

A. Russia and Poland Compared (Prof Harald Wydra) MT 2024

Introduction

This course introduces students into central selected themes of Russian and Polish politics. The premise of the course is that historical trajectories of nation-building, leadership and state-formation have been fundamental for understanding post-communist regime transformation and the evolution of new structures in politics and society. It applies historical, political, and sociological methods in order to elucidate ideological patterns, the evolution of nationalism and nationhood, the impact of communism on the modernisation of states and societies, as well as the more recent transformations of structures of government and political society. This course will develop conceptual tools that help understanding numerous family resemblances related to similar patterns of social development and state tradition but also highlight fundamental differences in political cultures, political identities, traditions of government, leadership, and commitments to different regime types.

Introductory reading:

Ash, Timothy G. (1991) *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity*. London: Granta Books.

Still a relevant and very gripping eye-witness account of the massive transformation undertaken by the Solidarity movement in the early 1980s.

Davies, Norman (2005) *God's Playground: A History of Poland*. Vol. 2. New York: Columbia University Press.

An indispensable historical account for understanding the challenges of state-formation, ideological structures, and imaginaries of the Polish nation.

Hosking, Geoffrey (1998) *Russia. People and Empire 1552-1917*. London: Fontana Press.

This is an excellent account of the empire-building in Russia throughout the centuries with particular focus on the interaction between the Tsarist states and its multi-national and multi-ethnic subjects.

Michlin-Shapir, Vera (2021) *Fluid Russia. Between the Global and the National in the Post-Soviet Era*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, Intro, chaps 1-2, Conclusion.

An excellent account of national identity and discourses regarding Russia's status in the world from a perspective of challenges of identification in a globalising modernity. It ties Russia's authoritarian politics to the disruptions and contradictions inherent in globalisation.

Sakwa, Richard (2020) *Russian Politics and Society*. 5th edition. London: Routledge, parts I, IV.

An indispensable and very readable guide to understanding the political frameworks, processes, and structures of the politics of the Russian Federation.

Schoepflin, George (1993) *Politics in Eastern Europe 1945-1992*. Oxford: Blackwell.

This book is still a very good guide to the unique political geographies of the post-imperial regions that constitutes 'Eastern Europe'. It deals with structural challenges in the region by examining social, political, legal, and economic traditions.

Wydra, Harald (2007) *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This book explores the social and political sources of democratization processes prior to regimes transformations in 1989/91 and the challenges for new regime types in the first decades of post-communist transitions.

Zubrzycki, Geneviève (2006) *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

This book provides a historical sociology of Polish nationalism and the unique and central role of the Catholic Church in Polish politics. It also covers the challenges of the role to Polish nationalism in post-communist Poland.

Lecture 1: State traditions and state formation

This lecture looks at problems of territorial sovereignty, the rationales of centralised rule, and the fluidity of borders, which were characteristic for the 'Eastern' type of state-formation. Whilst there are common patterns of state development, this lecture also highlights the fundamentally different trajectories of state-building, in particular the imperial expansion of Russian statehood versus the statelessness and foreign domination in Poland.

Key readings:

Davies, Norman (2005) *God's Playground. A History of Poland*. Vol. 2, chaps 1, 18, 21.

Kharkhordin, Oleg (2001), 'What is the State? The Russian Concept of *Gosudarstvo* in the European Context', *History and Theory*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 206-240.

The most relevant material is in the first part of the article. An important account of the genealogy of the concept 'state' in Europe and in Russia.

Schoepflin, George (1993) *Politics in Eastern Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell, Introd, chaps 1-2, Conclusion.

Sakwa, Richard (2020) *Russian Politics and Society*. 5th edition. London: Chapters 1, 11, and 12

Gives an indispensable account of historical conditions of Russia's state as well as the problems Russian nationalism, national identity, and state-building post-1991.

Further Readings:

Koyama, Satoshi. 2008. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a Political Space: Its Unity and Complexity. *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 15:137-152.

A good account of Poland's pre-modern status as a commonwealth and important power in Central and Eastern Europe.

Dominic Lieven (1995), 'The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as Imperial Polities', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Oct., 1995, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1995), pp. 607-636

A historically rich and comprehensive overview of the meanings and implications of imperial statehood both for Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union.

Szuecs, Jenő (1985) 'Three Historical Regions of Europe', in John Keane (ed.) *Civil Society and the State*. London: Verso, 291-332.

A brilliant account of the background and problems of disrupted statehood in Central Europe, imperialism, and precariousness of territorial integrity.

