

BOOK REVIEWS

Marc Morje Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Author: Simonida Kacarska,
MA in European Politics
University of Sussex, United Kingdom.
skacarska@yahoo.com

The re-emergence of the civil society idea in the writings of the Communist dissidents in the 70s and 80s placed the civil society at the core of the democratic transition in post-Communist Europe. In turn, civil society has been a dominant concept in all post-1990 academic literature, which considers it an essential element of the process of democratization.¹ Academic debates have widely acknowledged that civil society stands at the core of democratization, since without civic engagement there is no basis for a

¹ Post-Communist literature has placed the development of a functioning civil society at the heart of democratization: See, for example, Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (New York: Palach Press, 1985); Andrew Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Geoffrey Pridham and Tatu Vanhanen eds., *Democratization in Eastern Europe-domestic and international perspectives* (London: Routledge Publishers, 1994).

consolidated democratic order.² As a criterion of democratization, the functioning of civil society has become a major issue for assessing the progress of the post-Communist countries. Today, after almost two decades of transitional reforms, practice has shown, that, unlike the other elements of democratization, civil society development is lingering.³

Marc Morje Howard, in *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, analyzes the problem of civil society development in the conditions of post-Communism. Focusing on the behavior of ordinary citizens, Howard examines the reasons behind the low levels of membership and participation in voluntary organizations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. Emphasizing that citizens' participation is markedly lower in post-Communist systems in comparison to other post-authoritarian systems, the author argues that the Communist experience is the core reason behind the low participation in voluntary organizations. The analysis locates three main factors behind the low levels of voluntary organizational membership: the legacy of mistrust of all formal organizations caused by forced participation in Communist

² Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*.

³ Ivan Vejvoda and Mary Kaldor. "Democratization in Central and East European Countries," *International Affairs* 73. No.1 (Jan. 1997): 71.

organizations; the persistence of informal private networks, which function as a substitute to formal organizing; and the disappointment with the new and capitalist systems of today. Concentrating on these interrelated factors, Howard presents a persuasive account of the causal link between people's interpretations of their previous experiences and their current social behavior and activities. In contrast to explanations which relate post-Communist behavior to a *tabula rasa* individual, Howard builds upon the popular experiences from the former system in order to explain current behavior and trends. The data in the analysis point to the continuity of attitudes and practices before and after 1989. Howard concludes that the absence of civic skills in post-Communism impedes democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the author expects that generational change will facilitate the abandoning of old habits and proposes a more active role of the state in supporting and working with voluntary organizations.

The merits of Howard's analysis are located in his methodological and theoretical approach. The author uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, largely missing in available research on civil society. The analysis is based on cross-national survey data from the World Values Survey coupled with an original representative survey of membership in voluntary organizations conducted in Russia, East and West Germany. For triangulation purposes and increased

validity of the findings, Howard conducted in-depth interviews with citizens in Russia and East Germany. With this multiple method, Howard overcomes some of the most common problems of academic literature on civil society, such as sole dependence on statistical data on organizations, exclusive focus on single case studies and over-reliance on theory. Although difficult to replicate, Howard's methodological approach combines a variety of information concerning the specificities of civil society building in the conditions of post-Communism, thereby increasing the validity of the research.

The findings of the analysis tackle two of the most important questions in the contemporary analysis of post-Communist Europe. First, Howard's conclusions put forward strong arguments in favor of a common approach for the examination of the examined region. The similar findings on the most-different cases of Eastern Germany and Russia indicate that differences between them are "in degree" and not "in kind". These conclusions challenge the supporters of country-based approaches, which have emphasized country-specific differences, advocating use of single case-studies for analysis.⁴ Despite the

⁴ For a discussion, see Jacques Rupnik "On the two models of exit from communism: Central Europe and the Balkans" in *Between past and future-the revolutions of 1989 and their aftermath*, eds. Sorin Antohi and

differences in other arenas of democratization, the conclusions of this book indicate that it is both useful and recommendable to study the problems of civil society development in the conditions of post-Communism with a common analytical approach.

