestic challenges and global pressures, parallel elite goals and policies, and common communist experiences, the region has reemerged as a mosaic of rapidly diverging societies. This diversity of outcomes has its source not only in the legacies of the past, but also in choices made by strategically located actors in various critical moments of the unfolding processes of change, as well as in the modalities of transitional politics and institutional characteristics of the postcommunist period. The remarkable diversity of outcomes across Eurasia since the collapse of the Soviet bloc has even led Jacques Rupnik (1999: 57) to conclude that "ten years after the collapse of the Soviet empire, one thing is clear: the word 'postcommunism' has lost its relevance. The fact that Hungary and Albania, or the Czech Republic and Belarus, or Poland and Kazakhstan shared a communist past explains very little about the paths that they have taken since."

Yet from a different perspective, this declaration of the "postpostcommunist" period appears premature. Indeed, the most extreme contrasts to be found among the countries of the region mask continuing similarities among those that made up the core of the former USSR – especially Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, but including other areas particularly burdened by the aftereffects of Stalinist planning and repression, such as Romania and northern Kazakhstan. Over a wide swath of Central Eurasia, more than a decade after the Soviet collapse former apparatchiki continued to hold sway over local political machines inherited from the Leninist past; collective farmers continued to labor inefficiently under the eye of longtime rural bosses; and millions of blue-collar workers continued to maintain at least formal job affiliations with the massive, polluting industrial dinosaurs of the Stalinist era. In these countries, new liberal and market institutions functioned poorly or not at all, corruption was endemic, and civil society seemed unable to recover from its suppression under one-party rule (Hanson and Kopstein, 1997; Howard, 1999; Fish, 2001; Tismaneanu, 1999). In short, the "Leninist legacy" described by Jowitt (1992) appeared, unfortunately, as burdensome as ever.

Thus the key paradox presented by the experience of the first decade of postcommunism is that the "Leninist legacy" mattered both *less* and *more* than scholars originally expected. On the Central European periphery of the former Soviet bloc, the constraints of past forms of communist standardization have seemingly been cast aside, and diverse new paths of development have emerged that cannot be explained simply in terms of the aftereffects of Leninist rule. In the core of the former USSR, however, the initial expectations of neoliberal institutionalists of a rapid "transition to democracy and the market" have been thwarted precisely by the largely unanticipated tenacity of old socioeconomic structures and the obstacles these have posed to successful liberal state and market building.

The post-1989 experiences of the region thus raise a number of questions and puzzles at the very heart of historical-institutional political analysis. How can we explain the divergence of political and economic trajectories across postcommunist Europe? Can we legitimately maintain the notion of a single region for countries that emerged from the former Soviet bloc – and if so, in what sense? How distinctive are postcommunist societies, and what are the sources of their most important differences? What are the relevant dimensions of postcommunist uniformity and diversity? Why do democracy and capitalism seem to be firmly established in some parts of the region but not others? Is a specific type or form of East European democracy and capitalism emerging? Are elite policies, institutional choices, modalities of transformation politics, international influences, or historical legacies most important in explaining divergent outcomes? Are there factors that have explanatory power in some cases but are not relevant in others? Do we have adequate methodological and analytical tools to provide convincing answers to such questions? Which of the established methodological approaches generates more fruitful questions and puzzles and offers more promising research strategies?

This volume is designed primarily as a contribution to the debate on explaining the diverging trajectories of postcommunist transformations. Its contributors have conducted extensive empirical research in the region, employ diverse research strategies, and offer various answers to the above questions. The theme that unites all chapters, however, is the emphasis on *legacies of the past* and mechanisms through which they shape the initial outcomes of East European transitions. This shared focus has broad theoretical and methodological implications. According to Kitschelt et al. (1999: 11), "legacy explanations claim that resource endowments and institutions that precede the choice of democratic institutions have a distinct impact on the observable political process under the new democratic regime. Moreover, such explanations claim that democratic institutions themselves depend on legacies, because they are endogenously chosen by political actors emerging from the old pre-democratic systems." The need for a historical approach to the study of postcommunist transformations has also been aptly articulated by David

Stark (1992: 2), who argues that "the economic and political institutions that must be reconstructed on the ruins of state socialism cannot simply be chosen from among the economists' designs like selecting wares from the supermarket or choosing the winning blueprints in an architectural competition." Similarly, the evolutionary approaches developed to account for the collapse of state socialism and various paths of transformation across the region emphasize the role of historical continuities (see, e.g., Staniszkis, 1991; 1999; Poznański, 1995; 1996). The issue of historical continuities and legacies of the past is also highlighted by ethnographers and anthropologists studying postcommunist transformations, who explore microlevel responses to macrolevel changes and focus on how the past frames various strategies of adaptation (see, e.g., Burawoy and Verdery, 1999; Berdhal, Bunzl, and Lampland, 2000).

