

# International Political Science Review

<http://ips.sagepub.com/>

---

## From Reflections on Post-Communism to Perspectives on Europeanization: Democracy and Civil Society in Central Europe

Karel B. Müller and Marek Skovajsa

*International Political Science Review* 2009 30: 501

DOI: 10.1177/0192512109352293

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://ips.sagepub.com/content/30/5/501>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



International Political Science Association (IPSA)

**Additional services and information for *International Political Science Review* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://ips.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://ips.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations:** <http://ips.sagepub.com/content/30/5/501.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Jan 7, 2010

[What is This?](#)



## From Reflections on Post-Communism to Perspectives on Europeanization: Democracy and Civil Society in Central Europe

KAREL B. MÜLLER AND MAREK SKOVAJSA

### BOOKS REVIEWED

Čísař, Ondřej (2008). *Politický aktivismus v České republice* [Political Activism in the Czech Republic]. Brno: CDK, Center for Democracy and Culture.

Marada, Radim (2003). *Kultura protestu a politizace každodennosti* [Protest Culture and the Politicization of Everyday Life]. Brno: CDK, Center for Democracy and Culture.

Říbník, Jiří (2007). *Právní symbolismus: O právu, času a evropské identitě* [Legal Symbolism: On Law, Time and European Identity]. Prague: Filosofia.

Raciborski, Jacek, ed. (2006). *Elity rządowe III RP 1997–2004* [Government Elites of the Third Polish Republic 1997–2004]. Warsaw: Trio.

Staniszki, Jadwiga (2006). *O władzy i bezsilności* [On Power and Powerlessness]. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

*Keywords:* • Democracy • Civil society • Democratic transformation  
• Social movements • Middle class • Politicization • Political identities •  
Central Europe • Post-Communism • Europeanization • EU

---

Political science is a young discipline in post-Communist countries by virtue of the fact that it was not allowed to set roots and grow under Communist authoritarianism. The level of ideological control in different Central and Eastern European societies varied, but everywhere the analysis of political life was one of the last reserved areas of official ideology to be ceded to free and unbiased academic scrutiny. The full development and institutionalization of the political sciences therefore only became a reality after the collapse of Communism in 1989.

The institutional expansion of political science, measured by the number of new departments and study programs set up in recent years at universities all across Central and Eastern Europe, has undoubtedly been spectacular. Also, political science in post-Communist Europe has done quite well in opening itself up to the global circulation of ideas and in taking part in international academic structures (see, for example, Klingemann, 2002: 207). Unfortunately not all the research from those countries is well known internationally, as work published in local languages remains mostly inaccessible to outside audiences.

The twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall is an ideal opportunity to discuss and submit to critical scrutiny the scholarly output of academics from Central and Eastern Europe on the nature of political change taking place in these societies in recent years. In this review article, we focus on academic output from two former Communist countries located in Central Europe: Poland and the Czech Republic. We have chosen books that have been published in the respective national languages. To give a total representation of our selection is clearly impossible, as the number of political science publications in both countries is growing rapidly but the number of titles we review has to remain limited. The books we discuss here are quite different in their approaches and themes, but they have some commonalities that make them interesting for us: their authors study the transformation of politics in post-Communist Central Europe after 1989 and have something important to say about the nature and consequences of those changes. All the authors have published their books in the local language and thus have in mind local readers as the target audience; this notwithstanding, they all make broad use of theoretical notions inspired by Western scholarship.

In our choice of particular books we let ourselves be guided by the objective of having a group of titles roughly comparable in terms of the issues they discuss, but at the same time sufficiently heterogeneous in their theoretical approach and methodology. We also wanted them to be written by authors representing distinctly different scholarly and political perspectives. Our decision to limit our attention to Czech and Polish publications was motivated by the desire to offer a more in-depth discussion of how local political scientists analyze recent major political transformations in these two geographically close societies that have moved along very similar historical paths for at least half a century. In the case of Poland, the selection was particularly difficult, and necessarily unfair, given the size and quality of the output in Polish political science in recent years.

Jadwiga Staniszkis, an author well known for her ground-breaking studies of Poland during the years of the Solidarity movement and the post-Communist period, has, in her recent book *On Power and Powerlessness*, extended her original analysis of Polish politics to the transformations it is undergoing in the era of globalization and European integration. She makes an ambitious theoretical attempt to define the political, economic, and cultural place of Poland in the European and global order.

The second book on Polish politics is a collection edited by Jacek Raciborski which studies the political biographies and recruitment patterns of the ruling elites in Poland between 1997 and 2004. The team that has written this book continues in the tradition of the study of politics cultivated in Warsaw since the 1960s by the respected Polish political scientist Jerzy Wiatr, himself a contributor, and the list of other contributors includes political scientists and sociologists from all generations.

Oppression of the social sciences in the Czech half of Czechoslovakia under Communism reached levels matched, in Central Europe, only by East Germany, and among the highest in the whole Eastern bloc. Independent political science was not tolerated, and the beginning of the institutional development of the discipline in the Czech Republic dates only to 1989. The hostile political climate before then is reflected in the delayed development of the discipline in the post-Communist period. We have chosen works by two mid-generation scholars and one by an author from the younger generation.

The sociologist Radim Marada's book *Protest Culture and the Politicization of Everyday Life* offers interesting insights into the formation of political identities in pre-1989 Czechoslovakia and the political significance of youth in authoritarian and democratic political settings. He also explores the political sensitivities of the middle classes and the changes occurring as a consequence of the political and civic challenges posed by globalization.

