

# Breaking the Postcommunist Liminality: The Transformation Process in Eastern Europe

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**Abstract:** With the understanding that any setting of boundaries for completion of the postcommunist transformation can be, to a large extent, only arbitrary, this article attempts to discuss and analyze major factors and issues in determining the temporal dimension of the transformation process in Eastern Europe. It focuses on several conditions in the longer-term developments in the postcommunist constellation, namely, the sociopolitical and sociocultural ones. These conditions are understood as imbedded psychosocial matrices working as the factors that underlie changes in the political and economic spheres.

**Key words:** Eastern Europe, Eastern European society, generational turnover, liminality, postcommunism, transformation

Postcommunist culture is constantly in the making and is always a  
“work in progress.”

## Merging Theories of Postcommunist Change

**N**o one can prevent us from comparing apples and oranges;<sup>1</sup> both are fruits, and it may be convenient for some to devise a theory of how similar or different they might be, but can these fruits turn out to be kangaroos under certain conditions? There is a potential danger that such comparison might be simplistic and fruitless: we know that apples and oranges are fruits that differ in several recognizable features. The question then arises: Is it not more challenging to better understand apples (or oranges or kangaroos for that matter), to discover what

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makes an apple an apple, and to explore why, in the natural world, an apple could hardly become an orange than it is to endlessly compare them? Many theorists of postcommunist transformation in Eastern and East-Central Europe (EE/ECE), namely, “transitologists,” insist that both apples and oranges are noticeably similar fruits and one can obtain a higher knowledge in comparing their suspected common features.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, following Bunce, students of the momentous change in the region started to grasp that the postcommunist transformations differ from most other cases of political transitions in at least two aspects. First, they are more complex than other transitions in question (i.e., Latin American and South European transitions), as they contain efforts to completely overhaul the old economic system. Second, they possess specific sociocultural and normative dimensions, which include anything from the unique political, social, and cultural (both communist and traditional) legacies to the effects of the deep disruption of the old social, ideological, and normative systems. In other words, the past in the region had produced very specific characteristics that became firmly embedded in society, culture, and people’s minds.

In a sense, since human history consists of countless transformations of societies at each level, the postcommunist transformation offers an opportunity to be compared with other great transitions or transformations (i.e., the French Revolution, the Meiji Restoration, or England’s “Great Transformation”), namely due to its broad sweep, uniquely national and historical features, grand combination of continuity and discontinuity, and complexity. Such comparisons might have a very limited value, however, unless they focus on general historical contours or on carefully selected individual (and comparable) features, but even here such comparisons might be more meaningful from the perspective of history than that of comparative politics.<sup>3</sup>

But let comparatists have their piece of fruit pie. We assume that in the real political world, after the process of democratization and marketization reaches a certain critical mass, apples may be in the process of becoming oranges and comparisons may take place on a level field. We are not quite there yet, however. My question here is rather broad: To what extent can we still talk credibly of “Western European” and “Eastern European” politics after the nearly complete economic and strategic inclusion of most of Eastern Europe into the structures, or at least the orbit, of the Western world? I propose that the claims of those who believe that there is no autonomous field of comparative Eastern European politics are perhaps somehow premature.

The modes, expressions, and meanings of postcommunist change have been conceptualized in several different ways. Over the past dozen years, two patterns of explaining developments in the region have become dominant in comparative transformation studies, although their variations and combinations also abound. The first set of theories focuses on tracing divergent outcomes of institutional and policy choices to different strategies of transformation. The second general pattern in understanding the postcommunist change is associated with a more ambitious historical perspective, with emphasis either on the institutional-structural trajectories or on social, psychological, or political-cultural dynamics.<sup>4</sup> The latter

theoretical approach is mostly subsumed under the “path-dependency” theory and attempts to explain why and how the continuities in institutions—both formal and informal, political and economic—constrain new actors wishing to depart from the old constellation. It also rejects claims that postcommunist reforms are a technical process with “inherent technical solutions that can be imposed everywhere.”<sup>5</sup>

The path-dependency process sets up a specific broadband for available options. As David Stark explains, actors who “seek to move in new directions” find that their choices are constrained by existing institutional resources. Such institutional inertia precludes many desired choices and constrains certain courses.” From a related perspective, the path-dependency approach deals with the postcommunist transformation “as a function of the social, cultural, and institutional structures created under [old] regimes.”<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, the past institutional and other inertia will predominantly shape the course of transformation, regardless of the institutional design and (often lip service) liberal commitment of new postcommunist elites. The attempt to create a sustainable democratic society and a transparent market economy would long be challenged by the lingering effects of communists, traditional cultures, and institutional vestiges, surviving old networks and interests, weak roots of democratic institutions, and undeveloped skills of the new elites (such as the skills in effectively managing new political and economic situations).

The postcommunist development is marked twofold by path dependence. First, it proceeds on the new path shaped by strategic choices or emergent recombinations born during the immediate transition period. (Once the “open situation” that still offers alternatives has played out after choosing one option, the path instituted tends to reestablish itself, and it is difficult to change the direction in subsequent stages of transformation.) Second, the set of options available in that period is constrained by legacies of the past, that is, by nationally different paths of communist and precommunist development.<sup>7</sup> The approach implicit in this article respects both variants and is close to the so-called neo-institutionalist variant of “path dependency,” which seems to suggest reasonable ways to explain the difficulties and the protracted character of the transformation process by emphasizing the role of the complex structural and cultural heritage of the past without rejecting the effects of the reforms and transformational processes. As we will see, one does not necessarily have to perceive the past legacies as negative forces that obstruct the emergence of democracy and the market economy, but one can regard them also as social and institutional resources that can affect the transformation in many different, even positive, ways. In general, I tend to acknowledge that the broader structural environment defines the opportunities through which individuals and collectives may pursue their interests, as well as the constraints and powers defining various agents in pursuit of their interests. Consequently, I believe that the social environment consists of a large set of political, social, and economic institutions that act as both stimulants and constraints of individual acts of collective choices. In the same way that my analysis puts emphasis on the sociocultural factor, it also implies emphasis on the important role of the individual and collective psychological aspects and factors in social action. These social and cultural aspects are obviously not isolated from other aspects of the

postcommunist constellation, but rather they underlie the complexity of the processes in Eastern European transformation.

I will deal with time horizons of these processes in the second half of my article, but, by and large, there is no reason to disagree with Jadwiga Staniszkis's assertion that "in 1999, post-communism had . . . come to an end—or rather, the first phase of the transformation had ended."<sup>8</sup> The inertia of the starting positions, however, together with the dynamics and residue of the unique mix of communist and precommunist social, cultural, and psychological patterns, will affect norms, values, and behavior on many levels of political, economic, and social life in the region for some time to come.