Second, Howard advocates a shift of focus in the examination of the post-Communist countries from elites and organizations to ordinary citizens, embracing a substantive, rather than a procedural understanding of democracy and democratization. Thus, Howard assesses a substantive aspect of civil society building, in contrast with the usual focus of civil society studies on formal elements of democratization.⁵ His methodological approach and findings closely support Kaldor and Vejvoda's idea that substantive democracy in this region does not rest upon written provisions, but the practices and habits of the post-Communist heart.⁶ Concentrating on the behavior of citizens, Howard studies the vibrancy of civil society, commonly neglected in the analysis of post-Communist Europe. Hence, this analysis represents a novel attempt in the civil society research that commonly relied on the number of

registered voluntary organizations. Practice has shown that the number of voluntary organizations all over the region is not representative of the actual development of civil society, confirming the need for a shift of attention to ordinary citizens in the examination of civil society.

As opposed to other segments of the book, its conclusions are comparatively underdeveloped. In addition, each of the proposed future scenarios necessitates further analysis. The possible positive impact of generational change requires an examination of the link between age and organizational membership. Moreover, the empirical findings do not indicate that the younger generation with virtually no experience from Communism is more likely to participate in voluntary organizations. The work of the state with voluntary organizations, as a second alternative, is also potentially problematic. This option stands in sharp contrast with one of the central arguments explaining the low membership in voluntary organizations today, namely the legacy of mistrust of voluntary organizations during Communism due to their connection with the state. As a result, the work of the state with voluntary organizations is unlikely to have a positive impact on the rates of membership in these organizations.

Overall, Howard's analysis with its focus on cross-regional similarities carries significant implications for the study of post-Communist Europe. Focusing on the behavior of citizens, it

Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000).

⁵ For a discussion on formal and substantive democracy, see Kaldor and Vejvoda, "Democratization."

⁶ Kaldor and Vejvoda, "Democratization," 63.

moves beyond formal approaches, which have proven unsuitable for the assessment of civil society building. Hence, in terms of both its methodology and findings the research has significant implications for the future study of civil society.

Bibliography

Havel, Vaclav. *The Power of the Powerless*. New York: Palach Press, 1985.

Janos, Andrew. *East Central Europe in the Modern World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Linz, Juan J. and Alfred Stepan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Pridham, Geoffrey and Tatu Vanhanen. eds. *Democratization in Eastern Europe-domestic and international perspectives*. London: Routledge Publishers, 1994.

Rupnik, Jacques. "On the two models of exit from communism: Central Europe and the Balkans," in *Between past and future-the revolutions of 1989 and their aftermath*, ed. Antohi, Sorin and Vladimir Tismaneanu. Budapest: CEU Press, 2000.

Vejvoda, Ivan and Mary Kaldor. "Democratization in Central and East European Countries," *International Affairs*. 73 (Jan. 1997).

James Kyngge. *China Shakes the World: The Rise of a Hungry Nation*, London: Phoenix, 2006. xi + 244 pp. £8.99/€14.07 (paperback).

Author: Dylan Kissane
University of South Australia,
School of International Studies
dylan.kissane@unisa.edu.au

There have been many of books published in the past five years describing the fundamental changes to international politics that a rising China has provoked. Some, such as David Lampton's *Major Power Relations in Northeast Asia* or David Shambaugh's *Power Shift*, largely focus on security and foreign policy issues arising from the PRC's post-socialist transformation. Others, including Nicholas Lardy's *Integrating China into the Global Economy*, are concerned with the implications for global markets of China's economic trajectory. James Kyngge's *China Shakes the World: The Rise of a Hungry Nation*, however, does not limit itself to considerations of a sole element of China's tangible impacts on the world. Instead Kyngge attempts to consider China from within and without in economic, social and political terms, succeeding in presenting an informed study of the nation-state that will come to influence international affairs in ways barely imagined during the Cold War.

Broadly, Kyngge's book is divided into two parts which might be thought of as "the impact" and "the cost". Chapters

One to Five present studies of Chinese successes in manufacturing and industry, all to the detriment of communities in Europe and the United States. Drawing of examples ranging from steel and vehicle production to textiles and men's fashion, Kyngge explains how the evolution of China has revolutionized global markets. The final four chapters assess the impact of this revolution within China from a variety of perspectives. The environmental cost on rivers and forest both in mainland China and across the world, the social costs to individuals and families in China as well as the impacts on those in the West who feel they are "losing" to the rising Chinese state. Kyngge concludes that, in spite of the significant changes within and without China, "future scenarios full of doom and gloom" (p.227) fail to consider the integration of the People's Republic into the world economy in recent years that acts as an increasingly strong restraint on the possibility of international aggression.