Legal and political theorist Jiří Přibáň, in his book *Legal Symbolism: On Law, Time and European Identity*, discusses the constitutional developments in post-Communist countries and their impact on politics, the issues of transitional justice connected with the collapse of Communist systems, and the legal, political, and cultural aspects of Europeanization. While the emphases are different in every case, all the authors concur in their interest in the quality of post-Communist democracy and civil society. This is no less true of the study *Political Activism in the Czech Republic* by political scientist Ondřej Císař, which offers rich empirical analysis and theoretical discussion of the role of civic advocacy groups in the Czech political landscape after 1989.

Our discussion of these books is guided by a series of principal concerns. Firstly, we are interested in how the authors analyze the impact of the Communist experience on post-Communist politics, both at the level of individual action and identities and at the institutional level of political parties and governments. Secondly, we want to know what the reviewed books say about particular problems faced by post-Communist democracy and civil society. This, again, includes questions of political identity and memory shaped by particular ways of dealing with the Communist past, but also questions about the inclusiveness and legitimacy of the post-1989 democratic political order, and the controversy concerning the actual effects of the international (Western) assistance to the new democracies. Our third concern corresponds with our belief that the study of the transition of post-Communist countries to democracy and capitalism needs to be complemented by an equally systematic and detailed inquiry into Europeanization and globalization, forces to which they were exposed immediately after 1989. Here we ask how some of our authors view the nature of these interrelated processes and how they characterize their impact on the development of post-Communist democracy.

### **Perspectives on Communism and Its Impact on Post-1989 Politics**

Radim Marada, in his book on the politicization of everyday life under Communism, robustly argues that the major deficit of the Communist regime was the absence of the public sphere, which he understands as the cornerstone of political modernity. He portrays the public sphere as a crucial structural precondition enabling the formation and representation of political identities. Without an arena for political

contestation, articulating conflicting issues during Communism was confined to the private sphere only. The significance of the private sphere was further cemented, argues Marada, by the limited opportunities available to freely pursue many sorts of individual professional careers. The situation of confined individualism created a climate of mutual and almost conspiratorial feelings of closeness and solid social cohesion, which was sometimes admired a great deal by visitors from the West. And yet the delusion of sound social cohesion was based upon a growing hostility between civil society and the state (and its apparatchiks), fostering the simplistic and stereotypical binary perception of "us versus them."

Such a situation, Marada contends, did not allow for the institutionalization of the mechanisms needed for the smooth resolution of existing conflicts, which contributed to the accumulation of social tensions and hampered the formation of adequate political identities. The absence of the public sphere gradually undermined the quality of public discourse and a culture of conflict resolution within such discourse. As Marada convincingly argues, this manifested itself, for example, in the progressive deterioration of relations between Czechs and Slovaks. This lack of a public discourse, in which arguments and alternatives for the mutual cohabitation of the two nations in a common federal arrangement could have been formed and articulated, meant that the mutual tensions, channeled into various informal conduits within the private sphere (stereotypes, stories, jokes, etc.), continued to grow.

Complete loyalty or a subversive attitude toward the political regime were the only alternatives for any political agency; in fact, no room remained for maintaining any culture of public discourse. Political identities could be formed only within these two extreme reference parameters (either acceptance or resistance), which were not easily transformed into genuinely political conflict. Because of the lack of political pluralism there was no one to blame for the regime's shortcomings but the regime as a whole. The horizon of political experience of Czechoslovak society lacked the open opportunity to publicly express alternatives and to discuss arguments. With no public sphere accessible to them, people were unable to interpret the experiences of their everyday life as politically relevant; therefore there was no room for the formation of political identities. Marada suggests that the public sphere, where political positions and oppositions can be represented and articulated, presents a precious reservoir for political identities. When the public sphere is missing and the political sphere is opaque, the citizens, deprived of the chance to adopt any precise political orientation, can only regard the political regime with growing disengagement and distrust. This partly explains why the Czechoslovak regime (and Communist regimes in general) promoted and appealed to nationalist sentiments and identities, in spite of the internationalist nature of Communist ideology.

Here, Marada provides an interesting account of the role of political conflict, mainly based on Lewis Coser's sociological theory. As Marada points out, conflicts can be articulated or institutionalized on three levels: public discourse (political ideologies), organizational levels (political parties), and symbolic levels (public protests). Institutionalization of conflicts depends on the shared recognition of a discursive environment where conflicts take place. Marada presents a rather convincing defense of democratic theory based on the conflict paradigm by suggesting that the very existence of political conflicts within civil society stimulates social integration and, possibly, societal cohesion. The range of available types of

political experience in Communist countries excluded the experience of political conflict, and because of that the symbolic form of (private) protest became the single most important and deeply ingrained form of civic participation.

The view that the everyday experience of the Communist period continued to have an impact beyond 1989 and affected the quality and structure of post-Communist political life is central to the book by Jacek Raciborski and his coauthors. It offers an excellent analysis of the recruitment patterns and biographical backgrounds of the ruling elites in Poland in the period 1997–2004. The ruling elites are defined as members of the cabinet, state secretaries and undersecretaries, and also the governors of Polish self-governing regional units, the voivodships (*województwa*). The contributors to this volume have investigated the various political, institutional, and social factors influencing the composition of the ruling elites so defined in two consecutive Polish governments: the centre-right government of Jerzy Buzek, composed of post-Solidarity political parties (the broad coalition of various centrist and rightist parties grouped in Solidarity Electoral Action, together with the Freedom Union), in office 1997–2001, and the post-Communist government of Leszek Miller that presided over the final stage of Poland's integration into the European Union in 2001–4 (composed of the Democratic Left Alliance and minor left-wing parties).

