

*Another Freedom: The Alternative History of an Idea.* By Svetlana Boym. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. xiii, 360 pp. Notes. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. \$35.00, hard bound.

There is much to admire in this fascinating book. Svetlana Boym, a scholar of Russian literature, takes on questions of politics and law, thereby bringing literature and art generally and Russian literature in particular into arenas where they are at best tolerated, but more often studiously avoided. Boym challenges scholars to engage in “passionate thinking” (25) about literary works and provides a model of how to do so. Through her readings of Euripides, Aleksandr Pushkin, Fedor Dostoevskii, Viktor Shklovskii, Anna Akhmatova, Osip Mandel'shtam, Andrei Siniavskii, and Varlam Shalamov, coupled with her discussions of Alexis de Tocqueville, Soren Kierkegaard, Georg Simmel, Isaiah Berlin, and Hannah Arendt (not the complete list), she demonstrates that literary and artistic works have a robust capacity, not only to address the idea of freedom, but also to address readers performatively, by creating new public spaces and possibilities not already given by existing structures of power and authority. In a bold and significant gesture, this book affirms freedom, which leading theoreticians in the latter part of the twentieth century, including Stanley Fish, Michel Foucault, Slavoj Žižek, and Giorgio Agamben, have almost rejected as an impossible illusion. Boym counters this argument with the claim that, as Arendt puts it, freedom is “infinitely improbable” (4) but nonetheless possible.

The key terms *worldliness*, *adventure*, and the *third way*, provide an open-ended framework for Boym's wide-ranging reflections. Worldliness (which Boym takes from Arendt) signifies the rejection of apocalypticism or messianism of any kind; on the positive side, it means a commitment to the limited, fallible, unpredictable plurality of human existence grounded in historical reality and beyond mere biological survival. Worldliness thus in some ways corresponds to the life of the citizen, although it is not limited to civic duty. Adventure elaborates and develops freedom beyond the merely civic or political realm to include love, pleasure, play, and any encounter that has the potential to be transformative. The third way, fittingly, is a bit more difficult to pin down; Boym uses the term to suggest variously an alternative to both authoritarianism and revolution, the space between nostalgia and modernity, and estrangement *for*, and not *from* the world (204). The autonomy of art and the practice of criticism represent some of the dimensions of “the third way.” This conceptual framework creates a tension (which could be explored more deeply) between the singularity and solitude of adventure, whether in art or love, and sociality and plurality, which are the *sine qua non* of worldliness.

Each chapter opens a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary dialogue in which visual art (including the author's own), literature, and philosophy confront the problem of freedom. Boym uses the myth of Prometheus and *The Bacchae* to discuss the relation among civic life, madness, art, and religion. The chapter title, “the corruption of sacrifice” remains unclear, however, and not only because it suggests the possibility of an uncorrupt form of sacrifice. The rejection of sacrifice in the story of the binding of Isaac and the figuration of Jesus as the perfect sacrifice are missing from this account; the view of sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament additionally could have served as a point of departure for the discussion of Mandel'shtam and Franz Kafka. Boym harshly criticizes art and politics that venerate sacrificial victims or promote manic enthusiasm of any kind,

favoring instead “the transformation of violence and sacrifice into the ambivalent space of storytelling” (55).

Boym emphasizes ambivalence in her analysis of Pushkin and Tocqueville. Pushkin demanded one right above all others—“the right to ambivalence . . . an apolitical inner freedom not inscribed in any constitution” (89). Even though Boym writes in her conclusion that “the quest for inner freedom was not independent from public architecture” (292), and even though she admonishes others, including Foucault and Agamben, for not distinguishing between totalitarianism and democracy, her emphasis throughout the study on the apolitical realm suggests a zero-sum game in which outer freedom precludes alternative freedoms. What sort of external furniture of rights and limited government result in more or less tolerance of ambivalence?

Boym also shows, on the other hand, that narrative and ambivalence are not always on the same side. As she makes clear, in *Demons* Dostoevskii exposes the narrative’s capacity to transform its audience into enthusiastic believers in absolute values. She writes that in Dostoevskii’s work more broadly we see “the transformation of political violence into the philosophy of suffering that becomes a proof of authenticity and a foundation of moral authority” (107). In *Russia’s Legal Fictions* (1998), I argued similarly that storytelling does not necessarily create multiple meanings but may also trade in compulsion and violence. Chapter 4, “Dostoevsky’s *Diary*: A Child Is Being Beaten,” shows how Dostoevskii used child abuse cases and the fictions he subsequently created about their protagonists, together with his own witnessing of corporal punishment in Siberia to engender his authority as son of and father to Russia. Symbolic processes and verbal narrative can thus serve to mask suffering, transforming violence into a foundational moment. Boym’s discussion of Dostoevskii retraces this ground.