Kyngge's style is engaging and it easy to imagine him as a very British Thomas Friedman. In contrast to Friedman's broad generalizations and relentless name-dropping, however, Kyngge takes the reader to the very personal experiences of the average citizen in China and beyond. Kyngge's account of the impact of identity fraud in China, for example, draws on an interview with Qi Yuling, a young woman whose life was changed forever when a classmate stole her identity after high school (pp.149-153). Drawing on Qi's

experience, Kyngge builds a case for the endemic black market that infests Chinese cities. In Beijing, he notes, "a whole identity makeover with a PhD in rocket science can be bought for less than \$100" (p.154). Kyngge cites the thriving market within major cities in illegal vehicle license plates which are mounted on cars to avoid speeding fines (p.155). Such examples build to the inevitable conclusion that, despite all the successes of China, there remain some domestic obstacles for the state to overcome in order to continue its meteoric international rise.

Kyngge uses this methodology consistently throughout his text, moving from the specific and personal through to the general conclusions that depict broader trends, both in China and abroad. Such an inductive style is common in texts that attempt to bridge the gap between academic and popular social science. While it makes for easy reading and opens the book to a wider audience, it also results in an absence of the detailed citations that will aid the researcher. As such, while it is deserving of its 2006 *Financial Times* Business Book of the Year award, it remains short on the footnotes and sourced references that aid scholars in building their own arguments. This is not a failing on the part of Kyngge – he made no representation of presenting a standard academic work – but it must be considered by the serious researcher of post-communist economies.

While it is impossible to compare post-socialist China with post-socialist

Central and Eastern Europe in all areas, there are some similarities that remain striking. Besides the impact of the black market, there are clear parallels in two other areas, the first being the market price of labour in post-socialist societies. Though the disparity in labour cost between China and the rest of the world has driven their manufacturing sector for a decade, the same cost disparity exists between the former socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe and the states of Western Europe. While there remains the chance that Western multinationals will bypass Central and Eastern Europe and direct their investment to China, Kynge does not discount the possibility of post-socialist European states using their comparative advantage in labour costs to their advantage (p.94).

Further, China's embrace of regional institutions through ASEAN+3 (p.212), the East Asia Summit and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation mirrors the integration of Central and Eastern Europe in both the European Union and NATO. While China's regional integration is not as far-reaching or as bureaucratic as that experienced under Europe's continent-wide project, it is significant that major regional powers such as Russia and China are working more closely in matters of security and foreign policy. This will surely impact on international affairs just as much as the economic policies that Kynge describes in this book. The reader with research interests in post-Cold War integration in Europe will thus find this an interesting comparative study of

post-communist economic, social and political development.

However, integration is only part of the rising China story. Kynge recounts the tale of the Illinois town of Rockford. Previously the heart of the American machine tooling industry, today it is a town which has felt the rise of China in a way that increasingly more communities in the West have and will. Its manufacturing jobs have departed for the Asian superpower, and have been traded for cheaper imported consumer products which now fill the aisles of the local Wal-Mart. Describing this trend, Kynge writes "Rockford's centre of gravity had shifted" (p.98). *China Shakes the World* is a compelling study of Rockford's story writ globally. Kynge's book is above all else an account and analysis of the shift in the global centre of gravity from the North Atlantic of the United States and Europe to the Asia-Pacific of China and the United States. Of utility to researchers and students of post-socialism, Asia studies and globalization, Kynge's work will enlighten and inform both the scholar and the more general audience with an interest in this rising state.

TJ. Pempel, editor. 2005. *Remapping East Asia: The Construction of a Region*, Cornell: Cornell University Press, 315 pages.

Author: Jewellord Nem Singh
Lund University, MA Center for East and Southeast Asian Studies
jtnemsingh@gmail.com

The idea of an increasingly cohesive, socially constructed East Asia is evident in the literature on regional integration and international relations. As the most dynamic region in the world, East Asian regionalism demands significant academic attention to map the changes in the region. *Remapping East Asia* demonstrates this effort to understand the historical, political, economic and social contexts of these changes and what they imply in the prospect of the integration project. This book offers new perspectives in three ways: it rejects the EU-based, state-centred focus on regional integration, it demands conceptual clarity in using the terms 'regionalism' and 'regionalization', and finally, it takes East Asia's project on its own terms using realist and constructivist lenses. The result is a compelling argument that greater regional cohesiveness is driven by an expanding, complex network of webs by governments, corporations, and ad hoc problem-oriented coalitions

The book is divided into three parts. The first part provides a concise overview of regional institution-building and regionalization in East Asia in a comparative perspective by analyzing state-to-state interactions and demographic changes. The major argument is that domestic politics and societal conditions matter in creating regional cooperation frameworks. The commitment toward regionalism is determined primarily by national interest, whether it is for economic, political or security reasons.