One of the most striking findings of the book is that the political trajectories of members of the ruling elite were shaped more by their experiences and decisions in the pre-1989 period than by any other factor. The editor and principal contributor Jacek Raciborski proposes a typology of political trajectories that identifies two principal ones primarily based on the pre-1989 political divisions, and a group of others that are based either on the individual's profession or on the individual's political activism mostly or entirely in the post-Communist period. One "historical" political trajectory is that of the officials of the Communist youth organizations or student organizations, and it is this trajectory that leads to the post-Communist ruling elite. The other historically rooted political pathway is represented by the so-called "professional revolutionaries," that is, activists and collaborators in the Solidarity movement who have since become members of the centre-right post-Solidarity ruling elites. Less connected to the pre-1989 political situation are the trajectories of the "party yuppies" from the 1990s or those of local party officials who were promoted to top-ranking national positions in the post-1989 period. Non-political trajectories include those of former academics and experts.

The development of Polish politics after 1989, characterized by the alternation of post-Communist and post-Solidarity parties, seems to give clear support to the assumption that the division between former Communists and the anti-Communist opposition is a permanent phenomenon and has acquired a status comparable to a cleavage in the sense of Lipset and Rokkan. This thesis has been advocated by Polish political scientist Mirosława Grabowska (2004) in her book about the so-called post-Communist division. However, Raciborski et al.'s research shows that the boundaries between the former Communists and anti-Communists are in fact becoming less stable and impermeable. At least some members of the Polish ruling elites have switched into the opposite camp: there are former Solidarity activists who have joined the post-Communist ruling elites and there are also individuals with earlier links to the Communist Party among the post-Solidarity elites.

Further studies in the book suggest that the post-Communist division is thrown into question not only by those still rather infrequent decisions of individual government leaders to offer positions to members of the opposite camp, but also by the constant work of reinterpretation and forgetting of the Communist past on the part of the actors themselves. Przemysław Sadura concludes that the post-Communist elite reacted to the superior symbolic power of the post-Solidarity camp after 1989 with collective as well as individual amnesia. Unlike Grabowska, he maintains that the post-Communist elite displays no specific post-Communist consciousness: former Party members among the ruling elites, contrary to what might be expected, positively evaluate the post-1989 developments and express full support for democracy and the market economy. Similarly, Cezary Trutkowski's study of the conflicting versions of recent Polish history proposed by the Communist and anti-Communist camps shows how the post-Communist elites use the strategy of gradual changes of emphasis, slowly but surely shifting attention from the systemic flaws of the Communist system toward what they interpret as the positive contributions of former Communists to post-1989 Poland. It is to be noted that these conclusions do not contradict, but rather complement, the judgment of other observers, such as Georges Mink (2008: 483–4), who have found that the memory of Communism in Central Europe is kept alive and manipulated in order to reactivate the post-Communist cleavage. These opposite strategies of using the past in "political games" (Mink) are rational from the point of view of their respective actors.

The mutually incompatible ways of relating to the former Communist regime among political elites clearly contain high conflict potential that can result in excessive polarization of post-Communist societies, as demonstrated, for instance, by the rise of social tensions in Poland during the Kaczyński government in 2006–7. But the most serious problem identified by Raciborski and his coauthors concerns the formation of Polish ruling elites. The authors point toward weak institutionalization of Polish political parties and the party system in general. Political parties failed to provide adequate channels for the recruitment of qualified political elites. In consequence, unsuitable candidates were often promoted to top jobs in the government with negative consequences overall for the quality of governance and stability of a particular cabinet. According to Raciborski, members of the Polish governing elites in 1997–2004 had "poor and one-sided" political experience and their recruitment was chaotic and haphazard. "If compared to the background of West European governments," he writes, there "appear serious deficits in the institutionalization of the trajectories leading to government positions, or the atypical nature of such promotions" (Raciborski, p. 48). The conflicting legacies and memories of Communism together with the lack of well-established channels of elite recruitment, itself an institutional legacy of Communism, are among the main factors that lessen the quality of democratic politics in post-Communist countries.

The Communist political systems in Czechoslovakia and Poland were unable to secure the institutionalization of political and social conflicts and provided no space for the formation and adoption of political identities and roles. Because of that, Marada concludes that the Communist regime cannot be considered as politically modern. His conclusion matches that of another Czech sociologist, Ivo Možný (1999), who once labeled the political regime in Czechoslovakia a de-modernizing force, plus the analysis of the Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (1998), who suggested that the destruction of the public sphere, on the one hand,

and the excessive praise of the private sphere, on the other, are the most significant ways Communism has undermined the revival of civil society in Central Europe after the regime change in 1989.

### **Post-Communist Constitutions, Political Identities, and Civil Society**

In the books so far reviewed the influence of the former Communist regime is analyzed mainly on the level of individual memories and experiences, and the problem of how the past is processed with regard to the political system remains unanswered. Some extremely interesting hints about the way the legacy of the previous non-democratic regime has been overcome and transformed in the new political and legal order are provided in Jiří Příbáň's study of post-Communist constitutionalism. Příbáň analyzes the formation of historical memory and the process of "dealing with the past" in the course of the constitutional transformation in a broader group of post-Communist Central European countries (East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia until 1993, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1993). He argues that this process was connected to the formation of a new collective identity and its legal codification and, as he rightly stresses, the formation of collective identity is always a process of symbolic construction in which the legal and political systems select past events and future expectations in order to create present and future collective identities.

