

Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: The Anatomy of Post-Communist Regimes

Book Subtitle: A Conceptual Framework

Book Author(s): Bálint MAGYAR and Bálint MADLOVICS

Published by: Central European University Press. (2020)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7829/j.ctv209xmtv.7>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



JSTOR

*Central European University Press* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Anatomy of Post-Communist Regimes*

# Introduction

## Trapped in the Language of Democratization

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly gained dominance of **liberal democracy** as a political regime was accompanied by a newly gained dominance of liberal democracy **as a descriptive language**. This means that the social science concepts that had been developed for the analysis of Western-type polities were applied to the various phenomena in the newly liberated countries. Scholars started to describe these polities as some forms of “democracy” with certain kinds of “governments,” “parties,” “politicians,” “checks and balances” and so on. Indeed, such categories are intertwined and form a special narrative context, a framework of Western-type democracies where the categories have their particular characteristics and their relative place and connections to the other categories of the framework. Therefore, **the use of this language** of liberal democracies **implicitly assumes the structure and logic of Western-type polities**, that is, that the regimes the language is used for do share the essential features, the pattern of elements and internal dynamics, of liberal democracies.

This belief is deeply rooted in the euphoric state that followed the collapse of communist regimes. “**The end of history**” quickly became the hallmark phrase of this period. This phrase, somewhat simplifying what Francis Fukuyama actually said in his 1992 book of the same title,<sup>1</sup> expressed an outright optimism about the decisive victory of liberal democracy leading to an irresistible wave of democratization around the globe. The **geopolitical argument**, underpinning this belief, saw the above-mentioned collapse as the **end of the relatively unambiguous world order defined by the competition of two superpowers**, a democratic and a dictatorial one. For the world’s polities had either been associated with one pole or the other,<sup>2</sup> the obvious conclusion from the fall of the latter pole—the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc—was that countries can only be associated with the winner pole—the United States and the Western Bloc. Adding to this the active American policy of democracy assistance,<sup>3</sup> it is easy to see why democratization appeared to be inevitable and history, indeed, ended.

The euphoric view also embodied a normative, **liberal argument**. This meant **a moral impetus for the universal extension of human rights** as well as the political system that can guarantee those rights the best.<sup>4</sup> From this standpoint, the post-communist regime changes provided a unique opportunity for the peoples who had suffered under



---

<sup>1</sup> Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man*.

<sup>2</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*; Diamond, Linz, and Lipset, *Democracy in Developing Countries*.

<sup>3</sup> Carothers, “Democracy Assistance”; Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*.

<sup>4</sup> Holmes, “Democracy for Losers.”

communist rule to build free democracies for themselves, adopting the values of the post-WWII West. On the other hand, the liberal position also meant **a moral inhibition toward taking into full account the historical and cultural background of post-communist societies**. It was more in line with the liberal view of human equality to disregard the institutional and cultural ruins of communism: to believe that every nation has the same potential to build Western-type liberal democracies, and that there exists an inherent desire for the freedoms the West values—indeed, the freedoms the people are entitled to—just this desire had been suppressed by communist dictatorships.<sup>5</sup> This is an important reason why transitology and the studies of the success of democratization have tended to focus more on the political method of regime change, the quality of institutional setup, the interests of the elites, and finally the visible hand of the West manifested in economic and political linkage.<sup>6</sup>

The geopolitical and the liberal arguments seemingly justified that post-communist countries should be analyzed in the terminological framework of liberal democracy, which was seen as the endpoint of a linear development for which the base conditions were more or less granted. The specific features of every polity were to be expressed in terms of congruence and deviance from the teleological vision of democracy. **All divergences from the way of democratization were seen as mere “teething problems”** that are surmountable and are to be surmounted.

As “deviances” became more and more disturbing and the end of the transition paradigm developed,<sup>7</sup> the scholarly reaction was a widespread **change of regime labels without a change of the regime framework**. In other words, while new terms were coined to name the various non-democratizing regimes, the underlying language that was used to describe their specific features remained almost intact. The introduction of new categories for sub-regime elements was much more *ad hoc* than the labeling attempts of comparative regime theory,<sup>8</sup> and basically no one has attempted systemically to revise the categories and harmonize them with the new labels.

Indeed, we are trapped in the analytical language that gained dominance in the 1990s. **Although the transition paradigm has been consensually rejected**, we kept the terminological framework of Western-type polities and **have continued to use the language of liberal democracy to describe post-communist systems**. The same terms are used to describe the inner elements of post-communist regimes as if they indeed retained the above-mentioned logic and dynamics of liberal democracies—even though they are not recognized as liberal democracies anymore.

**The language of liberal democracies perpetuates misunderstanding** in the theories and views **regarding the present state of post-communism**. Using the same analytical categories for the Western as well as the post-communist region inevitably results in conceptual stretching and brings in a host of hidden presumptions, many of which—as we will

<sup>5</sup> Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value.”

<sup>6</sup> Schmitter and Karl, “The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists”; Bunce, “Should Transitologists Be Grounded?”; Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*.

<sup>7</sup> Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm”; Levitsky and Way, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism.”

<sup>8</sup> For a critical meta-analysis of these developments, see Cassani, “Hybrid What?”

show in this book—simply do not hold for post-communist countries. **Also, the context expressed in the language distorts attempts at empirical analysis** and data collection. From this respect, the effect of the presumption of simple comparability of Western regimes with post-communist regimes can be best captured with so-called continuous measures. These measures assess the state and trend of “democraticness” of the countries of the world quantitatively, selecting a range of institutions or criteria, and ranking them on continuous scales. These measures are then aggregated and the country is given regime label according to its cumulative score.<sup>9</sup> Research institutes like *Polity* and *Freedom House* collect, for every country, a uniform set of available variables and they are aggregated according to the same algorithm in case of every country. While it produces decent databases for scholarly use, this method indeed presupposes that every regime, Western or otherwise, looks essentially the same: that they can be understood by focusing on the same kind of components—the actors and institutions the collected variables focus on—which are all structured in the same way with the same pattern of emphases—as expressed by the uniform method of aggregation. These presumptions, and the dubious nature thereof, would have already become clear had different words been used for the elements of different contexts; it would have been obvious that what happens is indeed analyzing apples and oranges, or rather apples and kangaroos in the same way.<sup>10</sup> But the language of liberal democracies has concealed structural differences and even their probability, and allowed for the analysis of post-communist polities just as if they were Western ones.

## The Inadequacy of Existing Models for the Post-Communist Region

But is it really unjustified to look for the same elements in post-communist and Western regimes? **Are post-communist countries fundamentally different? To answer this, we have to see what the regimes’ fundamentals are.** We need to take a closer look at the existing models, that is, the scholarly understandings of the systems which have developed after the so-called “third wave of democratization”<sup>11</sup> so we can reveal their presumptions, and why they are not applicable to post-communism.

**The failure of the paradigm of linear transition** from communist dictatorship to liberal democracy became apparent within a decade after the regime changes. Some post-communist countries, like Estonia, Poland or Hungary, moved remarkably close in a few years to the Western-type model of liberal democracy, whereas in post-communist countries further east, like Russia and the Central Asian countries, democratization seemed to have stopped or turned back soon after the beginning of the process.<sup>12</sup> As it became increasingly difficult to overlook the disappointment in this regard, **the literature on the**

<sup>9</sup> For a critical meta-analysis, see Bogaards, “Where to Draw the Line?”

<sup>10</sup> Bunce, “Should Transitologists Be Grounded?” 112. Cf. Sartori, “Comparing and Miscomparing.”

<sup>11</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*.

<sup>12</sup> Zakaria, “The Rise of Illiberal Democracy.”

**transition grew richer: scholars started to introduce new regime labels**, reflecting on the nature of the not-so-democratic polities.

At first, in the period that may be called “**the transitology phase**” of analysis, political scientists presumed that **post-communist countries set off in the direction of the liberal democratic world, just not arrived yet**. Indeed, transitology appeared not only as a transformation of social systems but also as a reference to its own literal meaning: these systems are underway, and form different models according to the rate of their distance or deviation from liberal democracy.<sup>13</sup> Under this assumption, several branches of research have appeared in the literature. First, the most literal branch of “transitology” focused on the process of transition itself, both in the post-communist region and Latin America. Samuel P. Huntington, Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Adam Przeworski are regarded as classics of this branch.<sup>14</sup> Second, the “consolidology” branch—popular mainly in the second half of the 1990s—placed emphasis on the consolidation of democracy in transition countries, as analyzed in the works of Juan Linz, Scott Mainwaring, and Larry Diamond, among others.<sup>15</sup> Finally, “Europeanization” can be regarded as a branch of transitology, although it evolved differently from mainstream comparative regime theory. With exponents like Frank Schimmelfennig and Ulrich Sedelmeier, the Europeanization literature examined the convergence of Central-Eastern European post-communist countries to the European Union (EU).<sup>16</sup> It was also the longest surviving branch of transitology (at least until 2008), which is explained by the fact that it focused on the “success countries,” that is, where the assumption of transitology—regime change from communism to the Western model—was the least obviously wrong. The scholars of Europeanization hoped the EU accessions of 2004 and 2007 would deepen democracy further, whereas Western linkage and leverage was presumed to be strong enough incentives against any kind of “backsliding” on the road to liberal democracy.<sup>17</sup> Later on, though, even in this part of the region the failure of linear progression became obvious, most spectacularly in the cases of Hungary and Poland.<sup>18</sup>

Conceptualizing regimes, for transitology **the adequate labels for “transitional regimes”** that were “gravitating toward the democratic end at a varying pace” were the so-called diminished subtypes. Diminished subtypes are **democracies with adjectives**: categories that add privative suffixes to the term democracy like “illiberal,” “electoral,” “defective,” and so on. The aim of such conceptualization was to point out the defects of the given regime vis-à-vis the Western model. As two leading scholars of democratization put it, democracies with adjectives should be seen as “less than complete instances of democ-

<sup>13</sup> For a meta-analysis, see Kopecký and Mudde, “What Has Eastern Europe Taught Us about the Democratization Literature (and Vice Versa)?”