Hosking, Geoffrey (2009) *Rulers and Victims, The Russians in the Soviet Union*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Introduction and conclusion)

A superb account of how the Soviet state structure was made by Russians but also worked against Russians before, eventually, Russian drive towards national sovereignty, destroyed the Soviet Union.

Lecture 2: Nationalism and Nation-Building

This lecture explores paths of nation-building, variants of nationalism, and meanings of nationhood. It attempts to make sense of the paradoxical trajectories of Poland as a 'nation without a state' and the Russian empire as a 'state without a nation'. Crucially, it also relates nationalism in both countries to their perceptions of and self-assessments with regard to western 'models'.

Key readings:

Auer, Stefan (2000) 'Nationalism in Central Europe – A Chance or a Threat for the Emerging Liberal Democratic Order?', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 213-45. (on moodle)

Provides a very good comparative assessment between Western and Eastern models of nationalism.

Beissinger, Mark (2009) 'Nationalism and the Collapse of Soviet Communism', *Contemporary European History*, Aug., 2009, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 331-347.

This article argues that the a tidal way of interconnected nationalist mobilisation were instrumental in the collapse of Soviet communism in Russia and Eastern Europe.

Brubaker, Rogers (1996) *Nationalism Reframed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Introduction and pages 13-54. (on-line access)

An excellent conceptual introduction into the idea of nationalism based on contingent events, including a case study of Soviet nationality policy and its unintended consequences of turning into demands for more autonomy (and finally independence) of autonomous republics.

Sugar, Peter and Ivo Lederer (eds) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 3-54.

This introduction provides an excellent analysis of the specifics of nationalism in Eastern Europe with a view to differences and resemblance with Western forms of nationalism.

Further Readings:

Brock, Peter (1994) 'Polish Nationalism', in Peter Sugar and Ivo Lederer (eds) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*. Third printing. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 310-72.

This is a first rate and concise analysis of different phases of Polish nationalism.

Laruelle, Marlène (2018) *Russian nationalism: Imaginaries, Doctrines, and Political Battlefields*. London: Routledge, introduction, (on-line access, i discover)

An up-to-date primer on key debates around Russian nationalism with a chapters on contemporary conflict zones including relations with the West and Ukraine.

Tolz, Vera (1998) 'Forging the Nation: National Identity and Nation Building in Post-Communist Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No.6, 993-1022.

Gives a detailed overview of different understanding of nation and national identity in the Russian Federation.

Todorova, Maria (1993), 'Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Communist Legacy', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol.7, No. 1, 135-54. (on moodle) Introduces into different theories of nationalism and, in particular, focuses on the relationship between statehood and nationalism.

Lecture 3: Leadership and Ideological Traditions

This lectures examines key concepts of leadership and the attendant ideological traditions in both countries. Given the differences in state capacity, regime type, and religious-cultural traditions, the focus will on forms of political messianism, oriented towards the reconstitution of an independent state in Poland, and towards imperial expansion in the

case of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, as well as the renewed attempts to neo-imperialism under state-led nationalism in the Russian Federation.

Key readings:

Casanova, José (1994) 'Poland: From Church of the Nation to Civil Society' in *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 92-113.

A study of the transformation of Polish Catholicism into an institution/movement supporting civil society and democracy.

Zubrzycki, Genevieve (2006) *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post - Communist Poland*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, chapter 1 and 2

An important historico-sociological overview of the genealogy of Polish nationalism and a critical account of Polish national identity.

Zarycki, Tomasz (2000) 'Politics in the Periphery: Political Cleavages in Poland Interpreted in Their Historical and International Context', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 5 (Jul., 2000), pp. 851-873.

Shevtsova, Lilia (2010) *Putin's Russia*. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, chaps 3 and 4.

A critical overview of the establishment of Putin's power in the early 2000s, notably focusing on the interventionism in the economic elites and the reinforcement of the superpresidential regime.

Brier, Robert (2009) 'The Roots of the Fourth Republic': Solidarity's Cultural Legacy to Polish Politics', *East European Politics and Societies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 63-85.

Good analysis of the long-term ideological and political legacy Solidarity has had on the on-going conflict of values in recent Polish politics.

Further Readings:

Sakwa, Richard (2007) *Putin. Russia's Choice*. London and New York: Routledge.

A rich outline of Putin's strategic choices in his first two terms of the presidency.