Příbáň shows that the conditions of political and legal transformations in post-Communist Central Europe varied in accordance with the styles of political negotiations and dynamics in the shift of political power. In this context, he stresses the role of "round tables" between representatives of the Communist regime and representatives of oppositional groups. Two major types are differentiated in the author's view: the *transitional* (or *amendment*) type and the *revolutionary* type. In the *transitional* type (Poland and Hungary), political transformations were carried out through the amendment of the existing (Communist) constitution. Both Poland and Hungary in the 1980s were already enjoying relatively liberal and reform-oriented governments and therefore in these countries the oppositional groups were recognized as legitimate partners by the political establishment earlier than in other Central European countries. Here, "round tables" were carefully prepared; negotiations took longer and played a central political role. The takeover of political power had an evolutionary nature and the departure (and replacement) of Communist elites took a gradual course.

In the *revolutionary* type (Czechoslovakia, East Germany), "round tables" were organized only as a consequence of mass protests. Their primary goal was to secure a non-violent course for revolutionary changes and their political and constitutional impacts were less significant than in the *transitional* type countries. In these cases, according to Příbáň, real revolutionary change, filled with strong political tension, had occurred, which opened the doors for a thorough policy of de-communization, for legal retroactivity, and for giving criminal justice a role within the process of "dealing with the past." The use of the instruments of criminal justice varied accordingly. Příbáň's book suggests that two extreme positions could be found: minimalist and maximalist. In Poland (the minimalist case), the political elites of the new regime gave up searching for any type of settling of accounts with the past by means of criminal justice, whereas in the Czech Republic



and East Germany (the maximalist position) they pushed through policies to rectify as many of the injustices of the Communist regime as possible. Přibáň's analysis highlights one very significant paradox of democratic transformation in post-Communist Central Europe: the strict adherence to the rule of law (and democratic procedures) created in all the analyzed countries a profound conflict between public expectations and the outputs of legal and judicial systems.

Přibáň defends (with reference to Fuller [1969]) the retroactivity of laws as the only option to remedy the situation of profoundly dysfunctional legal systems, as an extreme choice indispensable for the reconstitution of the rule of law. Nevertheless, he further argues, mutual trust between government and citizenry is a necessary condition for successful legal retroactivity in order to strengthen the respect for, integrity, and stability of new legal and constitutional systems. In this regard the difference between the *transitional* and the *revolutionary* types becomes very obvious. The Polish and Hungarian constitutional courts accepted the principle of legal continuity, whereas East Germany implemented the most radical legal retroactivity because it adopted the West German criminal code. The legal system in East Germany was declared lawless and an illegitimate infringement of democratic principles, the rule of law, and jurisprudence.

Interestingly enough, Přibáň interprets the constitutional processes in post-Communist Central Europe as a struggle for the revival of civil society. He regards the constitutions of various countries in the region as guarantors and stabilizers of civic political identity within the process of democratic transformation. However, as the author further reveals, this was not the most significant factor; the formation of a new political identity was imbued with the revival of national identities referring to national traditions and history. Přibáň insists (in agreement with such influential authors in the field of civil society and national emancipation movements as Hroch [1996] and Gellner [1983]) that civil traditions in the post-Communist Central European countries were weak and ethnic traditions rather strong. In this regard, he offers an intriguing comparison of the different ways in which the various civil and ethnic traditions were codified in the constitutions of the analyzed countries. The Czech constitution is interpreted as entirely civil, the Polish and Hungarian constitutions as patriotic mixtures of civil and ethnic traditions, and the Slovak constitution as entirely ethnic. Nevertheless, as Přibáň concedes, civil or ethnic codification did not automatically imply inclusive and exclusive state policies toward ethnic minorities. Furthermore, he does not hesitate to remind the reader that the tension between *ethnos* and *demos* which is deeply ingrained in European political history is more or less part and parcel of the formation of all modern European nations.

The striving for a civil, as opposed to an ethnic, character of political community is one of several aspects of the dynamics of building civil society in Central Europe after the collapse of Communism. The institutional dimensions of this process are studied in Ondrej Císař's case study of the development of Czech political activism after 1989. "Political activism" is, for Císař, citizen participation in civil society organizations and social movements. Post-Communist Europe has been diagnosed as having high levels of citizen passivity and indifference, and a general weakness of its civil society (e.g. Howard, 2003; Müller, 2002). At the same time, the growth of organized civil society after 1989 has been rather impressive and frequently attracted praise from politicians, practitioners, and analysts alike as one of the great successes of the transformation period. It is this apparent contradiction between the rapidly expanding field of civil society

organizations, on the one hand, and low citizen participation, on the other, that Císař attempts to resolve. Central to his project is the concept of transactional activism proposed by Sydney Tarrow and Tsveta Petrova (2007), which refers to organized civil society groups maintaining high levels of interaction with the political institutions to which they address their demands. Organized advocacy groups can be very active irrespective of whether the citizenry is active or not. Transactional activism and participatory activism are two different concepts. As Císař aptly notes: “we can have participation without activism as well as activism without participation” (p. 8).

Transactional activism is certainly not the only type of active citizenship in the post-Communist Czech Republic. Císař distinguishes five types of political activism: *old participatory activism* is a membership-based form of civic engagement exemplified by traditional trade unions; *new radical activism* refers to the political action of groups such as anarchist or anti-globalization networks that are characterized by a very loose organizational and confrontational style; *episodic mass mobilization* is spontaneous short-lived collective action of the crowd; *citizen self-organization* is the term for actions of individual citizens or their informal groups, such as organizing petitions, aimed at addressing a variety of concerns with national or local authorities; and, finally, *new transactional activism* refers to forms of political action typical of advocacy groups with professional staff and permanent organizational structures.