One of the strongest discussions of alternative freedom comes in chapter 5, “Dissent, Estrangement, and the Ruins of Utopia.” Bringing Shklovskii into Arendt’s orbit should inspire readers to a new appreciation of the importance of his work beyond formalism. Boym makes the crucially important point that Shklovskii’s concept of estrangement is not only about creating new forms of art but, more fundamentally, about producing a new relation to the world and therefore represents, not a turn away from, but instead a return to a creative new engagement with the world. Arendt is a key figure in this study; Boym discusses her in relation to Martin Heidegger (chapter 4), the Kantianism which she shares with Shklovskii (chapter 5), on totalitarianism and Nazism (chapter 6), and elsewhere. More systematic discussion of Arendt’s fundamental ideas would have been helpful.

In light of the corporatization of the university, and the pressure on the arts and humanities to prove their usefulness (and capacity to generate revenue), this is a good moment to affirm that art and literature provide the capacity for transformation and discovery that are both unpredictable and irreducible to ideology and politics. Boym’s point about the importance of literature as a source of classic liberalism, as opposed to “polls and policies” (292) is well taken. The shift in perspective, the moment of realization, however, can also come from the civic realm. The O. J. Simpson trial, according to Boym, like the proliferation of Internet companies in Silicon Valley, was one of many events of the 1990s that “distracted” Americans from the “non-virtual events in the world” (290). For many Americans, however, the trial was not merely a televised car chase. It was rather an unsettling moment of estrangement in Shklovskii’s sense, because it challenged assumptions about American culture, revealing the huge chasm between whites and blacks.

In this study art generally trumps politics. The argument, however, sometimes avoids the role of violence in producing and constraining the cultural forms that Boym represents as a noble alternative to politics. For example, Boym, using the findings of the anthropologist Aby Warburg, suggests that the Hopi opted out of institution building: “the road to dignity doesn’t move toward the formation of political institutions in the Western sense of the word but to a staging of elective affinities between human, animal, and the divine through symbolic practices” (58). The road to dignity, however, might have taken a different turn if the Hopi had not been forced onto reservations by the U.S. government. There is another episode where Boym’s understated response to violence is disconcerting. She recounts the scandal created by an exhibit of the artwork *This Is My Blood* in Moscow in 2003. The vandals who destroyed the art were briefly taken into custody, while the Duma passed a law to punish the artist and the museum director. One of the deputies who voted against the measure was subsequently murdered. Boym notes that the government’s failure to uphold the importance of legal institutions contributed to the “scandal around the exhibit” (252). She mentions the death of Sergei Iushenkov, the dissenting Duma deputy, but offers no other response—from the realm of art or politics—to this act of violence.

Discussing alternative freedoms while avoiding the histories of violence that necessitated them requires a difficult balance, which elsewhere in her study Boym succeeds beautifully at maintaining, but not in these two cases. Her discussion of Shalamov’s *Kolyma Tales*, for example, masterfully keeps the violence of the camps at the front and center of the discussion, showing how Shalamov refuses to aestheticize it or turn it into the source of personal transformation. Boym finds in Shalamov’s style and use of repetition a challenge to the basic premise of communication; violence enters language and remains there incapable of being assimilated, as she points out, and as I would add, because it is the precondition of this language.

In her admirable discussion of Akhmatova and Isaiah Berlin, Boym speaks positively of the philosopher’s concept of negative freedom “not reducible to political rights” (99). In the winter of 2011, hundreds of thousands of individuals in Tunisia, Egypt, and elsewhere took to the streets demanding their rights and an end to years of humiliation at the hand of ganglike governments. It is too early to foreclose on rights, something that Boym’s study veers towards.

This tendency is perplexing, given her admiration for Arendt, for whom the “right to have rights,” including the right to belong to an “organized community” is an essential element of human freedom (*Origins of Totalitarianism*, 297). Boym provides an alternative picture of Arendt that makes the political less important. This is her right, and it is fitting for a book about the value of art and literature in providing alternative freedoms. In *Knight’s Move*, a collection of essays originally published in Russia from 1919 to 1923, Shklovskii observes “the fact that we write articles on Schiller and Sterne, solving problems anew, is a miracle” (46). *Another Freedom* rightly affirms this miracle.

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*Imagining the West in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*. Ed. György Péteri. Pitt Series in Russian and East European Studies. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. vi, 330 pp. Notes. Illustrations. \$27.95, paper.

*Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc.* Ed. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010. vii, 348 pp. Notes. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. \$79.95, hard bound.

What was *socialist* about socialist consumption in the Soviet Union and other eastern bloc countries? How much could they accommodate luxury, and how was one to distinguish ordinary from luxurious goods and practices? Did the criteria replicate those of the capitalist west or was there an attempt to create an alternative system of values? Was there a “west” within the east when it came to cultural standards and affinities? It might seem astonishing to realize how little serious discussion scholars of the Soviet Union and eastern Europe generated about these questions until quite recently. But that is only a reflection of how rapidly and thoroughly thematic interests and approaches have shifted over the past decade or so. The publication of the two collections of essays under review is, in any case, to be applauded, for together they significantly advance our understanding of the experience of living in really existing socialism and how much of the west was part of that experience.

