



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

**In the Shadow of War: Social,
Distributive and Civil Conflicts in
Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan,
Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russian
Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine**

Cerami, Alfio

23 September 2023

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/116870/>
MPRA Paper No. 116870, posted 01 Apr 2023 07:28 UTC

In the Shadow of War:

Social, Distributive and Civil Conflicts in Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine

Alfio Cerami 31 March 2023

Home page <http://www.alfiocerami.com/>

Blog: <https://alfiocerami.wordpress.com/> Twitter: <https://twitter.com/acerami/>

E-mail: ceramial@gmail.com

Abstract

This article examines the relationship between presence of vertical and horizontal inequalities and the emergence of social, distributive and civil conflicts in Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine. Are ethnic, religious or linguistic conflict related reasons alone responsible for the emergence of social, distributive and civil conflicts? If not, what other factors play an equally determinant role (e.g. structure of the economy, regime type, welfare institutions, public policies) in structuring and determining in-groups and out-groups related tensions? These are the key quest this article addresses. In this article I show unstable trends in night lights development and associated electricity usage, which follow recent tensions in the oil and gas economic and political markets. The more oil and gas prices/supply become unstable, the more are the prospects for national and subnational social, distributive and civil conflicts.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, in-groups and out-groups related tensions, social, distributive and civil conflicts, vertical and horizontal inequalities, shadow of war, Commonwealth of Independent States

Introduction

In Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine, different ethnic and linguistic groups co-exist in not always peaceful ways. The issue of boundary-drawing and state-building that focuses on such groups has therefore been the object of increasing academic interest. Boundary-drawing in Eastern Europe and beyond has, in fact, not corresponded to any of the dictates of the Westphalian conception of the nation state, in which (1) a union of people sharing cultural and linguistic affinities; (2) merged together within clearly defined territorial borders (3) giving birth to a political power that (4) represented the interests of a specific political community (see Leca, 2010). In

Eastern Europe, national boundaries have often been artificially created by foreign powers and this regardless of the possible social and civil tensions that might have emerged. Trying to understand the origins and causes of the several civil, social and distributive conflicts, ethnic and linguistic tensions that have emerged on the European continent over the centuries is an extremely difficult task. It is common wisdom to attribute the reasons for the emergence of increasing tensions and conflicts between and within European nations to the persistence of negative foreign influences, with unresolved ethnic and linguistic disputes anchored in a 'primordial' tribal European past (Huntington 1996). In reality, the myth of 'primordial' ethnic conflicts does not survive serious empirical testing. As correctly remembered by Echeverri-Gent *et al* (2008, p.44) and Fearon and Laitin (2003), peaceful relations tend to be more common in societies characterized by ethnic diversity. Carefully examining the different ways in which the economy, governments, political interventions as well as social relations are organized in one country becomes in this context crucial to fully understanding the complex patterns of political mobilization. Equally important is also a correct understanding of the different institutional and social mechanisms that may lead to the materialization of violent events.

Social, distributive and civil conflicts have changed over the decades. They create new challenges and push to go beyond earlier theories of political science and conflict studies. **The challenge** here is to understand the *elective affinities* among these objects and among subjects. This article focuses on **Wahlverwandtschaften** (elective affinities). It also focuses on shifts in *bounded rationality* and *bounded willpower*. This article also provides an innovative combination of theory and empirical analysis. In the next decades, scholars of social science disciplines could use these findings to analyze the prospects for more peaceful **markets, economies and societies**. At the end of the article, the reader should also be able to interpret new forms of conflict and societal transformations. In terms of theoretical and conceptual understanding, this research will move the debate on **institutional design** beyond the frontiers of our current scientific knowledge. It will contribute to improve our understanding of contest designs, price dynamics, mechanism designs, decision making in organizations, as well as participations in conflict resolution activities and its dynamics (Karle and Möller, 2020). A simple argument is that the dramatic changes which are clearly occurring in the labour structures, family and household composition in these societies in transition and in the shadow of conflict and war are resulting in the emergence of completely new forms of *vertical* disparities, positions of individuals in the social class, as well as in new forms of *horizontal* disparities. These lead to new ethnic and linguistic divides, forms of poverty and income inequality for households and require new policy responses, as well as a more recalibrated politics of inequality because these new linguistic divides represent a new category of identity in the post-Soviet world (Laitin, 1998; Golubeva, 2010).

Vertical and Horizontal Inequalities

There is a dangerous *liason* between inequality, development and security. The causes responsible for underdevelopment can be manifold and must be searched for in a wide series of endemic problems, which range from a persistent lack of infrastructures, to political mismanagement, increasing environmental hazards, and difficulties in industrial and agricultural modernization. The micro responses of citizens to increasing macro environmental challenges is also determinant (Cerami, 2013). Related to this are the problems

concerning rapid mass urbanization, chronic poverty and social deprivation. The uneven distribution of infrastructures and social services represents a particularly urgent and still unaddressed problem in the continent that leads to the creation of persistent spatial and psychological ‘inequality traps’. These leave vast parts of territory backward and economically stagnant (Echeverri-Gent *et al* 2008, p.38), representing important barriers for future modernization and democracy promotion stages. There are several other reasons why the persistence of inequalities should be addressed as one of the most dangerous threats to the system stability of Eastern European countries, but, perhaps, the most important reason concerns the extremely negative impact that inequalities may have on the emergence violent social and distributive conflicts. These can then easily be turned into civil wars, massacres and genocides. There is, in fact, an important development problem linked to the emergence of inequalities. As identified by Echeverri-Gent *et al* (2008, p.7), the issue at stake is that ‘under conditions of high inequality, elites of a country may create socially suboptimal institutions and policies, while resisting to changes that promote development but threaten their dominance’. Status inequality may become, in this way, conducive to policies and institutions that discriminate against and marginalize weaker groups, giving rise to violent civil, ethnic and linguistic conflicts. The resulting unequal distribution of resources that benefits one segment of the society at the expenses of others may, in no rare cases, result in a ‘winner-take-all-politics’ (Hacker and Pierson, 2010) that exacerbates already existing differences and tensions (Cederman *et al*, 2011). At national and subnational level, Hunziker and Cederman (2022), there can be *No Extraction Without Representation*. Oil production also seems to significantly increase the risk of armed secessionism in areas where ethnic minorities are present (Hunziker and Cederman, 2022). Oil dependence or oil reselling could also exacerbate secessionist tensions. It is interesting to note, as Echeverri-Gent *et al* (2008, p.48) correctly remind, that 95 per cent of all armed conflict now takes place within countries, with violent internal conflicts being 15 times more likely to occur in poor countries than in richer ones. But how do we frame precisely the influence of inequality on the emergence of violent conflicts? In other words, what kind of inequalities are more conducive to violent protests and which others result instead in silent acceptance?