Galeotti, Mark (2019) *We need to talk about Putin: How the West gets him wrong*. Ebury Press, Introduction, chaps 1, 3, 5, 7

An interesting portrayal of Putin's strategic mind and his different alliances across the network of Russian political and economic elites.

A strong and historically rich account of structural patterns in Polish politics.

Jasiewicz, Krzysztof (1997) 'Wałęsa's Legacy to the Presidency', in Taras, Ray (ed.) *Postcommunist Presidents*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 130-167.

A good analysis of the first presidency in Poland's third republic, notably the role and legacy of former Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa who was president from 1990-95.

Lecture 4: Communism: Modernising States and Shaping Political Cultures

Whilst both Russia and Poland shared the experience of communism as a fundamental period of state modernisation during the twentieth century, this lecture identifies the different modalities of its implementation, key institutional characteristics, and modes of resistance against communist power.

Key Readings:

Ekiert Grzegorz and Daniel Ziblatt (2013) 'Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: One Hundred Years On', *East European Politics and Societies (and Cultures)*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 90-107.

Taking a perspective of the *longue durée*, this article argues that long-term continuities have a greater impact in societies and states, which have undergone deeper and more frequent institutional changes.

Service, Robert (2007) *Comrades. A History of Communism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave. Intro, chapters 7-13, 20, 30-34

A very readable and comprehensive history of communism, both with focus on ideology and events.

Wydra, Harald, *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy*, chapters 3 and 5.

A context-based analysis of the establishment of Soviet communism in Russia and its long-term ideological impact in the region.

Kotkin, Stephen (2001) *Armageddon Averted*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A very concise account of the immediate reasons for the non-violent Soviet collapse.

Further Reading:

Kubik, Jan (1994) *The Power of Symbols Against the Symbols of Power. Rise of Solidarity and the Fall of State Socialism in Poland*. Penn State University Press.

One of the best analyses of the political culture of late communism in Poland and the sources of Poland's democratic revolution.

Rothschild, Joseph (1993) *Return to Diversity. A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wydra, Harald (2008) 'Revolution and Democracy: The European Experience', in Foran, John/ Lane, David/ Zivkovic, Andreja, *Revolution in the Making of the Modern World*. London and New York: Routledge, 27-44.

Lecture 5: Regime Transformation

This lecture explores different trajectories and meanings of democratisation in both countries. It embeds accounts of regime transitions into the different political cultures of each nation, illustrating how republican traditions and discourses dominated in Poland, whereas political transformations in Russia were dominated by centralized authoritarian legacies and state-oriented discourses. The focus of this lecture is on the elements that helped Poland to create a parliamentary multi-party system, whilst the Russian Federation developed a super-presidential system, a managed state democracy, and, eventually, a repressive dictatorship.

Key Readings:

Rupnik, Jacques and Jan Zielonka (2013), 'Introduction: The State of Democracy 20 Years on: Domestic and External Factors', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 3-25.

An overview article and critical assessment of the first 20 years of post-communist regime transformation in Central and Eastern Europe.

Fish, Steven (2003) 'Conclusion: Democracy and Russian Politics', Barany and Moser (eds) *Russian Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 215-51.

This piece makes a case for the missed opportunity of introduction democratic pluralism in the very early days of post-communist in Russia.

Grzymala-Busse, Anna and Pauline Jones Luong (2002), 'Reconceptualising the State – Lessons from Post-communism', *Politics & Society*, Vol.30, No.4, 529-554.

This piece argues that post-communist transitions are not only regime changes but instances of state-formation.

Hosking, Geoffrey (2009) *Rulers and Victims, The Russians in the Soviet Union*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Chapter 11.

A thorough account of the dissolution of the Soviet Union amidst the creation of Russian sovereignty.

Kubik, Jan (2003) 'Cultural Legacies of State Socialism: History Making and Cultural Political Entrepreneurship in Postcommunist Poland and Russia', in Ekiert, G. and Hanson, S. (2003) *Capitalism and democracy in Central and eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

A rich and readable evaluation of the *longue durée* of cultural legacies and their impact on state-formation and political society.

Wydra, Harald (2007) *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy*. Cambridge University Press chapters 9-11.

These chapters demonstrate how the political culture within authoritarian communism underpinned future democratic transformations, mainly pointing to memory, second realities, and civilising processes.

Further Reading:

Sanford, George (2002) *Democratic Government in Poland: Constitutional Politics Since 1989*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, chaps 1, 3, 4.

One of the best analyses of constitutional change and the evolution of party pluralism in Poland post-1989.

