

book is novel, among other things, for the attention it devotes to the role of interest groups [see also Hellman 1998]. When comparing transition to gradual and continuous modes of capitalist development (and accumulation), they make the crucial point that transition created room for novel forms of wealth accumulation based on gaining control over the resources that were created within the former economic system. This is probably the most distinctive feature of transition economies and this is what makes transition—to borrow the authors' adaptation of Shleifer's notion—"fundamentally predatory". Shleifer [1997: 228, 231] was sceptical about the Russian state and dubbed it fundamentally predatory, disorganised, hostile to growth, and coming to business with a grabbing hand. Myant and Drahokoupil aptly argue (p. 118) that such 'blanket condemnation of the state was used to justify giving property to individuals largely freed from the controls required to prevent them from becoming . . . "fundamentally predatory"'. In this line, I think the term can be used even more broadly for transition as a whole. Indeed, the book under review might be labelled an encyclopaedia of 'fundamentally predatory' transition.

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Andrew Roberts: *The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe: Public Preferences and Policy Reforms*

Cambridge 2010: Cambridge University Press, 252 pp.

Social scientists who study the political processes in contemporary Eastern Europe (EE) and Latin America (LA) have placed an emphasis on the prospects and obstacles of successful transition to and consolidation of democracy. Attention has certainly moved away from linear assumptions of democratisation to the analysis of variant and divergent transition experiences in EE and the predicament of 'non-consolidation' in LA. A steadily growing number of empirical and theoretical studies try to first explain the asymmetries in and obstacles to democratic consolidation and achievement of a high quality of democracy. Debates have included the explanatory nature of: institutional design [Linz and Valenzuela 1994], socio-economic factors [Przeworski 1991], cultural heritage [Lipset 1981], international influences [Levitsky and Way 2010], 'social capital' [Putnam 2001], strong legislatures [Fish 2005], illiberalism [Easter 1997], and the role of the elite as the 'winners' of transition [Hellman 1998]. Our aca-

demic inheritance on the subject of democracy's rise and decline is immense; however, our ability to assess the quality of these 'new' democracies, such as the studies by Diamond and Morlino [2005], Lijphart [1999], and O'Donnell [2004], depends heavily on our definitions of democracy and its consolidation. Andrew Roberts' *The Quality of Democracy in Eastern Europe: Public Preferences and Policy Reforms* seeks to contribute to this auspicious body of literature in that it aims to provide an assessment of the quality of democracy in Eastern Europe. Roberts employs a mixed-methods approach and focuses his analysis on the country cases of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

By frontloading his main findings in the introduction, Roberts offers a key aspect that differentiates his work from similar attempts. Rather than repeating the 'doom and gloom' analysis and prognosis of the quality of democracy in EE, the text provides a surprisingly positive assessment of the 'quality of democracy' in EE. Roberts writes: 'the headline finding is that democracy in Eastern Europe is working better than many scholars had expected. Politicians take considerable pains to try to please the public, and citizens are very capable of punishing politicians for poor performance' (p. 15). For most observers of post-transition politics in Eastern Europe—this statement almost reads like a provocation, as it goes against the mainstream view that at least for the first 10–15 years after the transition politics was disappointing and disenchanting for ordinary citizens. Thus, Roberts challenges the reader upfront and then efficiently and at times rather eloquently explains how he arrived at such a surprising finding.

Alas, like most assessments of democratic quality, Roberts is forced to make conceptual and definitional choices that affect the outcome of his findings. First off, Roberts provides a good overview of the

literature concerning democratic quality and aptly divides it into three groups of theoretical focus: quality as procedures, quality as preconditions, and quality as societal outcomes (p. 25). It is clear that Roberts gives a great deal of theoretical attention to different frameworks in developing his own definition, yet it is not convincing why he throws out several key elements, like the rule of law. Second, Roberts chooses an institutional definition of democracy, which for him includes regular or routinised free and fair elections. Third, Roberts defines democratic quality: 'as the strength of linkages or . . . strength of popular control' (p. 6). In this regard he is concerned with three types of 'electoral linkages': electoral accountability (voters' power to sanction incumbents), mandate responsiveness (voters' power to select new representatives, identifying that elections are not merely sanctioning but also selection mechanisms), and policy responsiveness (the voters' ability to affect policy decisions). Roberts rejects other factors included in the Diamond and Morlino [2005] and O'Donnell [2004] studies, such as the rule of law and basic freedoms and rights, such as free speech, because these 'indicators' should, according to Roberts, be implicit in the definition of democracy. Thus, the focus of the study is on procedural and formal elements of democratic participation. This conceptual choice leaves the reader wondering if it is possible to have a high quality democracy (including, according to Roberts, an electorally accountable and policy responsive government), with high levels of corruption in the legal system, forms of institutional illiberalism, and the presence of a system of clientelist networks? Roberts too easily discounts the possibility that even though a government is highly responsive in policy terms, there can be other severe socio-political deficiencies that will affect the nature of democracy in a polity. Thus, the major criticism we can make about Roberts' text is that 'quali-

ty of democracy' is defined too narrowly and leaves out important characteristics of democratic deepening and consolidation. Roberts' explanations for defining 'democracy' and 'quality of democracy' only in relation to electoral politics are quite weak and unconvincing. Simply put, Roberts takes the goal of parsimony too far.