<sup>14</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave*; O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*; Schmitter, “Transitology”; Przeworski, “Transitions to Democracy.”

<sup>15</sup> Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*; Mainwaring, O’Donnell, and Valenzuela, *Issues in Democratic Consolidation*; Diamond, *Developing Democracy*.

<sup>16</sup> Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*.

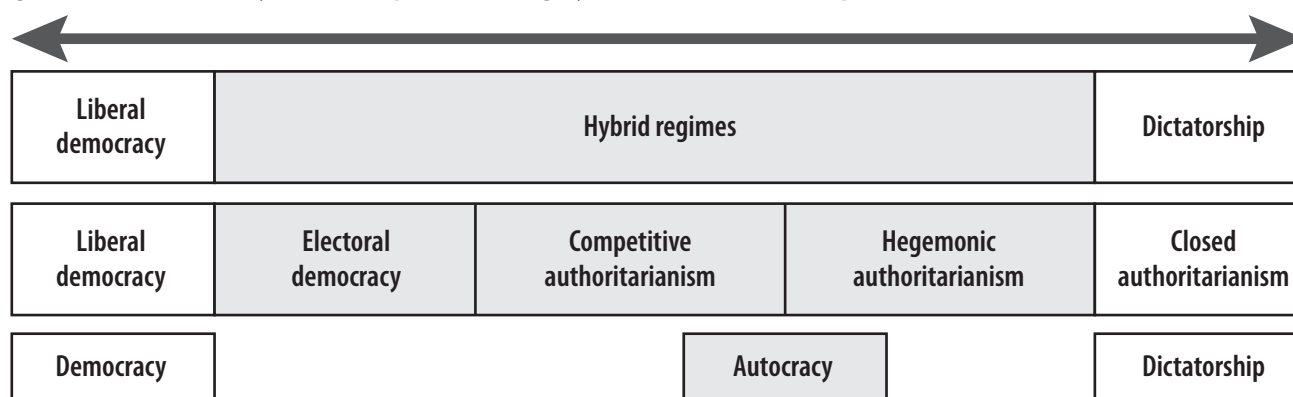
<sup>17</sup> Levitz and Pop-Eleches, “Why No Backsliding?”

<sup>18</sup> Magyar, “Parallel System Narratives.”

racy,” and also “in using these subtypes the analyst makes [a] modest claim about the extent of democratization.”<sup>19</sup> Despite the obsolescence of the transition paradigm, such labels in the genre of diminished subtypes remain highly popular to this day.<sup>20</sup>

The transitology phase of analysis was gradually replaced by “**the hybridology phase of analysis**” in the literature of comparative regime theory. **The new regimes were finally seen as stable**, that is, not gravitating towards the democratic or the dictatorial pole but sitting on specific equilibria between them. This is not to say that these regimes are static; only the linear development toward liberal democracy was no longer presumed. Realizing the presence of *sui generis*, electoral but not democratic regimes,<sup>21</sup> scholars introduced the concept of a permanent “grey zone” between democracy and dictatorship, positioning existing polities along **the democracy-dictatorship axis** (Figure I.1).

Figure I.1. The democracy dictatorship axis, with a grey zone between the two poles



**First categorization:** Larry Diamond, “Thinking about Hybrid Regimes,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002): 21.

**Second categorization:** Marc Morjé Howard and Philip G. Roessler, “Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (April 1, 2006): 367.

**Third categorization:** János Kornai, “The System Paradigm Revisited: Clarification and Additions in the Light of Experiences in the Post Communist Region,” in *Stubborn Structures: Reconceptualizing Post-Communist Regimes*, ed. Bálint Magyar (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2019), 21–74.

Conceptualization attempts of the grey zone may be categorized into **two groups**. **First, the zone can be understood as not a scale**, extended between the endpoints of the axis, **but a mere group of regimes that are neither democracies nor dictatorships**. Regime labels “**hybrid**” or “**mixed**” are included in this category, for such terms do not seek to define the respective regime in correlation to any polar type at all. Also in this group, there are the various labels that were created for concrete, stable regime types inside the grey zone without defining a fixed position relative to both of the axis’ ends. Instead, they position the respective regime nearer one pole which they feel it closer to, and define the regime as a twisted form of that polar type. For examples, one can think of labels such as “**managed democracy**” or “**competitive authoritarianism**.” Indeed, several diminished subtypes have joined this group, too, starting to mean a distinct regime type instead of a transitional

<sup>19</sup> Collier and Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives,” 437–38.

<sup>20</sup> For a meta-analysis, see Bogaards, “How to Classify Hybrid Regimes?”

<sup>21</sup> Diamond, “Thinking About Hybrid Regimes.”

station. “Defective democracy” is a good example for such a development, itself getting several (normal) subtypes from comparativists,<sup>22</sup> but “illiberal democracy” has also been understood as an independent regime type that is not a democracy anymore.<sup>23</sup>

**Table I.1 offers a compilation of the regime concepts of this group.**<sup>24</sup> For the sake of precision, we included the names of the authors chiefly associated with the given terms. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the proliferation of regime concepts is not limited to hybrid regimes, but some have been developed for the two polar types as well. Especially interesting are the elaborations on the notion of liberal democracy, marking dissatisfaction with the current state of Western-type society in both normative and conceptual sense. These new terms are also included in the table, giving a more complete picture of the current status of regime theory.

**Table I.1. Proliferation of political regime categories. Source: modified from Bozóki and Hegedűs (2018), in chronological order of the introduction of the labels in the literature.**

Liberal democracies	Hybrid regimes	Dictatorships
<p><b>Representative democracy (consensual or majoritarian), and further classifications:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polyarchy (Robert Dahl)</li> <li>• Participatory democracy (Carol Pateman)</li> <li>• Deliberative democracy (Jürgen Habermas)</li> <li>• Elitist democracy (John Higley)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mixed regimes between democracy &amp; dictatorship:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democradura and dictablanda (Guillermo O'Donnell &amp; Philippe Schmitter)</li> <li>• Delegative democracy (G. O'Donnell)</li> <li>• Illiberal democracy (Fareed Zakaria)</li> <li>• Managed democracy (Archie Brown)</li> <li>• Competitive authoritarianism (Steven Levitsky &amp; Lucan Way)</li> <li>• Electoral authoritarianism (Andreas Schedler)</li> <li>• Semi-democracy (Larry Diamond)</li> <li>• Liberal autocracy (Larry Diamond)</li> <li>• Defective democracy (Wolfgang Merkel)</li> <li>• Plebiscitary leader democracy (András Körösesnyei)</li> <li>• Externally constrained hybrid regime (A. Bozóki &amp; D. Hegedűs)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Authoritarian &amp; totalitarian regimes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communist and fascist totalitarian dictatorship (Hannah Arendt, Carl Friedrich &amp; Zbigniew Brzezinski)</li> <li>• Post-totalitarianism (Václav Havel)</li> <li>• Authoritarianism (Juan Linz)</li> </ul>

**The second group of concepts includes labels that were created as parts of a scale,** reaching from the democratic to the dictatorial pole. **Such a scale may be discrete** where regime types are defined along the various mutually exclusive states of one or more variables, covering the entire scale seamlessly. An example of such categorization is depicted on Figure I.2. On that scale of Howard and Roessler, the defining variable is electoralism and regimes follow each other strictly, according to the degrees of removability of the rulers. The mutual exclusivity of the levels can also be noticed, for there is no logical space between the binary options of having contested or uncontested elections, for instance. Theoretically, one can create such scales using any number of variables. Indeed, a two-dimensional framework, classifying regimes by the two variables of electoralism and constitutionalism, was created