### **Paradoxes in Eastern European Transformation**

From the above considerations, one can already sense that the dilemma of *continuity versus discontinuity* should be at the center of an analytical assessment of the dynamics of transformation. Continuity is embodied in the legacies of the communist rule and traditional heritage, while discontinuity lies in a deliberate effort to reorganize the previous system and experience. In an ideal model of postcommunist transformation, discontinuities caused by the system breakup and reforms ought to be compared with the nature and the scale of continuities, particularly those at social and cultural levels. (On the proper inclusion of these continuities one can agree, for instance, with Hanson, who argues that further progress toward a comprehensive theory of postcommunist democratization requires returning to a more detailed analysis of institutional and social developments during the communist period itself.)<sup>9</sup>

After examining this situation closely, one soon becomes aware that the transformation has been burdened by *several interrelated paradoxes* arising from the fundamental discrepancies between the tasks of transformation and the starting positions. These paradoxes are inseparable from the initial conditions and the first stage of transformation; that is, they can be seen as inherent prerequisites of the postcommunist transformational project. One qualification is perhaps needed here: although I apply these paradoxes to the region as a whole, I agree with Wiarda that, generally, both political culture and geography matter in the postcommunist area; one should add that geography matters especially through the particular histories. To maintain focus on a larger picture, I suppress the importance of the diversity across the region in this analysis.<sup>10</sup>

#### **1. The Paradox of the State (or, the State Collapses when It Is Most Needed)**

The edifice of the communist state had not collapsed completely, but the state had suffered (in addition to its metamorphosis in orientation) from the erosion of its many important functions. Particularly, in its role as a source and guarantor of legal power and norms and as the arbiter of major societal and economic changes, the postcommunist state abandoned its previous levels of penetration and effectiveness. (In fact, such abandonment of its all-pervasive role had been expected from the new state.) No other broader institutional actor (except for petty dictators) has been

available to step in and replace the state in steering the momentous changes underway. (Oftentimes, the changes occurred simultaneously with the decline of the state that sanctioned them.)<sup>11</sup> For many reasons, the debate about the proper role of the state in creating conditions for the necessary transformation has been inconclusive, both in theory and practice. As it appeared, the imperfect new political institutions, although mostly democratic in their design, were not able to take over the declining role of the state. The initially weak individual institutions and the system as a whole were taken over by increasingly contradicting interests and were not up to the task to adequately channel problems into standard democratic procedures and to do so on behalf of the public interest rather than particularist interests.

## **2. The Paradox of Elites (or, Where to Find New Elites when There Are None)**

The new or “reform” elites have often risen from among the old communist cadres, mainly due to their advantageous positioning in the old networks and access to resources. They had been the only ones privileged to acquire

necessary political and other skills under the communist regime. In addition to having stakes in success in the new regime, they are inescapably linked to structures, networks, thinking, and practices of the past. The process of recruiting new elites, untainted by involvement with the old structures, was gridlocked by the old elites (and proved difficult for other reasons). This applies both to the political and economic elites. At the core of emergence of the latter was the process of denationalization (privatization), with the most salient issue being how to reconcile requisites of legality, effectiveness, and fairness of privatization under the conditions in which virtually no one could have legally acquired the means to privatize, especially larger state-owned assets.<sup>12</sup> The quality of leaders is no doubt very important to every country, but this is even more important for transitional societies. Although an argument could be made that behavior of the old elites under the newly created institutions may change in a desired direction (as it sometimes happened), to secure their own future success in a competitive political system, a credible counterargument charges that the presence of the old elites, who have perpetuated many corrupt, less-than-democratic attitudes and habits and hindered democratization (and often genuine marketization), would severely constrain, in the absence of qualified successor elites, much-needed reforms both in the economic and political spheres.

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## **3. The Paradox of the Standard of Living and Social Security (or, Where’s the Beef?)**

When the old Soviet bloc collapsed, people mostly took the new freedoms as the first logical steps toward a better life. Although there certainly was some degree

of idealism, the stronger motives to support the new regime were economic, not ideological or moral. Unfortunately, in almost all EE/ECE countries, during the process of dismantling the old economic system and creating a new one, the population at large experienced, as an unintended consequence of reforms, deterioration in their standard of living. Views on how to mitigate the social costs still vary and, not surprisingly, they include demands for “capitalism with a human face.” In the absence of genuine restructuring and stronger economic performance, a spontaneous market economy only led to siphoning of resources from real investment to private hands of oligarchs. Since the outcomes of transformation leave the increasing number of people behind (who were previously used to the services of the paternalist state), there has been a growing pressure on state expenditures for social security to increase a cushion for the burden of the transformation. This is happening at the same time when the state can ill afford high social spending.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4. The Paradox of Democracy (or, What Comes First: Democracy or Prosperity?)**

The *paradox of democracy* is closely linked to all the abovementioned paradoxes. The literature on transitions confirms the trend that a higher degree of economic freedom supports a higher degree of political freedom (and democracy); specifically, that there exists a strong relationship between economic prosperity and the strength of democracy (and also positive attitudes toward the latter among the population). In most of the former communist countries, there has not been yet sufficient socioeconomic progress achieved for the new institutions to attract massive support among the population at large (often rather to the contrary). According to the standard theory, a certain level of economic development creates conditions for democracy to take root and evolve. If democracy precedes economic development, there is a danger that conflicts, which arise in the early phases of transformation, cannot be solved as a result of lacking economic resources, and dysfunctional democracies may thrive. Unless the economic conditions improve significantly and societal values coalesce around the middle class values, one cannot expect too much genuine progress in the sphere of democracy in the region. Similarly, as many now believe, not just strong economic foundations but also a mature civic culture are important conditions of stabilized democratic institutions and processes.<sup>14</sup>

#### **5. The Paradox of Time (or, Real Changes Take Time—but We Cannot Wait)**

Timing, sequencing, and time horizons are important, and often determining, time-related factors in the transformation. But even if they could be fine-tuned, they cannot defy the elementary nature of large-scale change: of the relatively long time span needed for reform policies to take effect and bear fruit in the broader economic and societal spheres. Such long-term time frames have generally been underestimated both by scholars (especially those from outside the region) and policymakers. From the point of reform support on the part of the population at large, it seems vital that relatively good economic performance and

a better standard of living be reached in a relatively short time span, if not as soon as possible. However, this is virtually impossible: the realistic time horizon for comprehensive socioeconomic reforms to materialize and yield results would be in decades and generations rather than in years. (In the meantime, the patience of the people has its limits and may peter out.)

## **6. The Moral Paradox (or, We May Be Downtrodden, but We Still Have a Sense of Justice)**

I suspect there is something else beside the often understandable envy many people in Eastern Europe might feel when witnessing a former communist lackey amassing a fortune. Often the feelings are associated with the acute sense of injustice and helplessness, and are accompanied by the demoralizing effects of the experience. In the same vein, there is a deeper moral issue coming to the surface here, based on comparisons and expectations. Although the communist regime was quite oppressive, politically discredited, and immoral, with dubious legitimacy (in addition to being economically incompetent), nonetheless, these regimes had not been perceived, at least by the majority of the population, as criminal—in most cases, not even as illegitimate. But shortly after the collapse of the old regimes, when it became obvious that some shady characters managed to amass property, disregarding any meritocracy principles or morally sound behavior, many ordinary people realized that taking advantage of the weak state and its weak legal system was the rule of the new game. What disturbed many such citizens about the new “moral mess” was that the basic human assumption about a desired change, that is, that its outcome will be consistent with their own values, moral world, and sense of justice, did not materialize. Arguably, genuine democratization requires harmony with the prevailing positive societal values and norms, as well as certain reconciliation with (or rather, *catharsis* from) the past.<sup>15</sup> The festering moral wounds (the object of much Western interpretative and moral misunderstandings) are clearly tangible in Eastern European societies, regardless of the fact that the majority of people did not think about the transformation in strictly moral terms.