These two books are in conversation with each other and not only because they share four authors in common. Both partake of the cultural turn in history, although each takes a somewhat different approach to cultural history. *Imagining the West* is primarily about “symbolic geographies” and “mental mapping” (2). Several years ago, its editor György Péteri used the metaphor of a “nylon curtain” to introduce a series of papers on “transnational and transsystemic” cultural tendencies in Soviet Russia and east central Europe. The present volume expands upon this theme of mutual visibility and its impact on the “socialist way of life” in the east. Most of the contributions demonstrate how devilishly difficult it was to maintain “the integrity of the distinctive systemic identity of the state-socialist social order” (8) in the face of relentless imitateness of standards, massive desire on the part of constituent populations for what they imagined the west provided in the way of a decent living, and not-so-massive but still considerable interaction with the west.

*Pleasures in Socialism* is coedited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, both of whom are represented with essays in *Imagining the West*. Like the other two collections of essays they coedited (*Style and Socialism*, 2000; *Socialist Spaces*, 2002), *Pleasures in Socialism* takes an archeological approach to its subject, analyzing certain material objects and the practices of consuming them as essential to understanding everyday life in the eastern bloc. Catherine Cooke wrote in the preface to *Style and Socialism* that to her, an architectural historian, the “materialized manifestations of such societies always seemed more revealing and enduring descriptors of their attributes and tensions than the ephemera of properly ‘political’ analysis.” Thanks to Crowley and Reid, the approach that—to continue quoting Cooke—takes “the fragment as a diagnostic site for exploring the condition of a whole system” (*Style and Socialism*, vii) has gained in adherents and potency in Soviet and east European studies over the past decade or so. The fragment at the center of *Pleasures in Socialism* is that “elusive phenomenon” (7) of pleasure. The editors identify pleasure with the categories of leisure and luxury (thereby implicitly excluding the possibility of it being derived from another quotidian activity—work). They relate leisure and luxury to shortage, privilege, popular expectations, fantasies, and other key dimensions of life under socialism. The choice of the preposition in the title is also worthy of note: “in” rather than “of” allows the contributors to explore pleasure that was experienced despite socialism as well as thanks to it.

“Where, when, and how,” Crowley and Reid ask in their introduction, “did people acquire their sense of what constituted ‘normal’ entitlements to leisure and consumer goods? What role was played by the awareness of lifestyles in the West or, for that matter, other parts of the Bloc?” (17) These questions are addressed most forthrightly by Reid’s and Paulina Bren’s contributions—not to *Pleasures in Socialism*, but to *Imagining the West*. Reid, who has previously written about the 1959 Nixon-Khrushchev “Kitchen debate” and the new source of political legitimation that domestic consumption provided Nikita Khrushchev, here argues that responses among Soviet visitors to the gadgetry displayed at the American National Exhibit were far more critical than the Americans had anticipated and some scholars have claimed. She attributes this, among other things, to certain expectations about exhibitions and what was proper to display at them, as well as skepticism about the emancipatory effects of labor-saving devices. Bren concerns herself with how the Czechoslovak government made use of lifestyle (as distinct from living standards) during the “normalization” following the Soviet-led invasion of 1968. Even if it ultimately failed to dislodge the desire for western-made goods, she argues, the encouragement of “self-realization” both within and outside the workplace created “an entirely new experience of communism in the 1970s and 1980s, the impact of which is still felt today” (193).

Michael David-Fox, who provides a characteristically thoughtful conclusion to *Imagining the West*, has written elsewhere about “entangling modernities.” In this volume entanglements come in all shapes and sizes. Greg Castillo’s chapter on home design in the 1950s weaves an intricate argument about the appropriation by the east (in this case the German Democratic Republic [GDR]) of western cultural achievements, reminding us in the process that “socialist realism established as its mission not the creation of an alternative to Western bourgeois culture but the distillation and arrogation of its progressive essence” (89). Music historian Elaine Kelly uses Richard Wagner as an example of how the two Germanys struggled over their common cultural heritage, with Bayreuth and Dessau each claiming to be the legitimate heir. Polish architects in David Crowley’s sympathetic treatment traveled quite literally between Paris and Moscow and figuratively between a capitalist west that used to represent the future but now figured as the past and a Soviet east whose modernity had outstripped that of the capitalist west. Cultural misperceptions went both ways in Catriona Kelly’s less sympathetic analysis of Soviet assertions of superiority in defense of children’s rights, and in Barbara Walker’s interpretation of encounters between Soviet dissidents and U.S. journalists. Finally, Anne E. Gorsuch reads several Soviet films of the Khrushchev era as indicative of an optimism about the USSR’s ability to absorb western influences—including those of its own west, Estonia—that would peter out under Leonid Brezhnev.

*Imagining the West* is chronologically diffuse. Two essays, by Karen Gammelgaard and Erik Ingebrigsten, concern east central Europeans’ relations with Russia and the west before the communist era. There are also occasional references to more recent times, including Castillo’s observation that “perhaps the most surprising cultural development associated with the collapse of Communism has been the romantic rediscovery of its consumer culture” (103). This was nowhere more evident than in Germany where throughout the 1990s “Ossies” and “Wes-sies” alike indulged in *Ostalgie*. Ina Merkel has written extensively on this phenomenon from an ethnographic standpoint; in *Pleasures in Socialism* she provides a political economy of consumption in the GDR that serves as a fitting framework for the other essays. These can be divided into three types: analyses of activities that fall within the category of leisure; those that use consumption and material



culture as a prism through which to view the peculiarities of mature state socialism, and those that pursue material “biographies.”