To clarify, for Stewart (2008) and Langer *et al* (2011), vertical inequalities refer to the disparities that emerge among individuals and households in a determined society, while horizontal inequalities refer to the differences that materialize among the different social groups (ethnic, religious, etc.). Close to vertical inequalities (discussed already in more details in chapters 5, 6 and 7 in my book on Permanent Emergency Welfare Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), new horizontal inequalities and reasons for grievance emerge in the European continent and must be seriously investigated (Kurer *et al.*, 2019). This also involves the emergence of new climate change related vertical and horizontal inequalities (Heyward, 2021). During the last five decades, new horizontal inequalities have greatly altered the social structures of European societies with associated patterns of income mobility. These have, subsequently, led to a situation of permanent emergency, conflicts and tensions. Horizontal inequalities (Langer *et al.*, 2011; Cederman *et al.*, 2011) in Eastern Europe have entailed particularly dangerous connotations, manifesting themselves in political under-representation, reduced access to basic public services, and chronic economic poverty. These factors of social exclusion, insecurity and segregation have, in turn, fuelled feelings of collective marginalization, humiliation and revenge that have ultimately resulted in additional civil conflicts.

In making a distinction between political, economic, social and cultural inequalities, Stewart (2008) has correctly argued that scholars have, to a large extent, failed to find evidence of inequality's war-causing effect because of their reliance on individualist, rather than group-based, measures of income and power differences. For Langer *et al* (2011) and Cedermann *et al.* (2011, 2022) conflicts are in essence *organized group conflicts*. Reviews of such empirical studies have not unsurprisingly found an increasing support for this thesis. Cedermann *et al*'s (2011), comprehensive analysis of several hundred group violent actions has shown, for example, that horizontal inequalities between politically relevant ethnic groups and states often promote ethno-nationalist conflict. The authors find that in highly unequal societies, both rich and poor groups fight more often than those groups whose wealth lies closer to the country average. In this context, it does not surprise that during the period 1946-2004, the number of ethnic conflicts as a proportion of total conflicts has more than doubled, from less than 30 per cent to more than 60 per cent of total conflicts (Stewart 2008). Despite undisputable merits, the evidence from my book shows that the dichotomy between vertical and horizontal inequalities is highly artificial. Drawing upon an in-depth analysis in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya, LeBas (2011) shows, for example, that where authoritarian states created temporary alliances with corporate actors, notably organized labor, they unintentionally armed their allies, providing them with structures and resources that could later be used to mobilize large constituencies and effectively challenge the state. Instead, in my book I argue in favour of a more comprehensive approach in which one form of inequality does not exclude the other, but rather it reinforces it. The captured nature of resources and welfare institutions (see Cerami and Stubbs 2013) makes the real difference, with universal redistributive policies that reduce the chances of political mobilization. The importance of material incentives for engaging in violent social conflicts, wars or even in terrorism is extremely important for understanding the real reasons for the emergence of long lasting social conflicts, which can, then, easily turn into bloody civil wars. The same reasons apply to the decisions of some individuals to join terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda (Sageman, 2004). As shown by Sobek *et al.* (2012), terror and economic incentives can produce positive returns for individuals to continue engaging in terror and that is why redistribution and the reduction of distributive conflicts is crucial. Similarly, group-related perceptions can, in no way, be disjointed by individual-related perceptions. In order to explain this phenomenon of peace disintegration, Collier *et al* (2007) have developed the concept of 'greed and grievance'. The former reflects elite competition in capturing benefits from valuable natural resource rents, while the latter refers to the relative deprivation and grievance it produces in fueling conflict (Collier, 2007). Whether 'greed and grievance' related mechanisms can be addressed as the sole responsible for conflicts and wars in developing countries has been the object of a lively academic debate. According to Fearon and Laitin (2003), there are serious doubts that ethnic and political grievances alone are able to fully address such complex issues concerned with the emergence of violent conflicts where several coinfluencing factors, such as historical legacies, cultural repertoires and religion or the ways in which 'the other' is constructed, should also be taken into account (Stewart, 2009; see also Carmel and Cerami 2011). According to Scarcelli (2011), other socio-structural questions are equally determinant, including, for example, overlapping versus cross-cutting cleavages, as well temporal questions of economic decline in regime change (Häusermann, 2010). In addition, Kurer *et al.*'s (2019) more novel conceptualization of economic grievances emphasizes their direct impact on protest behaviour where structural economic disadvantage de-mobilizes individuals, but the deterioration of economic prospects increases political activity.

For Murshed and Tadjoeeddin (2007), neither the presence of greed or grievance is sufficient for the outbreak of violent conflicts. The degradation of the social contract with associated forms of collective solidarity (see Durkheim, ([1893]1933) and discussion in Cerami 2013, ch 2) is what the authors address as more likely in the context of poverty and growth failure. Another and not less important set of co-influencing factors involves the differential patterns of acquisition of natural resources, state assets and their redistributive priorities (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; North *et al* 2009; Cerami 2013). As it is stressed in Cerami (2013), *the exclusive [and inclusive; more recent addition] origins of dictatorship and democracy* become determinant. In fact, a not less irrelevant reason able to explain the emergence of violent conflicts involves political mobilization and feelings of resentment, humiliation and revenge present in the population. For Petersen (2002), resentment and humiliation from being politically or economically dominated by a group often provokes ethnic, linguistic and civil mobilization, which can easily turn into violent conflicts. For Tilly (1978), opportunity-based mobilization rather than grievances is responsible for internal conflicts and revolutions (see also Olson, 1965). Despite undeniable merits, one doubt still remains. To re-call the work of social theorists, neoinstitutionalist scholars and analytical sociologists, how is it possible to structure opportunity-based mobilizations without individual and group-related reasons and perceptions? To put it differently, even if we accept that the emergence of social conflicts may be explained in terms by the presence of opportunity-structures, and individual-based and in-group based feelings of deprivation, what are the driving factors and mechanisms that lead to violent political mobilization or to its dismantlement?

