

**FROM PERSONALITY TO ANTI-COALITION.
EXCLUSION AS PRINCIPLE OF COALITION MAKING:
THE BALTIC CASE**

PART I

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Introduction

After the breakdown of socialism and dictatorship in Eastern Europe political science was faced with a completely new situation of complex and simultaneous changes in a huge region. Many experts on Eastern Europe used to be the “oracles” of the West for understanding and – if possible – predicting processes in the East about which hardly any certain or even official information was available for the public. Even in Eastern Europe was no access to information. Now they had to switch over from the research of socialism and dictatorship to transformation and democratisation.

This process again caused intensive scientific discussions about these terms and their impact which is not yet really finished. The very first was even the problem to deal with the region in general because the term Eastern Europe was in fact a synonym for socialist dictatorship during decades. The second quarrel concerns the question of understanding the process in Eastern Europe as a part of the third wave of democratisation after Latin America and Southern Europe or to see an independent phenomena because of the differing historical and cultural situation.

One side tries to verify the old scientific means and models getting some certain interesting results. But these attempts don't satisfy the need of explanation, which as well can't give the simple description of historical roots for nowadays breaks in the process of development.

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the weak points of existing theories and descriptions and to show a way out by giving them the ability to “feel” some new dimensions inside.

Theoretical Approaches

There were several attempts to explain the development of political party systems in Eastern Europe. Political scientist tried to rewrite the cleavage approach, searched for the necessity of civil society, for the functioning of a democracy and tried to explain the happenings through rational choice theory.

Von Beyme said that the cleavage theory was like an „archaisches Relikt“ reactivated after the first free elections to find an explanation for the by him called „ahistorischen Voten“.¹ Certainly in the beginning of the 90es the East European societies lacked deeply rooted socio-economic cleavages after more than 50 years of socialist attempts to equalise them. But after ten years of transformation we can without problems identify between former cadres and their victims on the one hand and between the “new rich” and the losers of system change on the other. Merkel and Puhle see as well an explanation possibility by cleavages. Not only socio-economic conflicts are transformed into the party system. Referring to the theory of defect democracies they emphasise the ethnic aspect.²

But the quire of the opposite opinion is quite big. In negative interpretation of the cleavage-model Evans and Whitefield offer the „missing-middle-approach“³, arguing that there isn’t a socially diversified society in Eastern Europe as a result of a repressive and centralised regime. Elkster, Offe and Preuss simply

¹ von Beyme, Klaus: Parteiensysteme und Demokratisierung in Osteuropa; in: Geschichte und Gesellschaft 3/92, S.280f. The author doesn’t precise his understanding of the election results as “unhistorical”. So far it is his secret, whether he thinks unexpected or unlogical for what reason.

² Merkel, Wolfgang / Puhle, Hans-Jürgen: Von der Demokratie zur Diktatur, Opladen 1999, S.151f. In spite of accepting some socio-economic cleavage Merkel and Puhle don’t accept the work-capital-cleavage as strong enough to be a cross-cutting one for disarming the impact of the ethnic. This doesn’t take into account that also many migrants voted for independence in 1991.

³ Evans, Geoffrey / Whitefield, Stephen: Identifying the Bases of Party Competition in Eastern Europe; in: British Journal of Political Science 23/94, S. 528

mean that the party formation could not take place along existing socio-economic cleavages.⁴ The Lithuanian Žeruolis agrees concerning his country that the formation of a party system „takes place not in a society of cross-cutting Cleavages but in the socio-political vacuum“.⁵

Kitschelt suggests that the electorate makes it's decision by considering the own interest. But how can this function, if the individual has still problem to identify them or even to see themselves as a subject of the political process not as a victim of politicians and their policies.⁶

Both seems to be too shortly viewed. It is too simple to qualify the former socialist society with it's quite equal living standard for all people beside the nomenklatura as a society without different interests. Pettai correctly says that in the beginning of independence there were at least two Cleavages, a national – cosmopolitan and the one of market economy contra economic populism.⁷ Widmaier qualifies the adaptation of the cleavage theory as the attempt to identify new post communist cleavages like the conflict between modernisers and traditionalists.⁸ But this idea is as right as necessary.