### **The Process of Democratization and the State of Democracy**

Many democracies in EE (and especially in ECE) might be viewed as “consolidated” because they already held multiple, more or less democratic, although often flawed, elections, and the systems in place are often being perceived as lacking in democratic substance (as formal or “decorative”), being mostly deficient in penetration of democratic principles and values and, more important, perceived by a majority of the population as corrupt. In many cases, the newly built institutions resemble their Western models only formally, without fully exercising the functions assigned to them.<sup>16</sup> The process of building stronger democratic institutions is often ambiguous or tentative, but, in many cases, it is fortunately responding to positive (as well as negative) external signals. It is fair to say that, on balance, institutional assistance, and other external pressure by European organizations, not to mention steps on the road to integration into the European Union,

have proven helpful for a few countries. But many of the developments are rather superficial. Westernization, as coming both from the European inclusion and from globalization, has been replacing the communist and postcommunist goods and mores, but often translates more into the popular culture themes (and formal rhetoric of the elites) than fosters deeper roots of indigenous political culture and institutions. Thus, although the process of Westernization, especially as the spread of Western lifestyles and some other standards and values associated with Western civilization, pushes itself through in the region, it has yet to be reconciled with the indigenous cultures and the process of transformation itself.<sup>17</sup>

Lukin<sup>18</sup> and others have pointed out how problematic such reconciliation might be in societies and cultures not quite ready to accept polyarchy the way it is working in longtime democracies. Regardless of the fact that many postcommunist countries may qualify as polyarchies from the procedural point of view, the nature and stability of their democracy remains questionable. As another observer noted:

Russia mounts elections and tolerates a free press [sic], but it does not have democracy. Why not? Voting in Russia is not a means by which citizens discipline their rulers. Elections in Russia, in fact, do not create power. For the most part, they mirror the power that already exists. Incumbents find their supporters in hidden networks. They do not draw their power, in any way, from the majority of average voters, which is why the public, although bitterly resenting its rulers, has given up actively opposing the government. Russian elections do not produce anything even vaguely resembling accountable or responsive government largely because of institutional weakness.<sup>19</sup>

According to Melville, the situation in Russia is determined by an elitist rule that “makes use of the formal institutions of democracy for nondemocratic purposes. It is the result of a superficial democratization that provides no mechanisms of democratic control over the actions of the authorities.” The Russian regime is a hybrid and mixed one (using the terminology of Schmitter and Karl) because the rules of the game at the elite level are not those of open political competition, but consist of “clan and corporate laws structuring the ‘under-the-carpet’ struggle for power.”<sup>20</sup>

The transformations in most Eastern European countries are typically characterized by the excessive (if not pathological) fusion of the political and economic spheres, with attendant implications for effective management of the economy and politics (corruption, criminalization of economic activities, and so on). This potentially parasitic constellation is mostly due to the deficiencies in the legal-regulatory framework in which the state is not effectively autonomous and lacks independent and efficient professional administrations and judicial systems. Many area researchers frequently identified multiple flaws in the democratic process and mass and elite political cultures that are not able to sufficiently support the former and produce a low-quality democracy and institutions. Recently, for instance, Polish sociologist L. Kolarska-Bobinska, analyzing the case of Poland, singled out nine problems underlying the “inadequacy of [Polish] democratic institutions” (including the “fluid party system,” level of corruption, eroded meritocratic principle, etc.).<sup>21</sup>



In sum, there seems to be enough evidence regarding the relative immaturity of EE democracy, political elites, and society, even if we disregard cases of clearly “illiberal democracies.” Some of the region’s countries may have succeeded in correcting, if not completely reversing, such a derailed mode of transformation. The question as it stands right now might be: Which of the two forces will prevail and to what extent—the local idiosyncratic dynamic or the “pull” of the more advanced Europe?

### **Some Considerations on the Effects of Sociocultural Factors on the Transformation**

Increasingly, scholars studying the region have recognized the significance of the role of the cultural factor in the democratization process; they are not so united on the issue of how critical the role of this factor is. In a model, simplified for analytical purposes, political systems can be seen as having two components: structural (institutions and procedures) and cultural (these two no doubt overlap). Very generally, whether there is a congruence or incongruence between the two components largely determines the quality of the system’s performance in the long term.<sup>22</sup> For the most part, I argue that sociocultural characteristics, which may be redefined both in *psychosocial* and *political-cultural* terms, have constrained choices of strategies and implementations available to the democratic political transition and economic transformation in EE/ECE. This argument has been acknowledged as almost self-evident and requires only a few comments. Sociocultural characteristics constitute a broader framework within which patterns of political and other behavior can be located, and one of the key factors that influence and constrain—though not strictly determine—future patterns of development in political and economic systems.<sup>23</sup> Surely, many specific components of postcommunist societies and cultures, such as political mistrust, political apathy, the dichotomy between the private and public spheres, sense of social entitlement, and authoritarian tendencies, are not fully compatible with the requirements of democratic civic culture, and can therefore complicate (in addition to the weak institutions) the functioning of the system. The list of constraining symptoms may be amended by some related limitations in the sociopolitical sphere, such as the distorted perception of power and authority, nonstandard formation of political parties, underdevelopment of social and political organizations, and the preponderance of personality over institutional factors in politics.<sup>24</sup> And not least, the issue of corruption stands out across the region; there is the mounting evidence that corruption “has become so pervasive and deep-rooted in most postcommunist countries [that it] is jeopardizing the development of a free market economy and souring . . . the idea of democracy.”<sup>25</sup>

When considering the above deficiencies, the lack of *compatibility between the systemic continuity of societal factors and the discontinuity intrinsic in liberal-type models* is obvious. Contrary to the expectations of “neoliberals,” functioning democracy and market economy can be obtained only at a junction of broadly negotiated institutions and compatible or congruent political culture. As A. Przeworski has sug-

gested, democracy is “sustainable when its institutional framework promotes normatively desirable and politically desirable objectives, such as freedom from arbitrary violence, material security, equality, or justice.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, one can see that some fundamental underlying cultural premises viable for modern complex society, together with the entrepreneurial culture as a necessary ingredient/precondition of a modern market system, have been missing in postcommunist societies.<sup>27</sup> Thus, many necessary civilizational attitudes and skills have not fully developed yet due to the specific historical circumstances of the preceding periods.

Notwithstanding all the assumptions of continuity in social and cultural phenomena, some scholars (such as Gibson and others) have argued that changes in certain attitudes and values

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occurred as early as the beginning of the 1990s among the populations in the region. Particularly in terms of expressed values, researchers in many countries have demonstrated that, in the 1990s, some values have undergone shifts or even several stages in their development.<sup>28</sup> Such often contradictory evidence has come mostly

from attitudinal surveys and should be treated with caution, if only because the relevance and durability of such changes have not been closely examined.<sup>29</sup> In this regard, I agree with a general suggestion by Kolarska-Bobinska that some values may be “situational,” that is, held as necessary only during a period when certain conditions persist and are “ready” to be discarded when the situation changes.<sup>30</sup> But since values tend to be associated with deeper cultural codes and the deeper layers of consciousness, the change would likely be linked to long-term processes. Thus, despite the evidence that certain changes in attitudes and values have occurred, it is doubtful whether these changes occurred, or could have occurred, in deeply seated sociocultural (and habitual) characteristics.

There is little doubt that significant changes (especially in some situational values), and the level of accepting change and the degree of success in coping with the challenge of the transformation, differ from one individual or collective actor (or from one country or group) to another.<sup>31</sup> The overall evidence on trends in value changes in postcommunist ECE/EE is still fragmentary and often contradictory; also, many shifts seem to be linked to shifts in the general mood contingent on the politicoeconomic situation of the day, rather than to long-term changes in deep embedded values and dispositions.