In Belarus, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Ukraine a mix of spontaneous and organized patterns of political mobilization has often occurred. How can one try to explain these differences? Can unresolved labour, ethnic and religious disputes be addressed as the only possible sources for political mobilization and violent conflicts? At first glance, unresolved ethnic, tribal and religious disputes seem to be the key determinant factor for the emergence of violence. This, linked to the presence of extreme socio-economic inequalities, suddenly becomes a lethal mix. A less repressive approach in preventing demonstrations might also in theory be addressed as a determinant factor, as violent social conflicts (pro-government, antigovernment and external government violence) have been more widespread in countries known to have repressed more vehemently the demonstrators, as in the cases of **Euromaidan's** (євромайдан) demonstrations in Ukraine.

However, what these reflections neglect are the causal mechanisms, the power politics dynamics and the distributive conflict strategies that have led the masses to mobilize in more or less violent forms and the responses of political elites in dealing with, or even preventing, the emergence of violence. Even in this case, causal mechanisms involved in the process of transformation include: (1) institutional mechanisms of path-dependency (such as lock-in and self-reinforcing mechanisms); (2) institutional mechanisms of path-departure or path-creation (such as layering and conversion); (3) social mechanisms of path-dependency (such as those associated with compliance and acquiescence); and (4) social mechanisms of path-departure and path-creation (such as those linked to anger mobilization and contagion in collective

action). Forced internal displacement and international migration was here a clear result (Mykhnenko et al., 2022).

The reason why finding an adequate response to these questions is crucial depends on three principal factors. Firstly, systemic deficiencies present in the economic environment can greatly influence the social structure of a country. Secondly, these deficiencies contribute, at the same time, to the emergence of specific new social risks. Thirdly, they also determine the subsequent welfare state responses. As it is well known, the transition from communism to capitalism has implied huge social costs in both CEE, Southeast Europe, the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States. GDP dropped severely, many state-owned enterprises collapsed, several million workers lost their jobs, the paternalistic system of social protection was, to a large extent, dismantled, and, as a result, poverty rates and income inequality dramatically increased with a large proportion of the population now living below the poverty threshold.

Transitions to Capitalism

An enormous transformation, however, occurred not only in the economic sphere, but also in the relationship between the *state*, the *market* and the *society*. In the immediate aftermath of 1989, new ideas, interests and institutions had to be quickly introduced¹. A new social contract, no longer based on one-party rule and full-employment, had to be established with the citizens, whereas, in order to put the new social contract in action, new feasible institutions and interests had to be developed. This implied a process of *functional, distributive, normative and institutional recalibration*² in which the functional prerogatives, distributive objectives, normative foundations and institutional structures of these communist systems had to be adjusted to the post-communist environment. As highlighted by several authors, communist ruins represented, in this context, the main institutional material in which the new societies could be built (Ekiert, 2003; Mykhnenko, 2007). In other words, a *recombinant transformation* of ideas, interests and institutions took place (Cerami, 2015).

This article is based on the assumption that social, ethnic and linguistic problems of contemporary capitalism(s), changes in social structure and emergence of new social risks are not unrelated issues, but elements strictly linked together. The main hypothesis is that due to more drastic systemic social, ethnic and linguistic changes occurring in post-communist societies, more intense and more diversified *social problems* are taking place in transition economies than those present in the West (Cerami, 2008). These are resulting in faster changes in the social structure as well as in the emergence of broader new social risks types and groups. If this is the case, then post-communist welfare states are in front of a double burden of responsibilities. On the one hand, they will be called to ensure citizens both against old and new social risks, as Western welfare states are also required to do, while, on the other hand, they will also be forced to intensify their efforts in order to deal with the more severe problems stemming from the transition.

Managing societal conflicts while finding a response to new emerging social risks becomes, in fact, a much more difficult political exercise when governments are facing a moment of severe economic instability. Which were, in this context, the main political and policy strategies put in place by governments in order to deal with the new challenges?

Permitting effective interest representation could, for example, be another element that would make democracies more attractive to autocracies. Ensuring effective interest representation in transition economies has, however, been an uncompleted and mutilated process. Even though, tripartite consultations have played a crucial role during the entire process of transition by facilitating the introduction and continuation of reforms, mediating different interests and needs, actors in Eastern Europe, however, have lacked the capacity of being true corporatist actors in both policy formation and implementation. Priority was, in fact, very often given to macro-economic stabilization measures.

Undeniably, the now “open” economies of Eastern Europe, Southeast Europe, the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States are characterized by more intense *macro-economic vulnerabilities* than those usually identified in Western countries. The collapse of the central planned economy has coincided, in fact, not only with the collapse of the industrial organization, in force for more than forty years, but has exposed these emerging markets to a more severe global competition to which they were not ready for. Industrial production and employment rates dramatically decreased, while inflation and poverty rates systematically increased in CEE and Southeast Europe and with a even higher intensity in the Russian Federation and in the Commonwealth of Independent States. Even though a stable economic recovery could have been observable or predicted in the near future, questions about the long-term economic and social performance of these countries must still be raised. Economic and industrial restructuring is, in fact, an extremely complex and long process of *institutional recalibration*, which depends not only on the successful actions of policy-makers to deal with internal structural problems, but also on the actions and eventual speculations of foreign investors, whose contributions, more often than not, have worsen the country’s own vulnerabilities. In Eastern Europe and in the Russian Federation, foreign speculators have, voluntarily or not, contributed to the increase of inflation rates by buying and selling huge amount of currencies in periods of crisis, as well as, as in the case of big international supermarket or superhotel chains, altering the equilibrium of the prices of products/individuals.

A way to reduce these shortcomings could be linked to the development of new *institutional complementarities*³ able to produce *comparative institutional advantages* (see Hall and Soskice, 2001) in the post-communist environment. Unfortunately, with the collapse of the central planned economy the set of existing *institutional complementarities* in force during communism also collapsed. The communist economic system was highly integrated and strong ties existed among all economic sectors. Financial, industrial and labour market institutions were not separate entities, but were fully part of the central planned economy. It comes then as no surprise that once the command economy collapsed, post-communist countries found themselves unprepared in the new open environment. The process of capitalist conversion meant, in fact, a drastic recalibration of the once established institutional

structures and associated ties. Rigid financial markets had suddenly to be replaced by more flexible financial markets. Flexible labour markets had also to be introduced practically by dictation. As a result of this difficult process of adaptation, the mobilization of resources and the creation of new businesses, which in return would have sustained the demand, were, even though rapid, not effective at all.