The empirical analysis of a catalogue of protest events that took place in the Czech Republic between 1993 and 2005 shows that new transactional activism and, especially, citizen self-organization were by far the most frequent forms of political activism. Incidences of self-organization were more than twice as numerous as those of new transactional activism, but since self-organization lacks, by definition, a stable organizational basis, the author focuses on new transactional activism. The most common demands raised by this form of political activism concerned the environment, followed by human and civil rights and various public policy issues, with the notable exception of economic ones. The prevailing ideological orientation of the new transactional activism is thus clearly post-materialist in a society in which the materialist orientation is very dominant. This might be puzzling, but the author will offer an explanation.

New transactional activism is a form of non-participatory political action characterized by a high capacity to engage in transactions with other state and non-state institutions, a rather stable organizational basis, and a low capacity to mobilize the public. Were this form prevalent, we could speak of a civil society without citizens, that is, dominated by a handful of professional civil society organizations skilled in dealing with political institutions and donors but unable to engage with broader sections of the population. Císař's empirical study of political activism in the Czech Republic shows that the reality is different, but, still, the question to be asked is what has helped new transactional activism to become such an important form of political action?

To find the answer, Císař reviews developments in the most active sectors of the new political activism, environmental, women's, and human rights movements, and in the most important sector of the new radical activism, the anarchist movement. These movements were able to develop their transactional capacity to the extent that they could rely on the patronage of Western donors. Programs of civil society development funded by the West have been criticized for leading

to the co-optation of social movements by the political system. Císař takes issue with this line of criticism, arguing that the effect of Western patronage was not co-optation, but what can be called “channeling,” after the distinction introduced by Craig Jenkins (1998). Indeed, Western donors have channeled local civic groups toward professionalization and formalization, but these processes have not resulted in their depoliticization and abandonment of confrontational demands. On the contrary, Císař argues, the environmentalist, women’s, and human rights movements drew important benefits from being sponsored by Western donors in the shape of vital know-how and organizational capacities that helped them survive the period of severely limited political opportunities during the government of Czech Prime Minister Václav Klaus in 1993–7.

Another line of criticism directed against Western patronage of civil society groups in post-Communist Europe maintains that it has imposed on recipient societies a Western model of civic engagement. Here Císař concurs, but he does not see the effects as particularly damaging. On the contrary, he uses this perspective for explaining why, of all types of civic organization, Western donors have most willingly sponsored those belonging to the new transactional activism category. As previous research has shown (e.g. Skocpol, 1999), the development of US and Western European civic activism since the 1960s is characterized by declining mass participation and the rising role of professional advocacy groups. The Western donors in the 1990s were looking for, or creating where they did not exist, the same type of organization they were used to working with at home – professional advocacy groups. Jointly with the organizational form, they have also exported their usual Western goals and agendas. This has resulted in a higher-than-expected incidence of post-materialist demands among new transactional activists in the post-Communist Czech Republic.

Císař’s study of new transactional activism highlights the powerful influence on post-Communist politics of global actors, patterns of action, and cultural codes. This conclusion is further supported by the somewhat different case of the radical anarchist movement. Major events organized by anarchist groups in the Czech Republic, such as the anti-IMF and World Bank or anti-NATO demonstrations in Prague in 2000 and 2002 respectively, owed their success and visibility to the massive presence of international activists. At the same time, since they failed to, and as a rule did not aspire to, attract funding from mainstream Western donors, the anarchist groups were unable to build up their transactional capacity.

An important change in the patterns of Western patronage for political activism in the Czech Republic and other post-Communist countries of Central Europe occurred at the end of the 1990s, when the level of support dropped from the main Western source, the US government and foundations, and the European Union became the principal donor. The Europeanization of new transactional activism in the Czech Republic, Císař argues, brought about a qualitative shift toward more, not less, politicization. Czech environmentalist civil society organizations turned their freshly acquired capacities toward influencing the policy process at the EU level, as well as taking a more active role in the national political arena which under the EU’s pressure, was becoming increasingly receptive to the wider environmental context. Even more significantly, the EU acted as the principal source of political leverage for women advocacy groups. It channeled their mode of operation toward professionalization and, by opening up opportunities for them to influence decision-making at the national and EU level, contributed in a decisive way to their politicization.

In brief, one cannot fully assess the quality of democracy and civil society in post-Communist countries today without taking into account the effects, both positive and negative, of globalization and Europeanization. The EU has been, in both Císař's and Přebáň's diagnoses, an essential factor in strengthening the transactional mode of political action and civil traditions in general, but its impact in particular on the participatory dimension of democracy in the new member states is more ambiguous, calling for further investigation.

### **Europeanization of Post-Communist Politics: Shifting Interests, Cultures, and Identities**

Polish political scientist Jadwiga Staniszkis also demonstrates that it is impossible to adequately describe the developments in post-Communist politics if they are treated in isolation from the broader processes of Europeanization and globalization. In her earlier works, Staniszkis analyzed the implications of the global context for both the Poland of the Solidarity years and the Poland of the first post-Communist decade (Staniszkis, 1984, 1999). In *On Power and Powerlessness* she attempts to insert into a global framework her analysis of Polish politics at the time when Poland became one of the member states of the European Union.

The gist of Staniszkis' argument is well summed up in the title of one of the book's chapters: "No one rules Poland, since Polish elites don't understand the nature of present-day power." To start with, her account is conventional and follows earlier theoretical takes on the impact of globalization on politics (e.g. Beck, 2005): globalization undermines the traditional, Westphalian model of political power exercised in a monopolistic way over a delimited territory, concentrated in clearly defined loci, and invested in specific individuals. More and more power is exercised by decentralized global networks that challenge and sometimes even colonize states, especially where these are weak, as is the case in Central and Eastern Europe. The major paradox of post-Communist political development is that once the nation states in the region had acquired independence from the Soviet hegemonic power, they almost immediately became entangled in the destructive logic of globalization that makes the very concept of territorially limited self-rule impossible. "The post-Communist 'governance' has transformed into 'administration' that carries out rules imposed through the global logic" (pp. 18–19).