### **A Framework for Long-term Change: The Legacies and the Generational Turnover**

The logic of the liberal rational approach assumes that new political institutions will produce relatively fast changes in the values and behavior of individuals, since the

new institutions alter the rules, incentives, and constraints that individuals use to calculate their behavior. Stimulated by new situations and opportunities to advance their own interests, individuals reassess their previous choices and actions and will act under new conditions to maximize their current net advantage and emerged future expectations.<sup>32</sup> Many liberal creationists and corporatists writing about the emerging postcommunist system have mostly missed something from the portrait of the new era—the omnipresent and continuous everyday life, the reality with its social, cultural, psychological dimensions. Thus, this “something” might be almost intangible but encapsulates the experience of two or three still-living generations. It seems to be something more than an idiosyncratic and passing pathology or form of personal nostalgia—it is a deeper code of experience that is affecting many people’s social and political thinking and behavior. In fact, as maintained by well-informed observers who are aware of historical continuities, the legacy of real socialism and the culture of the Eastern European past have influenced many groups in the region to a much higher degree than we are usually willing to admit.

On the process and micro levels, the direction of research on the issue, namely by those coming from the region, has closed on the assumption that many socio-cultural traits associated with *continuity* are embedded in the individual *psyche* of the members of these societies. Sztompka, for instance, has considered the internalization of certain key cultural codes, rules, and values by societal members as being the “*prerequisite for their meaningful actions within institutions.*”<sup>33</sup> According to him, there is not just one traditional culture; also, more multilayered cultures are on the level of individuals linked to their personal psychologies at the level of subconsciousness, often in the form of some sort of cultural code. A widely shared code within a given society represents patterns, matrices for both “thinking and acting which strongly constrain or facilitate social life and societal consciousness.” Consequently, on the level of deeper *personal experience*, extended to collective social experience, there exist clusters of values, motivations, ways of thinking, and habits that are subject rather to comprehensive acculturation than formal socialization. (They are often subconscious, but nevertheless affect human conduct.)<sup>34</sup>

In Kolarska-Bobinska’s view, such level and mode of acculturation is even more pronounced in the case of the passage from the socialist-state formation to one based on pluralism and a market economy, with the result that for a transition to be successful, it must be based on a “genuine revolution of values.”<sup>35</sup> Obviously, transition or revolution in values may be likely to happen only to the extent and speed to which the particular dominant values, norms, and habits (and the nature of their relationship to other factors) necessitate a replacement in the psychosocial contents, in conformity with the principles of psychological and social change. Certain values, and particularly habits, change relatively slowly and remain stable once they have been adopted, even more so if genuinely internalized; here, a new internalization may be necessary.

To make sense of implications of this insight for the postcommunist constellation, one can make a few reasonable assumptions. For instance, it might be reasonable to anticipate that some sociocultural traits obtained during the acculturation or socialization processes under the communist system had affected certain

age groups more than other groups, from which it follows that the acquired traits may be linked to the issue of generational sequence. One might also expect that these traits or symptoms recede as the population most affected by communist acculturation, especially those who had experienced communism in the most absorbing years and thus more thoroughly internalized its values and norms often in the form of habits, is gradually replaced, or loses its influence in social and political life. Thus, even if we allow for certain elements to be transmitted from generation to generation, one can expect that eventually the old symptoms will fade away and new psychocultural codes will emerge. The logic of this expectation is based on the general idea that values and habits remain relatively stable once they have been socialized and internalized in the individual, but are not necessarily transferred to those who succeed him or her.<sup>36</sup> This idea is championed by many social theorists, including Comte and Mannheim, who at the same time assigned the mechanism of *cohort replacement* a central role in processes of sociocultural and political change. The principal notion is that the diffusion in society of new attitudes and behavioral patterns is linked to the cyclical renewal of a society's population. Old attitudes and behavior are supposed to disappear as people associated with such attitudes and behavior are replaced. According to Mannheim, the continuous intake of new members into a society implies fresh contacts of young people getting acquainted with the cultural heritage; yet, this acquaintance does not take place under the same condition, since they witness different historical events and developments during their formative years. They potentially constitute a generation (*Generationslagerung*) with different historical and cultural experiences, values, and attitudes, which constitute a basis for different modes of behavior.<sup>37</sup>

To conceptualize this assumption of generational change in its effects on political life, some scholars have proposed the concept of a political generation. A political generation is a group of people whose political beliefs, values, and norms are formed by a significant historical event (or series of events) and by similar sociopolitical experiences that occur when these people are in their formative years (usually in their youth and early adulthood). Although the events occurring in that period as well as subsequent events may affect individual participants differently, these events have "clearly formed the values of these persons that a generational community can clearly be observed."<sup>38</sup> However, in this context, one should also be aware that theories of generational effects differ on both the importance and the mechanism of a political generation and its exchange. Some scholars treat the distinctive experiences of individual age cohorts as decisive in their effect for political and other developments, while others treat these differences as more or less ephemeral or epiphenomenal to other factors.<sup>39</sup> Hough (1980) and others argued that each generation is politically distinct because of cumulative changes in the political climate and social and educational conditions in which each cohort experienced political socialization. Contrary to that, some theories espouse the view that people's values change over their entire life.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, given the logic of the communist acculturation, one can expect that its homogenizing effects had created the distinct cohorts according to the

stage of communism (such as the degree of totalitarianism) that the surviving population had experienced, and that especially the cohorts raised under communism should differ from those coming of age after the fall of communist regimes.<sup>41</sup> For instance, Breslauer identified the so-called Social Contract generation coming of age in EE in the 1970s; this generation, having become used to promises of more consumer goods and social welfare benefits in return for political allegiance, could be expected to be quite distinct from the generation coming of age during a democratic and market economy era (the more forward in time in the latter era, the more distinctive).<sup>42</sup>

In their 1995 study, Rose and Carnaghan presented the results of their investigation into the issue of the generational effects in ECE/EE. Having compared survey data about generations in eleven countries of the region, they problematized the assumption that we really understand to which extent and to what effect individual generations differ. Rose and Carnaghan started with the common-sense assertion that since “old citizens die and youths come of age [and replace them] with actuarial predictability, the turnover of generations has potentially profound implications for change” in postcommunist countries. Using multivariate analysis, they found, however, that differences in education levels were even more relevant than those in age; not too surprisingly, they discovered that citizens with the most education showed the least approval of the communist regime and those with the least education showed the highest level of endorsement. (From the fact that younger generations tended to have a higher education, Rose and Carnaghan concluded, “it is possible that generational effects are spurious, accounted for by differences in education levels between generations.”) The authors reached the conclusion that, despite the consistency of patterns across the ECE/EE countries suggesting that Sovietization had produced similar intergenerational differences, regardless of national context, “divisions *within* generations were greater than divisions between generations.”<sup>43</sup> Having presented their case or a weak variant of the generational approach, Rose and Carnaghan pondered whether it might be the case that (as life-cycle theories maintain) the most substantial changes are not between individuals but within each individual, as he or she comes through generational metamorphoses (for instance, as the glasnost’ generation grows older, its views might come to resemble those of the wartime/Stalinist generations). In fact, the latter phenomenon may have a stabilization function for society but, at the same time and to a certain extent, perpetuates previous sociocultural patterns and contents.<sup>44</sup> Since the life-cycle theses do not take into account or explain specific types of attitudes and values, Rose and Carnaghan considered them as deficient for the purpose of explaining and predicting the evolution and change in specific values and attitudes. In the end and quite significantly, they concluded that “generational turnover will increase the proportion of the population for whom there is no returning to that [communist] past.”<sup>45</sup> Nonetheless, Rose and Carnaghan noted, history, and not only that of ECE/EE, provides the evidence that generational shift in values and attitudes “does not guarantee inexorable democratization.”<sup>46</sup> As far as my opinion is concerned, the generational turnover, even in its weak form, might significantly contribute to the changing values and psychocultural codes in transitional societies.