Corruption and clientelism emerged. Although the emergence of specific forms of clientelism is not an invention of the West, but rather a heritage of the communist past, where in order to deal with the shortages caused by central planning, “second” and “informal” economies emerged almost everywhere in the region (see, for instance, Szélenyi 1988; Hankiss 1991), clientelist relations, that once served to ensure legitimacy for a system unable to provide material support for all citizens and for these functional reasons tolerated by the communist nomenklatura, now contribute to its own disintegration.

From a societal point of view, the transition from a planned to a market economy was characterised by several different patterns of social change, social welfare, social problems and associated social pathologies, such as unemployment, poverty, income inequality, absence of ore and decent jobs, reduced household income, crime and juvenile delinquency, deterioration of health and quality of life (Cerami, 2015).

As I have argued in Wolchik and Curry (2015), ten problems of system transformation have hindered a smoother and more stable transition of former post-communist countries to democracy (see also Schmitter 2010). *The first problem of system transformation* implied the assumption that the transition from communism to democracy would have automatically led to more social welfare and to an increasing citizens’ support for the national government and the new democratic system. No backslide towards authoritarian rule was, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, meant to be possible. *The second problem* of system transformation concerned the belief that economic restructuring would have systematically led to increasing well-being and that social problems would have suddenly disappeared. *The third problem* of system transformation involved the conjecture that drastic austerity and neoliberal policies would have, by design, led to increasing fiscal stability and growth and that the associated social costs would have been limited. *The fourth problem* of system transformation implied the improbable hope that former communist citizens would have immediately abandoned old mentalities and patterns of behavior. They would have easily adapted to the new social order, rejecting, once and for all, the old one. *The fifth problem* of system transformation was based on the assumption that citizens would have enjoyed, by default, the democratic liberties associated with the transition from communism to democracy (e.g. freedom of speech, plural elections, etc.) and that the old lifestyle would have been easily forgotten. *The sixth problem* of system transformation was based on the belief that, in presence of continuous economic growth, no anger and resentment among the citizens would have arisen or, at least, the reasons for protest and resentment would have been limited. *The seventh problem* of system transformation concerned the notion that new political economies and social policies could have been easily implemented and put in line with the new economic order. *The eighth problem* of system transformation involved the supposition that new ideas, interests and institutions could have been easily implemented, replacing overnight the old ones. *The ninth*

problem of system transformation involved the expectation that poverty and inequality would have immediately diminished with the fall of the Iron Curtain, leading to a paradisiacal inclusive society. *The tenth and final problem* of system transformation concerned the postulation that the presence of a unique ‘communist’ model of political economy and of welfare capitalism would have soon disappeared from the scene and that former communist countries would have rapidly converged to the western models of welfare capitalism and of political economy.

In the Shadow of War: Social, Distributive and Civil Conflicts

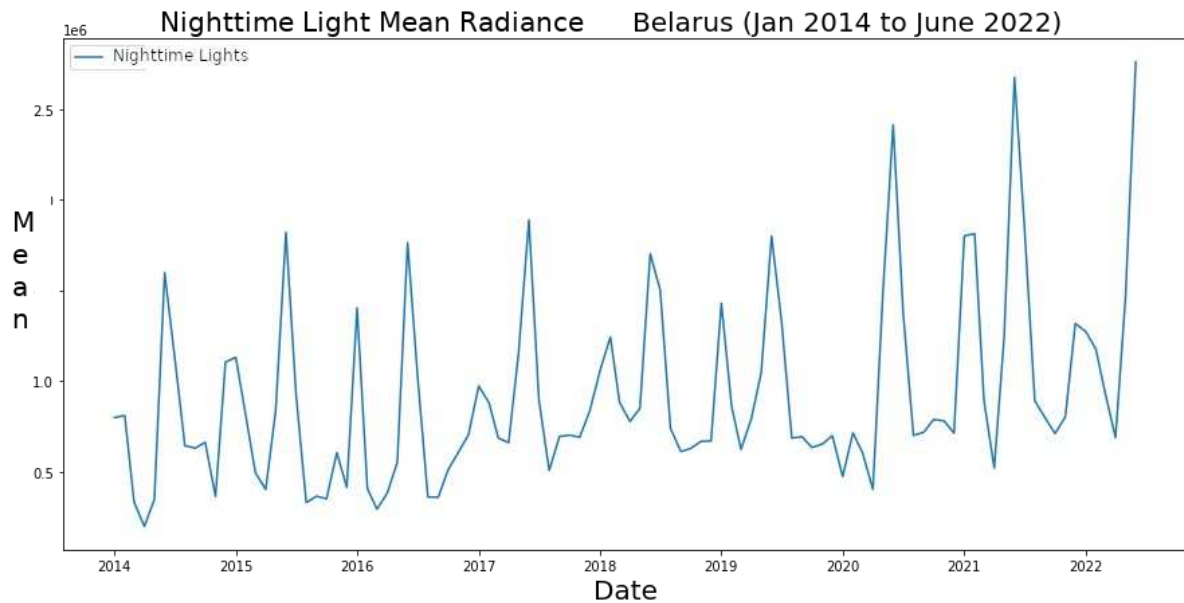
Timothy Frye’s (2010) *Building States and Markets after Communism. The Perils of Polarized Democracy* is one of the most valuable contributions on post-communist transformation(s) appeared in the last decades. Frye examines the relationship between state building and market creation in twenty-five post-communist countries since the end of communism. The author combines statistical quantitative analysis (regression and multi-variate analysis and outputs) on a variety of data (including a survey of business elites) with more in-depth country studies. Frye’s main focus is on *political polarization* – the policy distance between different political factions present in the political arena – and its effects on democracy and market reforms. The main questions that the author addresses are: 1. ‘Does democracy promote the creation of market economies and robust state institutions? 2. If so, why? 3. Under what conditions do state building and market building work at cross-purposes and when are they mutually reinforcing?’ (p.2). Frye’s main argument is compelling. Political polarization does play a crucial role in democracy promotion, as well as in the creation of market and robust state institutions. Political polarization does so, however, under different conditions and circumstances and in different ways. The author suggests, for example, that the effects of democracy on economic policy choices are conditional on the level of political polarization with political institutions that shape economic policy by influencing policy instability, economic inequality is also identified as a potential social base for political polarization. Countries that experienced higher levels of income inequality during the first years of transformation(s) seem to have been characterized by more polarized political systems in later years. Subsequently, however, polarization shapes economic policy choice via policy instability. The Soviet legacy – and, in particular, the institutional and political reproduction of Communist Party’s members – remains one of the important sources of political polarization in the post-communist world (ibid. p. 3-166). Timothy Frye’s warns the reader that democracies where many different and distant voices are present in the political arena tend, unfortunately, to be inefficient (sic!). This primarily applies to market reforms, as well as to democracy promotion, political and economic efficiency.

