

## **The Implications of International Influence on Policy Making in Post-Communist Europe: A Comparative View of Minority Policy**

When one looks at the aftermath of the collapse of systematic Soviet domination over politics and policy making in East Central Europe, one could be truly astounded at the amount of change that has occurred. Both the Czech Republic and Hungary are in the process of democratization while simultaneously integrating themselves into Western institutions. There is no question that the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe were spurred by the loosening of Soviet control, and therefore affected by international influence. However it is important to consider the role that international influence, through the use of democratic conditionality, has in the second aspect of democratization, democratic consolidation.

My hypothesis is that democracy, specifically minority policy, is being elite crafted from 'outside' in much of post-Communist Europe due to the use of democratic conditions attached to incentives by international actors (the EU) and the embryonic state of post-Communist civil institutions. I will investigate the influence exerted by both domestic and international actors on domestic elites in the area of minority policy, and how the policies implemented are disseminated at the local level in two EU candidate countries, the Czech Republic and Hungary. (1990 –2000). Schmitter asserts that once democratic institutions and policies are in place, habituation of democratic practice will bring about democratic consolidation. I will explore the possibility that the dissemination of democratic values, crucial to democratic consolidation, from outside could undermine other aspects of democracy, specifically plurality and the rule of law. Democratic policies imposed from outside might amount to rule by law, if policies put in place by domestic elites due to international pressure, are not adequately debated, supported, enforced and implemented at the local level.

A consolidated democracy requires the full rooting of democracy, which can be seen by policy debate and policy choice for citizens. (**plurality**) It also requires the internalization of rules and procedures (**rule of law**), and the **dissemination of democratic values** through the extension of universal citizenship and human rights. (Pridham and Lewis) It is widely accepted that international influence plays a role in this process, whether directly or indirectly, but as it is generally diffuse and not quantifiable the nature of the relationship has not been fully explored. I believe that the conditions of post-Communism provide a filter through which this specific influence can be assessed. These conditions can be generally defined as the underdevelopment of civil society and the need to develop social institutions, and the need to develop the market economy and financial institutions. This economic and social transformation and the desire to integrate removes socio-economic issues from the political landscape. The nature of post-Communist transition therefore provides a unique opportunity to assess the ability of international institutions to craft democracy from the outside and 'assist' democratic consolidation.

My research considers plurality and the dissemination of democratic values through looking at domestic and international influences on minority policy, central to democratic values, as well as looking at rule of law by considering how this policy is internalized and implemented and enforced at local levels. Assessing how international influence affects arenas of democracy and how it has caused the development of plurality and the rule of law allows an examination of whether democratic crafting from outside is optimal and whether consolidated democracy has been crafted or will be crafted in Central Europe. I will also assess the findings of the paper against the existing elite crafting literature, by considering the problems associated with relying on habituation for consolidation, as the dissemination of democratic values by elites, can undermine other aspects of democracy, specifically rule of law and plurality.

As this paper is considering the role of international influence on domestic elites and the process of democratic consolidation, my hypothesis is strongly based in the democratization literature of the Political Crafting School (DiPalma)/Prerequisite School(Huntington. Lipschitz) debate. I take the position that democratization in Eastern Europe is elite-crafted, and in fact that due to the exertion of international conditionality, that perhaps it is being crafted by international elites and filtered through domestic elites. Despite my belief in the existence of elite crafting, this paper will serve to challenge the assertion that it is the transition phase that is crucial and not the consolidation phase, that once rules are in place democratic behavior will follow. The goal of this research is to establish the role of international actors as the crafters of democracy and to question the ability of an elite crafted democracy to be consolidated.

It is my assertion that how democracy is crafted has implications for the quality of the democracy. Whereas imposing democratic norms from outside might be the best option for Eastern Europe there is no real substitute for the prerequisites for democracy in assuring democratic consolidation. Hopefully as the economic transition becomes more complete, democratic values will be disseminated and create the plurality, policy debate, rule of law, and dissemination of democratic values necessary for democratic consolidation. This research, by isolating the international influences on aspects of democracy also has policy implications for wider European Democracy. International influence affects all democracies but its effects are difficult to distinguish from domestic influences in established democracies. Hopefully due to the prism that the post-Communist environment provides (though it has unique characteristics, the international influences are universal), I will be able to ascertain what increasing international influence and democratic crafting means in a wider context, beyond post-Communist transition. The conclusion will include a discussion of implications for further consolidation of democracy and the cleavage that this international influence brings to wider European democracy. It will also consider the fact that it might be the best option as those states less influenced from abroad are not doing as well and minority rights are of utmost importance.

### **Methodology**

I have chosen the comparative method as a means for exploring how democracy is crafted in Central Europe and what the implications of the dissemination of democratic values from 'outside' are for the consolidation of democracy. I have not confirmed which specific cases I will be studying however the use of the Czech Republic and Hungary is under consideration. At this point, because international influence exists throughout the region, I feel that my best course of action for case studies is to do a dissimilar case study.