Leisure encompasses the “bikini boys” of Poland’s Nowa Huta (Katherine Lebow), what Soviet television programmers sought to provide viewers (Kristin Roth-Ey), and the hunting clubs and outings of Hungary’s political elite (György Péteri). In Lebow’s sensible interpretation, Poland’s “cultural hooligans” were not resisting communism but, like Alexei Yurchak’s informants from a later period of the Soviet version, could be enthusiastic champions of it. In creating new identities for themselves, they were contributing to the destruction of the old prewar bourgeois identities that Stalinists also claimed to abhor. Roth-Ey’s television programmers of the 1950s and 1960s were also intent on promoting new identities via fun and games, but *within limits*. Meanwhile, Hungary’s *nomenklatura* (which included the author’s father) was bagging deer, boar, and other game, thereby engaging in an exclusive form of recreation that Péteri argues represented a nonmonetary dividend to the party-state apparatus.

Three essays—Paulina Bren’s on a Czechoslovak television program that promoted women as reliably moderate consumers; Larissa Zakharova’s on the Soviet fashion industry; and Josie McLellan’s on East German erotica—are wonderful examples of how gender analysis can be brought to bear on political economy. I personally found Bren’s characterization of the shop assistant as the “vanguard of socialism” (189) priceless. The remaining essays are all indebted in one way or another to the approach that Africanist anthropologist—how’s that for transnationalism!—Igor Kopytoff called in 1986 “the cultural biography of things.” The things here include Soviet champagne, clothes designed by fashion houses, and cars (Jukka Gronow and Sergei Zhuravlev); camping equipment in the GDR (Scott Moranda); Bulgarian cigarettes (Mary Neuburger); alcohol in Romania (Narcis Tulbure); and furs in the USSR (Anna Tikhomirova). Each of these essays makes fascinating points transcending particularities of the objects whose biographies they tell. Both Gronow-Zhuravlev and Tikhomirova, for example, note the informal sumptuary codes in Soviet society according to which “luxury was not . . . ‘accessible to everybody’ but was attached to definite ‘estates’” (300). Thanks to them as well I now know that having an atelier make a fur coat was nearly identical to getting one’s car repaired. All point to the dynamic of what once was considered a luxury eventually becoming a necessity as a no-win situation for respective regimes.

Together, these two volumes do a tremendous job of transnationalizing the history of the eastern bloc and offering a whole new perspective—that of luxury and leisure—through which to understand consumption and other dimensions of everyday life. They are so rewarding that only the foolish would ignore them.

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*Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War.* By Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. Problems of International Politics. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xviii, 517 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. \$95.00, hard bound. \$29.99, paper.

Comparative politics is the area of political science in which the tension between generalizing and particularizing is constant and omnipresent; it is, however, also

a source of creative ferment that generates increasingly sophisticated analyses of various phenomena. In an important subfield of democratization studies the theoretical tension between these two general types of inquiry has recently produced several fascinating studies and stimulating debates. A group of scholars who value parsimony and formalization over other analytical virtues offered highly influential studies of democratization, focusing on the relationship between the economy and processes. The broadly debated exemplars include Adam Przeworski and his colleagues, Carles Boix, and Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, scholars privileging detail over parsimony, context over (excessive) abstraction, and real historical time over timeless analytical matrices have also produced pathbreaking works. Here, the arguably most eloquent example has been recently provided by Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt.<sup>2</sup>

Steven Levitsky's and Lucan A. Way's *Competitive Authoritarianism* enters the debate on the side of mid-range theorizing with uncommon analytical finesse and theoretical innovativeness. Levitsky and Way belong to the long and distinguished tradition of social science for which theoretical sophistication does not mean stripping the world of so many details that the resulting models achieve parsimonious elegance at the cost of vacuousness. This is the tradition of mid-range theories pioneered by Robert Merton.

The book's power rests on two innovations, one conceptual and one theoretical. The authors use a fresh concept, *competitive authoritarianism*, that became a part of the standard vocabulary in comparative politics almost immediately after they coined it in 2002.<sup>3</sup> This concept is but one of several they offer in this work whose conceptual and definitional work is exemplary in its precision and exhaustiveness. The book also proposes a novel theory of regime change, challenging a number of standard theories that focus most commonly on economic correlates of democratization.

The authors deserve a place among the major innovators of comparative politics just for coining and elaborating the concept of competitive authoritarianism (CA). The existing literature is full of attempts to come to terms with the phenomenon observed in many parts of the world during the last two to three decades: the emergence of hybrid political regimes that neither fit into the category of old-fashioned authoritarianisms nor can be sensibly classified as democracies. As a specific kind of hybrid, competitive authoritarianism is a political system with regular elections, arbitrarily dished out doses of liberty, and uneven transparency of public contest (the oppositional forces are publicly known and participate in the political process). The system is thus not fully authoritarian, but at the same time it lacks three attributes of democracy: (1) free elections, (2) broad protection of civil liberties, and (3) a reasonably level playing field. The deficiencies in these three areas are carefully defined and classified. The introduction of the concept of an uneven playing field is a particularly noteworthy conceptual innovation. Many scholars have sensed the significance of the processes covered by

1. Adam Przeworski, Michael E. Alvarez, José Antonio Cheibub, and Fernando Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950–1990* (Cambridge, Eng., 2000); Carles Boix, *Democracy and Redistribution* (Cambridge, Eng., 2003); Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Princeton, 2006).