The argument concerning the inefficiency of democracy is clearly not new. Long time ago now, Winston Churchill’s ironically argued that democracy may well be *the worst form of government except for all other forms that have been tried from time to time*. However, and in contrast to the proponents of the ‘good governance’ argument, it is important to emphasize that democracy is something more than efficient and good governance-enhancing institutions. Democracy is also (and fortunately) about *values*, such as *Freedom* (of speech, of press, of owning the property assets one individual retains necessary or valuable), *Equality* (before the law and before other individuals) and *Fraternity* (among people belonging to the same nation-state and with those outside national borders). Democracy is, in short, far more than

efficiency and, even when empirical evidences, rightly, highlight its shortcomings, pluralism of voices is to be preferred to efficiency-oriented reasons. Having sadly (and again) recognized the bureaucratic deficiencies of pluralist and polarized democracies, it rests to be asked whether the key above mentioned questions raised could not have also been approached the other way around.

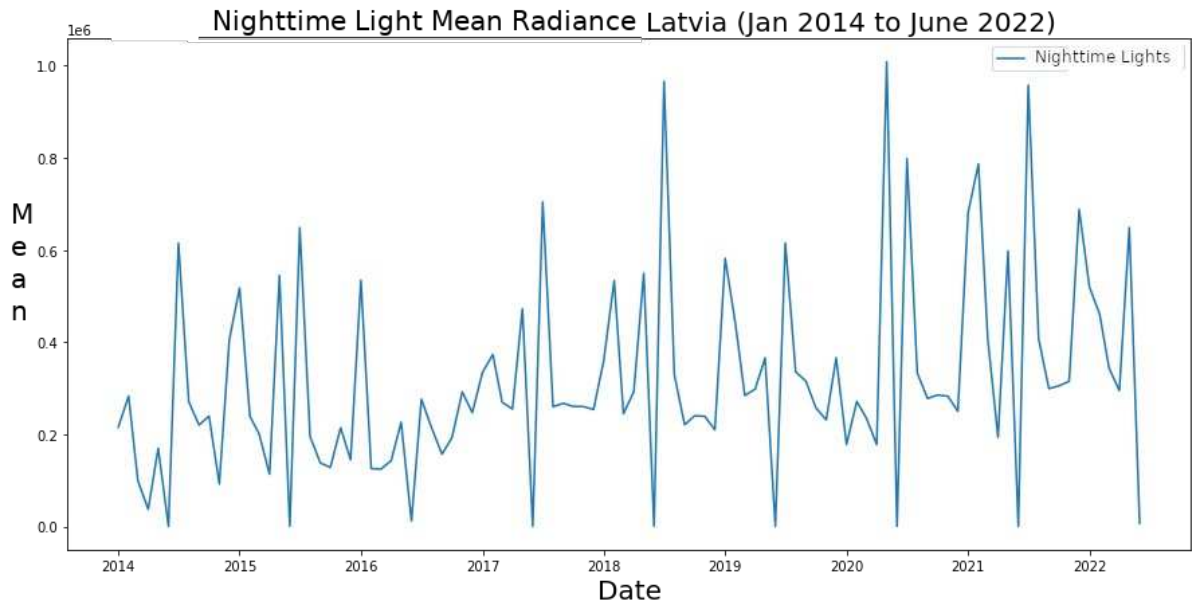
Did the ways in which market reforms have been introduced in post-communist countries during the first thirty years of transition succeed to promote the creation of stable democracies, robust state institutions and free ‘non-vulnerable’ or ‘elite-captured’ market economies? And if not, where have mistakes been made? Oil and gas prices have an impact electricity usage. They determine the economic slowdown or progress of a country, as well as the associated social, distributive and civil conflicts. Oil and gas prices have also an impact on fertilizers for crops, which can result in food shortages. As mentioned, the availability of oil and gas has important geopolitical and ethnic consequences. It can exacerbate armed ethnic secessionism, reduce representation at national and subnational level, increase fuel and food riots. It can, obviously, also increase armed ethnic secessionism in oil and gas dependent or reseller economies, when oil producer countries cut oil and gas transfers (Hunziker and Cederman, 2022). The figures below show indeed unstable trends in night lights development and associated electricity usage, which follow recent tensions in the oil and gas economic and political markets. The more oil and gas prices/supply become unstable, the more are the prospects for national and subnational social, distributive and civil conflicts.

In landlocked oil reseller Belarus, during the period 1986-2021, several social and distributive conflicts have been reported, whose main reasons were linked to requests for independence from the Soviet Union, against the Russification of the Belarusian language and culture (1960 law), against the negative repercussions in the Belarusian agriculture of the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl in Ukraine. Electoral riots concerned pro and against President Alexander Lukashenko opposition groups (such as Aleh Byabenin, founder of the opposition group Charter '97). Moreover, oil and gas (restrictions) street protests and riots, as did energy supplies, banks bailouts, financial and currency depreciation related reasons were also high on the protest agenda-setting. Mass protests and riots also concerned reforms in the social security system, farmers' land reforms, anti-corruption and economic scandal campaigns (Lukashenko once main reason for his election) (see BBC News Timelines 2022).



