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Boekbespreking van: Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe. Volume I: Institutional Engineering

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period of two years. A first glance suggests that the topics of most of these thousands of statutory instruments are tedious and everyday: they should correct previous errors, merely implement European Union regulations, or formally announce the outcome of processes conducted outside the process of drafting. In order to achieve a deeper insight into the matter other approaches are called for.

Next, Page selects 46 statutory instruments and interviews those involved: civil servants (administrators and lawyers) and members of interest groups who were consulted during the drafting process. The aim of these interviews is to determine who took the initiative, the nature of ministerial involvement, the role of civil servants, and the characteristics of the consultation process. Furthermore, a survey with data from hundreds of interest groups was compiled. Finally, Page looked into the role of parliament in the process of drafting statutory instruments.

Page concludes that civil servants at the lower level of governmental bureaucracy dominate the process of drafting statutory instruments. Junior Ministers, whose signature enacts them, are less involved. Yet, bureaucrats have to reckon with their blocking power. The Executive dominates the initiation of statutory instruments; the same is true for the process of consultation. Contacts with interest groups originate in the civil service, which, through the consultation process, seeks to obtain information and reassurance, promote fine-tuning, and obtain guidance. In short, it tries to avoid blundering. Thus, civil servants do not always dominate the substance of policies, not least because interest groups often have more issue-specific knowledge than civil servants. This is explained by the higher level of mobility amongst lower level bureaucrats compared to the functionaries of the interest groups they consult. The latter, incidentally, are mainly senior officials.

Page's study provides many remarkable insights into the world of everyday politics. Civil servants who are working on issues they hardly understand; issues that are of interest to only a few and of which even fewer have any expertise whatsoever; the implementation of European Union regulations that is sometimes delayed or only partly effectuated; how an apparently trivial statutory instrument can in fact be the manifestation of a major change (such as the statutory instrument that abolished the height requirement for members of a fire brigade, which enabled women to join the force).

However, the importance of Page's study lies in the manner in which he describes and highlights the relationship between the everyday politics of the drafting of statutory instruments and high politics. Page demonstrates that it is mistaken to believe that the influence of parliament on the process of delegated legislation is limited. Although parliamentary scrutiny of policy issues involved in statutory instruments is weak, interest groups can (re-) introduce an issue into the party political arena. Interest groups may use it as a crucial strategy. Consequently, an everyday political item can suddenly develop into an important political issue. Most lawyers, therefore, try to draft regulations as if parliament is looking over their shoulders.

The approach Page has chosen in this study resembles that of an archaeologist. He also starts from residues: starting off from a *prima facie* description of the artefacts he

tries to get a better understanding of the process and context in which they came into existence by combining different methods. In his conclusions – and maybe here we find a further similarity with archaeologists – Page presses his point more strongly than is warranted by his material.

More generally, more insight into several interesting issues, which Page discusses only cursorily, would have been preferable. In particular, the practice of effectively blocking the (correct) implementation of EU regulations; the functioning of lower level officials (who have not been studied as frequently as streetlevel bureaucrats, managers, or boys and girls at the top); the exchange of employees, and the relation of trust and dependency that exists between governmental bureaucracies and interest groups.

In sum, *Governing by Numbers* demonstrates that policy-making in a multi-actor setting and in the obscure does not in itself prove that democratic institutions have lost their importance. Their impact may have become more indirect, but it exists nevertheless. Bypassing the dominant perspectives and choosing an original point of view, as Page does here, pays off.

Berry Tholen

Jan Zielonka (ed.), *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe. Volume I: Institutional Engineering*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, ISBN 0-19-924167-8, £ 45.00

Jan Zielonka and Alex Pravda (eds.), *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe. Volume II: International and Transnational Factors*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, ISBN 0-19-924168-6, £ 45.00

The explanation and understanding of the post-1989 change towards democracy in Eastern Europe is the main preoccupation of the two volumes on *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*. This timely contextualization of the 1990s within the twin developments of globalization and the fall of communism has resulted in a grand, lucid and extremely perceptive collection of essays detailing the East European experience. The two volumes provide a unique examination of the particular experience of the 'transition to democracy'. The post-cold war period saw a number of established social, political and economic structures not just being challenged but being completely dismantled. As communist regimes were being swept from power, the institutions of government fell with them, resulting in a fragmentation and breakdown of domestic, intra- and inter-regional order. These developments introduced contending projects for the redistribution of power, resources and authority, more often than not compounded by a whole host of other challenges to traditional values. Thus, the culture of totalitarian hegemony (east of the Iron Curtain) was confronted with the *expectations* from a culture of democratic norms projected by the West. However, was this a process of targeted conditioning of East

European states within a democratic pattern of behaviour, or was it a mere rhetorical practice? The quest for answers to this question (and its derivatives) guides the intellectual drive of the essays in the two brilliant volumes on the East European transition. Both of them follow a similar methodological structure: (1) a collection of conceptual perspectives, expecting the issues raised by the case studies; and (2) a collection of case studies detailing the experience of individual East European countries. Such an approach offers a comprehensive and, at the same time, coherent argument, permitting an eclectic and dynamic understanding of the interaction between society, economy and polity in transition. In effect, this is an evaluation of 'how conscious' the effort to 'craft/engineer' democracy in Eastern Europe was both in the East and in the West. This provides both a conceptual and comparative basis for analysing the post-cold war experience.