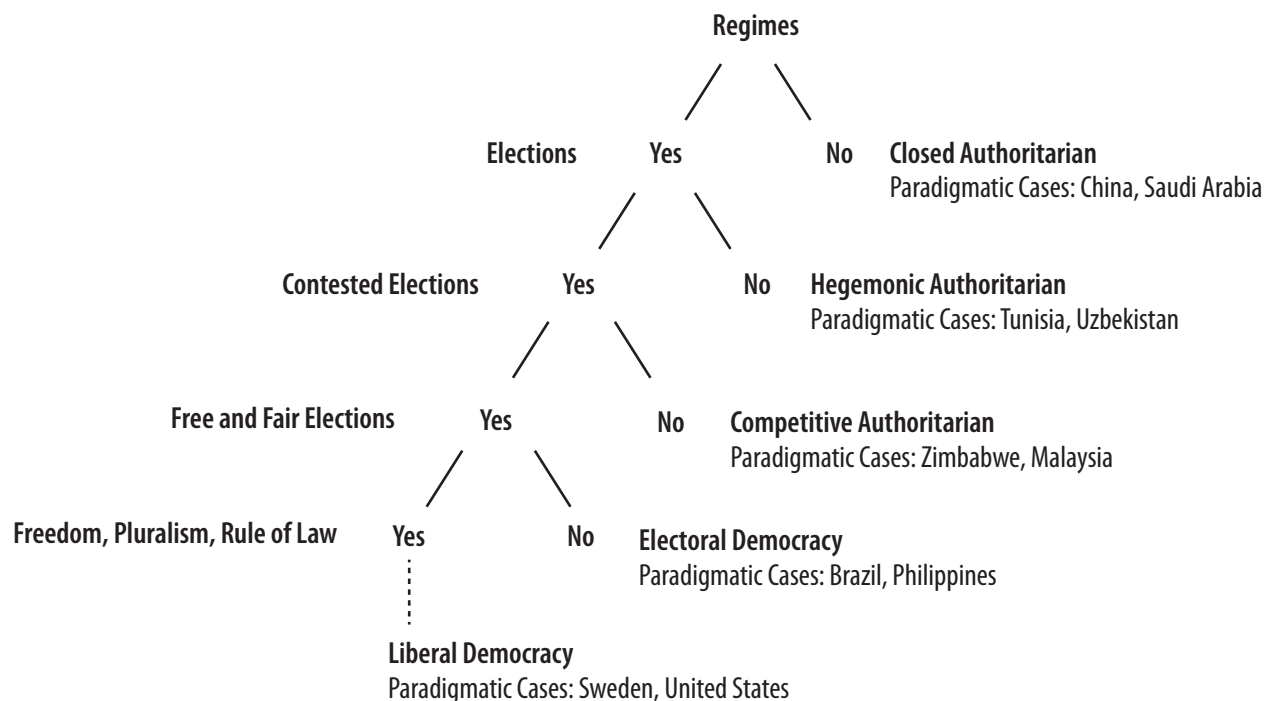
<sup>22</sup> Croissant, “From Transition to Defective Democracy.”

<sup>23</sup> Bozóki, “Beyond ‘Illiberal Democracy’: The Case of Hungary,” 94–98.

<sup>24</sup> Bozóki and Hegedűs, “Democracy, Dictatorship and Hybrid Regimes.”

by Mikael Wigell,<sup>25</sup> whereas a three-dimensional one with competitiveness, civil liberties and tutelary interference as aspects of categorization is offered by Leah Gilbert and Payam Mohseni.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure I.2. Disaggregation of regimes along the dimension of electoralism. Source: Howard and Roessler (2006).**



**Alternatively, the scale of the grey zone can also be seen continuous.** A particularly successful attempt at such conceptualization is that of János Kornai, who understands a polity along 10 dimensions (variables) and succinctly defines “democracy,” “autocracy” and “dictatorship” as three ideal types, between which there is logical space to position intermediate regimes.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this approach, which can be seen as the third categorization on Figure I.1, turns the original democracy-dictatorship axis into a two-part democracy-autocracy-dictatorship axis. But as opposed to the distinct hybrid regime concepts, Kornai’s so-called **ideal types** call for positioning the respective polity into the space between them, and defining the relative distance of the regime from the ideal types. Along the ten dimensions—to be shown and analyzed further in the book—a regime can be put on the scale closest to the ideal type it is the most similar to, and less close to another ideal type according to its particular differences to the former and the latter types. Also, in line with the main assumption of hybridology, these are no longer the stations of a strictly linear development but independent, self-maintaining political system types. Crossing from one to the other is not unidirectional; it is possible both ways.

<sup>25</sup> Wigell, “Mapping ‘Hybrid Regimes.’”

<sup>26</sup> Gilbert and Mohseni, “Beyond Authoritarianism.”

<sup>27</sup> Kornai, “The System Paradigm Revisited.”



Contrasting the two phases of comparative regime theory, **hybridology is clearly a positive step** from transitology.<sup>28</sup> Hybridology escaped from one set of false presuppositions and showed that regimes do not necessarily move toward Western-type democracy, and “transitional stations” can indeed be terminal ones. It is based on the idea that the new regimes are not what they present themselves to be: behind a democratic façade, there is autocratic politics.<sup>29</sup> It is this discrepancy hybridology builds on, breaking with the transitologist approach that would have explained this phenomenon as a teething problem of “uncultured politics,” or a temporary deviance resulting from “underdeveloped institutions.” Indeed, non-democratic traits are system-defining features in hybridology—which means they have done away with understanding *sui generis* features as deviances on principle. However, hybridology narrows the set of the phenomena that make up the regime definition to political institutions. This is quite understandable in the case of political scientists, but this method embodies a fundamental presumption, making these scholars relegate many phenomena to a secondary category of importance, whereas they can be defining traits as well. This is **the presumption that the center of a polity is a distinct political sphere**, that is, that political processes are indeed defined by formal actors—such as politicians—and formal institutions—such as the government and the ruling party. This presumption manifests in an exorbitant focus on the aforementioned factors in regime analyses. As it can be seen from the review above, the theories of hybridology (as well as transitology) deal with primarily political phenomena, actors and institutions. Even when scholars talk about “tutelary interference,” referring to powerful businessmen or an influential church, their very words imply that the regime’s center is the political sphere which “external actors” only “interfere” with.

Whether the presumption is true depends on the presence of a distinct political sphere or, in other words, whether the society in question has gone through the process of **the separation of spheres of social action**. Claus Offe divides the field of possible social activities into three categories: **political, market, and communal activities**. In his words, “political action is embedded in a state structure and framed within features such as the acquisition and use of legitimate authority, accountability, hierarchy, and the use of rule-bound power for giving orders and extracting resources. [...] Market action is recognized by the contract-based pursuit of acquisitive interests within the framework of legal rules that specify, among other things such as property rights, the universe of items that can be ‘for sale,’ and which cannot. [...] Finally, communal action is defined by a sense of reciprocal obligation among persons who share significant markers of identity and cultural belonging, that is, belonging to the same family, religious group, locality, and so on.”<sup>30</sup>

**The separation** of these three spheres of social action—indeed, a centuries-long development—is **peculiar to Western civilizations**. The fulfillment of the separation is **achieved in liberal democracies**, where not only does the institutional system map the separation of these spheres, but specific regulations and a series of guarantees excluding conflicts of interest regulate the manner in which these spheres interact and diverge. Proceeding from the West towards the East, it can be observed that this separation of the spheres of social action has either not been realized or only rudimentarily. And the

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Armony and Schamis, “Babel in Democratization Studies.”

<sup>29</sup> Dobson, *The Dictator’s Learning Curve*.

<sup>30</sup> Offe, “Political Corruption,” 78.

**communist regimes** rising to power in 1917 (and after 1945) **not only halted this process where it had begun or been developed, but reversed it.** The framework of totalitarian communist ideology and established order liquidated the independence of the three spheres of social action, private property, the private sphere, and autonomous communities, uniting them in a single neo-archaic form. While this change impacted Central Eastern Europe as a regression, going further East it meant that the process of separation was arrested and frozen.

As a result of the **Western separation** of these three categories of social action, social relations not only within the spheres in question but within the whole political-economic sphere progress in a **fundamentally formalized and impersonal system.**<sup>31</sup> It is this type of system where the presumption of the presence and central importance of a distinct political sphere holds true. But **where the separation of social activities is rudimentary**, or is not in evidence, instead of formalized, impersonal networks, **one typically sees informal and personal relations dominating.** These relations tend to be organized into patron-client patterns of subservience, into patronal networks.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, when scholars of hybridology notice that post-communist autocrats dismantle the separation of branches of power, that is a logical adjustment of formal institutions to patronalism and to the lack of separation of the spheres of social action in general.

The rudimentary or lack of separation of spheres of social action is **the basic reason why post-communist regimes should not be treated automatically as if they were Western.** Indeed, such an analytical viewpoint carries an illusion, a postulate of pastlessness, which disregards the social history of post-communist regimes and presumes that an ideal, Western-type political system of liberal democracy can be raised on any ruins of communism. The assumption is that, irrespective of prevalent value structures, such an undertaking would be merely a question of a propitious historical moment and political will. But the autonomously shifting “tectonic plates” of historically determined value structures do not support just any odd political construction one might want to establish.

Turning to the problem of language, we can now see why **the undifferentiated use of a terminological framework is misleading.** Hybridologists did make great progress on labeling the regimes as a whole, but for the detailed description of post-communist regimes the terms are borrowed from the language of liberal democracies. For instance, if we speak about the actors, the word “politician” implies a distinct political sphere; a politician is a person who pursues political action and goals, namely power and ideology. If there is a merger of social spheres, a person who looks like a politician—such as the formal prime minister of the country—is not limited to political action and most probably takes part in market and communal activities as well—such as in the top position of a patron-client network.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the word “party” refers to an institution with political goals, operating in a distinct political sphere, not to one where no actual decisions are made and is only the political façade of an informal patronal network, resulting from a merger of spheres.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> North, Wallis, and Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders*.

<sup>32</sup> Hale, *Patronal Politics*.

<sup>33</sup> Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State*, 40–45, 69–75, and *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Hale, *Patronal Politics*, 61–94.