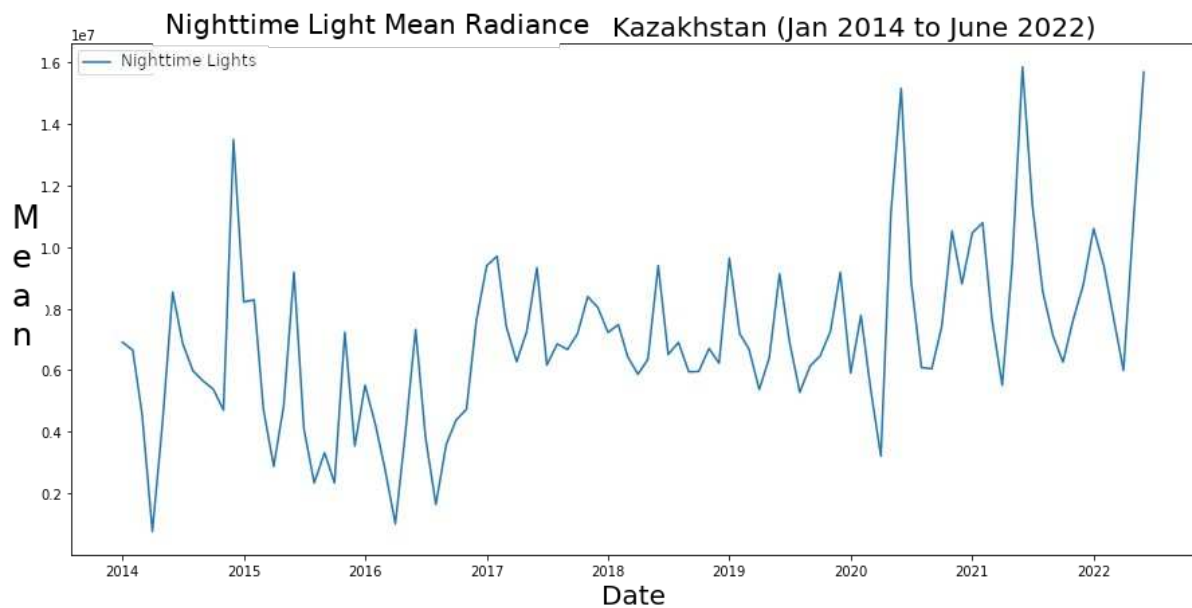
Source: NASA (2014-2022)

In the coastal FDI dependent economy of Latvia, during the period 1986-2021, main reasons for social and distributive conflicts concerned national independence from the Soviet Union, environmental issues against Chernobyl's negative repercussions of nuclear explosion on Latvia, ethno-nationalist and ethno-linguistic related motivations with associated vertical and horizontal inequalities that continued between Latvian-speakers and Russian-main speakers. The latter are now required to pass a Latvian language test to be fully included in the society, where education policies represent the new model for ethno-nationalist inclusion (Golubeva, 2010). Political pressures on ethno-linguistic membership are, therefore, seen as one of the main guiding factors of state-building, playing also a fundamental role in the formation of a shared collective memory (Golubeva and Gould, 2010). Social and distributive conflicts also involved economic and financial street protests and riots with requests to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to approve a 1.68bn euro rescue package (see BBC News Timelines 2022). Accession in the European Union in 2004 under Mrs President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga and adoption of Euro coins in 2014 under President Andris Bērziņš forced Latvian authorities to accept and to converge to a series of criteria that made the country stronger but also that set the conditions to increase divides. Euro convergence did not automatically translate into purchase power parities convergence.



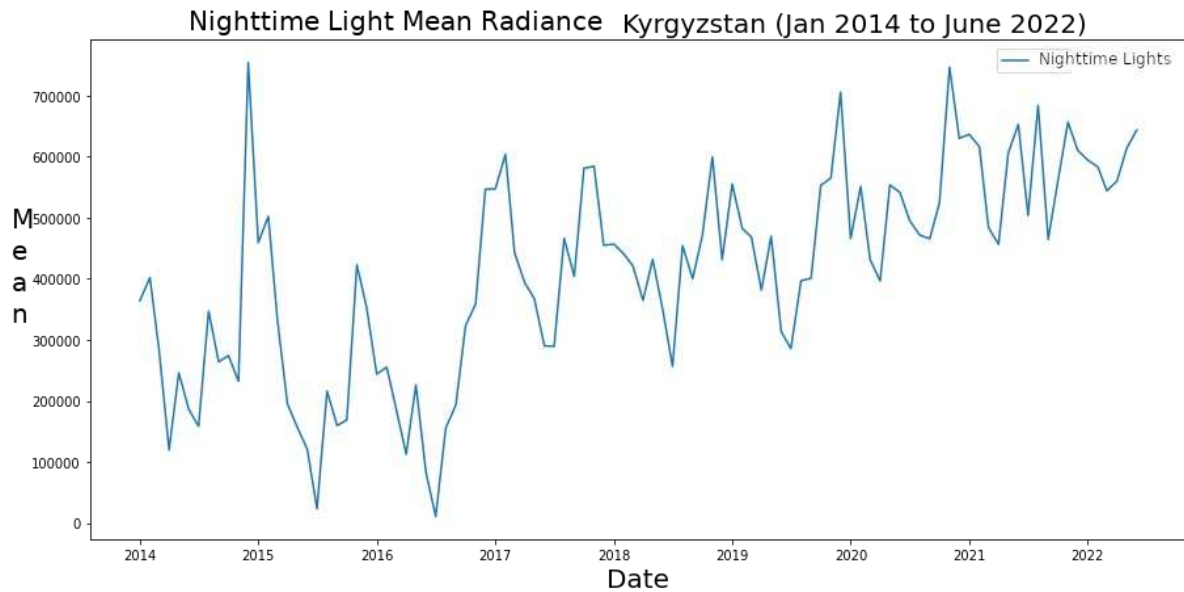
Source: NASA (2014-2022)

In landlocked oil-rich Kazakhstan, during the period 1986-2021, several social and distributive conflicts have been reported, whose main reasons were cultural- and politically-motivated, though issues concerned with the persistence of social inequalities and poverty were also high on the agenda. Anti-soviet riots “ended” with the election of Nursultan Nazarbayev. “Pro” President Nazarbayev riots emerged until his resignation in 2019. The introduction of new laws on language that focused on Kazakh as main state language represented the first step towards derussification. Nazarbayev's political purges, however, continued. Some members of the opposition were fired (his son-in-law Rakhat Aliyev), jailed (Galymzhan Zhakiyanov) or worse. These events were followed by separatist riots in north east Kazakhstan. Reasons for social, distributive and civil conflicts also involved land reforms (see BBC News Timelines 2022).