### The Assessment of Prospects: A Case for Liminality?

Revisiting our initial paradoxes and given sufficient time, even the opposites within a paradox tend to reconcile somewhat, and a degree of normalcy can be restored or achieved.<sup>47</sup> The paradoxes inherent in postcommunist transformation at its onset have been at the root of the spasmodic efforts in the region to overcome the liabilities of the past. The postcommunist liabilities and idiosyncrasies (including the “relative civilizational backwardness”) have governed at an underlying sociocultural level and interplayed with political and economic spheres. This is by no means a normative judgment: there is nothing demeaning in these countries’ awkward steps along the untrod path in the unknown territory, with no blueprints available to guide them.

As we have seen, it would be rather simplistic to assume that the exchange of generations is the only source of change available for the mass psychosocial and cultural levels in these societies. No generational leveling or replacement will automatically lead to a standard democratic life and smoothly functioning democratic and market institutions. As the experience of transitions and transformations in other areas has shown, both the internal dynamics of societies and external pressure on them (and the complex relationship between the two) will play a crucial role, along with the issue of demographics. In the internal dynamics, much will be determined by the socioeconomic development, especially, as Melville noted, by the acquired strength of the middle class.<sup>48</sup> The turning point, or rather multiple turning points, may have fuzzy borders. Nevertheless, they evolve around a qualitative change in the way society and its elites perceive themselves and their values and goals and act upon the latter. During this process, a significant emphasis will be put on the principles of adaptability and externally induced change, or what Marody has referred to as *adaptation to democracy*.<sup>49</sup> In modern society, changes become part of the maintenance process of political and other cultures. (Eckstein, using the term “change toward flexibility,” argued that technological advances and economic changes do not actually lead directly to a different cultural type; instead, a flexible culture can adapt these advances and changes into the existing culture.)

Development of a stable and effective democratic government depends upon “more than structures of government and politics”<sup>50</sup>; it depends upon the orientations and relationships that people have to the political process and the institutions. Thus, to sustain all democratic function in a particular state society, and at a comparatively or qualitatively high level, a certain civic capacity and skills are, according to Almond and Verba, required on the part of both the society and elites; also required is a suitable sociocultural environment. (Could such a congruent cultural environment be feasibly achieved, and how?) Since the emergence of democratically acting subjects is rather the result, and not the precondition, of the democratic transition, the large-scale emergence of bearers of democratic values and practices can be observed only after a prolonged process of democratization, when the democratic culture has been accepted as a criterion for all levels of political action. Typically, what often happened in EE/ECE was that instead of changing the underlying cultural base, new structural parameters were incorporated into that base.<sup>51</sup>

As Offe, Lukin, and others noted, the transformation processes in EE/ECE are historically unique. According to this view, the existing conditions of transition in postcommunist Eastern Europe and all variables and modalities of the economic and political trajectories have been exposed to both the outcomes of their interactions and funneled through the effects of universal and external factors. Such a complexity prevents most attempts at analysis from reaching any definite single prediction, not the least because of inclusion of the sociocultural factor as a historical product deeply subject to human agency. Although my argument acknowledges the role of historical continuity, it also recognizes that human agency can bring about change, both by reflecting on accumulating continuities or changed external conditions. Finally, one can expect that changes in the sociocultural sphere, due to its largely internalized and habitualized character, are likely to take place in a long-term horizon, even if other factors change relatively fast. In terms of the latter, for instance, certain values, when differentiated from habits, do change within a person's lifetime, and their original function and meanings "may be altered as they are recycled to cope with new situations."<sup>52</sup>

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***“One can expect that changes in the sociocultural sphere, due to its largely internalized and habitualized character, are likely to take place in a long-term horizon, even if other factors change relatively fast.”***

But other values and habits based on underlying cultural codes might not be as easily “available” and should be judged on the merits of their own meaning. Here, the Weber (or Dilthey) tradition of perceiving the social world might prove useful. Dilthey and Weber argued that social actions differ from other (strictly scientific) activities in that the former possess meaning for the social actors. The specific main task of social science therefore is *Verstehen*—implying efforts to understand such meanings and motivations underlying social actions. *Verstehen* also includes “basic explanations, both particular and general, on meaning as a critical independent, or explanatory, variable.”<sup>53</sup> Social science, when reflecting on people's behavior and perceptions of their own actions, attaches certain meaning to the objects of its observations. Since meanings vary among and within societies, we have to acknowledge that people would ascribe different meaning to the events and situations in which they find themselves. Social scientists attempt to decipher the observed meanings by way of hermeneutics, or *Deutung* (interpretation). The conclusion is that cultures, including political culture, create their own reference points and are not easily transferable.<sup>54</sup>

One can argue that since the newly created institutions in EE and their ultimate meanings are still in flux, as well as people's attitudes to them, this kind of continuing fluidity is part of a typical *liminal* constellation. In fact, the transitional character of the transformation in EE/ECE, uncertainty of its results, and especially the abovementioned inherent paradoxes do give some justification to the notion of *liminality* applied to the amorphous, not-too-transparent but changing

state of affairs in the region (Zygmund Bauman did describe the actual course of the transitory period in Eastern Europe some years ago). This notion, taken from anthropology (an appropriate discipline to capture the comprehensive nature of social transformations), evolves around a rite of passage through transitional stages, in which stable structures and identities are temporarily suspended to guide the novice from one social status to another. Such a transitional rite is “to effect an ontological transformation . . . not merely to convey an unchanging substance from one position to another by a quasi-mechanical force.”<sup>55</sup> Given the suspension of normal institutional order and social normalcy, the standard, static, structural approaches of social science are not applicable to the liminal phase.<sup>56</sup> Using the concept of liminality, Szakolczai suggested that, as communism was based on the perpetuation of temporary liminal conditions “into a permanent state,” a post-communist transiitiveness also may be perpetuated in the same way.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, I use *liminality* in this context in a sense that is rather detached from discussions on whether democracies are consolidated and the transformation is over in the region; the notion is rather meant to encapsulate a totality of conditions and symptoms that are transitional without a clear horizon where this transitionality may come to an end.

Related to this is the obvious question: Are we approaching the point in time when we could declare postcommunism dead? There are many reasons for an assertive answer, with some qualifications worth mentioning. With regard to a time frame necessary for the new system to get rid of the vestiges of the old socio-cultural symptoms, it seems that generational turnover, reinforced by changes in the socioeconomic and political structures (under “globalization” and crossborder and crosscultural tendency to convergence) will gradually erode the basis of the (post-) communist syndrome. Since psychocultural and social phenomena would take a longer time to change than formal institutions, due to the complex (multilayered) and long-term character of the former, it is very likely that a generation coming of age now would be the first one able to significantly reduce or eliminate the cultural effects of communism. But in society as a whole, even though the period of the postcommunist transformation may be coming to an end, the complex syndrome of postcommunism will still be resounding for some time. The residue of the past, the unique mix of communist and precommunist social, cultural, and psychological legacies and idiosyncrasies, will still cocreate norms, values, and behavior in the political, economic, and social life. Any further convergence with the Western standards and norms, or with “civic values and competence,” has so far been both purposeful and unintended work in progress—but the opportunity and limits of the graduated time-spatial diffusion and convergence are obvious.