Examples work in both ways, in the political as well as the other spheres of social action. The notion of “private property” refers to an institution of a distinct sphere of market action. Consequently, it makes little sense to use it when there are no distinct spheres and, for instance, a piece of property that *de jure* belongs to a private actor is *de facto* the property of a public actor, who uses the private actor as his “front man” (subordinated in a patron-client order).<sup>35</sup> This also implies a problem with the scholarly use of official statistics, which collect data by the Western notions of formal property relations.<sup>36</sup> To take another example, the word “corruption” is primarily understood by the world’s leading watchdogs as bribery and state capture, both concepts presuming distinct political and economic actors where the latter corrupt the former.<sup>37</sup> In post-communist regimes, “political” actors are indeed patrons on the top of patron-client pyramids. This means top-down, and not bottom-up, corruption patterns. To illustrate the difference, corruption in the West is typically seen as a deviance: a result of wrong or deficient legal frameworks that dishonest administrators and private actors exploit. “Opportunity makes the thief,” we may say. In the post-communist region, however, it is the other way around—the thief makes the opportunity, as he modifies, as head of executive, the regulatory framework and uses the means of public authority to accumulate personal wealth for himself and his patron-client network.<sup>38</sup>

As the lack of separation of social spheres is a legacy from the past, it is tempting to use **historical analogies** for regime description. After all, **communism** itself embodied a kind of merger of political and economic spheres, and so did **fascist totalitarian dictatorships** and, before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, **feudal states** all over Eurasia. Using the “neo-” or “post-” prefix to indicate the difference between current regimes and historical ones, scholars and commentators have spoken about “neo-communism,” referring to voluntarism and excessive state intervention in the economy;<sup>39</sup> “neo-fascism,” drawing analogies on the basis of xenophobic, anti-Semitic rhetoric or the cult of the leader;<sup>40</sup> or “neo-feudalism,” noticing the elimination of social autonomies and the appearance of hierarchical chains of vassalage, containing basically unchecked “lords,” “local barons” and vulnerable “servants.”<sup>41</sup> However, the main problem with historical analogies is that they are limited in range. In other words, they may be **good metaphors for certain phenomena or dimensions of the system but cannot cover every dimension in a unified, coherent framework, so they cannot be used to describe the system as a whole**. Once the focus is moved, the analogies cease to hold. In case of communism, the metaphor might work to statist economic involvement (although post-communism shows a variety of ownership relations as opposed to the monopoly of state ownership), but the character of the ruling elite and its corrupt networks are entirely different, among other things. Feudalism is suitable to spotlight the praxis of power, but

<sup>35</sup> Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State*, 88–94.

<sup>36</sup> Hanson and Teague, “Russian Political Capitalism and Its Environment.”

<sup>37</sup> Magyar and Madlovics, “From Petty Corruption to Criminal State.”

<sup>38</sup> Stefes, *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions*; Klíma, *Informal Politics in Post-Communist Europe*.

<sup>39</sup> Bokros, “Hanyatlás” [Decay].

<sup>40</sup> Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*; Motyl, “Putin’s Russia as a Fascist Political System”; Ungváry, *A láthatatlan valóság* [The invisible reality].

<sup>41</sup> Inozemtsev, “Neo-Feudalism Explained”; Heller, “Hungary”; Shlapentokh and Woods, *Contemporary Russia as a Feudal Society*.

in the case of feudal forerunners, the real nature of power and its legal status overlapped in a kind of natural harmony, requiring no illegal mechanisms for alignment as it does in post-communist regimes. A king did not pretend to be president or prime minister; he did not say he had nothing to do with the wealth of his family or barons; nor did he keep his fortune under the name of the stable boy, for he was in no need of economic front men.

The historical analogy of “fascism” points to yet another misunderstanding. While the fascistic or corporatist systems were essentially ideology-driven, among post-communist systems we generally see ideology-applying systems, with rulers characterized by a value-free pragmatism. They assemble the ideological garb suitable to the anatomy of their autocratic nature from an eclectic assortment of ideological frames. In other words, it is not the ideology that shapes the system by which it rules, but the system that shapes the ideology, with huge degrees of freedom and variability. Attempting to explain the driving forces of post-communist rulers from nationalism, religious values or a commitment to state property is as futile an experiment as trying to deduce the nature and operations of the Sicilian mafia from local patriotism, family-centeredness, and Christian devotion.

Up to this point, we have talked about the inadequacy of the existing models and language of political scientists and commentators. However, there have been other social scientists as well, notably economists and sociologists, who attempted to capture post-communist phenomena and introduce new terms to their description. While these developments are usually *ad hoc*, the more systemic ones either focus on the economy and speak about “**rent-seeking**,” “**clientelism**,” “**crony capitalism**” or “**kleptocracy**,”<sup>42</sup> or they follow in the footsteps of Max Weber and use the terms “**patrimonialism**,” “**sultanism**,” “**personal rule**,” and so on.<sup>43</sup> As for the former terms, they reflect fertile perceptual shifts in the explanation of post-communist regimes, but the adjectives used as complex categories provide only a limited understanding due to their presuppositions and underlying subtext. “**Clientelist**,” as an adjective, does not express the illegality of the relationship; the term “**crony**,” in the context of corrupt transactions, assumes parties or partners of equal rank (even if acting in different roles) and implies voluntary transactions—occasional, though repeatable—that can be terminated or continued by either party at their convenience, without one party coercing the other into continuing the relationship. And as for the arrangement connoted by the notion of “**kleptocracy**,” the term does not generally imply an aggressive reorganization of the ownership structure, nor a system based on permanent patron-client relations of subservience.

**Weberian terms** have a certain appeal for the post-communist region because they were developed for systems where the spheres of social action were not separated. Yet when they are applied, two sorts of problems often arise. First, the lack of genuine conceptual innovation, especially when Weberian terms are simply given a prefix like in case of “neopatrimonialism.” Here, the resultant category is not very telling in the sense that it does not tell us what is new in “neo-” patrimonialism, whereas the use of a term which was developed for pre-modern systems carries the risk of becoming a mere historical analogy

<sup>42</sup> For examples, see Szelényi and Mihályi, *Rent-Seekers, Profits, Wages and Inequality*; Roniger, “Political Clientelism, Democracy and Market Economy”; Åslund, *Russia’s Crony Capitalism*; Dawisha, *Putin’s Kleptocracy*.

<sup>43</sup> For a meta-analysis, see Guliyev, “Personal Rule, Neopatrimonialism, and Regime Typologies.”

(not unlike the analogies criticized above). The second problem is that these concepts as well as the ones mentioned above are often **not used consistently but in an *ad hoc* manner**, always when the scholar feels them appropriate and illuminating enough for his purposes. Indeed, the terms are often used as synonyms, which blurs the boundaries between them and also brings about conceptual stretching (when a single, homogeneous concept is applied to heterogeneous phenomena).<sup>44</sup> To avoid confusion, mis-comparing and the deceptive implication of similarity of different systems, one must be aware of the exact definitions of his terms and where, at which phenomena or dimensions, one concept should be rejected for another.

To sum up, the imprudence that is widespread in the use of concepts has hindered the apperception of the trap of the language of liberal democracy. Partial solutions have been offered, always renewing the notions at one or two dimensions of regime analysis, but the starting point is still the Western-type polity of separated social spheres. cursory changes do not step out of the framework as a whole and do not resolve the disharmony between the regime label, referring to a non-democratic polity, and the terminological framework, referring to a liberal democratic polity. Existing solutions do not achieve adjustment to something that is different at its very fundamentals.

## The Multi-Dimensional Analytical Framework: Spanning Conceptual Spaces

**To break out of the trap** of the language of liberal democracy, we have to perform a **systemic renewal of the vocabulary of regime analysis**. What needs to be developed is a new terminological framework, breaking away from the underlying presuppositions and Western bias of hybridology. A new framework should not simply change the words used to label the regimes but also conceptually reestablish its components. It must take into account the rudimentary or lack of separation of the spheres of social action and consequently see phenomena such as patronal networks, informality, the collusion of power and ownership, or centralized forms of corruption as fundamentals, and not side effects, of post-communism.

Furthermore, the new analytical framework should be **multi-dimensional**: it should feature a coherent system of categories, defined in context and covering all the relevant layers (political, economic etc.) of post-communist regimes. The main practical advantage of such holism is that it brings **the end of the necessity of “storytelling.”** If a scholar remains within the language of liberal democracy, he can explain specific phenomena of post-communism only through approximations. Indeed, he must tell his readers the “story” of the phenomenon, that is, the specific context and all the components, for which he can use Western terms with specifying adjectives and prefixes only. Instead of such broad circumscriptions, a multi-dimensional analytical framework offers words that immediately imply their context and refer to a special feature, separating the respective phenomenon

<sup>44</sup> Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics.”

from “similar” phenomena of other contexts. This not only **makes description easier and more accurate** but also **introduces coherence and conceptual discipline**.