The second part investigates the drivers of regional integration. Changes in the international and regional political economy of East Asia, the strategic interest of the US, and the economic linkages forged by East and Southeast Asian businesses are key variables that shape regional institutions and bottom-up processes of economic integration. The conclusion is that institution-building is in flux as it is less institutionalised, informal, and voluntary; bilateralism is combined with multilateralism and regional cooperation schemes.

The final part of the book is regional linkages of the institutions, interests and identities. It complicates our understanding of regionalism by looking at different actors and the dynamic processes they undergo to construct and reconstruct the region. For instance, the role of 'epistemic communities' or policy networks is revealing of the limitation of the regional institutionalisation. They see East Asian regionalism as a complementary project to the American-led regional security architecture and 'open' orientation towards global economic integration. The book likewise makes a reflective assessment of regionalism by looking at the two challenges ahead: (1) the lack of capacity of Asian countries and the regional institutions to create an effective international regime for sustainable development; and (2) the challenge of terrorism in Asia. In conclusion, the contributors

problematise the goals, interests, and processes of regionalism and regionalization. While East Asia aims to increase its global influence, it is neither ready to make multilateral regional frameworks more powerful nor to limit the role of external actors, particularly the US. The major impediment remains nationalism and national identity, which is reinforced by state actions.

Since the 1990s scholars have turned their attention on the impact of China as a dominant actor in regional and global affairs. Although comprehensive in dealing with regionalism and regionalization, the book lacks an explicit analysis over this aspect: how does the rise of China affect regional security or economic integration? How do international institutions adapt to the rise of a potential economic and political power? Such questions are fundamental in any analysis of regionalism because they raise the issue of leadership, prospects of economic integration and the tension between national versus regional interests. It is only in Paul Evans' chapter that attempts to address these issues were made. In one way or another, he highlights the tension between China and Japan to influence Southeast Asian states, the ineffectiveness of overlapping coalitions based on the 'Asia Pacific Way', and the negative impact of American assertiveness in the region's affairs. This single chapter is an essential contribution because Evans represents the optimistic scholars attempting to rationalise the institutions

of East Asia into more cohesive and politically relevant institutions. Here, we find new trajectories in doing research on Asian regionalism: China seen as a domineering regional player poses a challenge to institution-building and therefore new research agendas must focus on the politics of accommodation and adjustment.

More importantly, the book leaves out transnational and national civil society movements in Asia as a potential actor of regionalization. In the past twenty years, civil society has been active in Asia more than at any point in history. In a region where governments retain political legitimacy through economic performance, the book (and the literature!) misses out some important analytical issues. These include the extent to which civil society has challenged elites and has sought political inclusion in decision-making in Asia. As shown in Latin America and Europe, civil society has been a source of democratic legitimacy and credibility of regional institutions. It is essential to investigate the nature of this political force, their strengths and limitations, and the ways they affect other actors in the dynamics of regionalization. This would make our picture of East Asian regional integration more complex, realistic and theoretically informed.

Finally, assessing the prospects requires asking the difficult questions: how will the region move forward given the uneasy relationship between China and Japan? Will sovereignty-reinforcing regionalism characterised by less

institutionalisation persist in the context of growing questions over the relevance of ASEAN and the other institutions? Is East Asia building common norms, values and identities that will generate regional cohesiveness, and if so, what is the nature of this identity? The book barely addresses these questions since its focus is in mapping out the continuities and discontinuities between Asia's past and present. The choice to synthesize the literature to understand the integration process is a laudable effort, but explanations require prescriptions, which the book does not explicitly state. Such questions raised point towards reforms and changes in institutional structures at the regional level, to which the book severely lacks responses.

Despite these limitations, it offers important contributions in specifying the processes involved in regionalism and regionalization. Historically accurate and theoretically conscious of its position, TJ Pempel has successfully clarified the debate on national versus regional identity, statism versus transnationalism, and economic versus other forms of integration. The book takes regional integration as a combination of these things rather than an either/or. It illuminates scholars which research areas require more effort towards further investigation and how regional governance can enhance its legitimacy. The book remains an essential reading for students, professors and policy makers who want to understand the past and the present of East Asia.

Elizabeth C. Dunn. *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor.* **Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 2004. viii + 204 pp; Includes bibliographical references and index (paperback)**

Author: Aleksandar Kostadinov,
University of Bologna, Interdisciplinary
Master in East European Researches
and Studies
aleksandarkostadinov@yahoo.it

Privatizing Poland is a case study structured in six parts, conducted by observation of the privatization process in one of the biggest baby food producing companies in Poland. Alima is a successful Polish company organized as a typical socialist company of a Fordistic way of production. In order to modernize and transform Alima into a highly competitive and modern production company, in the beginning of the 1990s the Polish Ministry of Privatization decided to sell the company to foreign investors. Alima's new buyer is Gerber, a leading US baby food producer. Since Gerber realized that Polish workers are not the same as those in Fremont-Michigan (where Gerber's main factory is), a new strategy was required in response to Polish socio-economic and religious customs. In the mid-1990s, author Elizabeth Dunn went to work in AG (Alima Gerber) in Rzeszow. In a very insightful and vivid style, Dunn tries to explain the typical Polish worker's attitude and way of thinking. She was

allowed close observation and was able to discover many differences between workers in Rzeszow and Fremont. The author's research was that Polish workers did not oppose capitalism and favor socialism, but their way of thinking had a more socialist heritage, thus creating a changed personhood and legacy within the new system.

Dunn illustrates different observations on Polish inter-hierarchical behavior, contrasts between how Polish people view *kierownik* (nonflexible, old fashioned bureaucracies whose power lies on close social and personal ties with superiors and subordinates) and *menadzer*, "manager" as a (flexible, initiative, eager to change, sophisticated) autonomous individual. The creation of a new managerial structure, emphasizes Dunn, was decisive in order to strengthen Alima's competitiveness. Not having a marketing or sales department, and without identifying a niche market as was the case with Alima, could jeopardize the existence of the company. Seeing that the Polish economy was transforming into an open trade and market-oriented country during the 1990s, following the neoliberal economic model of Western countries, the introduction of those managerial functions was a question of survival for the company. Establishing TQM (Total Quality Management) in Alima, observes the author, was the second biggest and important reorganization in the company (after introducing a marketing and sales department). TQM is not just

monitoring the control process of production but, moreover, controlling worker's attitudes and productivity. Under socialism, shop floor workers were considered as *proste ludzie* (simple people) that could perform only physical labor without using imagination and creativity, hence almost impossible to move into other jobs that require imagination, as in a marketing department. In the fourth part, in a very remarkable and striking way, Dunn explains the meaning of "znajomosci". Living in an economy of shortages, in order to gain something that could not be obtained persistently and on a regular basis, people in socialist countries created networks of "znajomosci": informal personal connections of friends, colleagues and family members that are interconnected in horizontal and hierarchical relationships through gift giving, bonuses, doing favors, etc. Alima-Gerber workers believe that it is not a worker's productivity or potential contribution to the company that tempers the final choice on hiring and firing, but "znajomosci".

Another interesting observation is how Dunn illustrates the logic of the "gendered politics of feeding" (133). Under socialism, women had equal rights to access labor but there was an underlying division between jobs considered physically 'light' and appropriate for women and others which were not appropriate for women. Working in a company such as Alima was considered a "physically light" job and appropriate for women, thus the

“main reason why mostly shop floor workers were women”. At a more general level, however, the idea of an industrial worker working as a mother was part of the ideology of state socialism, regardless of the industry in which they worked. The construction of femininity in Poland led to a belief within Alima that “women workers make food for babies as mothers, not profit for Gerber as laborers” (145). Considering that East European post-communist countries are just backward reflections of what Western economies were, this could be disastrous for the implementation and final accomplishment of projected strategies. Gerber’s CEO, Al Piergallini, recollects that “this country reminds me a lot of the United States in [the] 1920s” (3) was a typical stereotype about post communist countries in the beginning of 1990s.

Although mostly focused on Alima-Gerber relations, *Privatizing Poland* offers a wide range of information regarding changed “personhood” as a result of the new political and economic situation in Poland. This volume makes a good contribution to the literature on the postsocialist transition in Eastern Europe and provides valuable insight of workers’ behavior in post-communist systems.