Shevtsova, Lilia (2010) *Putin's Russia*. Revised and Expanded Edition. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, chapters 1 and 11.

Urban, Michael et al.(2009) *The Rebirth of Politics in Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapters 1, 11 and 12.

An indispensable analytically rich account of the rebirth of politics in the Russian Federation, which points to the hybrid political structure between democracy and dictatorship.

Weigle, Marcia (2000) *Russia's Liberal Project. State-Society Relations in the Transition from Communism*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 382-459.

A very critical assessment of the prospect of liberal politics in the Russian federation.

Wydra, Harald (2008), 'Democratisation as Meaning-Formation – Insights from the Communist Experience', *International Political Anthropology* Vol. 1, No. 1, 113-32.

Lecture 6: Paths to Democracy and Dictatorship

This lecture assesses the fundamental differences in the democratic credentials of both systems and, more importantly perhaps, the divergent international anchorage of each country in different geo-political alliances. Outlining key elements of paths to democracy and to dictatorship, it looks at the internal controversies and dilemmas that accompanied Poland's trajectory towards a fully-fledged representative democracy within the European Union. It then explores key stages of the transformation of Russian Federation from a super-presidential regime into an increasingly authoritarian 'dual' state and, eventually, into a repressive dictatorship. For this purpose, it also takes into account the positioning of both countries in international politics.

Key readings:

Kubik, Jan and Amy Lynch (2006) 'The Original Sin of Poland's Third Republic: Discontinuing Solidarity and its Consequences for Political Reconciliation', *Polish Sociological Review*, Vol. 153, No. 1, 9-38.

Provides a cultural approach to the disintegration of the Solidarity movement and the consequences for political processes in post-communist Poland, especially the lack of 'symbolic closure' in 1989.

Lukin, Alexander (2009) 'Russia's New Authoritarianism and the Post-Soviet Ideal', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 66-92.

This piece investigates the roots for the popularity of Putin's authoritarianism by linking it to specific imaginations of the public political ideal from the Soviet period.

Bill, Stanley and Ben Stanley (2020) 'Whose Poland is it to be? PiS and the struggle between monism and pluralism', *East European Politics*, vol. 36, no. 3, 378-94.

Quite up-to-date analysis of ideology and practice of the recent PiS government in light of wider options of Polish politics.

Dryzek, John and Holmes, Leslie (2002) *Post-Communist Democratisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapters 1, 6, 14, 16.

A very fine analysis of the cultural and social conceptions behind Russian and Polish discourses of democracy during transition period of the 1990s.

Sakwa, Richard (2010) 'The Dual State in Russia', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 26, No. 3 185-206.

A very fine article differentiating the constitutional state in Russia and the administrative regime that exercises a tutelary regime outside the normative framework of the state.

Petrov, Nikolai/Maria Lipman, Henry E. Hale (2014) 'Three dilemmas of hybrid regime governance: Russia from Putin to Putin', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 1, 1-26.

A poignant analysis of the regime type and some policy implications in Russia.

Further Reading:

Zuba, Krzysztof (2010), 'The Political Strategies of the Catholic Church in Poland', *Religion, State, and Society*, 38(2), 115-134.

An excellent overview assessment of the changing patterns of influence of the Catholic Church in democratic Poland.

Koczanowicz, Leszek (2016), 'The Polish Case: Community and Democracy under the PiS' *New Left Review* 102, 77-96.

A critical account of the ideological shift in Polish politics after PiS achieved an absolute majority in 2015.

Korycki, Kate (2017), 'Memory, Party Politics, and Post-Transition Space: The case of Poland', *East European Politics and Societies (and Cultures)*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 518-44.

This article demonstrates how the political of memory and of the past has become a crucial cleavage line in party competition.

Rupnik, Jacques and Jan Zielonka (2013), 'Introduction: The State of Democracy 20 Years on: Domestic and External Factors', *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 3-25.

A good review of the achievements and problems of democracies in Central and Eastern Europe.

Sakwa, Richard (2021), 'Greater Russia: Is Moscow out to subvert the West?', *International Politics*, 58, 334–362.

A very interesting account of the geo-political implications of Russia's revisionism and the rising tensions with the West.

Supervision essay questions:

Is there an Eastern European model of nationalism?

How did communist legacies influence regime transformations in Eastern Europe?

Do transition processes weaken or strengthen state power?

How has nationalism shaped state traditions in Eastern Europe?

Was authoritarian rule in Eastern Europe dependent on national particularities?