These two volumes contribute to the current debate in the study of world politics on the interaction between 'ideas' and 'institutions'. With few exceptions, *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe* favours an instrumentalization of the institutional development in Eastern Europe as opposed to the prevalent neorealist paradigms of the cold war period. Establishing functional (and functioning) institutions, through which the process of democratization can be channelled, can ensure not only an environment of East European interdependence, but also one between the East and the West. The development of mechanisms for discussing the social, political and economic issues of the transition period is suggested as a viable way for dealing with them.

A minor point of recommendation is that it would have been beneficial if the editor had defined the term 'Eastern Europe' in the preface. The post-cold war period saw a multiplication in the geo-political terminology of Eastern Europe: from Central Eastern Europe to South Eastern Europe (also used in the collection). Therefore, it would have contributed to the focus of *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe* if the term Eastern Europe and its subsequent fragmentation had been introduced at the outset. This could have served as a common cognitive map for the readers on their journey through the process of East European democratization.

The first volume looks at the broad topic of *Institutional Engineering* and attempts to establish the interconnectedness between inter/transnational and domestic factors on the post-1989 change in Eastern Europe. It also considers their implications for individual countries. Perhaps, a better title for the volume would have been *Constitutional Engineering* since it deals predominantly with the legal form of institutionalism. The objective of constitutionalism in Eastern Europe is outlined as a rational framework of procedures "about the distribution of power" (p. 14). Such an approach to legal institutionalism suggests its implications for effective countering the danger from the asymmetries of power in the changed environment. But as the case studies indicate (i.e., Estonia and Latvia) the pragmatics of implementation are very often different (if not contrary) to the abstraction of theory. Issues such as minority rights and citizenship challenged (and still challenge) the process of democratic consolidation. In effect, the crises that such issues prompted must indicate that constitutional engineering "was developed to describe transitions from democracy to

democracy" (p. 23), and not from authoritarian rule to democracy. This oversight leads to a number of shortcomings in the institutional development, which, on the one hand, hampered it and, on the other, impelled it as a conflictual process (for instance, in Poland and Russia). Such conceptual confusion effectively put some "constitutional brakes on democracy" (p. 26). However, even imperfect constitutions manage (and managed) to create "legal and political conditions in which democracy had a chance to assert itself" (p. 47; Belarus being the most notorious exception to this corollary: pp. 293-319). It is argued that in such a context, constitutionalism has to suggest that "institutions often *determine*, rather than *are determined by*, the events of history" (p. 456). Constitutional patterns have effects on policy-making (i.e., Slovenia) as well as on the strategic behaviour of the actors (i.e., Bulgaria). Moreover, they bear implications on state-identity (a) through citizenship and (b) through their ethos. On the one hand, constitutional acts make presuppositions about the composition of the polity, most obviously by defining who are the citizens of a particular state. On the other hand, a constitution attempts to identify (and project) the fundamental values of a community, but treated in an "anxiety-free, reflexive, and open to learning" pattern (p. 464). Perhaps, one of the main inferences from this volume is the emphasis that, after all, constitutions *constitute* a process. In the East European environment, they should not be understood as fixed acts carved on a slate and then left on a top shelf to gather dust, detached from the experience of individual societies. Rather, they proffer an interactive process, which discourses the nature and implications of the post-1989 changes.

The second volume, as its subtitle suggests, concentrates on the interplay between international and transnational factors in the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe. This volume probably appeals to a much wider audience than the first one as it deals with a wider array of issues: ethnic strife, market reform, crime and corruption, regionalization, etc. The topicality, as well as the attention that is paid to the majority of these issues in the post-cold war period, make this collection of articles an extremely intriguing one. The implications of both domestic and external factors on these issues are considered from a number of different and quite illuminating angles. The fact that these challenges affect individual East European states and impact the engagement of external actors is the point of investigative departure for this volume.

However, despite the insightful suggestions of the essays that are included in it, the structure of this volume seems to struggle to keep its conceptual focus. To a large extent, the reason is the *burden* of theoretical perspectives introduced in the first half of the volume, which nearly diminishes the findings of the subsequent case studies. Instead of providing an overview of conceptual perspectives that anticipate the country-specific analyses (as it is intended), it overwhelms the reader. It does this on the one hand through its abstraction, and, on the other, with some aberrations from the institutional framework of the collection (mainly Reimund Seidelmann's neorealist corollaries). Structuring the first part of this volume around Karen E. Smith's, Iver B. Neumann's, S. Neil MacFarlane's and Ewa Morawska's articles might have been a much better approach. This is not intended to belittle the other theoretical

contributions and their conclusions, however, most of their discussions have already been presented in the individual case studies. Thus, some of a more pragmatic mind might find this intellectual tautology of (an otherwise exceptionally perceptive) volume somewhat onerous.