Source: NASA (2014-2022)

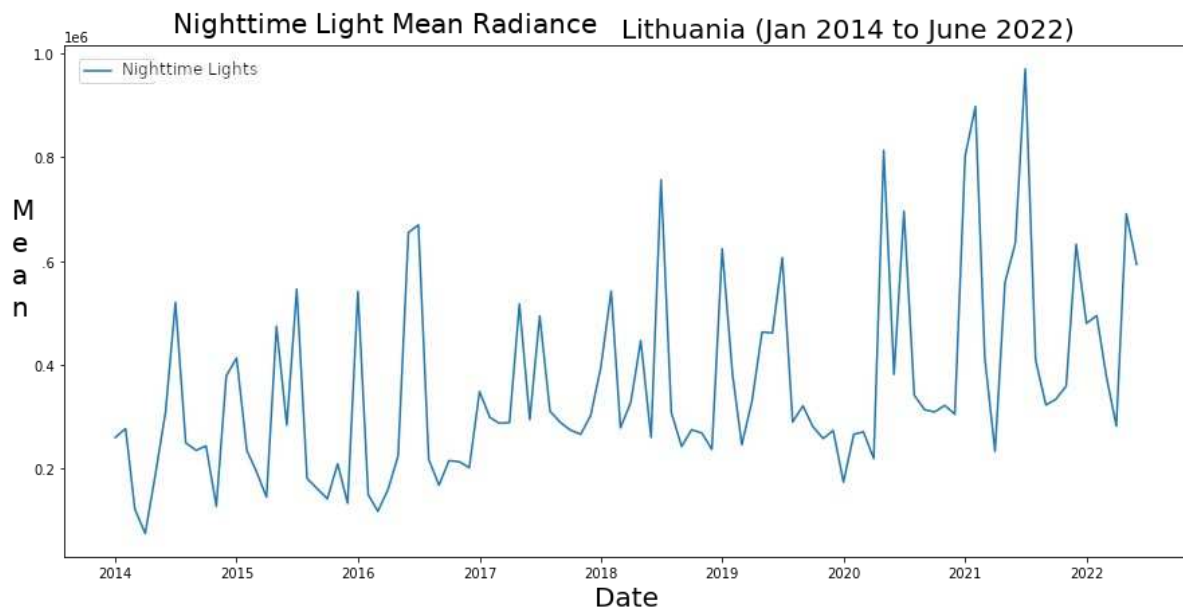
In landlocked oil and gas dependent Kyrgyzstan, during the period 1990-2021, the main reasons for social and distributive can be attributed to interethnic riots between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, pro and against President Askar Akayev supporters. The main Akayev's political opponents were, in this case, deputy Azimbek Beknazarov and the leading opposition politician Felix Kulov, then imprisoned for alleged corruption. Electoral riots emerged prior to the new presidential victory by Kurmanbek Bakiyev during the “Tulip Revolution” of 2005. Street protests followed requests for constitutional reforms, and against crime and corruption. Other street riots materialized against government privatization plans allegedly followed by Prime Minister Almaz Atabayev's poisoning. Following the new election of interim president Roza Otunbayeva (2010) new electoral and ethnic riots between Kyrgyz and Uzbek came to the forefront of Kyrgyz media. These were followed by new protests and elections due to fraud and corruption scandals, with new President Almazbek Atambayev forced to leave and pass the office to Sooronbay Jeenbekov and afterwards to President Sadyr Japarov (see BBC News Timelines 2022).



Source: NASA (2014-2022)

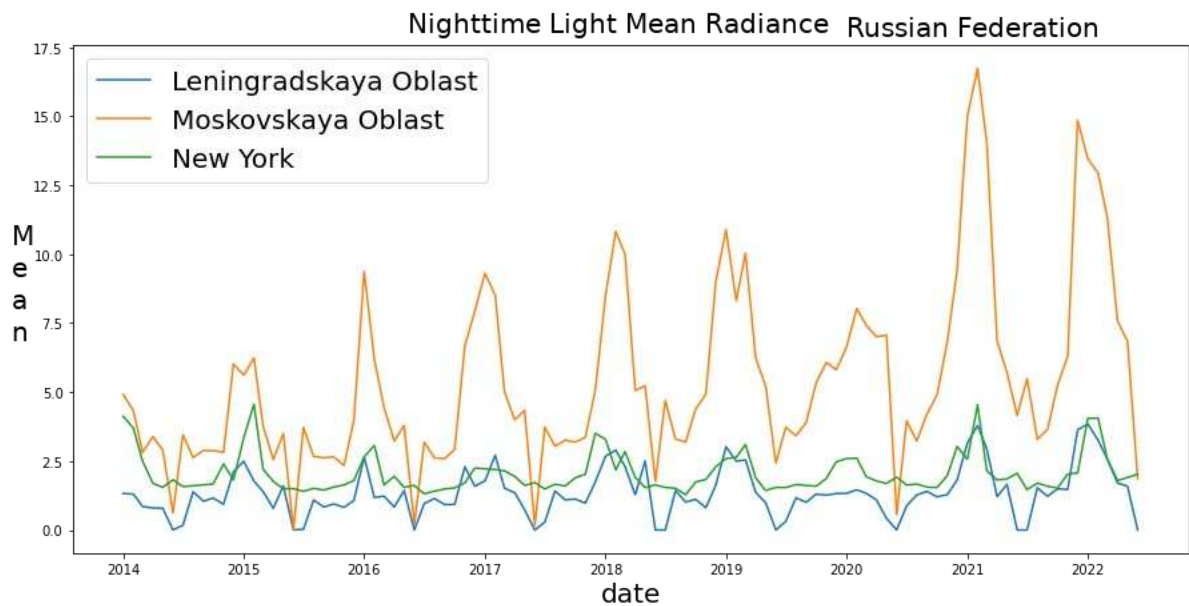
In the coastal FDI dependent economy of Lithuania, the emergence of ethnolinguistic horizontal and vertical inequalities follows similar patterns that the one of Latvia. During the period 1990-2021, social and distributive conflicts reported concerned independence (pro and against independence riots), street protests because of ethno-nationalist and ethnolinguistic reasons (Lithuanian vs. Russian minority), economic difficulties and fuel supplies related riots. These were primarily due to Soviet-led blackmailing. Street protests for environmental protection also emerged at Ignalina nuclear power plant in Visaginas in 2009. More recent, political and economic scandals (banking crisis) led to new street protests and to new general elections. The democratic instinct of Lithuanian here moved from environmentalist to political freedoms. Increased in Russian assertiveness and Putin's new Soviet Katastrojka¹ foreign policy also led to an increase in NATO military operations in neighbouring countries and to peace street protests in Lithuania (see BBC News Timelines 2022). With regard to ethno-nationalist and linguistic minority rights, between the World Wars, Lithuanian minority policies were quite tolerant by the standards of the time, but not all minorities were treated equally, succeeding to balance National Unity and “Multiculturalism” (Kari and Kaubrys, 2022). Social policy programmes under limited EU financial resources did not prove able to resolve all conflicts (Grybauskaitė, 2004), as SWIFT cut-offs or energy sector and banks reforms did not seem to be sufficient instruments to ensure independence, as in the current case of Russian aggression to Ukraine (Grybauskaitė, 2022).