The obvious way to create more specific terms is to move down the “ladder of abstraction,” that is, to add further characteristic features to an existing definition, moving it closer to the specific phenomenon we want to describe.<sup>45</sup> But this is not our way. We do not try to create concepts which give a precise description, as that (1) might often be misleading, as post-communist regimes are “moving targets” and change dynamically all the time,<sup>46</sup> (2) would result in too “bulky” or non-parsimonious categories, especially if they want to reflect on the uniqueness of each case they are created for,<sup>47</sup> and (3) would result in concepts that are unable to travel, meaning they would describe some particular cases precisely while becoming imprecise in other countries.<sup>48</sup> Instead, what we provide are so-called **ideal types**, which do not describe actual cases but can be used as **points of reference**. As Weber explains, an ideal type is “no ‘hypothesis’ but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses. It is not a *description* of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description. [...] When we [create an ideal type], we construct the concept [...] not as an average of the [phenomena] actually [...] observed [...]. An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete* individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct” (emphasis in original).<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, ideal types are imprecise descriptions: they are “pure,” utopic depictions of phenomena which do not exist in the real world in their ideal typical perfection.<sup>50</sup> But **using an ideal type**, which tells us how a phenomenon “should” look like theoretically, **we can describe a real world phenomenon in terms of congruence and deviance**. This is what “point of reference” means. We do not have to create a category for the given case—we create a category *around* real world cases, and that category gives a word to identify phenomena that are in its vicinity. This way we do not have to take into account every feature of real world phenomena but only some of the distinctive ones, which are then rendered in a pure and ideal form in a clear-cut, logical construct. The above-mentioned Weberian categories provide examples. To take one, sultanism is described by Weber as “traditional domination [where] an administration and a military force [...] are purely personal instruments of the master.”<sup>51</sup> Obviously, every ruling elite is highly intricate and in no state are the administration and the military “purely” instruments of the master (head of executive etc.). But this utopic formulation of a logical extreme provides a useful type to describe such real world cases where we can see the *dominance* or great degree of instrumentalization by the master. Such cases can be interpreted as cases of sultanism, whereas one can point out the concrete deviances from the ideal type that can be noticed.

<sup>45</sup> Mair, “Concepts and Concept Formation,” 186–92.

<sup>46</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, “Mixed Regimes in Postcommunist Eurasia,” 5–9.

<sup>47</sup> Coppedge, *Democratization and Research Methods*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics,” 1033–36.

<sup>49</sup> Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 90.

<sup>50</sup> Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, 90.

<sup>51</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 231.

In case we have **two** such **ideal types**, we can **extend a conceptual continuum**, which is nothing more than a continuous scale between the two polar types on which intermediate phenomena can be positioned. Indeed, the above-mentioned democracy-autocracy-dictatorship axis of Kornai was a two-part conceptual continuum: every regime could be expressed in terms of differences from the ideal types and put on a continuous scale, extended between democracy and autocracy or autocracy and dictatorship, accordingly.

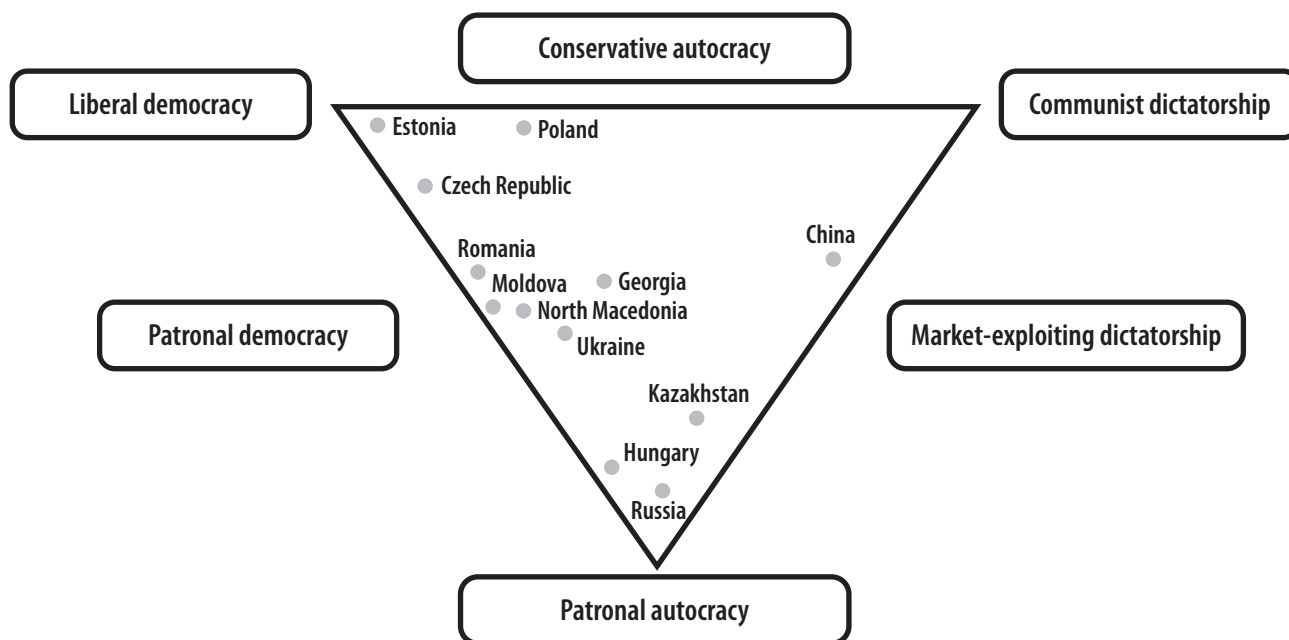
With **more than two ideal types**, we can define a group on the basis of a larger class concept or umbrella term they all belong to (such as “political regimes” or “economic actors”). And with such a group, we can **span a conceptual space**, where phenomena can be understood with respect to more than two ideal types. The advantage of a conceptual space is precisely this: one is not limited to the single dimension one or two ideal types refer to but can place existing phenomena along more than one continuum.

To illustrate the previous paragraphs, **Figure I.3 shows our main conceptual space—the one spanned for post-communist regimes**. It is defined by **six ideal type regimes**, including three polar types and three intermediate types. The polar types—liberal democracy, communist dictatorship, and patronal autocracy—extend conceptual continua, the three sides of a triangle. These sides are not axes of a diagram; they do not depict the potential values of a particular (quantitative) variable. Indeed, they are continua between certain concepts, which are defined by a bundle of variables.<sup>52</sup> **The top side**, or the continuum between liberal democracy and communist dictatorship **should be seen as the democracy-dictatorship axis** (or, more precisely, Kornai’s democracy-autocracy-dictatorship axis). However, realizing that the presumption of hybridology that the center of a polity is a distinct political sphere does not necessarily hold, **we integrate further dimensions by expanding the axis into a triangular space**. To give just one example, the three regime types on the top side are characterized by the supremacy of formal rules over informal impacts. But the lower we go in the triangle, the more we approach patronal autocracy and the supremacy of informal rules over formal impacts. In such a system, primarily informal networks take over formal institutions, operating them as façades for the accumulation of power as well as personal wealth.

At this point, we cannot give precise definitions of the six ideal types—that will be the subject of the book. Indeed, the book can be seen as an elaboration of the ideal typical anatomy of these regimes, that is, the nature of operation that is typical to these regimes, as well as the differences they exhibit in comparison to each other. But to give an idea of what kind of regimes the ideal types connote, we included twelve post-communist countries in Figure I.3. The reason we focus on them, and on the post-communist region in general, is that they all were near the upper right pole (communist dictatorship) when the Soviet empire collapsed. In other words, they started from the same “square one:” they were all characterized (1) by the dictatorship of a single-party state and (2) by the monopoly of state ownership, which were the key factors in the rudimentary or lack of separation of spheres of social action in the region. As we show in Chapter 7, each of these countries went through a specific trajectory since the regime change, whereas the empirical development of different regimes, or the changes of the “moving targets,” will be illustrated by movement from one point to another in the triangular space.

<sup>52</sup> What exactly these variables are, and how they are depicted by single sides, is going to be explained in Chapter 7.

**Figure I.3. The conceptual space of regimes, with six ideal types and twelve post-communist examples (as of 2019).**



While we feature six ideal types, eight out of twelve countries in Figure I.3 are either in the patronal-democracy cluster (Georgia, North Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Ukraine) or in the patronal-autocracy cluster (Hungary, Russia, Kazakhstan). This raises the question of usefulness of our regime types. Is it a meaningful framework where, for instance, Hungary and Russia are put so close to each other? True, we do not claim these regimes perfectly fit the ideal type, nor that they are equally close to it. But the two countries are still, apparently, vastly different. Russia is a multiethnic, multilingual nation more than 180 times bigger and 140 times more populous than Hungary. Russia is rich in natural resources—Hungary is not. Hungary is an EU-member state with low levels of violence, and the two countries have a largely different place in the world’s system of geopolitics, too. The list could go on. However, when it comes to comparative analysis, **it is crucial to distinguish regime-specific and country-specific features**. The triangular framework, as well as the definition of the ideal type regimes, is based on **regime-specific features like pluralism of power networks, normativity of state regulations, the dominant type of ownership, and formality of institutions**. These features can be seen as regime-specific because they regard the regime, that is, the institutionalized set of fundamental rules structuring the interaction in the political power center (horizontal relation) and its relation with the broader society (vertical relation).<sup>53</sup> In other words, regime-specific features regard the fundamental, endogenous elements of the system that define it as well as its internal logic. In contrast, **ethnic cleavages, country size, natural resources and the position in international political and economic system are country-specific features**, which provide the exogenous environment in which the given regime operates. Naturally, there are connections



<sup>53</sup> Skaaning, “Political Regimes and Their Changes.”



between country-specific and regime-specific features, for certain country-specific features (1) influence the sustainability of regimes and (2) might create local peculiarities of certain regime-specific features. We will mention such instances throughout the book, like when it comes to the description of the main decision-making body of patronal autocracies (the patron's court). But keeping the two sets of features analytically distinct is fundamental to realize similarities, as well as genuine differences, between certain regimes and countries. Going back to our example, we claim **there is no bigger difference between Putin's Russia and Orbán's Hungary in 2019 than the difference was between Brezhnev's Soviet Union and Kádár's Hungary before 1989**. While two different countries, the regimes of the latter pair could be described by the framework of communist dictatorship, whereas the former pair, by the framework of patronal autocracy.

