Veronica Anghel: The Road to Illiberalism: Informality and Personalized Politics in New Democracies

How can we account for the illiberal turn in post-communist democracies? The present study investigates a causal link between the pervasiveness of personalized politics and the rise of illiberalism by comparatively examining three new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria).

The prevalent theoretical understanding is that the personalization of politics is a stage subsequent to the decline of centrality of political parties. Based on qualitative in-depth evidence from semi-structured elite interviews, I observe that in these countries, political personalization through the empowerment of political leaders was present from the initial stages of institution building. The study notes that the parliamentary institutional design limited an increasing level of personalization. However, post-communist political leaders complement or substitute such limitations to their personal authority by favouring informal behaviour and institutions in political decision making. It suggests the need for a research agenda that focuses on informality as a potential tool to understand the prevalence of personalization in the region. It concludes with a discussion of the long – term challenges that personalization sets for the process of democratization and its effects on illiberalism.

Heino Nyyssönen: "Bold Nations" and their prestige: recent Poland and Hungary in comparison

This cross-disciplinary contribution asks, why democracy and rule of law have backlashed, or even dying in East Central Europe (cf. Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018). The paper compares two cases, Poland and Hungary, in which, according to some estimates, "authoritarian institutional system" is already established (Ekiert 2017). It is argued here that the question is about prestige, in which Poland and Hungary are struggling for a greater status and recognition. In this search of prestige long history matters, and politics and power is easily thought to have a priority before the rule of law, as practice before theory, or "realism" before "liberalism". Moreover, I claim that the experience of difference arises from history and expectations that the liberal West is treating the newer EU members condescendingly.

At first, the article revisits the politics of identity and cartography. It updates debates of naming, as the concepts of "Eastern Europe", "Central Europe" and "East Central Europe" remain contested. Furthermore, the experience of difference is located in ideas of separating "East" and "West" and to the state of democracy on the continent. As we are particularly comparing Poland and Hungary, a special chapter is dedicated to their centuries old special friendship. Empirical examples come from current discussions on "illiberal" and "flawed" democracy as the Polish Three Seas Initiative.

Arzuu Sheranova: Why populism and nationalism are a successful combination in Hungary: a theoretical explanation

Contemporary nationalism and populism in Europe have been referred as a "powerful cocktail" or "the cancer of Europe". Both nationalism and populism claim to represent the people, if nationalism states who is in and out of the people, populism stresses on down and up representation, blames illegitimate and corrupted elite by claiming that populists do instead represent the people. On the eve of inflow of migrants and refugees to Europe awakening of national sentiments became a good strategy for populists. The paper will provide a closer theoretical look at concepts of nationalism and populism and more importantly will explore the interplay between populism and nationalism. The paper considers later empirical case of Hungary. Namely, the Hungarian case will describe how populist in Hungary successfully used anti-immigration discourse during the recent elections.

Csaba Molnár: Have the Jobbik's policy proposals become more moderate?

The moderation strategy of the main Hungarian radical right-wing party (the Jobbik) became a relevant topic of the Hungarian media and political science in the recent years. This process of moderation started in the autumn of 2013. The changes during this period's first years were mainly related to rhetoric and communication of the Jobbik (see Róna – Molnár, 2017). However, it is important to investigate whether the moderation process influenced the policy goals of the Jobbik as well. A comparison of the Jobbik's party manifestos prepared for the legislative elections of 2010, 2014 and 2018 will be the first means of this investigation. After that the changes of socioeconomical and sociocultural policy areas' proportion will also be analysed in order to measure the level of mainstreaming (see Akkerman – de Lange – Rooduijn, 2016: 36-37). The most important (most frequently mentioned) policy topics and the changes in radicalness of the Jobbik's initiations reflecting to them (see Akkerman – de Lange – Rooduijn, 2016: 33-34) will be investigated as well. The radicalness can usually be measured in the context of relation to other actors of a given polity. That is why I compare these changes to the policy initiations of other relevant parties of Hungary during the same period.