Sociocultural legacies of the past complicate optimal institutionalization, leaving all guesswork difficult. In 1990, Ralf Dahrendorf made a prediction regarding a framework for change in EE/ECE. According to him, if constitutional reform may take six months, essential economic reform may be implemented in six years. But the transformation of civil society would require sixty years.<sup>58</sup> In my account here, I have put emphasis on deep-seated (internalized) and habitual legacies of com-



munism, to the level of individual values, perceptions, and actions; they are nevertheless linked to the structural political and socioeconomic factors and processes. There is no doubt that some of the old attitudes, convictions, or habits may be shed under new circumstances (either by choice or under pressure)—but unless powerful agencies of change in the direction opposite to the original codes or imprints are put to work, many old dispositions and habits are likely to persist for some time, or become entrenched, particularly where the new environment is perceived as not stimulative to change them in a more propitious direction. So, when will postcommunism end? Following the logic up to this point, I would argue that this could only happen when the paradoxes of the onset and their significant effects die out. For this, no specific prediction is perhaps possible; nevertheless, one can anticipate that the process of change will be close to Dahrendorf's prediction. Considering the fact that broadly conceived cultural change would rise from a complex interplay between two relatively autonomous dynamics, that of the external and structural conditions, and that of the sociopsychological and cultural development,<sup>59</sup> the specific nature of long-term change will be at the junction of these two forces.<sup>60</sup> One might be skeptical or hopeful as to which extent the *liminal stage* can give birth to a timely, positive evolution, that is, one leading toward prosperous, tolerant societies and polities, attaining a higher standard of civic life, in societies set on a course guided by a democratic purpose and the principles of good governance and ability to solve conflict by nonviolent political means. As for citizens in these EE countries, they are still not quite confident whether they are up to the task of becoming “fully-fledged European citizens, but things are changing.”<sup>61</sup> The real change may come through mobilization and action of newly emerging and motivated agents who are able both to take use of the new political and economic institutions and further improve them for the benefit of society. Whether these countries are really nurturing such a generation and values is another question, but some signs have already been moderately optimistic.

## NOTES

1. Here I give credit to Valerie Bunce and her seminal piece “Should Transitologists Be Grounded?” *Slavic Review* 54, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 111–28, on the issue of comparability between areas undergoing different kinds of change. Bunce's metaphor of apples, oranges, and kangaroos attests to a much-needed common sense, which the author was able to bring into the debate. Also, some others believe that the Eastern and Central European experience is “fundamentally different” from that of Southern Europe and Latin America. Cf. Howard Wiarda, “Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Comparative Politics: ‘Transitology’ and the Need for New Theory,” *East European Politics and Societies* 15, no. 3 (2002): 485–501. L. Holmes maintains that it is “legitimate to identify postcommunism as a phenomenon in its own right.” Leslie Holmes, *Post-Communism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 15–16.

2. Postcommunism or postcommunist transformation can arguably be the terms that best describe the period in Eastern Europe after the old regimes fell. No doubt, for this era, “rather ambiguous and multidirectional . . . the term ‘post-Communism’ is probably as good a name as any to define those ten years.” Andrew Stroehlein, “Czech Intellectuals and ‘Post-Communism,’” *Central European Review* 1, no. 14 (September 27, 1999): 1.

3. According to Offe, Eastern Europe has been undergoing a “multifaceted” transformation, in which political and economic dimensions are only two of at least four main dimen-

sions. Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997). Most students of Eastern Europe agree that the economic and political aspects of transition are very closely interrelated, although the modes of this relationship have been underestimated in the theoretical work.

4. The concept of path dependency was initially developed for modeling processes of technological development—especially to explain why a certain technological solution, once adopted, could continue to dominate the market even if it proved comparatively inefficient in the long run. It was later adopted by institutional economics and comparative politics. North, who first applied the concept to institutional development, focused on “what determines the divergent patterns of evolution of societies, polities, or economies over time?” Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 92. Note that R. Putnam applied North’s path-dependency argument to explain diverging outcomes of introducing the same set of formal institutions into different sociocultural environments (northern and southern Italy) in terms of institutional performance. See Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

5. Paul Aligica, “The Institutionalists’ Take on Transition,” *Transition* (March 7, 1997): 46–49. Some “legacies-of-the-past” theories might fit into the “path-dependency” approach; others tend to be rather one-sided.

6. See David Stark, “Path Dependence and Privatization Strategies in East Central Europe,” in *Transition to Capitalism*, ed. J. M. Kovács (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 63–101. See also Beverly Crawford and Arend Lijphart, “Old Legacies, New Institutions: Explaining Political and Economic Trajectories in Postcommunist Regimes,” in *Liberalization and Leninist Legacies: Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Transitions*, ed. B. Crawford and A. Lijphart (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 1–39.

7. Cf. Jurgen Beyer and Jan Wielgohs, “On the Limits of Path Dependency Approaches for Explaining Postsocialist Institution Building: In Critical Response to David Stark,” *East European Politics and Societies* 15, no. 2 (2001): 356–88.

8. See Jadwiga Staniszkis, *Post-Communism / Postkomunizm* (Gdansk, Poland: Wydawnictwo słowo/obraz terytoria, 2001). Similarly, Andreas Schedler deals with the issue of defining temporal boundaries of postcommunist democratization; see “Taking Uncertainty Seriously: The Blurred Boundaries of Democratic Transition and Consolidation,” *Demokratizatsiya* 8, no. 4 (2000). He concludes that the boundaries of the closure of consolidation “are structurally indeterminate.”

9. Stephen E. Hanson, “Sovietology, Post-Sovietology, and the Study of Postcommunist Democratization,” *Demokratizatsiya* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 142–49.

10. It is perhaps history as such that is not emphasized enough by Wiarda. Otherwise, one can agree that individual countries in the region do represent a unique hotchpotch of telling case studies. See Howard Wiarda, “Southern Europe, Eastern Europe, and Comparative Politics: ‘Transitionology’ and the Need for New Theory,” *East European Politics and Societies* 15, no. 3 (2002): 485–501.

11. One would expect that, in the absence of any better-positioned actor, the new state had an obligation to manage, at least temporarily, most of the complex transitional processes. There is always, for instance, a specific institutional framework to be set up for markets to work properly (efficiently)—there is “no market road to a market economy.” Cf. Michael Burawoy, “Transition without Transformation: Russia’s Involutionary Road to Capitalism,” *East European Politics and Societies* 15, no. 2 (2001): 269–90. To the point here is also the debate on the implications of the argument by Karl Polanyi in his work *The Great Transformation* (1944) about the centrality of the state in any transition to a market economy.

12. For a similar analysis of Poland, I refer to the recent work of Harald Wydra, especially to *Continuities in Poland’s Permanent Transition* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

13. This was argued, for instance, by A. O. Hirschmann who warned of an “antagonistic potential” looming over the transforming societies if the expectations aroused in broad

sections of the population in the first phase of transition are not soon fulfilled. Albert O. Hirschmann, *Entwicklung, Markt und Moral* (Munich, Germany: Abweichende Betrachtungen, 1989), 125.