Most of the book is concerned with regime-specific features, or the anatomy of post-communist regimes, but we will elaborate on country-specific features as well in Chapter 7. While the same chapter is also going to provide some information about the development of the countries presented in the triangular framework, when conceptualizing the various features, actors and phenomena we will use empirical cases only as illustrations. **By genre, this book may be best defined as a conceptual "toolkit:" an organized set of clear-cut categories**, which can be utilized as "tools" for the description and analysis of existing social phenomena in the post-communist region. Accordingly, the book contains many definitions and related explanations in a textbook-like fashion, following strict logical order and including many tables and figures to make the explanation of the concepts and related processes as perspicuous as possible. At the same time, empirical storytelling will be reduced to a minimum; only to the extent individual cases may help illustrate ideal types, or rather the phenomena we create the ideal types for.

Another metaphor to explain what we want to do in this book is the Mendeleev Periodic Table of chemical elements. The periodic table does not tell us where to find the elements, nor how much of each element can be found in the world. Hydrogen constitutes one cell in the table just like astatine, the rarest naturally occurring element in the Earth's crust. Yet the periodic table is useful because it shows what kind of elements exist, what those elements are like (atomic weight, element category etc.), and the strict logical order the table puts the elements in guarantees that the cataloguing is not *ad hoc* but focuses on the relevant phenomena that constitute a coherent whole.

By our intention, the book is precisely analogous to the Mendeleev table in these features. We do not claim to tell the reader which definition we provide has exactly how much empirical significance in the post-communist region (or elsewhere). We only claim that the phenomena we speak about exist and they are like the way we capture them, and we will cite a large number of empirical studies to corroborate this claim. We will also rely on the literature in identifying existing phenomena we need to create ideal types for. At the same time, the strict logical order we put our categories in guarantees that the cataloguing is not *ad hoc* but focuses on the relevant phenomena that constitute a coherent whole. Just like in the Mendeleev table, the basic logic of construction, that for each definition we need to consider every other element of the framework to make it coherent, provides a guideline, or rather a straightjacket that forces us to treat each phenomenon in its proper place. This also makes our definitions, as well as our decisions to focus on certain aspects and not others while creating ideal types, less arbitrary: every definition must fit into the framework consistently,

meaning it must not contradict any other claim or definition we make. This disciplining effect is further reinforced by the holistic nature of the framework, for every ideal type must conform to a larger, more complex set of other ideal types covering every sphere of social action.

Yet our framework differs from the periodic table in its ambition: it does not set out to provide concepts for the known world, only for the post-communist region. Particularly, we will be focusing on the area from Central Europe to East Asia, or from Hungary to China.<sup>54</sup> In Chapter 1, we will elaborate on the specificities of this region with the help of a number of well-established empirical claims about civilizational boundaries, the separation of spheres of social action, and the phenomena that follow from it. This will, then, define what phenomena we must focus on when we describe the anatomy of post-communist regimes—the argument of Chapter 1 will provide the general frame we must “fill up,” with every element defined and ordered to produce a coherent whole.

In the end, what we do is somewhere between hypotheses and a definitive reading of post-communist regimes. Personally, we are convinced that scholars dominantly disagree not in what these regimes substantively are but in what framework the established facts should be captured, and most debates stem from terminological confusion rather than opposing data. But skeptics are invited to read this book as a multi-level research proposal, while the concepts we offer may be used for more precise data collection, doing away with latent presumptions of Western-type regimes that simply do not hold in the post-communist region. Indeed, our goal is both modest and ambitious: it is modest because we do not claim to provide a description, rather a set of unambiguous means of expression to such a description; but it is also quite ambitious, for we aim at providing a toolkit that can be used for a variety of social phenomena of interest of political scientists, economists and sociologists in the post-communist region.

Naturally, despite our best efforts, there will surely be concepts we define imprudently or post-communist phenomena that happen to fall outside the conceptual spaces spanned by our ideal types. We expect our book to be provocative—and scholars’ interest to be piqued.

## How It Is Made: The Construction of a Conceptual Toolkit

**Our method** of constructing the conceptual framework for the anatomy of post-communist regimes can be divided into **three consecutive parts**. First, we need to perform **category selection**, by which we decide which concepts should be put in our toolkit and which ones should not. Beyond such usual criteria as familiarity and parsimony,<sup>55</sup> the main selection criteria we used were **(1) empirical relevance and (2) intra-framework coherence**. As for the former, we wanted to include concepts for every social phenomenon relevant to the workings of post-communist regimes, whereas the ones that have no

<sup>54</sup> While usually not part of post-communist studies, China is included because it indeed is post-communist (i.e., not communist anymore; for a recent take on Chinese post-communism, see Széleányi and Mihályi, *Varieties of Post-Communist Capitalism*). China also constitutes a paradigmatic case of one of our ideal type regimes, the market-exploiting dictatorship (see Chapters 5 and 7).

<sup>55</sup> Gerring, “What Makes a Concept Good?”

relevance in the region were sorted out. For example, hybridologists describe so-called “tutelary regimes” where “the power of elected governments is constrained by nonelected religious (e.g., Iran), military (e.g., Guatemala and Pakistan) or monarchic (e.g., Nepal in the 1990s) authorities,”<sup>56</sup> but such regimes can be found only outside the post-communist region so there is no reference to them in our toolkit.

Intra-framework coherence refers to the fact that **no existing category is innocent**: they have a past, a history of how they have been used, and accordingly, even if they are not used in their original context, they have a set of implicit, underlying assumptions that define the category indirectly. A good example would be the term “the ruling class.” The original context of this category can be seen if we consider it describes the rulers as a “class,” a fundamentally economic phenomenon both in Marxian and Weberian class theory.<sup>57</sup> Using the word “class” immediately situates the scholar in the context of this tradition and implies the acceptance of a vast array of assumptions of class theory, starting from the aforementioned economic nature through class-consciousness to the fact of class struggle.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, if we are to construct a coherent analytical framework, a concept like the “ruling class” could be included only if the other concepts did not contradict these assumptions—that is, in case of intra-framework coherence. Accordingly, for every phenomenon we found relevant to the workings of post-communist regimes we reject concepts and related theories which do not harmonize with the rest of the toolkit, and we describe these phenomena by concepts and theories which build further a single, coherent conceptual edifice.

After category selection, the second step is **category defining**. On the one hand, if we reject existing concepts for a certain phenomenon and there is no other concept in use that would fit into the toolkit, we **create new categories**. For example, for post-communist ruling elites we reject the notion of “ruling class” and find other concepts less than adequate, too, therefore we coin the term “adopted political family” (for a specific form of ruling elite in the region). On the other hand, as far as the selected concepts are concerned, we choose one of the following three strategies of adoption:

1. **full adoption**, which means we accept the concept as it is, with its current meaning and definition;
2. **restricted adoption**, which means we accept the concept but limit its definition to a narrower range of cases than it has been used for;
3. **extended adoption**, which means we accept the concept but expand its definition to include a wider range of cases, so we can define subtypes of the concept.

<sup>56</sup> Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 14.

<sup>57</sup> Pakulski and Waters, “The Reshaping and Dissolution of Social Class in Advanced Society.”

<sup>58</sup> Alternatively, one could keep using the term while making it clear which of these assumptions he does not agree with (see, for example, Sørensen, “Toward a Sounder Basis for Class Analysis”). Yet if there are too many assumptions one would need to reject, the benefits of introducing a different category with no such past and underlying assumptions become apparent. Hence, we follow this strategy with such categories as “the ruling class” (see Part 3.6.1.1).

For full adoption, an example would be “party state,” which is a widely used term for the type of state in communist dictatorships. For restricted adoption, an example would be “cronism.” As we mentioned above, the underlying assumption of this category is that the parties involved are friends, that is, parties of equal rank who entered the relation voluntarily (free entry) and could end the relationship at will (free exit). Such cases exist in the post-communist region so we do include cronism in our toolkit. But we make its implicit assumptions explicit, and make it clear that it refers, in our understanding, only to such cases of voluntary corruption. Finally, for extended adoption we can mention “redistribution” in the Polanyian sense.<sup>59</sup> Polanyi used this term only for the redistribution of goods or resources in an economy. We understand this as a subtype of redistribution, and extend the definition of redistribution to include another type we call “relational market-redistribution” (referring to the distribution of markets rather than resources).