2. Giovanni Capoccia and Daniel Ziblatt, "The Historical Turn in Democratization Studies: A New Research Agenda for Europe and Beyond," *Comparative Political Studies* 43, nos. 8–9 (August–September 2010): 931–68.

3. Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 51–65.

this concept and have danced around this problem area, but Levitsky and Way are the first to propose a bold conceptualization and to demand that the concept figure centrally in our analyses of political regimes.

In addition to their significant contribution to the conceptual side of things, Levitsky and Way also propose bold innovations in the theory of regime transformations. The vast literature in this field is organized around two types of questions. First, scholars ask where the causality is primarily located, in agency (say, among the negotiating elites) or in structural preconditions. Second, they look for the theoretical “location” of causal factors of political change: are they inside (endogenous factors) or outside (exogenous factors) politics? There is a tendency to look outside and then the key causal variables are seen to be either economic (wealth, rate of growth, inequality) or sociocultural (political culture, traditions). Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan offered arguably the most influential study of democratization (including important east European cases) that privileges factors endogenous to politics; Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman are often cited as authors who skillfully analyze interactions between endogenous and exogenous variables.<sup>4</sup> Both works have been broadly seen as exemplars of mid-range theorizing that pays equal attention to agency and structure and is based on richly textured, qualitative case studies.

Levitsky and Way not only continue this tradition but revolutionize its language and arguments. Although they do not discover new factors omitted by others (given the scope and breadth of the existing scholarship that would be nearly impossible), they do offer fresh conceptualizations and ingenious new arguments. Their theory shows how these factors work together in several different sequences and constellations generating three distinct regime trajectories: democratization, stable authoritarianism, or unstable authoritarianism. The analytically parsimonious theory is built around three concepts: (1) linkage (to the west), (2) leverage (by the west), (3) the organizational power of incumbents. Although many scholars write about these issues—including the entrenchment of old elites and the international context—none of them offered a crisp analytical separation of the two distinct processes: linkage and leverage. This distinction is central to Levitsky’s and Way’s innovative theory.

Linkage is particularly important. Countries that are linked to the west through a variety of channels—economic, political, and cultural; formal and informal; sustained rather than sporadic—democratize faster and more effectively. For example, in an influential series of analyses, Linz, Stepan, and others have suggested that the postauthoritarian countries are better off choosing parliamentary over presidential systems. Levitsky and Way challenge this recommendation by showing that among the 35 regimes classified as competitive authoritarian in the early 1990s, “13 of 29 presidential or semi-presidential regimes democratized between 1990 and 2008, compared to only 1 of 6 parliamentary regimes” (78). More important for their argument: “among high-linkage cases, all presidential regimes democratized” (78).

Other influential theoretical competitors do not fare much better when confronted with the explanatory power of the theory presented by Levitsky and Way. There are three standard ways to operationalize the economic factors hypothesized to play a role in democratization: wealth (the higher the gross na-

4. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, 1996); and Stephan Haggard and Robert R. Kaufman, *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions* (Princeton, 1995).



tional product [GNP] per capita, the higher the chance of democratization), income inequality (the lower the level of inequality, the higher the likelihood of democratization), and economic performance, measured, say, by the rate of growth of GNP (the higher the rate of growth, the greater the likelihood of democratization). According to the authors, none of these three theories predicts the trajectories of competitive authoritarian regimes as well as their own theory based on a triad of concepts including linkage, leverage, and the power of incumbents.

It is, however, crucial to remember that Levitsky and Way, careful adherents of mid-range theories, offer a theory of political transformations for one particular regime type: competitive authoritarianism. Conveniently, however, since this regime type is plentiful in the postcommunist world, we learn a lot about the twenty years of momentous transformations in our region. But because competitive authoritarian regimes account for a large and significant portion of the political map in 2011, those interested in other regions will profit as well.

The book's scope is ambitiously comprehensive: the political trajectories of all regimes that were classified as competitive authoritarian in 1990 are analyzed. The project is designed as a disciplined panel study. Thirty-five countries that were classified as competitive authoritarian regimes in the 1990s are then coded again in 2008. There are twelve cases from our region. Six from eastern Europe: Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia; and six that emerged from the Soviet Union: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine. Three trajectories are discovered: competitive authoritarian leading to democracy, competitive authoritarian leading to unstable authoritarianism, and competitive authoritarian leading to stable authoritarianism. Out of the thirty-five competitive authoritarian regimes, fifteen countries followed the first trajectory (six postcommunist), ten the second (four postcommunist), and ten the third (two postcommunist—Armenia and Russia).

The bulk of the book is devoted to careful description and analysis of the thirty-five cases. The authors' mastery of the massive literature is awe-inspiring. Thanks to this exhaustive literature review, the book can easily serve as a reference work on competitive authoritarianisms.