Further steps taken by Staniszkis in her analysis of post-Communist politics are more original, but also more controversial. Throughout her book, she makes two major claims about the broader external context of post-Communism, one concerning globalization and the other Europeanization. As for globalization, she views the post-Communist development as an instance of the ill-placed and ill-fated application of recipes derived from the present-day model of highly advanced Western modernity to the less developed social and economic systems of Central and Eastern Europe. Poland and other post-Communist countries have not yet completed the early phase of capitalist accumulation following the collapse of Communism in 1989, but the overriding logic which they are subjected to is that of the post-industrial stage of global capitalism. Post-industrial global capitalism can easily penetrate the structurally weaker post-Communist political and economic systems and create huge dysfunctions in their operation. The post-Communist countries, like other countries on the global periphery, are unable

to defend themselves against this “structural violence,” which, in Staniszkis’ view, can be characterized as a process of goal substitution: the iron logic of globalization pushes the less developed societies toward pursuing the goals of the more advanced system instead of pursuing their own goals, adequate for their actual stage of development. This process is rational from the viewpoint of global capitalism, but damaging for the less advanced systems as, in fact, it prevents them from fully exploiting the opportunities available to them at their stage of development. Staniszkis gives this central example: the integration of post-Communist economies into the global system has been accompanied by the intentional immobilization of domestic labor and production capacities that created more space for imports. Similarly, premature financial liberalization has made the savings of the population flow abroad, with only a minor portion being used for domestic investments. Ill-timed economic liberalization has subordinated the national markets to the logic of the larger-scale and more advanced global markets. The government is no longer able to take the essential decisions, but instead faces the necessity of reacting to decisions taken at different levels of the global hierarchy of interlocking networks. In consequence, the government has lost the capacity to govern the country.

The principal argument Staniszkis develops in her book about European integration is somewhat speculative. It is, however, extremely interesting, for it sketches the historical background upon which one can give deeper meaning to some of the strongest internal political tensions that abound in the present-day European Union. Staniszkis asserts that, starting in the 14th century, Western Europe underwent what she calls a nominalist revolution. This intellectual revolution deeply changed the prevailing understanding of politics and also the practice of exercising political power. Whereas according to the traditional understanding politics was anchored in human nature and bound up with substantive conceptions of the common good, the nominalist authors, such as William of Ockham, decoupled politics from substantive values and emphasized instead the importance of abstract rules and legal procedures for maintaining stable political order. The modern Western European understanding of politics found its genuine expression in the rule of law, the procedures of democratic decision-making, and the emergence of the abstract order of a free market.

The European Union represents, for Staniszkis, the most advanced form of the Western procedural interpretation of politics. Governing through negotiation, compromise, and regulation has superseded politics in the conventional sense of a competition among different conceptions of the common good. The proceduralization of politics in the European Union has progressed much faster than in the individual European nation states, in particular those that do not fully participate in the Western European cultural legacy. Viewed in this light, European integration, in general, and the latest EU enlargement, in particular, are the processes through which the procedural style of governance gradually expands from the Western European center to its peripheries. The countries at the core’s eastern periphery, such as Poland, have not undergone the nominalist revolution in their history. They remain influenced by the traditional concept of politics, a fact that has negative consequences for their democracy and also for the ability of those countries to understand and play an adequate role in the EU.

For Staniszkis, European integration is intricately intertwined with globalization. Convinced that the globalization process is unstoppable, she argues that the

EU cannot defy its iron logic. At the same time, the nominalist legacy remains relevant as perhaps the only instrument for taming globalization. Thus, maintains Staniszkis, the fundamental choice in Europe is between a conventionally political model and a procedural model of governance of an integrated continent, not between a Europe of nations, illusory in the global age, and a federal Europe. The project of a European federation, rejected and abandoned in the shape of the European Constitution, is intellectually indebted to the traditional conception of politics, and as such it is of the same antiquated kind as the calls for the preservation of the nation state emitted by enemies of the federalist idea. The alternative to either political version of Europe is a depoliticized and de-hierarchized Europe that is governed by inter-European decision-making networks and Brussels bureaucrats. Such a transnational apolitical and proceduralist system of governance is the response of the Western European nominalist tradition to the demands of globalization.

If we go back to two books by Czech authors discussed earlier, we find that they put forward views on globalization and Europeanization that contrast interestingly with those of Staniszkis. Jiří Příbáň offers with respect to Europeanization a similar analysis from a very different perspective with a rather opposite conclusion: according to him, democracy in the EU suffers from the lack of a political sphere. He argues that the EU has been symbolically constructed as a civil alternative to ethnic nationalism. EU policies are meant to eliminate risks bound to ethnic nationalism, which is rooted in the structure of the nation states. This became very obvious, in his view, in the course of the eastern enlargement of the EU. Příbáň stresses the significance of the Copenhagen criteria and their containing effect on ethnic nationalism in the post-Communist candidate states. As the most successful case he mentions the EU monitoring of the mishandling and abuses of political power under Vladimír Mečiar's government in Slovakia. This undoubtedly led, the author argues, to the victory of the political opposition in the pivotal parliamentary election of 1998.

Furthermore, Příbáň convincingly shows that the EU epitomizes the bulwark against the negative energy of ethnic nationalism in the old member states too. The concept of European citizenship is, in his view, primarily meant to impede the nationalist abuse of state power, not to replace ethnic identities. He presumes, in line with authors such as Habermas (2001) and Beck (2005), that collective identity in the EU will be strengthened in the future on the basis of constitutional patriotism; that is, citizens will share a set of liberal-democratic (procedural) principles which at the same time work to maintain and foster cultural and/or ethnic diversity. He also rejects the possibility that political identity in the EU could be constructed in the same way as the abstract solidarities of European nations.