The final step in constructing the toolkit is **category contextualization**. Indeed, we already define categories in a way that they imply their context. This step, however, is about making the context or the connection between the categories explicit and clear. This is to show why concepts like cronism and kleptocracy cannot be used as synonyms: each has its own meaning, put in a logical order vis-à-vis the other categories and their meaning. One can imagine the resultant context as a graph, where the vertices are the concepts (categories) and the edges are the logical connections between them. All vertices are carefully delimited from each other in their definitions and the logical connection between them—whether one is a subtype of the other, the subsequent category on the same scale etc.—should make a description using these categories unambiguous.

Indeed, careful delimitation of concepts is what we had in mind already at the previous step, when referring to restricted adoption. There, we try to show which phenomena they refer the most lucidly to and limit them to the description of those phenomena only, isolating them from other connotations they get in the literature. In terms of the toolkit metaphor: If we find a good screwdriver, we will put it in our toolkit, but we will not use it as a hammer—not even if it had been used that way more or less successfully. And having both well-ordered “screwdrivers” and “hammers” in our conceptual toolkit, internal linguistic coherence is created in the new terminological framework.

## How to Look at It: The Framework as a Structural Construction

Above, we used two metaphors to capture **our intention** with this book. First, we say **the book is a “toolkit,”** which refers to the characteristic feature that we do not provide a description but rather the tools to make a description. Second, we say the book is a **“Mendeleev table,”** expressing that our conceptual framework constitutes a strict logical order, with every existing and relevant phenomena ordered coherently but without telling how many of each element can be found in certain countries or regions. We may add to this now that we will use empirical cases only as illustrations in most of the book, and therefore

<sup>59</sup> Polanyi, “The Economy as Instituted Process.”

even if one disagrees with us and argues that a case cannot be described by the concept we associate it with, that does not rule out the concept *per se*. The soundness of the categories and the coherence of the framework on the one hand and their empirical relevance on the other hand are two separate issues. All we claim is that (1) we provide unambiguous means of expression for (2) phenomena that do appear in the post-communist region. Based on existing data, we will make a few claims about where (in which countries) these phenomena are prevalent, but their exact scope in quantitative terms is the subject of future empirical research.

Now we may introduce a third metaphor we only hinted at above: **this book also constitutes a new “language.”** When we say “language,” we mean not simply a set of words. Rather, we mean **a structural construction: a set of concepts ordered along a large number of theories** covering politics, economy and society and adding up to a logically coherent whole. Several features follow from this, revealing further points about our purpose and position, as well as the specificities of the conceptual framework. First, being a language with internal coherence, **the framework is value-free but it is not tradition-free.** Its concepts can be used to identify phenomena one wants to make ethical judgments about, but the concepts *per se* are neither supportive nor condemning. This book contains a positive description of what ideal type regimes are, not a normative prescription of what they ought to be.<sup>60</sup> True, several concepts we offer—like “liberal democracy” and “mafia state”—are frequently used with normative content, but the way we present them serves the sole purpose of providing unambiguous means of expression for the region’s phenomena. Whether these phenomena are good or bad is not a concern of our book. Yet the framework is not tradition-free: there are certain schools of social science we build on, believing they are the most fruitful to organize the large number of phenomena we deal with in a comprehensive analytical frame. These schools include Weberian sociology, particularly its starting point that it concerns itself with the interpretive understanding of social action,<sup>61</sup> as well as institutionalism and neo-institutionalism.<sup>62</sup> Yet we do not understand this in an exclusive manner, and we adopt concepts from other schools of social science, too, as well as from scholars from the left—like Iván Széleányi and Karl Polanyi—and the right—like Randall G. Holcombe and F. A. Hayek—whenever we find a particular concept or idea of theirs useful and illuminating in the study of post-communism.

Second, **the language we offer consists of ideal types as well as various subsidiary concepts.** In our book, we create ideal types for post-communist regimes as well as most of the actors and institutions. However, to render their workings and actions intelligible, we will also have to make it clear what we mean by terms like “coercion” and also define such concrete phenomena as “sphere of political action” or “state intervention.” These categories are not ideal types in the Weberian sense but they are subsidiary concepts, meaning we will have to define them to be able to define ideal types.<sup>63</sup> In addition, when we use the ideal

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Kornai, *The Socialist System*, 12–15.

<sup>61</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, 4.

<sup>62</sup> For an overview, see Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*.

<sup>63</sup> Indeed, some of the subsidiary concepts can be understood as classificatory types, which are discrete categories that cover entire conceptual continua instead of being just the endpoints of them. See Collier, Laporte, and Seawright, “Typologies,” 161–62.

types or give examples for them, they should always be understood as approximations. For example, treating Russia as well as Hungary as examples of patronal autocracy we do not imply these countries fit the ideal types perfectly, nor that they are equally close to it. Rather, we approximate these regimes with the category of patronal autocracy because dominantly, in most of their features they are close to that regime type. More precise pinpointing might differentiate Russia as a “hard patronal autocracy” and Hungary as a “soft patronal autocracy,” or one can also add a privative suffix to patronal autocracy to express the exact nature of deviance from the ideal type. Yet we will ignore, for most of the book, such subtle differences for the sake of simplicity and clarity of language building.

Third, **the concepts of the book work best when they are used as part of the language.** The concepts are refined to the multi-dimensional framework: in the previous part, we explained in what way we select, create, and adopt concepts and contextualize them to build a coherent set of categories. As a result of this process, our definitions are formulated in a way to imply their context and harmonize with the rest of the toolkit, constituting a language. Therefore, if one wants to use one of our concepts, then accepting the context, that is, our entire analytical framework is the best way to do so. Taking a single concept out and using it in a different context might not provide as appropriate results as if the framework was used as a whole. For instance, the way we define “unfair election” makes most sense when it is contrasted with our definition of “manipulated election,” or the way we define “rent” makes most sense when the context we use it in is taken into account.

Fourth, **the language is not closed but expandable**, just as new words can be adopted in our spoken language to describe new phenomena for which we had no words before. Concretely, the book is about the post-communist region and the political, economic and social phenomena relevant in the respective countries and regimes. But this does not mean the toolkit either (a) contains concepts only for post-communist regimes, (b) the concepts can be used only in the post-communist region, or (c) the toolkit cannot be expanded with new ideal types from different regions and countries. As for (a), the toolkit includes many terms for phenomena specific to Western-type polities and communist systems, too, for those concepts are the ones which we primarily want to delimit the specific notions of post-communism from. As for (b), we will make several suggestions about the applicability of our concepts outside the post-communist region in the Conclusion. Finally, (c) means that the toolkit should be treated as an edifice that can be built further, that is, expanded by new ideal types of other regions. The point is that one should always keep intra-framework coherence in mind: every new ideal type should be contrasted to the existing categories and integrated into the internal logic of the toolkit’s terminological framework (or maybe some old definitions should be refined so the toolkit can accommodate a wider range of categories).

## How to Read It: A Textbook with Original Contributions

**The format of this book** is unconventional in the academic world in many respects. First, the book is written with an encyclopedic aim of providing a detailed defining “dictionary” of categories and theories of the post-communist region, but it does not tell us their exact empirical relevance. Our role models in this respect are two: Max Weber’s treatise *Economy*

*and Society*, which provides an overarching, coherent conceptual framework of ideal type concepts; and János Kornai's textbook *The Socialist System*, which provides a systematic and highly structured description of political economy. We may mention Henry Hale's *Patronal Politics* at this point, too, which has been a deep inspiration for the book's perspective and finer points. Indeed, content-wise the aforementioned works—also systematizer in kind—are probably the three most often cited sources in the book.

Second, the book will be practically devoid of detailed literature reviews. Our aim is to construct a coherent conceptual framework and present it as such. When some building blocks are provided by other scholars and/or underpinned by their findings, we will cite them and integrate their ideas into our work. Moreover, when a piece includes a particularly important idea, we will not try to rephrase it but place a block quote from the scholar in a separate box along the text. But there will be only a few parts where we explain exactly why we do not subscribe to some fundamentally different approaches (like ruling class theory or neoclassical economics). Indeed, we will not omit much—a large part of the facts and theories we build our ideal types on are widely accepted, especially in the Eurasian literature on post-communism. Our most important contribution, we believe, is precisely to synthesize this literature in a uniform and coherent language of ideal types, therefore exploiting the synergies between research fields and also recognizing and filling in some gaps in the literature. But this typically requires *using* the findings of the literature as building blocks, not introducing them and the academic context in separate literature reviews.

As another kind of building block, much of our former works and publications are incorporated without specific references in the text.<sup>64</sup> In case we do refer to one of our own pieces that indicates at that point we do not want to elaborate on something, such as an empirical case, we have explained or analyzed in detail elsewhere. (It needs to be noted in connection to our earlier works that, as we were developing the toolkit, we revised and changed several definitions we had given before. In every case, the reader should treat this book as definitive.) In addition, **we rely heavily on research we have conducted since 2013, yielding numerous volumes of studies** with over seventy authors. We will often cite these studies and also quote from them, especially the ones in the two English-language volumes published by the Central European University Press: *Twenty-Five Sides of a Post-Communist Mafia State* (2017; the most quoted authors will be Zoltán Fleck, György Gábor, Dávid Jancsics, Éva Várhegyi, Imre Vörös) and *Stubborn Structures: Reconceptualizing Post-Communist Regimes* (2019; the most quoted authors will be Sarah Chayes, Nikolai Petrov, Mikhail Minakov, Dumitru Minzarari, Kálmán Mizsei).