The Czech Republic and Hungary are attractive because of their similarities. They both are experiencing the effects of a triple transition (Offe), are both small, are in proximity to Western Europe, have similarities in current problems with the Roma, similar levels of minorities, and most importantly are currently at 'similar levels' in democratic development. (Freedom House for example gives identical ratings on civil rights issues, and freedom indexes, and considers them both consolidated democracies) However if one looks to the beginning of the transition period for each, there are marked differences in approach to minority policy. Hungary, a state maintaining preexisting borders, and wanting to set an example in regards to treatment of minorities, due largely to the number of ethnic Hungarians outside the border, took a very civil approach to defining the new state, and at the national level set up institutional support for minorities very quickly. Alternatively the new state of the Czech Republic only granted citizenship initially to those with Czech nationality within the old Czechoslovakia. So despite similarities today, or what might be seen as similar outcomes, historical differences, differences in diaspora communities and differences in definition of the nation makes this an intriguing dissimilar case study. The time period for this study will be 1990-2000, or the post-Communist period. This study is synchronic as both case countries experienced similar shocks with the end of Soviet dominance and began the process of economic, political and social transformation.

In this paper I will explore the political conditions used by Western institutions to encourage democratic norms and specific policy decisions, effectively limiting elite political behavior. I will begin this study by considering the effect of international influence, through the use of incentives and conditionality, on the development of a specific policy area, minority policy. Minority policy is an area that provides the best possible means of exploring the effectiveness of democratic conditionality. Citizen rights specifically and human rights more generally are central to the Western conception of what constitutes a democracy, and therefore it is central to the agenda of international human rights regimes, international institutions and 'the West. Furthermore, the conditions set out by the European Union, the goal and 'guarantee' of Western integration, in the Copenhagen criteria, specifically list minority rights as a condition for membership. Conversely there appears to be very little domestic support for such policies, especially in light of economic hardship and the resurgence of nationalistic tendencies in the post-Communist era. Whereas the goals of transition are widely seen to be higher standards of living and increased personal freedom, it seems that in both case countries the former are valued far beyond the latter. Therefore this policy area will

provide an excellent area to explore in light of the goals of this paper, to assess the influence of international actors on policy decisions.

There are two steps to looking at how democratic values, in the form of minority policy, are disseminated. The first is to look at the policies formed at the national level by domestic elites, and the influences exerted on these elites by both domestic and international actors. Firstly, the activity on minority rights issues at the domestic elite level will be examined. This activity includes changes to citizenship rights, establishment of minority protection, and the establishment of Ombudsman regarding minority rights, special councils for different minority groups, and both short and long term governmental plans to promote civic equality. Once the policies in place are established, the influences that prompted the policies will be considered.

Measuring the international influence will be achieved by looking at the aid, advice and acceptance offered to the states in question, with conditions specifically attached. Change in minority policy that meets international conditions for foreign direct investment or EU membership, specifically following the reported insistence of international actors, would be considered responsiveness to this conditionality and international influence. This examination of conditional aid and how domestic elites react can be achieved by examining primary documentation from international organizations, including annual assessments, press releases, and interviews. Domestic Influences on domestic elites include voter interests, non-governmental interest groups, local governmental interests, as well as the more general measure of public opinion. Whereas it can be claimed that the predominant amount of voters vote on economic rather than 'minority rights' issues it is important to gauge the domestic interest in disseminating democratic values and equal rights for minority groups and individuals. An overview of these interests can be seen by first looking at public opinion polls regarding minority issues, and measuring the response against voting behavior. In applying this information to case studies it is important to consider whether the voting behavior reflects the policy decisions of elite politicians or simply campaign rhetoric. A more specific measure of interest can be seen by assessing the interaction and development of the 'civil arena' or non-governmental organizations, specifically domestic minority rights interest groups, the Catholic Church and other religious organizations, and networks of local politicians. Once again this can be measured by looking at primary source materials from domestic organizations, while considering where their funding comes from, and looking at their interaction with national political networks, and grassroots support numbers from annual reports and interviews.

I believe, as stated in the theoretical section, that the data will show that international influences on elites and their coercive powers (aid, advice, and assistance in developing political, economic, and civil sectors) dominate, while the conditions of post-Communism minimize domestic influences. The conditions imposed would amount to the limitation of domestic elites' policy choices, both disseminating democratic values from outside and limiting plurality and domestic policy choice.

The second aspect of dissemination of democratic values is from the national to local levels. It is not enough to consider the crafting of minority policy because what is more important is whether the minority policy crafted is effectively implemented and enforced at local governmental levels. It is not enough for the law to exist on paper. If minorities do not believe that it exists then there is no rule of law, which is central to the consolidation on democracy. This can be measured by assessing watchdog reports from local and international organizations regarding minority treatment in terms of interaction with local government and public services. This would include looking at policy and realistic data for access to schools, housing, health services, unemployment, prisons and police brutality and other forms of discrimination. This can be augmented by looking at government reports, and long term plans, enrollment in special schools, interviews with spokespeople from minority rights advocacy groups and local government officials and budgetary reports for dealing with local minority issues in these areas. Without rule of law there can be no consolidation of democracy.

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