The analysis of the role played by external factors in the East European democratization process is underlined by "the simultaneity of democratisation and marketisation" (p. 2). In effect, the setting of the frame of individual transitions is sequenced by the choices that both external and domestic actors have to make in transforming the economy and the polity. The volume outlines four main variables for the role of external and domestic actors in regime change. The first one is the proximity to the West European values (something that smacks of a thinly-veiled 'primordialism'). Second, (and implied by the first one) is the relationship between nationalism and communism. The third one is the quality of 'stateness' (p. 3). And finally, the fourth one is the stage of democratic transition. Following from these variables, each case study looks at implications for inter/transnational factors on the process of democratization and democratic consolidation. The underlying motif of all country investigations is that although stability and security depend upon economic and political transformations in the long run, in the short term they may not be compatible. Moreover, the often mutually contradictory (or even when compatible) objectives of different Western projects, which were perceived in Eastern Europe as instances of the same project, introduced a sense of confusion rather than an awareness of purpose. This was reinforced by a sense of vulnerability deriving from a challenge to the concept of sovereignty through the promotion of liberal democracy and market economy. The cold war status quo was being challenged externally by (sub-) regionalization and internally by ethnicization of society. Unfortunately, some of the individuals who have traditionally been involved in the promotion of a civic culture in Eastern Europe – dissidents and intellectuals (or epistemic communities) – did not manage to initiate a grassroots process of democratization this time. Instead, they remained engrossed in the procedural dynamics of democratic consolidation, and in effect co-opted within the emerging partocratic elites. As a result, the process of democratization found itself with neither external nor domestic guarantees as to the direction (let alone purpose) of its democratic consolidation.

In such a way *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe* captures the major issues accompanying the transition period. The two volumes project not only a heightened sense of awareness of the democratization process in Eastern Europe at the end of 'a decade of change', but also a perception of its direction. The articles in this collection grapple with the possibilities of detecting frameworks in the theory and praxis of the post-cold war experience that would inform prospective decision-making. It is suggested that the establishment of an institutionalized setting of East European relations can contribute to the stability of the region. Its structure of rules- and norms-based patterned behaviour can involve both inter/transnational and domestic actors in a dialogue with the aim of solving the problems of the transition period. As the two volumes emphasize, the post-cold war period has been (and continues to be) a period

of deepening transition towards a more reflexive common European experience. Regardless of some of the weaknesses mentioned above, *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe* is an extremely valuable contribution to the study of post-1989 Eastern Europe (and, in fact, Europe as a whole). The erudite perspectives presented in the two volumes respond to a nascent requirement to initiate a process of evaluation of the experience from the democratic consolidation after the fall of communism. This provides a powerful insight into the process of institution building in the new democracies of Eastern Europe. Therefore, *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe* is going to be a very helpful repository for anyone who is studying the period of transition and who is looking for critical and well-informed perspectives on Eastern Europe's experience of democratization.

Emilian Kavalski

Ronald R. Aminzade, Jack A. Goldstone, Doug McAdam, Elizabeth J. Perry, William H. Sewell, Jr., Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, ISBN 0-521-00155-2 (paperback), £ 15.95.

Among the vast amount of edited volumes existing in the social sciences very few tackle a common research problem by offering a set of comparable chapters that fit together and also talk to each other. Especially in a rich research field such as social movements research, the compilation of such a volume is rather unique. This book stands for a high quality, well-written volume, which has several interesting things to tell. It is likely to become a unique source of inspiration for future research. Yet, unfortunately, the book misses some opportunities or, to paraphrase its title, remains silent on some important topics.

Broadly speaking, the book can be characterized as a tinkering experiment by leading scholars in the field. Fortunately, the book does not offer yet another seemingly new approach or model. Rather, it seeks to give voice to silences in the contemporary literature on social movements and contentious politics. Borrowing extensively from other social science research traditions, such as anthropology, social geography, social psychology and political psychology, it explores how these gaps might be filled. In this regard, the book is also an attempt to synthesize existing literature, to promote interdisciplinary work and to foster communication among separate fields of research. Consecutively, the different thematic chapters deal with emotions, spatiality, temporality, leadership dynamics, threat, and, finally, demographic and life-course contexts. Most chapters contain very rich and fascinating case studies providing illustrations of the more general points raised. Nevertheless, more similarity across chapters would have improved the already existing communication among the chapters. For instance, by limiting the (in itself revealing) discussion on leadership to revolutionary leaders only (chapter 5) the authors may