Third, perhaps a minor detail, but it is important to mention that the book consistently uses “he” for the third person singular. Although we create an analytical framework where the actors' gender does not play an ideal typical role, we decided to use “he” to high-

<sup>64</sup> The works we used include Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State*; Magyar, “Towards a Terminology for Post-Communist Regimes”; Magyar, “Parallel System Narratives”; Madlovics, “The Epistemology of Comparative Regime Theory”; Madlovics, “A maffiaállam paravánjai”; Magyar and Madlovics, “Stubborn Structures”; Magyar and Madlovics, “From Petty Corruption to Criminal State”; Madlovics and Magyar, “Post-Communist Predation.” It must be noted that no chapter or sub-chapter of this book is identical to these former publications. The wording has been changed and new content and context have been added, and the text has been completely re-ordered according to a new structure. This is the main reason we give no specific references, as they would soon make the text awkward for the reader.

light that, in post-communist regimes, the vast majority of leaders and important political and economic actors have been male.<sup>65</sup> We shall use “she” as a generic only when we refer to an actual woman (or if a quoted text contains “she”).

A fourth unconventionality of our framework is the high number of tables and figures, summarizing practically the entire content of the book. Chapters 2–6 begin with tripartite tables, three-columned summaries of the toolkit’s respective categories with each column representing a polar type from the six ideal type regimes of our triangular framework. The aim of these tables in the beginning is to provide a guide to the chapter, to give the reader an initial idea what he can expect to read about in those pages. But many sub-chapters or parts are going to be summarized in tables or figures, too, just as the typologies we provide for some specific phenomena (like oligarchs, party systems etc.). In addition, to help see the coherence of the entire framework, the text will contain “links” between the chapters: for example, if we are in the third chapter but refer to something we will elaborate on in the fifth one, we will put a “[→ 5]” link sign in the text.

The final unconventionality is the constant use of **highlighting in bold** as well as bullet points, resembling an actual textbook rather than a distinct contribution to the literature. Indeed, although we intend to contribute many conceptual innovations to the research of post-communism, our purpose is to offer a work that will actually be used for teaching as well as research. Therefore—and this is the essence of the fourth and fifth unconventionalities—we tried to make the book as user-friendly as possible. Highlighting facilitates skimming, that is, to get the main message of the book fast without meticulous reading, and it helps refresh the main points after reading the text as well. **The reader is free to go through the highlights, bullet points, tables and figures as if he was climbing the rungs of a ladder: he may miss some details but still take the most important steps, allowing him to comprehend the toolkit quickly** and use the tools for his work, articles and research.

## How It Unfolds: Outline of the Content

The book contains **seven chapters**, framed by this Introduction and a Conclusion. **Chapter 1 provides the stubborn-structures argument**, the starting point of which has already been presented above—the rudimentary or lack of separation of spheres of social action. Structuring the argument in four steps, we will use civilizational theory as well as a number of historical and scholarly/analytical sources to reconstruct the development of the region from pre-communist times through communism to the post-communist era. Identifying the basic societal and rulership structures that follow from the lack of separation, we can delineate the dimensions we need to cover and renew the descriptive language in the multi-dimensional analytical framework.

---

<sup>65</sup> For quantitative data in Russian political and economic life, see Johnson and Novitskaya, “Gender and Politics”; Braguinsky, “Postcommunist Oligarchs in Russia.” Similar numbers and underrepresentation of women has been typical in other post-communist states, too. However, see also Funk and Mueller, *Gender Politics and Post-Communism*.



Using the foundation provided by the stubborn-structures argument, we can start developing the conceptual framework. **Chapter 2** is devoted to **the state**. Besides defining the basic concepts of the toolkit like “state,” “coercion,” “informality” and “patronalism,” this chapter also explains why concepts like “welfare state” and “developmental state” can be misleading when we approach post-communist regimes. We also show how more fruitful concepts like “neopatrimonial state” and “predatory state” can be put in a logical order as part of a single analytical framework, where neither of these concepts are rejected but it is specified exactly which aspect of the state they refer to. Combining state types, we will offer a definition of “mafia state,” as well as a comparison with the “constitutional state” of liberal democracies. Having defined stable states, we go on to challenges to the monopoly of violence, introducing concepts like failed state, violent entrepreneurs and oligarchic anarchy. The chapter closes with a comparative framework of state types, introducing the concepts of invisible-, helping- and grabbing-hand to distinguish some of the region’s most important types of state.

**Chapters 3–6 are devoted to the regime-specific features** of the six ideal type regimes, as opposed to certain country-specific features (like country size, ethnic cleavages, international embeddedness, and so on—these are going to be discussed in Chapter 7). **Chapter 3** deals with the **comparative conceptualization of actors** of the political, economic and communal spheres. We start with a more precise and formal description of the three spheres of social action, after which several parts are devoted to ideal typical political, economic, and societal actors and their specific roles in liberal democracy, patronal autocracy, and communist dictatorships. The chapter also involves a separate part for the post-communist ruling elite of colluding spheres, the adopted political family, and it concludes with a schematic depiction of elite structures in the six ideal type regimes (with examples).

In **Chapter 4**, we provide **comparative conceptualization of political phenomena**. We start with describing three ideological frameworks of civil legitimacy, used by 1–1 polar type regimes: constitutionalism (liberal democracy), populism (patronal autocracy), and Marxism-Leninism (communist dictatorship). The chapter then follows the structure of the democratic process of public deliberation and shows how the institutions related to its phases work in each polar type regime. This description will include phenomena like the media, demonstrations, elections, legal systems and law enforcement. In the rest of the chapter, we focus on the so-called defensive mechanisms that keep the ideal type regimes stable. We will present liberal democracies with the separation of branches of power; patronal democracies with the separation of networks of power; and patronal autocracies with the separation of resources of power. Also in this part, we explain color revolutions as specific mechanisms in patronal regimes, and strategies of reversing autocratic change will be discussed.

**Chapter 5** contains **the comparative conceptualization of economic phenomena**, and it is not only the longest but also probably the richest of all chapters. We introduce relational economics as a challenge to the mainstream, and use its insights for four main areas: (1) corruption, (2) state intervention, (3) ownership, and (4) comparative economic systems. In (1), we distinguish lobbying from corruption and offer a novel corruption typology that provides several aspects for analyzing corruption and also when different types of illegality coexist in a so-called criminal ecosystem. In (2), we provide a general frame-

work to differentiate normative and discretionary state intervention, linked to various levels of corruption. Then, we move on to analyzing regulatory intervention and rent-seeking, on the one hand, and budgetary intervention and the functions of taxation and spending, on the other. In (3), we distinguish three historical processes of political reorganization of ownership structure, and provide an analytical framework for privatization and another one for patronalization. As for the latter, we elaborate on property rights and economic predation, and offer a novel economic framework to analyze distinct processes of reiderstvo and centrally-led corporate raiding (as in patronal autocracies). Finally, in (4) the chapter provides a contribution to the literature on comparative economic systems, and describes the dominant and the subordinate economic mechanisms of market economies, planned economies, and relational economies. The concept of “crony capitalism” and why it is inapplicable to countries like Russia and Hungary is also discussed.

**Chapter 6** covers **comparative conceptualization of social phenomena**, with a specific focus on how the regime influences these processes and how it can convince the majority to support it. Using approaches from network science, we offer the concept of “clientage society” in an attempt to conceptualize the emergence and mechanisms of action of patronal dependencies in elite as well as social networks. The second half of the chapter is devoted to the description of ideologies: (1) what is the difference between patronal populists and (extreme) right-wing politicians; (2) what are ideology-neutral, ideology-driven and ideology-applying regimes; and (3) how ideology-applying works. We devote separate sections to the concepts of value and functionality coherence, as well as to the demand and the supply side of populism. At the end of the chapter, we provide two summaries: one summary of populism as an ideological instrument of collective egoism, and one that summarizes some of the most important regime-specific features of patronal autocracy through a structured overview of modalities of informal governance.

Having defined the regime-specific, “anatomical” parts of post-communist systems, we can at last **define the six ideal type regimes** themselves in **Chapter 7**. It will be this part where we explain how the triangular framework can be used to describe regimes, both in one given position (time) and their trajectories. The chapter also involves the **modelled trajectories of twelve post-communist countries**, the same countries that have been shown in the triangular framework above (Figure I.3). We present the countries’ movement (1) visually, using the triangular framework and describing from where to where the countries moved with respect to the six ideal type regimes, and (2) textually, meaning the presentation of the developments of these countries in “illustrative sketches.” These small case studies heavily rely on existing publications, which we organize and re-interpret for the purposes of illustrating ideal-type trajectories. Chapter 7 ends with a discussion of what we have mostly left out from earlier chapters: the **country-specific features** of regimes, that is, the geographical, geopolitical and social (ethnic etc.) conditions from which variances in regime character between countries stem. We will also discuss the concept of **policy-specific feature**, and offer an alternative analytical paradigm for its analysis in patronal regimes.

In the end, the book closes with a **Conclusion** that summarizes some of the main points of the book. We also attempt to provide some suggestions for future research, discussing the possibilities of expanding our conceptual framework spatially—for other regions—and temporally—for future times.

