Introduction: Advances in the Study of Post-Communist States and Public Administrations

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Nearly two decades after the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, our academic knowledge of the multiple aspects of democracy- and market-building in this region is somewhat uneven. Arguably, comparative analysis of post-communist social policy and public policy processes, social and political institutions, and party systems is in much better shape today than analysis of the less immediately salient – since bigger, less visible, and slower-moving – processes of state-building and public administration development is (for exceptions, see Goetz [2001] or Dimitrov et al. 2006]). Yet, in recent years important empirical and analytical strides have been made on the latter topic. Key contributions to this advancement are the two books at the heart of this Special Review Article Section: Anna Grzymała-Busse's *Rebuilding Leviathan* [2007] and Conor O'Dwyer's *Runaway State Building* [2006]. Both books represent advances in the study of post-communist states and public administrations by combining rigorous theory building with new empirical analysis of the size and effectiveness of the administrative bureaucracy of CEE central governments and their agencies. Both books, albeit in different ways, emphasise the nature of party competition as the single most important factor driving CEE state development.

Rebuilding Leviathan highlights the robustness of plausible political party competition as the key variable driving state exploitation in nine cases between 1989 and 2004. The connection between these variables is tested in a rich analysis spanning three different domains or dimensions: the adoption of institutions of oversight and control, the expansion of state administrations, and the use of the state as a source for party financing. This adds up to a rich analysis, which contributes to three more bodies of literature: the politics of clientelism and patronage [Shefter 1994; Gwiazda 2008; Keefer 2007; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2006], the political economy of the fiscal capacity of the state [e.g. Levi 1988; Hellman et al. 2003; Gehlbach 2008], and the politics of the temporality of institution-build-

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ing and governance [Goetz 2009; Ekiert and Hanson 2003]. *Rebuilding Leviathan* also studies another relatively neglected issue: how post-communist parties have used state resources to survive and thrive in new and typically electorally highly volatile polities with initially weak partisan loyalties [see Kitschelt et al. 1999] – although some of the book's conclusions in this regard have been questioned recently by Gwiazda [2008]. Conor O'Dwyer's insightful *Runaway Statebuilding* is even more firmly focused on the politics of patronage and clientelism. This phenomenon, O'Dwyer argues, could expand freely because of the unfortunate constellation of demobilised societies and partly delegitimised states in this region. In line with Shefter's [1994] classic study, O'Dwyer posits that post-communist democracies are similarly predisposed towards patronage politics because democratisation preceded the establishment of an autonomous, politically neutral state administration. While O'Dwyer extends and checks his main argument in a sample spanning cases across post-communist Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia, the main empirical focus is on Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia between 1990 and 2002.

In his comprehensive essay, which forms the heart of this Special Review Article Section, Seán Hanley surveys the main arguments, measures, and indeed idiosyncracies put forward in both these books. Hanley points out, for instance, that contrary to most work done on this topic by European or EU-based scholars, both books rather downplay the influence of the European Union in driving state development. While broadly appreciative of the contribution these books make to the study of state transformation and party-state relationships in CEE, Hanley questions their heavy reliance on – and at times debatable operationalisation of – the notion of 'robust competition' as an explanatory variable. And he insightfully points to a number of significant contradictions, indicating remaining ambiguities or lacunae in both the measurement and the theory of post-communist states. Thus Hanley shows that while for Grzymała-Busse the Czech Republic is an example of a highly exploited state, for O'Dwyer the same country actually boasts a singularly low level of runaway state-building.

I invited Anna Grzymała-Busse and Conor O'Dwyer to reply to Hanley's review article, and they have done so with candour and clarity. Finally, Scott Gehlbach, in reflecting on all the contributions, focuses on one specific issue that has been largely overlooked in both sociological and political science accounts of post-communist public administrations, yet one that is crucial to their positive and normative evaluation: economies of scale in bureaucracy. Other issues remain to be further explored in future research. For instance, the thesis that practices of patronage and clientelism have been part and parcel of post-communist state-building is consistent with much empirical evidence indicating politicians' strong preferences for targetable spending and hiring-and-firing whenever the institutional context allows [Keefer 2007; Tepe and Vanhuysse 2009]. One might hypothesise that election-motivated incumbents will prefer to manipulate for political/electoral purposes those particular policy domains that are more tar-

getable and timeable to voters. Policies that might meet these criteria include public spending, direct benefit provision and public hiring and firing in public administrations [Tepe and Vanhuysse 2009]. Translated to the post-communist case, this should lead one to expect strong evidence of political business cycle mechanisms in administrative hiring practices. This is an issue that merits more attention in future research on CEE. In the same vein, one might ask to what extent practices such as clientelism or patronage (or even political business cycles) are really more prevalent or more intensive in younger and/or less consolidated democracies like those in post-communist Europe. There appears to be an underlying assumption to this effect in the post-communist literature and in political economy literature more generally [e.g. Alt and Lassen 2006; Keefer 2007]. Yet there is evidence of similarly striking levels of political/electoral manipulation of public administration processes even in the best-established democracies in Europe [Tepe and Vanhuysse 2009]. Since stronger institutional constraints (e.g. the institutions of oversight and control) and better informed voters (e.g. though a more independent press) make it more difficult for politicians to manipulate monetary and budgetary policies, one might hypothesise that politicians in those contexts may merely shift manipulative practices towards policy domains that are easier to manipulate, such as public sector hiring and firing.

I am confident, in sum, that this Special Review Article Section of the *Czech Sociological Review* can further contribute to, and stimulate, an engaged and rigorous future debate about the nature and causes of state building in post-communist states and public administrations.

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