14. For instance, Hough, as well as Whitefield and Evans, found a strong correlation between the decline in positive affect toward democracy and worsening economic conditions. See Jerry F. Hough, "The Russian Election of 1993: Public Attitudes Toward Economic Reform and Democratization," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10, no. 1 (1994): 1–37. See also Stephen Whitefield and Geoffrey Evans, "The Russian Election of 1993: Public Opinion and the Transition Experience," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10, no. 1 (1994): 38–60. According to Whitefield and Evans, "almost four times as many people whose family living standards are considered to have risen a lot over the past five years evaluate democracy positively compared with those whose living standards have fallen a lot" (57). Also, Fleron argued, "Sensitivity to the emotive appeal of key terms such as 'democracy,' 'elections,' and 'tolerance' must be accompanied by awareness of the distinction between ideal and real cultural patterns, general and specific beliefs, abstract ideas and ideas embodied in social processes, as well as the relationship between political culture and more general cultural patterns." Frederic J. Fleron Jr., "Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations," *Europe-Asia Studies* 48, no. 2 (1996): 225–60. Also, there exists an assumption here that as soon as a critical mass point of material well-being has been achieved, societies possess resources and stability to afford and maintain their democratic institutions. One can make a good case that the postcommunist Eastern Europe supports this assumption, as the poorest countries in the region mostly have substantial democratic deficits. See also Alexander Lukin, "Electoral Democracy or Electoral Clanism? Russian Democratization and Theories of Transition," *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 93–110.

15. Referring to democratic transitions in general, O'Donnell and Schmitter predicted: "It is difficult to imagine how a society can return to some degree of functioning which would provide a social and ideological support for political democracy without somehow coming to terms with the most painful elements of its own past." Guillermo O'Donnell et al., eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 30. The process of "squaring with the past" would include not only the establishment of a legal framework defining an accountability for past crimes and the abuse of power and injustices, but also other rectifying procedures. As Gati testified, "the psychological legacy of communism is . . . an environment contaminated with guilt and suspicion." Charles Gati, "From Sarajevo to Sarajevo," *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1992): 64–78. Others (Bauman, Sztompka, Olson) identified apathy, lack of tolerance, and corrupted business practices as widespread in the region. Communism has "left behind an enormous burden in terms of built-in expectations, forms of behaviour and frames of mind," Lomax testified. See Bill Lomax, "Obstacles to the Development of Democratic Politics," in *Hungary: The Politics of Transition*, ed. Terry Cox and Andy Furlong (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 82. "Far from democratic institutions fostering democratic political behaviour, the attitudes, values and behaviour patterns learned and acquired in the past appear to be undermining the functioning of the democratic process and of the new political institutions" (82).

16. I do not elaborate here on problems of conceptualization of consolidation of democracy and on the underlying "legitimacy" crisis that constantly threatens to erode the very principles of these new polyarchies, if not the regimes as such. Also, many scholars have accepted that capitalism as a system producing some fundamental inequalities was not generally too supportive of substantive forms of democracy, that is, forms that would enhance the degree of equality in the political sphere and introduce a conclusive and inclusive fairness into the economic and social spheres, the latter on the basis of a consensually accepted notion of justice.

17. Baker and Koessel found the evidence that "[In Eastern Europe,] we can observe that the framework necessary for polyarchy is in place, but other institutions imperative to the

state, that fall under good governance, lack the necessary independence to function effectively." Peter J. Baker and Karrie J. Koessel, "Measuring 'Polyarchy Plus': Tracking the Quality of Democratization in East Europe, 1992–2000" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, August 30–September 2, 2001), <http://www.nd.edu/~pbaker/polyplus.htm>.

18. Alexander Lukin, "Electoral Democracy or Electoral Clanism?" *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 93–110.

19. Stephen Holmes, "What Russia Teaches Us: How Weak States Threaten Freedom," in D. Johnson, e-mail to Johnson's Russia List mailing list, June 24, 1997: 5–7.

20. Both citations are from Melville. He continues, "[T]he present oligarchy in Russia is a method for managing big organizations, a method based on power. The oligarchic principles of the postcommunist structure in Russia date back to the understanding of plutocracy as a regime under which power and privileges are based on wealth." Andrei Melville, "Russia in the 1990s: Democratization, Postcommunism, or Something Else?" *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no. 2 (1999): 165–87. See also Shevtsova (1997). Melville believes that the present hybrid regime in Russia "resembles the closed corporate structures of Latin America" (177).

21. Cf. Lena Kolarska-Bobinska, "The EU Accession and Strengthening of Institutions in East Central Europe: The Case of Poland," *East European Politics and Societies* 17, no. 1 (2003): 91–98. Ágh distinguishes "four types of degeneration or distortion of democracy which threaten the democratic transition in the countries of ECE which he calls semi- or pseudo-democracies." These distortions are: 1. formalist democracy, 2. elitist democracy, 3. partyist democracy (particrrazia), and 4. tyrannical majorities. Atilla Ágh, "The Paradoxes of Transition: The External and Internal Overload of the Transition Process," in *Hungary: The Politics of Transition*, ed. Terry Cox and Andy Furlong (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 15–34.

22. See also discussion in Harry Eckstein et al., eds., *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

23. See Stephen White, *Political Culture and Soviet Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 20.

24. Also, according to Ekiert, the perception of social justice "has been deeply engraved" in people's minds in all state-socialist societies. "Therefore unemployment, decreasing living standards and new market-induced inequalities represent a potential source of conflict and division which may decisively modify the strength and capabilities of political actors and affect the extension of citizenship and the creation of truly democratic institutions." Grzegorz Ekiert, "Democratization Processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Reconsideration," *British Journal of Political Science* 21 (1991): 285–313.

25. Margaret Shapiro, "On the Take in the New Russia: A Deep Corruption is Tainting Democracy," *Washington Post* (national weekly edition, November 21–27, 1994): 17.

26. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 107.

27. Piotr Sztompka, "Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break," *Communist and Postcommunist Studies* 29, no. 2 (1996): 115–29.

28. See also Fleron, "Post-Soviet Political Culture in Russia: An Assessment of Recent Empirical Investigations" and Mikhail Gorshkov, "Economic and Psychological Crisis Erodes Russian Mentality," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta-Scenarios* 6 (1998).

29. For a comprehensive analysis, one would have to make a longitudinal differentiation of the value-concept in several categories and their relationship to the processes of socialization, especially internalization (or habituation). On a related issue, Reisinger correctly noted that values "are the least malleable of the components of the public opinion" (and the most difficult to measure, one might add). Cf. Reisinger, "Conclusions: Mass Public Opinion and the Study of Post-Soviet Societies," in *Public Opinion and Regime Change: The New Politics of Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Arthur H. Miller et al. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 271–78.

30. Lena Kolarska-Bobinska, "Civil Society and Social Anomy in Poland," in *Social Policy, Social Justice and Citizenship in Eastern Europe*, ed. Bob Deacon (Brookfield, VT: Avebury, 1992), 56–70.

31. At a slightly different level, the mechanism of specific adjustment to sociopsychological pressures was analyzed by Erich Fromm. Here, I have in mind his assertion regarding sociopsychological internalization of "external necessities" resulting in harnessing human energy for the task of a given economic and social system." Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969 [1941]), 284 (emphasis in original). Some scholars argued that culture changes naturally without explicit reference to the generational effect. According to Eckstein (elaborating on a Parsonian theme), there exists a type of pattern-maintaining change, which while originating in an environment tends to maintain itself through the shaping of new influences and responses to fit into changing patterns.

32. Cf. James G. March, *Decisions and Organizations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

33. Piotr Sztompka, "Looking Back: The Year 1989 as a Cultural and Civilizational Break," 118 (emphasis in original). Sztompka has proposed the concept of "civilizational competence" to describe such a set of cultural premises "indispensable for a modern society of the democratic and market type." He defined civilizational competence as "a complex set of rules, norms and values, habits and reflexes, codes and matrixes, blueprints and templates the skilful and semi-automatic mastering of which is a prerequisite for participation in modern civilization" (118). See also Sztompka, "Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Postcommunist Societies," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 2 (1993): 85–95.

34. Piotr Sztompka, "The Intangibles and Imponderables of the Transition to Democracy," *Studies in Comparative Communism* 24, no. 3 (September 1991): 295–311.