The innovative conceptual apparatus is clearly laid out, conceptualizations and operationalizations are crisply spelled out (also in handy appendixes), and the coding is explicitly presented. I detected one problem: the somewhat unclear delineation of the relationship between two typologies: (1) regime type (democratic, competitive authoritarianism, full authoritarianism) and (2) the stability of authoritarianism (stable and unstable). The authors switch from one terminology to another. For example, Russia "through 2008" is referred to as a "stable competitive authoritarian regime" (186), while elsewhere it is classified as "Full AR" (370), that is, full authoritarian regime in 2008. The reader is sometimes left wondering whether a given country's authoritarianism is, say, stable and competitive or stable and fully authoritarian. The authors are so pedantic in their conceptual work that it is hard not to think about four logically conceivable types of regimes: stable full authoritarianisms, unstable full authoritarianisms, stable competitive authoritarianisms, and unstable competitive authoritarianisms. "Unstable full authoritarianism" is logically thinkable regardless of how (im)probable it is empirically. It would be useful to have this type discussed, at least as an extreme ideal type. More important, it would be helpful to have consistency throughout the volume in distinguishing full authoritarianism and stable authoritarianism.

This is, however, a minor quibble. This conceptually innovative and theoretic-

cally pathbreaking volume landed on the bookshelf devoted to classics of comparative politics classics almost instantaneously at its publication.

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*Post-Imperial Democracies: Ideology and Party Formation in Third Republic France, Weimar Germany, and Post-Soviet Russia.* By Stephen E. Hanson. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2010. xxvi, 274 pp. Notes. Index. Tables. \$90.00, hard bound. \$26.99, paper.

Stephen E. Hanson has written a very stimulating book seeking to explain how ideology plays a central role in the formation of successful parties in times of uncertainty. Arguing that ideology has been much undervalued in scholarly attempts to explain party formation, Hanson substantiates his argument through three case studies: France of the Third Republic (1870–86), Weimar Germany (1918–34), and post-Soviet Russia (1992–2008). His argument is framed by a combination of Weberian analysis and rational choice, with one of his stated aims being to revive the use of Max Weber’s work as a major tool of analysis in social science, something he believes has declined in recent years.

Hanson’s basic argument is that in times of considerable uncertainty (principally but not solely concerning the rules of the political game), political actors will tend to seek to acquire short-term benefits at the expense of long-term pay-offs. This means they will eschew the hard work of institution building in favor of short-term compromises to make immediate gains. In practice, this means that instead of committing to the building up of a political party, and thereby acting collectively, they are likely to strike out on their own with little concern for the institutional consequences of such actions. Mobilizing the Weberian notion of value rationality, Hanson argues that one means of overcoming this propensity to give priority to short-term instrumental goals over longer-term benefits is through the development of ideology. In his view, ideology “elongates the time horizon” (48) by committing adherents to values that are seen as “timeless” (49); the contingency of immediate instrumental action is thereby superseded by connection with the longer-term values embodied in the ideology. This means that “ideological” parties are more likely to survive and prosper than “nonideological” (sometimes called “pragmatic”) parties. The case studies show that of the sixteen parties present in the times of most uncertainty in each country, only one (the Catholic Center Party in Germany) did not fit this argument; all eight “ideological” parties were organizational successes (meaning they were able to gain and maintain significant parliamentary representation) while seven of the eight “nonideological” parties were organizational failures.

The basic argument that ideological commitment can assist party building and stabilization is, in my view, unquestionable, and the case studies bear this out. Those parties in which a clear and coherent ideological position was established tended to do better than those without such a position. Indeed, I am a little surprised that Hanson argues that this is not a mainstream position. More questionable are some of the assumptions behind the methodology that Hanson uses, explanation of which takes up a third of the book.

The first is the notion within which the whole argument is cast, that of “post-imperial democracies.” These are defined as follows: “a new democratic regime is born within the core nation of a formally imperial polity immediately after

its disintegration, and where reasonably fair and open democratic elections are held for at least a decade after imperial collapse” (xxii). Given the case studies, two aspects of this definition appear problematic. First, it seems perverse to label Third Republic France “post-imperial” when, as Hanson acknowledges, it engaged in the building of a “powerful colonial empire” (88). Was it both imperial and postimperial? How is this to be reconciled? Second, the description of the Russian elections of the 1990s as “reasonably fair and open” is one with which many would disagree. As international observers reported, they may have been free, but they certainly were not fair, and the book acknowledges this, at least in regard to the 1996 election. What these two issues suggest is that two of the three case studies do not actually fit the description of them given in the book’s title and at various places in the text. This is odd, but fortunately not central to the analysis.