Many authoritative scholars in the field of European integration (e.g. Hix, 2008) have made a pro-integration argument from the perspective of the dynamism inherent in the constitutional process. Příbáň is less convinced. EU integration has so far been carried out by, as he calls it in a notable parallel to the language of Staniszkis, the "politics of de-politicization." The EU has evolved into a set of institutional instruments for consensual national and international policy-making based on permanent negotiations and compromises. Consequently, political contestation has been replaced by legal and bureaucratic procedures that leave little room for EU-scale democracy; this is why Příbáň critically calls the EU a legalistic project. His analysis reveals that the European shift toward depoliticization

and legalization that has been praised by many as a major advantage of the EU can be seen at the same time as a very serious limitation (and shortcoming) of further democratic integration of the EU.

Radim Marada's book, too, offers some possible support for those interested in democratization of the EU. His thought-provoking ideas contribute toward both understanding and explaining the shifts in political identity formation and civic participation occurring in the context of European integration and globalization. Marada suggests (with reference to Habermas) that, historically, the crucial precondition for the public sphere to emerge was the legalization of a permanent political opposition, which heralded the emergence of the modern political sphere. Permanent political opposition served, according to Marada, as a guarantor of a vital and independent public sphere, which provided a public arena for the articulation of relevant positions and created a reservoir of discursive, organizational, and symbolic forms that people could identify with. Political aspects of everyday life could then be transferred into articulated and represented political orientations and identities within the public sphere.

Marada's complex analysis focuses primarily on the shifts within the middle-class segment of contemporary civil societies. Here, he offers an analysis that is complementary to (and more complex than), rather than in conflict with, Císař's study on the Czech Republic. Marada argues that the forming conditions of the public sphere and the criteria for civil competence in the time of late modernity are best adapted to the dispositions, experience, and mentality of the new middle class. He suggests that the protest culture becomes a widespread form of political participation and self-understanding (identity) across all social strata, but mainly for the new middle class. The changing mentality of the middle class corresponds in Marada's analysis with the complex transformations taking place in Western civil societies. With reference to authors such as Adorno, Bauman, Bell, Ch. Lash, Lipovetsky, and Riesman, the book develops an argument about individualization trends within the new middle class. These trends oscillate between a lack of moral and cultural orientation (anomy), on the one hand, and self-centered and superficial narcissism, on the other. The difference between the old and the new middle class is, in Marada's view, parallel to the shift from "politics of interests" to "politics of identity." Marada describes (citing Klaus Eder [1993]) the world of the new middle class heralded by the emergence of the new social movements as a "struggle for a means of identity formation" (p. 177).

In the last several decades, according to Marada, societies across the world have experienced a profound transformation of the protest culture which could be seen as analogous to the transformation of the public sphere. Protest becomes a legitimate and (partly) comprehensible element of an emerging global (or transnational) public sphere. Marada argues that the anti-globalization movement represents the very substance of the protest culture as an autonomous cultural form, because its representative role is neither ideological nor organizational, but purely symbolic. What makes protest attractive is not any shared utopian vision (or any particular political goal), but the plain protest form itself, which represents a specific way of communicating and relating to public authorities. Marada provocatively proposes to regard the protest form as the institutionalization of misunderstanding which refuses violence, on the one hand, and subordination to the political authority, on the other.

The protest culture, which was once the exclusive domain of the collective representation of youth, can nowadays no longer be associated, claims Marada,

with any specific social segment. According to him, there are two main reasons for this: 1) the new nature of social risks and 2) new social experience which instigates shifts in people's relationship with public authorities. In addition, inter-generational tensions have been alleviated because new centers of political, economic, and social power have become as unacceptable, inaccessible, and incomprehensible for the older as for the younger generations.

Going back to Přibáň, his crucial hypothesis regarding the deficit of political identity in the EU states that the lack of a democratic political sphere does not allow for the formation of a European demos. Both Marada and Přibáň demonstrate strong links between the political (and public) sphere (where political conflicts are represented) and the formation of political identities. Furthermore, both Marada (rather implicitly) and Přibáň (explicitly) suggest (somewhat in contrast to Staniszkis) that building an arena for political contestation in the EU – where political oppositions could be represented, recognized, and embraced by both groups and individuals – could be by far the most effective way of stimulating the formation of political identities within the EU. However, a pertinent question arises that Přibáň unfortunately does not deal with, and that is: how much politicization the EU could embrace without compromising its neutralizing force against ethnic nationalism. Arguably, one could rejoice that the capacity to absorb the politicization of the EU is spread rather unevenly among the collective (national) identities in the EU, which makes the issue of politicization very much a contested one. Nevertheless, many scholars hope (Hix, 2008) that the open political arena will create new collective identities and will contribute to building new channels of political identification with the EU.

## Conclusion

Radim Marada's analysis suggests that the political experiences specific to post-Communist Central Europe, on the one hand, and shifts between the public and private sphere brought about by globalization, on the other, could produce, interestingly enough, certain synergic effects in relation to the symbolic form of protest culture. But only at first glance. The post-Communist middle class is obsessed with worshipping their privacy and only a minor segment within it is trying to establish and cultivate a civil public discourse, whereas the new, Westernized middle class is disturbed to find the Czech public sphere at risk under the impact of global networks consisting of both public and private forces.