35. Lena Kolarska-Bobinska, "Civil Society and Social Anomy in Poland," 65.

36. Ronald Inglehart has expressed the view that people's values remain stable especially during their adulthood, and, accordingly, values change mainly as a result of the replacement of generations. Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990). Also, Huntington believed that, as the individual becomes more and more committed to the performance of certain functions, he or she finds it increasingly difficult to change these functions and to unlearn the responses that he has acquired to meet environmental changes. Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington, eds., *Understanding Political Development* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1987), 397.

37. Yet, as Mannheim pointed out, to what extent a generation emerges at all as distinct from a previous one and how soon depends on the rate of sociohistorical change. See Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1952), 286–320. According to Comte, to secure a continuous change, the conservative instinct of the old generation must balance the innovativeness of the young one. August Comte, *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (Paris: Bachelier, 1969), 635–36. See also Andries van den Broek, "Cohort Replacement and Generation Formation in Western Polities," in *Political Value Change in Western Democracies*, ed. Loek Halman and Neil Nevitte (Tilburg, The Netherlands: Tilburg University Press, 1996), 237–38. Inglehart has assumed that a "silent" cultural revolution that has unfolded itself in advanced industrial societies was brought about by cohort replacement. (He has focused especially on the extent to which the conditions of physical and economic safety affected the formation years of successive cohorts; Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, 68–69.

38. Ivan Volgyes, *Politics in Eastern Europe* (Chicago, IL: Dorsey Press, 1986), 261.

39. See Richard Rose and Ellen Carnaghan, "Generational Effects on Attitudes to Communist Regimes: A Comparative Analysis," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11, no. 1 (1995): 28–56.

40. As H. Hyman noted, "the individual is not . . . fixed in his politics for life. He may show further changes with cumulative experience." Herbert H. Hyman, *Political Socialization* (New York: Free Press, 1959), 118. Still others emphasize the universality of observation that older people tend to take more conservative and less flexible views. According to Miller et al., people also generally become more authoritarian in their views as they become

older. See Miller et al., *Values and Political Change in Postcommunist Europe*, 241.

41. Cf. D. E. Butler and Donald E. Stokes, *Political Change in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 249.

42. See Rose and Carnaghan, "Generational Effects on Attitudes to Communist Regimes," 35.

43. R. Rose and E. Carnaghan, 35, 29, and 45–48 (emphasis in original). Other surveys undertaken since the fall of communist regimes have shown intragenerational differences in a variety of attitudes. Hahn (1991), for instance, challenged the generational hypothesis, particularly on the basis of his findings that seem to suggest that in the early 1990s, the Russian political culture featured more change than continuities. Jeffrey Hahn, "Continuity and Change in Russian Political Culture," *British Journal of Political Science* 21 (1991): 393–421.

44. Rose and Carnaghan, "Generational Effects on Attitudes to Communist Regimes," 50.

45. *Ibid.*, 51–52.

46. *Ibid.*, 52. For a more skeptical assessment of the generational factor, see Rose et al., *Democracy and its Alternatives* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 205.

47. On the issue of "normalcy"—as being "mutually exclusive with postcommunism," see L. Holmes, *Postcommunism*, 336–37.

48. Andrei Melville, "Russia in the 1990s," *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no. 2 (1999): 165–87. In Melville's account, the Russian old middle class was "washed away" during the onset of the transformation and a new one not yet created; this fact is believed to have an important effect on the quality and stability of democracy in Russia (see esp. 176).

49. Mirosława Marody, "The Political Attitudes of Polish Society in the Period of Systemic Transitions," in *The Polish Road from Socialism*, ed. Walter D. Connor and Piotr Płoszajski (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), 255–68, emphasis in original. For instance, Ágh has noted, there was in the case of Spain "the invention of democratic tradition" in the sense of a qualitative change in how society and elites perceive their values and goals and act upon the change. Cf. Atilla Ágh, "The Paradoxes of Transition: The External and Internal Overload of the Transition Process," in *Hungary: The Politics of Transition*, 25.

50. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 359–66.

51. Cf. H. Eckstein, "A Culturalist Theory of Political Change." According to a general culturalist theory, there are two broad types of cultural changes: those arising "naturally" from changes in situations and structural conditions and those that result from "artifice"—deliberate attempts to transform political structures and behavior. A third type could be added: that arising from interplay between two relatively autonomous dynamics: one of the external and structural conditions of the social and political environment, and the other of cultural development. See also Eckstein, *Regarding Politics: Essays on Political Theory, Stability, and Change*. See also James Alexander, "Surveying Attitudes in Russia," *Communist and Postcommunist Studies* 30, no. 2 (1997): 107–27. In this respect, an interesting argument was presented by Mueller, who believes that "it is not necessary for old habits to be unlearned"; one preexisting set of habits and perspectives "may be gradually (or perhaps suddenly) eclipsed" by either the other preexisting set or a newly adopted set of orientations that has been proven elsewhere. John Mueller, "Democracy, Capitalism, and the End of Transition," in *Postcommunism (Four Perspectives)*, ed. Michael Mandelbaum (New York: Council of Foreign Relations Book, 1996), esp. 137. In a sense, this argument also fits well in Kolarska-Bobinska's notion of situational values that are espoused as necessary only during the period when certain conditions persist, and are to be discarded when the situation changes.

52. T. Jonassen Christen, *Value Systems and Personality in a Western Civilization: Norwegians in Europe and America* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1983), 319.

53. H. Eckstein, "Culture as a Foundation Concept," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 8, no. 4 (October 1996): 483. Eckstein notes: "Sociology, in brief, had to be interpretive sociology" (483).

54. Cf. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

55. Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," *The Forest of Symbols* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93–111.

56. See Arpad Szakolczai, "In a Permanent State of Transition: Theorizing the East-European Condition," [http://limen.mi2.hr/limen1-2001/arpad\\_szakolczai.html](http://limen.mi2.hr/limen1-2001/arpad_szakolczai.html).

57. In this context, Szakolczai notes: "This diagnosis leads to . . . a two-fold policy suggestion. First, no country lacking an elite can come out of a vicious circle of permanent transitoriness on its own. As a consequence, the countries of the region are not capable of solving their problems."

58. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe; in a letter intended to have been sent to a Gentleman in Warsaw* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990). Similarly, in a discussion in 1992, Stephen Cohen concluded that "[any] hope for real markets and real democracy in Russia is a matter of a generation," here quoted from Mueller, "Democracy, Capitalism, and the End of Transition," 103. On the factor of generational turnover in the duration of regimes, see Ted R. Gurr, "Persistence and Change in Political Systems," *American Political Science Review* 68 (1974): 1482–1504. Referring to Gurr, Eckstein argued, "to democratize fully should probably cover some twenty-five years—more or less, depending on local conditions." H. Eckstein, "Lessons for the 'Third Wave' from the First," in *Can Democracy Take Root in Post-Soviet Russia?* 276.

59. Cf. H. Eckstein, *Regarding Politics: Essays on Political Theory, Stability, and Change*.

60. All citizenry can be differentiated on the basis of certain sociodemographic categories, such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, education, rural-urban residence, religion, and ethnicity. For the reason of simplicity and space available, in this essay I deal with these categories only marginally.

61. Here, I paraphrase the argument made by Sztompka in "Intangibles," 311. Sztompka assumed, in 1991, that "the residues of the communist system are entrenched at . . . two levels—most strongly at the level of the cultural codes and somewhat more loosely at the level of personal attitudes" (297).