A second question relates to the definition of ideology used in the book. Ideology is defined as “proposals . . . to define clear and consistent criteria for membership in a proposed polity” (xix). Hanson argues that this is a much better definition of ideology than any of the others that have been in common usage, in particular that of worldview or *Weltanschauung*, which has been prominent in the literature. Yet Hanson’s definition is, by itself, not very useful; for example, it effectively turns rules of citizenship into an ideology. This is unnecessarily restrictive and, as Hanson himself shows, cannot be sustained. An ideology will usually include some notion of who can be members of the polity, but this is usually expressed in terms of what that polity should be like, how it should be constructed and operate, and what it stands for. And this is the heart of notions of ideology as worldview. If Hanson had openly recognized that his narrow conception of polity membership was part of a broader conception of the future society, the apparent exception to his rule (the Catholic Center Party) would not be an exception, and his discussion of successful parties like the French Republicans, German Nazis, and Russian communists would not be at odds with the basic definition of ideology with which he is seeking to work. The ideology that he discusses in the case of all three parties is clearly much broader than his definition would allow and shows that that definition is not particularly useful for his analysis.

A third issue concerns the clear distinction drawn between the “ideological” and the “nonideological”/“pragmatic” individual and party. While Hanson does at times say that he is working with ideal types, the sharpness of this distinction injects a sense of unreality into his analysis. People are rarely driven just by ideological motives or act purely pragmatically without any concern for wider values. In practice, both individuals’ and parties’ actions will usually be a result of some combination of ideological and pragmatic concerns. No electoral party is without an ideology. It may be underdeveloped, not well thought-out or articulated, and not presented in programmatic form, but it must go to the voters with some sense of what it stands for. Hanson’s own analysis suggests that this is the case, as his discussion of many of the unsuccessful parties shows that they did articulate views about what should happen in the society, even if those views were vague and relatively unformed. The issue is best seen, not in terms of whether a party is “ideological” or not, but how clearly formulated its ideological position is; even United Russia purports to stand for something.

A fourth question relates to the rational choice assumption that Hanson makes, that in times of uncertainty, as individuals seek their own short-term goals, people are less likely to band together for longer-term aims. This may be accurate in some cases, but clearly not in all. An equally logical argument could be constructed to the effect that in times of uncertainty, people are more likely to act together than to go it alone. When confronted with adversity, pooling resources

would seem to be at least as logical as striking out alone. If so, this means that the collective action problem that Hanson sets out to solve is not always present.

Finally, there is the question of party organization. Hanson acknowledges that ideology alone cannot produce party success; a range of other factors can be important, including party organization. But whereas some consider organization to be the key to party survival, Hanson downplays its role. The problem is that the argument does not appreciate the role that organization plays in the successful mobilization of ideology. A party's ideology can be successful only if it unites party members and appeals to potential voters. Party organization is a major vehicle for the projection (and sometimes development) of the party ideology, especially in those situations where there is not wide access to unbiased media. In the 1996 Russian election, where media bias against the communists was extreme, the party had to rely on its own resources to get its message across, and it was a tribute to the party's organizational network that it was able to garner the level of votes that it did. Ideology without organization would be likely to be as unsuccessful as organization without ideology.

Fortunately these criticisms do not devalue the basic argument about the importance of ideology for party development. That case is well made through the case studies, and although there will be aspects of those case studies that people will disagree with—for example, the downplaying of the importance of the personal roles of Léon Gambetta and Adolf Hitler in party development, and the high level of coherence attributed to the ideology of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation—overall they are generally excellent. They are the heart of a book that makes a major contribution to our understanding of these three case studies and shows the value of comparative historical research. It is recommended for everyone interested in the issues of party formation as well as the course of development in these three countries.

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***Uncivil Society: 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment.*** By Stephen Kotkin, with a contribution by Jan T. Gross. New York: Modern Library, 2010. xxviii, 197 pp. Notes. Chronology. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$24.00, hard bound. \$16.00, paper.

Stephen Kotkin is the author of *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (1995), a magnificent social history of the creation of the industrial city of Magnitogorsk, as well as *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000* (2001). Jan T. Gross is well known, both for his work on the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland, and for his recent turn to issues of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II and its aftermath. The book does not make clear the extent of Gross's involvement, so I will treat Kotkin as the author.

Kotkin attacks what he calls the "civil society utopia" theory of 1989. In short, "civil society' could not have shattered Soviet-style socialism for the simple reason that civil society in Eastern Europe did not then actually exist" (7). Kotkin's alternative explanation lies with "uncivil society" or how party-state elites were incapable of coping with the reform efforts launched by Mikhail Gorbachev and the unrest these efforts unleashed. They could neither adapt nor repress, so they were swept away. In Kotkin's estimation, it was not civil society that swept them away but the power of spontaneous unorganized crowds.

In assigning Gorbachev the responsibility for what transpired in eastern Europe, Kotkin is not alone among Russian historians (see also Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, 2009). The decomposition of the Soviet bloc is seemingly unconnected to its own turbulent history, which was punctuated by a series of threatening crises from the outset (the Tito-Stalin split, East Berlin in 1953, the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the Poznań March in 1956, the Polish October in 1956, the Albanian break with the USSR in 1961, the Prague Spring in 1968, March 1968 in Poland, the Baltic coast strikes of 1970, the Łódź strikes of 1971, the Radom-Ursus Strikes of 1976, the strikes in the Jiu Valley of 1977, the whole period of opposition and Solidarity in Poland from 1976–1989, and the Brasov strikes of 1987). Imagine a history of the end of the British empire that afforded such a singular place to Mountbatten. This is a top-down view, in which those who put their necks on the line are written out of history and the party-state is responsible for the construction of the system as well as its demise forty years later. The antidote to such a perspective is the work of historians like Padraic Kenney who highlights the role of the opposition in the events of 1989 (*A Carnival of Revolution: Central Europe, 1989*, 2002).