To “some” degree it is possible to find explanations for the ascertain phenomena. There are not the same cleavages in Eastern Europe as in the west with huge similarities in the process of party

⁴ Elster, Jon / Offe, Claus / Preuss, Ulrich K.: *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies*, Cambridge 1998, S.135

⁵ Žeruolis, Darius: *Change and stability in emerging East European party systems: What the relevance of West European party models*, Msc Dissertation, The London School of Economics and Political Science, S.5

⁶ Kitschelt, Herbert: *Die Entwicklung post-sozialistischer Parteiensysteme. Vergleichende Perspektiven*; in: Wollmann, Helmut / Wiesenthal, Helmut / Bönker, Frank (Hrsg.): *Transformationen sozialistischer Gesellschaften: Am Ende des Anfangs*. Leviathan Sonderheft 15/1995, S.476

⁷ Pettai, Vello: *The Baltic States*; in: Smith, Julie / Teague, Elizabeth: *Democracy in the new Europe. The Politics of Post-Communism*, London 1999, S.124

⁸ Widmaier, Ulrich / Gawrich, Andrea / Becker, Ute: *Regierungssysteme Zentral- und Osteuropas*, Opladen 1999, S.177

formation. But there were different interests or cleavages which are still getting deeper. Therefore the party systems keep changing. So the main problem is to understand the dynamic.

As far as for the beginning of the third wave of democratisation in Latin America and Southern Europe a special model of different phases was already invented by political scientist defining the three steps from the breakdown of dictatorship to democracy: democratisation, transition and consolidation. Also the term normalisation is in use for the third phase. This dualism contains already the different understanding of this period. Is it a consolidation, which can be understood as finished after some time without new changes in the party system and so far in the clear kind of the word's meaning consolidated. But does the term normalisation allows also a different development? I can imagine for example a consolidation of a mechanism of continuing changes. Anyway, the discussion about what is normal could be too long to refer within several pages. Maybe permanent changes will be the normal situation in Eastern Europe, which certainly doesn't coincide with something consolidated.

But even not taking into account the difficulties of understanding of these three steps to democracy still there are very different phenomena in the East European countries with partly hardly understandable reasons, whether resulting from high volatility or just producing it. Is this the process we call consolidation?

Beichelt defined consolidation as the change of paradigm for the elite or just politicians from the regime breakdown to the system of a constitutional state.⁹ But such an explanation doesn't give real clarity because the theory of democracies gives very different ideas of what are the characteristics of a democracy. Merkel already before called it symptomatic that the transformation

⁹ Beichelt, Timm: Politische Institutionen und demokratische Konsolidierung im postsozialistischen Europa, Dissertation, quoted from manuscript; published as Demokratische Konsolidierung im postsozialistischen Europa. Die Rolle der politischen Institutionen, Opladen 2001, S.309

research didn't yet develop any debate of democracy theory. He accuses his colleagues for underestimating the question of participation („soziale und politische Inklusion“). This discussion is voluminous and shows very different opinions. For one a functioning democratic system on the surface, that means free elections accepted by the elite and the peoples, other think that there should be a convincing democratic political culture. Once it is the missing desire for another system – Przeworski's “only game in town“ for others two changes in government are necessary. Merkel requests a minimum of diffuse support. He accuses political science for the discussion only about the right way to democracy missing the question about the behaviour of elite and masses which may hinder or foster this process.¹⁰

And consolidation of what? It could be understood as the pass to stability. But could it not be as well a duration of chaotically political landscape, let us call it the stability of instability. Some authors like Katrin Matthusch are accentuating that the model of democracy in Eastern Europe is open and the result must not necessarily coincide with the liberal democracy as can be found in the West.¹¹ But it would also be too simple to allow only the possibility of establishing democracy or autoritarism. The third possibility in between, a continuation of developing of party system within a general acceptance of democratic rules, was not discussed yet. Only on a more general level the discussion of defect democracy between liberal democracy and dictatorship gives an idea of the world between black and white.

One of the reasons for the difficulties to define terms which were up to now well understood within new and different

¹⁰ Merkel, Wolfgang: Theorien der Transformation: Die demokratische Konsolidierung postautoritärer Gesellschaften; in: Beyme, Klaus von / Offe, Claus (Hrsg.): Politische Theorien in der Ära der Transformation, Sonderheft 26/95 der Politischen Vierteljahresschrift, Opladen 1996, S.33ff., 44. Merkel, Wolfgang: Institutionalisierung der Demokratie in Ostmitteleuropa; in: Merkel, Wolfgang / Sandschneider, Eberhard / Segert, Dieter (Hrsg.): Systemwechsel 2. Die Institutionalisierung der Demokratie, Opladen 1996, S.95

¹¹ Mattusch, Katrin: Demokratisierung im Baltikum? Frankfurt 1996, S.27

circumstances is that political scientist from the west urge to verify their thesis's won from former experiences from transition transferring them to societies of completely different experience. As a result it is clearly too difficult to find answers on questions one is not able to ask.