Our objective, however, is to go beyond general reaffirmation of the utility of historical analysis for understanding postcommunist transformations. This volume attempts to develop a far more specific and theoretically precise understanding of the nature and causal role of legacies than has been typical of the literature to date. So far there is no consensus among scholars concerning how legacies should be defined, what types of legacies have more explanatory power, and through what mechanisms legacies shape current outcomes. A glance at the prevailing conceptualization of legacies reveals several distinct understandings. Crawford and Lijphart (1995: 179) specify six fundamental legacies – the history of "backwardness," the absence of a successor elite, weak party systems, interrupted nation building, the persistence of old institutions, and the legacy of the command economy – that may affect postcommunist transformations. Barany and Volgyes (1995) distinguished among physical and environmental, economic, societal, and political legacies of communism. Hanson (1995) identified four components of the Leninist legacy – ideological, political, socioeconomic, and cultural – that may have different impacts and varying capacities to persist. Other scholars have defined legacies in terms of inherited sociopolitical cleavages or core conflicts (see, e.g., Ekiert and Kubik, 1999; Seleny, 1999); prevailing attitudes inimical to liberal values such as intolerance, mistrust of authority, hostility to competition, excessive welfare and distributional expectations, and so on (see, e.g., Jowitt, 1992; Koralewicz and Ziółkowski, 1990; Kolarska-Bobińska, 1994; McDaniel, 1996; Simon, 1998; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer, 1998; Zagórski and Strzeszewski, 2000); the persistence of formal institutions, social organizations, or industrial structures constructed under the old regime that inhibit the formation of new states, democratic accountability, market-oriented behavior, and horizontal social linkages (see, e.g., Linz and Stepan, 1996; Jowitt, 1992; Burawoy and Krotov, 1992; Ekiert and Kubik, 1999; Bunce, 1999); policy legacies constraining the choices of economic and political actors (see, e.g., Campbell, 1996; Vujacic, 1996);

inherited informal rules and networks[1] (see, e.g., Walder, 1995; Stark and Bruszt, 1998; Lebedeva, 1998; Böröcz, 2000; McDermott, 2002); the formal or informal resources at the disposal of collective actors (see, e.g., Eyal, Szelényi, and Townsley, 1998; Ekiert and Kubik, 1999; Grabher and Stark, 1997; Grzymała-Busse, 2001); the inheritance of past institutions defining and sometimes aggravating contemporary forms of national or ethnic identity (Suny, 1993; Brubaker, 1996); and the persistence of old elites, social hierarchies, and social structures (Wasilewski, 1995; Szelényi, Treiman, and Wnuk-Lipiński, 1995).

In most of these analyses, the boundaries between precommunist and communist legacies are not clear. Indeed, the former are rarely systematically investigated, and there is a marked ambiguity about the nature of their impact.[2] The precommunist history of ethnic conflicts and divisions in the region, for example, is frequently invoked to explain the occurrence and intensity of ethnic strife in the postcommunist context, but the causal mechanisms linking the former to the latter are usually left unspecified. In fact, the view linking the current resurgence of ethnic conflicts to old hatreds and divisions has two components. One refers to the history of ethnic and national conflicts in the region. Another describes the impact of communist rule on suppressing of what Shlomo Avineri (1992: 31) has called "the demons of hate and anger that fuel ethnic strife."

Legacy explanations usually highlight *the burden of the past*, understood as a set of factors likely to impede the formation of modern democratic polities and market economies in the postcommunist context. Like the concept of "centuries-old ethnic conflicts" used to explain the intensity of ethnic politics throughout the region, the notion of "Leninist legacies" thus also tends to have a distinctively negative connotation. In Grabher and Stark's words (1997: 4), "legacies indicate institutional pathologies contaminated with the deficiencies of the old regime obstructing the process of transformations: the future cannot be realized because the past cannot be overcome. The legacies of state socialism block the promising road to free market." The positive impact of some of the legacies of state socialism, however, should not be overlooked (see Ekiert, Chapter 3 in this volume), especially when one compares the experiences of postcommunism with other cases of postauthoritarian transformations burdened by massive social problems (see, e.g., Greskovits, 1998). The same point may apply to some of the region's

[1] North (1990: 91) emphasizes the importance of informal constraints, arguing that "although wholesale change in the formal rules may take place, at the same time there will be many informal constraints that have great survival tenacity because they still resolve basic exchange problems among participants, be they social, political, or economic."

[2] For attempts to capture the impact of precommunist legacies on specific dimensions of transition, see, for example, Vujacic (1996); Walicki (2000); Nadelsky (2001).

precommunist social and institutional legacies (see Kitschelt, Chapter 2 in this volume).

In our view, before the plausibility of explanations based on the notion of legacies can be fully assessed, clarification of such key definitional and conceptual issues is necessary. This task, however, turns out to be far more complex than is often appreciated in the literature. Indeed, to develop a more precise theoretical understanding of institutional and cultural legacies of the past and their specific effects on political, economic, and social outcomes, we are forced to confront some of the most fundamental theoretical problems of social science – in particular, the problem of theorizing the nature of the temporal and spatial contexts of social change. We are not alone, however, in this effort to reassess such critical issues of comparative historical analysis. By focusing on this specific set of regional experiences, we hope to contribute to the growing body of literature reassessing historical institutionalism and advocating a systematic and disciplined approach to the problem of historical causation (see, e.g., Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth, 1992; McDonald, 1996; Goldstone, 1998; Thelen, 1999; Pierson, 2000; Mahoney, 1999; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003).