As a political scientist who has written two deeply historical books, I have grown used to historians not fully appreciating that my work pursues social science questions using historical evidence. It is now my turn to hoist the other discipline on our petard and argue that *Uncivil Society* suffers from a lack of attention to the social science literature on civil society and democratization, as well as the perspective that comparative historical analysis in the social sciences brings to issues of inference and evidence.

The structure of inference and evidence in *Uncivil Society* is based on a three-case comparison—East Germany, Romania, and Poland. The three cases are treated dichotomously in terms of whether civil society was a consequent actor in the collapse of communism. If one accepts this conceptualization of the problem, and accepts the coding of cases as correct, the uncivil society explanation does not work. In Kotkin's coding, civil society was the driving force in Poland, whereas in the two others the social force that brought down the regime was “spontaneous” protest. In those latter two cases the evidence of uncivil society—a party-state elite unable to either reform or repress is strong. In Poland Kotkin allows for greater uncertainty about whether the party-state was unable to repress or reform. But this case can be characterized with even greater certainty. Poland's track record demonstrated that it was capable of repression—1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, and especially 1981. And it was also a bloc leader in innovative reform as well—national communism in 1956, import-led modernization in the 1970s, and the convening of roundtable negotiations with the opposition in 1988. This body of evidence means that neither the civil society utopia nor the uncivil society dystopia is a necessary or sufficient cause for the collapse of the regimes. The evidence marshaled in the book thus does not support its main argument. Instead it supports the proposition that there are two distinct paths out of communism.

Given that Kotkin propounds a regional theory of democratic change using case comparisons, it is reasonable to expect he would look at the existing literature on this sort of thing. Social scientists have been working on such themes for over thirty years. The literature on democratization has long argued that the role of civil society in democratic transition is not uniform. Initially it was argued that Third Wave democratization was a top-down phenomenon in which liberalization by authoritarian incumbents allowed for a “resurrection of civil society” where pressure from below could extend authoritarian openings into democratic transitions (see Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, 1986, 48–56). Some of us also argued that transition could be civil society driven, that pressure from below could cause a split in the



authoritarian elite that would in turn trigger liberalization. But in both instances it is important to understand that civil society gains strength with liberalization in countries that successfully democratize. So even if civil society were considerably weaker in every other place in east central Europe in comparison to Poland, it does not mean that it was irrelevant.

From the perspective of this literature it is unrealistic to conceptualize the state–civil society relation as fixed in transition. Kotkin's either/or coding seems plausible only due to a limited selection of cases. First, his sample includes two polar opposites: Poland, with its fourteen-year history of organized opposition (1976–89), and Romania, with its harsh neo-Stalinist dictatorship. He omits most of the cases that fall between these two extremes. Second, East Germany is a case on the lower-middle end of this spectrum. Though more developed than either Romania or Bulgaria, it lagged behind Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. East Germany is also a problematic case in that what transpired in November 1989 was overtaken by other events.

A comparison of Czechoslovakia and East Germany is illustrative of the difficulties this poses. Both had smaller oppositions of several thousand activists who engaged the state on human rights, ecological, and peace issues. In Czechoslovakia, the ability to call out protests seems to have been advancing faster than in East Germany. It was the repression of a student demonstration in Prague that started events moving there. In East Germany, the opposition activists who organized the original Monday demonstrations in Leipzig played a fundamental role in bringing down the regime. It was also the New Forum, an umbrella group of opposition activists who negotiated with the regime at the roundtable that led to democratic elections. In Czechoslovakia the support of the crowds for Civic Forum and Public against Violence was more effectively channeled toward forcing the regime to concede power and calling for elections. In East Germany the intervention of West German politicians displaced the opposition and channeled the broader movement into support for unification rather than East German democratization. In East Germany both the party-elite and the opposition ceased to count for much. For that reason, its inclusion in this study does not provide much in terms of inference.

In my view, the impact of civil society in each country is better understood from the perspective of the balance of power between the party-state and the opposition in relative terms (e.g., in Poland, it took a strong civil society to overcome an elite that had not fully lost its capacity to repress or reform). All things being equal, it is in those countries in which oppositional civil society groups were more developed at the point of transition or where such groups were able to channel the pressure afforded by mass mobilization that the prospects for democratic change were strongest. Twenty years later the postcommunist countries that have made the greatest progress toward a liberal democratic market society—Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltics, and Slovenia—are also those whose oppositions placed the greatest pressure on party-state elites at the point of transition. In those countries in which communism collapsed without the countervailing power of a civil society, or mass mobilization channeled by oppositional civil society organizations, the uncivil society that Kotkin decries was able to hold onto power (e.g., Central Asia, Belarus, and Russia). Those are the countries in which we see neo-authoritarianism, stalled transition, semidemocracy, and the concentration of economic assets in the hands of the members of the power elite. This, above all, is the best evidence that civil society has real material force.

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