The major dilemma of the post-Communist countries in Central Europe is epitomized by the tension between democratic transformation as an attempt to build civil society and foster the rule of law within the nation state, on one level, and on another level Europeanization as both a consequence of globalization and a reaction to it, which has made the nation state obsolete. Where does the period of democratic transformation end and Europeanization begin? If the latter simply succeeded the former, we could follow the old reliable concept of linear modernization. But, in fact, both of these processes are intricately interwoven and this leads, as the reviewed books brilliantly demonstrate, to both unintended advantages and shortcomings.

As Čiřař's and Přibáň's diagnoses show, the democratization of Central European post-Communist countries has registered many positive achievements. Perhaps their position within the reach of the centripetal force of the West destined them to succeed. But by the same token, such a success story together



with their Communist legacy makes them vulnerable and less well equipped than older established democracies to sail in the wild waters of the globalizing world. Marada's and Staniszkis' insightful discussions of the recent political experiences of the Czech Republic and Poland help us understand the predicaments of post-Communist countries' democratic transformation, as well as their problems with integration into the EU. Simply put, all former Communist countries still struggle to establish a viable and autonomous civil society and a vibrant public sphere. All of them suffer from a great deal of parochial myopia and overly dogmatic public debate, which harms both domestic democratization and the integration into European structures. The inexperience of the civil sphere manifests itself mainly in the hypostasis of partisan politics, which tends to penetrate all levels of public administration and all phases of the political process. At the same time, as the empirical study of Polish government elites by Raciborski and his colleagues has shown, the democratic potential of political parties is negatively affected by their insufficient institutionalization and high degree of political polarization due in part to the persisting presence of controversial themes linked to the Communist past in the public memory. These circumstances undermine the institutional capacity to contain and to deal with social conflicts and tensions and, in fact, seriously weaken the ability of the political sphere to address and respond to relevant problems of the citizenry.

The overall conclusion of the reviewed books could be condensed into the following message: with respect to the new democracies in Central Europe (but not only them) the processes of democratization and Europeanization should support and feed from each other rather than contradict each other. This demands innovative social and political imagination. Undoubtedly, the Central European context can provide grounds for positive expectations since one's biggest shortcoming is always one's greatest possible resource.

## References

- Beck, Ulrich (2005). *Power in the Global Age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Eder, Klaus (1993). *The New Politics of Class*. London: Sage.
- Fuller, Lon L. (1969). *Morality of Law*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Gellner, Ernest (1983). *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Grabowska, Mirosława (2004). *Podział postkomunistyczny: Społeczne podstawy polityki w Polsce po 1989 roku*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo naukowe Scholar.
- Habermas, Jürgen (2001). *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Hix, Simon (2008). *What's Wrong with the European Union and How to Fix It*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Howard, Marc Morjé (2003). *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hroch, Miroslav (1996). *In the National Interest*. Prague: Charles University.
- Jenkins, Craig (1998). "Channeling Social Protest: Foundation Patronage of Contemporary Social Movements," in Walter W. Powell and Elisabeth Clemens (eds), *Private Action and the Public Good*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Klingemann, Hans-Dieter (2002). "Political Science in Central and Eastern Europe: National Development and International Integration," in Max Kaase, Vera Sparshuh, and Agnieszka Wenninger (eds), *Three Social Science Disciplines in Central and Eastern Europe: Handbook on Economics, Political Science and Sociology (1989–2001)*. Berlin and Budapest: Social Science Information Centre (IZ) and Collegium Budapest.

- Mink, Georges (2008). "Between Reconciliation and the Reactivation of Past Conflicts in Europe: Rethinking Social Memory Paradigms," *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 44(3): 469–90.
- Možný, Ivo (1999). *Proč tak snadno ...* Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Müller, Karel (2002). "Czech Civil Society: Preconditions, Problems and Perspectives," *Central European Political Science Review* 3(9): 160–84.
- Skocpol, Theda (1999). "Advocates without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life," in Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina (eds), *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Washington, DC, and New York: Brookings Institution Press and Russell Sage Foundation.
- Staniszki, Jadwiga (1984). *Poland's Self-Limiting Revolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Staniszki, Jadwiga (1999). *Post-Communism: The Emerging Enigma*. Warsaw: Institute of Political Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.
- Sztompka, Piotr (1998). "Mistrusting Civility: Predicament of a Post-Communist Society," in J. Alexander (ed.), *Real Civil Societies: Dilemmas of Institutionalization*. London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage.
- Tarrow, Sydney and Petrova, Tsveta (2007). "Transactional and Participatory Activism in the Emerging European Polity: The Puzzle of East Central Europe," *Comparative Political Studies* 40(1): 74–94.

---

### *Biographical Notes*

KAREL B. MÜLLER is Associate Professor of Politics at the University of Economics in Prague. His research interests include civil society's theories, democratization in CEE, and the Europeanization of civil societies. In 2006, he published an article in the *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* on complementary accounts of civil society. ADDRESS: Department of Politics, Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics, Prague, Winston Churchill Sq. 4, 130 67 Prague 3, Czech Republic [email: müllerk@vse.cz].

MAREK SKOVAJSA is Assistant Professor in the Department for Civil Society Studies at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague. From 2001 to 2008 he served as the editor-in-chief of the *Czech Sociological Review*. He has recently published an article on civil society during the transition to post-Communism in the *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*. ADDRESS: Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, U Kříže 10, 158 00 Prague 5, Czech Republic [email: skovajsa@mail.fhs.cuni.cz].

*Acknowledgments:* Karel B. Müller acknowledges the support of the Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Prague (grant MSM6138439909 "Governance in the Context of Globalizing Economy and Society"). Marek Skovajsa acknowledges the support provided by the grant MSM0021620843 awarded to the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, by the Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic.