

Stephen White, Judy Batt and Paul G. Lewis (eds.) Developments in Central and East European Politics 4. Palgrave: Basingstoke, 2007, xix + 310pp., £21.99 p/b.

The Developments in Central and East European Politics series is deservedly one of the most widely used introductions to the politics of post-communist Europe. As well as condensing the expertise of an array of specialists, one of the key strengths of the Developments series has been the regular publication of updated and revised new editions. This has been particularly necessary given the rapid evolution of the region in the two decades since the fall of communism. Accordingly ten of the revised editions 18 chapters Developments in Central and East European Politics 4 newly authored pieces, including substantive and detailed new contributions by Sarah Birch on electoral systems, Cas Mudde on (un)civil societies in the region and D. Mario Nuti on transition economics. The new edition, however, follows broadly the same format as the previous (2003) edition: an introductory chapter on the historical formation and identity of the region; case studies of (groups of) countries; thematic chapters covering the major formal institutions of the political system as well as issues of special pertinence to the region such as democracy or civil society development.

The most major revision is the sharply reduced coverage of the Visegrad countries. Frances Millard's overview chapter of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic thus substitutes for three more in-depth chapters in the previous edition. This opens up space for the addition of a historical overview chapter of communist rule in the region by Mark Pittaway and discussion of other, generally less well known, new CEE members of the

EU by Tim Haughton. Post-communist South Eastern Europe is again given a chapter, but following Bulgarian and Romanian EU accession, coverage is narrowed by Judy Batt to the Western Balkan region (former Yugoslavia minus Slovenia plus Albania) currently central to EU enlargement strategy. Andrew Wilson's chapter on Ukraine in DCEEP 3 is expanded to include Belarus and Moldova, which share its post-Soviet origins, fractured national identity, recurrent (but contested) semi-authoritarianism and geo-political liminality between Russia and the new EU. However, such breadth comes at a price. However, although greater entanglements with illiberal nationalism do perhaps allow the Baltic states, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Romania to be meaningfully grouped, Haughton faces an uphill task in uniting the political development of these 'Other New Europeans' into a clear narrative. Similarly, the need to cover multiple cases in 20 pages pushes Millard's and Pittway's chapters towards a briefing-style format of broad analytical brush strokes.

The thematic chapters cover broadly the same ground as the previous edition: the major institutions of state (executives and legislatures, political parties, electoral systems, constitutions), civil society and citizen engagement and the politics of economic reform. The major innovations here are a new chapter on post-communist states' accession to the EU (completed in 2004-7 across most of the region, ongoing or potential in of South Eastern Europe) by Heather Grabbe and a new concluding chapter on by Dirk Berg-Schlosser suggesting that for most European states, including most CEE states, multi-faceted measures of 'democratic quality' may be more appropriate than notions of 'democratic consolidation' looking back to the fall of communism and the initial outcome of transition. These are important and welcome additions. However, the collection's

stress on electoral politics and the formal national political institutions betrays a certain conservatism. Issues foregrounded in recent research such as informal networks, sub-national politics, public administration or welfare reform go almost entirely unaddressed. Similarly, although some contributions such as Haughton's survey of the 'Other New European' or Lewis's updated discussion of parties reflect upon the possible interweaving of Europeanization processes and domestic politics, overall, there is surprisingly little addressing the place of CEE multi-level politics of the EU after 2004/7. The absence of any chapter addressing ethno-national conflict and identity politics is also puzzling.

Arguably, many of these problems stem from the attempt to concertina over-arching coverage of the whole of post-communist Europe (bar Russia) into a single student-friendly text. However, as the collection's evolving structure across four editions clearly shows - CEE has fragmented into a shifting set of sub-regions with diverse political trajectories, which arguably merit collections of their own. Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova could, for example, be arguably be more profitably incorporated into a collection on post-Soviet politics subsuming Russia than juxtaposed with functional, EU-integrated democracies such as Hungary or the Czech Republic, whose pronounced democratic and social malaise can increasingly be regarded as post-communist variants on themes prevalent in other European democracies.

Developments in Central and East European Politics 4 is, as ever, a well written and accessible collection well suited to the needs of teaching and, in particular, to courses dealing with politics across post-communist Europe in broad comparative terms. In the longer term, however, the collection's attempts at geographical and thematic breadth seem

likely to come into increasing conflict with Europe's distinct and diversified sub-regions, which no longer coincide with the Cold War division of the continent. For academic readers, the evolving content and coverage of the DCEEP series thus throws into sharp relief many current dilemmas about how to frame research on the former Eastern Europe and innovate in European comparative politics more generally.

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