This volume is accordingly organized around three major themes. In the first part of the book, we present two contrasting theoretical essays that attempt to reassess the nature of historical legacies in East Europe by rethinking social science approaches to the analysis of institutional change – in the postcommunist region and more generally. In Chapter 1, Grzegorz Ekiert and Stephen E. Hanson argue that the temporal and spatial contexts within which institutional change in the region is taking place can be usefully categorized in terms of a distinction among structural, institutional, and interactional levels of analysis. In Chapter 2, Herbert Kitschelt presents a methodological critique of causal arguments that rely on overly "deep" structural continuities in East European history as well as those that present an overly "shallow" testing of short-term variables affecting institutional outcomes, and argues for a middle-range approach to understanding the causal effects of historical legacies.

The second part of the volume presents a general overview of empirical trends during the first decade of postcommunism in Eastern Europe and assesses the key historical and geographical factors that help to explain the diversity of postcommunist outcomes to date. In Chapter 3, Grzegorz Ekiert argues that the distinctive and varied features of state socialism in different parts of the former Soviet bloc have generated path-dependent effects that have constrained the institutionalization of democracy and capitalism in some subregions while facilitating them in others; thus contemporary Eastern Europe cannot be understood except with reference to developments in the communist and precommunist past. In Chapter 4, Jeffrey Kopstein and David Reilly argue that the initial outcomes of transition have been decisively

affected by the geographical positioning of various regimes, because postcommunist institutions have unavoidably been shaped by cross-border flows of norms, resources, and institutions from neighboring countries. In particular, they show that geographic proximity to Western Europe has been a crucial determinant of success in postcommunist democratization and marketization. Thus, whereas Ekiert's essay emphasizes the importance of the historical context of postcommunist transitions, Kopstein and Reilly tend to highlight the importance of the spatial context.

The third part of the volume includes a series of comparative case studies that attempt to isolate the concrete processes and mechanisms through which legacies of the past have affected efforts to build democratic and capitalist institutions in postcommunist Europe. In Chapter 5, Anna Grzymała-Busse examines efforts to reform communist successor parties in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, arguing that the reasons for communist party regeneration lie neither in electoral nostalgia for the Leninist past nor in favorable political institutions, but rather in the degree to which communist party elites acquired "portable skills" based on the organizational practices of these communist parties while in power. In Chapter 6, Allison Stanger investigates the relationship between communism's institutional legacy and early constitutional decisions in postcommunist Poland, Hungary, and the former Czechoslovakia; she argues that the initial reluctance of postcommunist Central Europe's democratizers to scuttle communism's constitutional framework and the obstacles to further institutional reform that arose as revolutionary gains were locked in demonstrate two different variants of path dependence – the former with its origins in inherited informal rules of conduct, the latter stemming from the new formal rules of the game. In Chapter 7, Tomasz Inglot compares and contrasts efforts to reform social security systems in Poland and Hungary, arguing that they both display far more institutional continuity with the communist and precommunist past than is generally recognized by analysts; indeed, these systems can be understood as two distinct variants of a new postcommunist "entitlement state" that builds on inherited patterns to create a viable safety net for the prolonged and difficult period of market reform and democratization. In Chapter 8, Phineas Baxandall looks at the different ways in which the communist-era "unemployment taboo" has eroded in East Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, arguing that this legacy of state socialism has endured only where enterprises are still run in ways typical of the Leninist past; elsewhere, the combination of widespread informal labor markets and distinctive postcommunist norms of "entrepreneurship" have tended to undermine efforts to hold the state to old promises of full employment. In Chapter 9, Juliet Johnson looks at the development of the Russian commercial banking system since the collapse of the USSR, arguing that institutional "design failure" in this sphere has been the product

of an interaction among policy choices, institutional legacies, state capacity, and policy sequencing – a process she terms one of "path contingency." In Chapter 10, Jan Kubik explores the complex problem of how to theorize about the causal effects of "cultural" legacies on institutional change. Building on recent developments in cultural theory, Kubik argues that cultural legacies of state socialism should be understood as both "discourses about the past" proposed by contemporary cultural-political entrepreneurs and as "syndromes of attitudes" built upon actors' past experiences. Through a comparative analysis of conceptions of national identity in Poland and Russia in both the communist and postcommunist periods, Kubik shows that postcommunist cultures vary in terms of the degree to which socialist and nationalist discourses are welded together to generate debilitating political polarization.

In the Epilogue, Paul Pierson ties together the findings from these theoretical and empirical studies, showing how an effort to be rigorous about the impact of Leninist and pre-Leninist legacies on contemporary institutional change in Eastern Europe contributes to emerging theoretical trends in the political science literature on comparative historical institutionalism.

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