Empirical Approaches

On the other hand there are especially young scientist dealing with empirical methods for measuring the democracy in Eastern Europe or the ability of society to democratise itself.

On the very surface the party system in Eastern Europe seems to be grown out from the cleavage

- **opposition versus former communists**; but here we find the first difference between the Baltics and the rest of the transition countries within the question of a minority from the russification policy on the one hand and the fact of necessity to regain independence as well on the other hand.¹² Therefore it must be discussed which election to regard as founding elections – for the Baltics a bit more difficult because the first free turnout took place still under soviet rule. As a compromise Krupavičius called the 1990 Supreme Council (Soviet) Election Founding Elections and the 1992 Seimas election “Party-System Building Elections”.¹³ But Krupavičius contradicts this idea himself by arguing that none of the cabinets during the Supreme Council was a party government, therefore didn't exist any concurrence between parties in that parliament.¹⁴ But anyway, the Lithuanian Sąjūdis can be seen more as an opposition party to the communists than the umbrella-

¹² Reetz, Axel: Staatsbildung und Demokratisierung im Baltikum, Manuscript 2001

¹³ Krupavicius, Algis: Electoral research in Lithuania; in: Klingemann, Hans-Dieter (Hrsg.): Elections in Central and Eastern Europe, Berlin 2000, S.147

¹⁴ Krupavičius, Algis: Political results of the Seimas elections of 1996 and formation of the cabinet: The third turnover; in: Krupavicius, Algis (Hrsg.): Lithuania's Seimas election 1996: The third turnover, Berlin 2001, S.164

movements Tautas Fronte and Rahvarinne, the Peoples Fronts of Latvia and Estonia, which themselves were coalitions of the moderate opposition with moderate communists while Sajūdis just formed a government together with the communists.

Some of these young scientist don't see the step by step development of society (or the transformation of society) with it's cross cutting new cleavages mirrored by the development of the party system. Mattusch capitulates with a formulation about the difficulties to find out single input factors for the observed phenomena among a huge composition of reasons difficult to unravel („Der vorliegende Beitrag geht dagegen von einer analytisch schwer entwirrbaren Wechselwirkung dieser Einflußfaktoren aus.“¹⁵) Beichelt has the same analytical problems (“kaum zu überblickenden Kontextbedingungen”¹⁶). The first fact to catch is the existing more party system already at the time of the first turnover: nationalists, Soviet hard-liners, communists and the umbrella of system softliners with soft line opposition.

This misunderstanding or better the ignorance of this fact leads often to the poor surface view of the Baltics only with the mentioned cleavage transformed into a cleavage between **nationalists and post-communists** in Estonia and Latvia; but beside the national cleavage there is also a socio-economic cleavage of

- **transformation winners and losers.** For that reason both have a stronger fragmentation of parties in parliament as Lithuania where the high rate exists only due to victories in single member districts in favour of a party representation with sometimes only one deputy, which leaves the certain party far

¹⁵ Mattusch, Katrin: Vielfalt trotz ähnlicher Geschichte. Die drei baltischen Staaten und ihre unterschiedlichen Parteiensysteme; in: Dieter Segert (Hrsg.): Spätsozialismus und Parteienbildung in Osteuropa nach 1989, Berlin 1996, S.95

¹⁶ Beichelt, Timm: Die Wirkung von Wahlsystemen in Mittel- und Osteuropa, in: Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen 4/1998, S.622f. Of cause Beichelt probably tried to be more than perfect by viewing all East European countries from Estonia to Bulgaria including the European CIS.

beyond the ability to form a faction. By the elections in 2000 changed this picture of cause gradually. Parties are growing in Eastern Europe the developing new cleavages.

Nevertheless also these thoughts can't explain the stability of changes. Estonia since 1999 has now the first legislation period without change of government and no new parties since the Reform Party was found in 1994 while Latvia after the elections in 1998 had a change in government even more frequently than once a year. The question, what consolidation may be and when it will happen is still unanswered.

(to be continued)

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