In fact it seems that Roberts' main concern is the level of electoral accountability and the political elite's responsiveness to their electorate, rather than the broader concept of democratic quality. If one takes this as the starting point and aim of Roberts' study, then the following empirical chapters are extremely persuasive and informative. The empirical chapters engage the reader with well designed and tested hypotheses, detailed case studies, and a compelling set of findings. In his well-organised empirical examination, Roberts deals with the cases of three policy domains, including economic reform (mostly covered by statistical analyses), pension policy reform, and housing policy reform (covered in thorough case studies), to assess the presence and quality of electoral accountability, mandate responsiveness, and policy responsiveness.

In Section II, the presented statistical analyses, dealing with economic reforms in 10 Eastern European countries, lead Roberts to conclude that voters in EE have been able to hold politicians accountable for performance. Second, Roberts finds that while governments tended to respond to public opinion, they were rather inconsistent 'in presenting and following through on clear campaign promises' (p. 188). Roberts notes that while responsiveness is high in the region, it may come at a cost of substantive representation. Politicians may not be producing the best policies for their citizens as much as they are trying to stay in power (p. 108). Although the analysis in Section II is confined to a single policy area, as Roberts notes, economic restructuring and the period of transition provide a tough test for a

responsiveness hypothesis and thus the findings are quite impressive and a valuable contribution.

In Section III, Roberts deals with a case study analysis of pension and housing policy reforms in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. It is in this section that readers finally have most of their concerns and questions answered with meticulous and schematised accounts of the complexities and variation of social reforms. Most interesting is the finding regarding pension privatisation. Roberts finds that privatisation occurred 'only where public opinion was permissive . . . rather than a product of autonomous politicians' (p. 144). Thus, rather than an elite project, privatisation was enabled by favourable public opinion. The key point one takes away is that, while not always policy responsive, 'politicians worried about the public acceptability' of policy actions and acted accordingly (p. 162). Thus, Roberts highlights that voters do in fact matter.

In conclusion, although the very narrow definition of democratic quality, as well as Roberts' choice of electoral accountability measures, will provoke readers and undoubtedly spur much deliberation, it seems that Roberts is already keenly aware of some of the definitional and measurement limitations of his study. Furthermore, if readers approach the text as a detailed analysis of electoral accountability and policy responsiveness, then they will be pleased to find a convincing and detailed analysis that leaves them with a somewhat shocking finding: that the political elite in EE do indeed pay attention and react to voters and public opinion, even in the tumultuous period of transition. Thus, the findings further problematise our understanding of the role of 'ordinary' citizens in transition politics.

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Joan Costa-Font (ed.): *Reforming Long-Term Care in Europe*

Chichester 2011: John Wiley & Sons, 176 pp.

Long-term care (LTC) reforms have been at the core of public debates in many European countries recently, triggered by concerns over the future affordability of LTC, the fairness of funding systems currently in place, and the question of whether LTC can be regarded as a 'new social risk' or remains subject to family responsibilities and social assistance-oriented public support. How should welfare states cope with the rising need for LTC? How should LTC be financed, provided, and regulated? The book addresses these questions from the perspective of European welfare states and

their recent efforts to improve LTC systems, based on contributions from renowned experts in the field such as Adelina Comas-Herrera, Blanche Le Bihan, Heinz Rothgang, August Österle, and many others.

The book starts out with a discussion of arguments in favour of and against long-term care insurance, exemplified by the experiences of a number of countries: the first part arches from 'quasi-universalistic' states such as the UK where the idea of an insurance-based system is rather new, via France—characterised by a 'policy learning' process in LTC in recent years—to the Netherlands and Germany, where public LTC insurance has been introduced successfully already. In some cases, such as the chapter on the Netherlands, the description remains very broad, giving detailed figures on LTC in this country, yet failing to provide a clear focus on the most relevant reform efforts in recent years.

The first section builds on the theoretical concepts and tools introduced by Nicholas Barr in the first chapter. Barr points to the differences between private and social insurance (p. 12) and the reasons for market failure in a private insurance market for LTC (p. 4ff.). Private, actuarially fair LTC insurance fails because the risk of a need for LTC in the future may be too uncertain, problems of asymmetric information (i.e. cream-skimming and moral hazard) arise, and individual risks may not be independent from each other. Social insurance, by contrast, makes membership compulsory and thus breaks the link between the amount of insurance premiums and individual risks. Second, social insurance coverage is able to deal not only with risks, but also uncertainty, as the conditions for coverage are less narrowly defined.

While much of the book's content focuses on the specific design of LTC systems in each country, the first section of the book also conveys a solid impression of the political debates surrounding the possible in-