¹ see Zinoviev (1990).



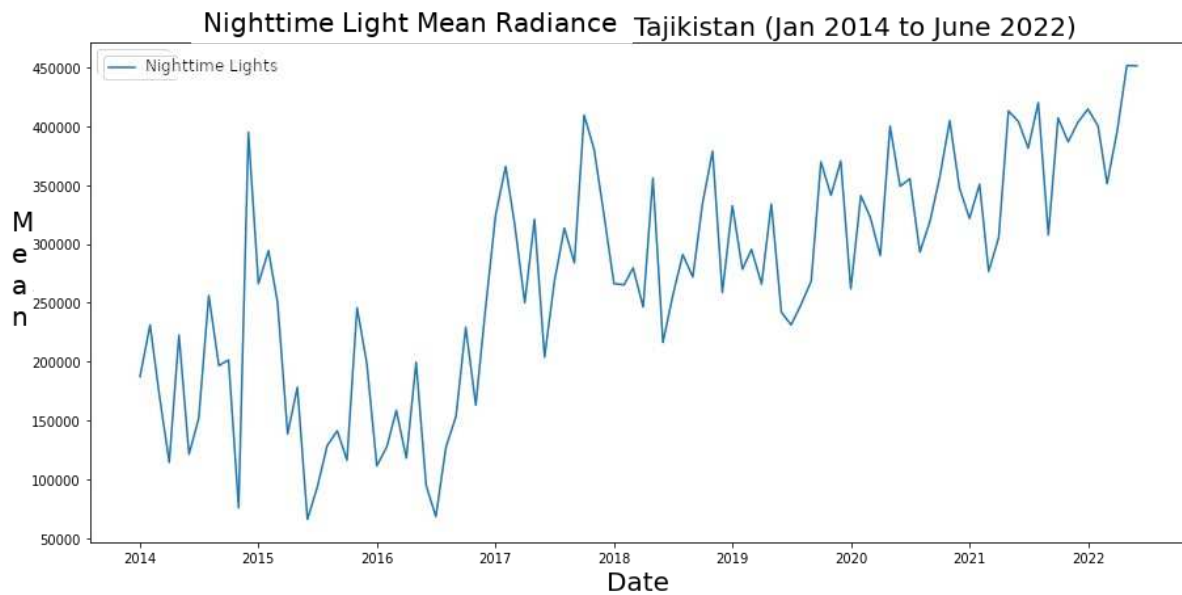
Source: NASA (2014-2022)

In the coastal resource rich oil and gas producer **Russian Federation**, during the period 1985-2021, social and distributive conflicts have been concerned with pro- and anti- Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika and glasnost (1985-1991) policies, pro- and anti- Yeltsin demonstrations (1991-1999), pro- and anti- Putin demonstrations (2000-2022, led by Kasparov and Navalnyi), security-driven protests regarding Chechnya, privatisation related street protests, financial and currency crisis street riots, oil and gas sanctions against Russia related protests in Saint Petersburg, Moscow and Yekaterinenburg. Important to note here is that the contemporary welfare expansion of the Russian Federation strictly depends on high oil and gas prices, and that this oil-led social policy makes the future of the 'Russian miracle' highly volatile. The Russian welfare state with associated social and distributive conflicts (Pensioners' and Mamuschka's associations of rioters) is able to function properly and to ensure social integration and solidarity only under conditions of sustained oil-led growth. Noteworthy is also a variety of different, but equally important, endogenous, as well as exogenous, factors that influence war and the social policy developments in the Russian Federation. These correspond to the existence of few veto points present in the political arena, the lack of a well-structured system of interest representation, the presence of informality in the welfare state organization, but also to the presence of national economic vulnerabilities and/or strengths in the now open global economy, as well as to non-contingent decisions taken in strategic sectors of the state, such as those related to the energy or defence sectors. Putin's new Soviet Katastrojka in international relations now also play a determinant role in deciding the reasons for street protests (see BBC News Timelines 2022).



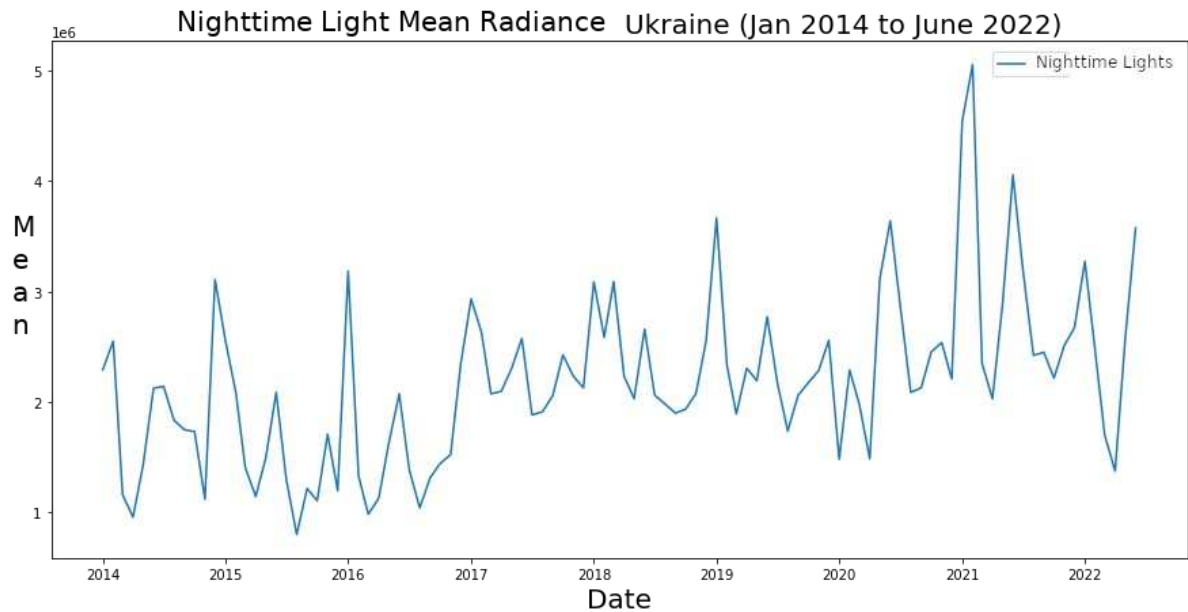
Source: NASA (2014-2022)

In the landlocked oil and gas dependent **Tajikistan**, during the period 1990-2021, the majority of social and distributive conflicts concentrated not only in the capital Dushanbe (in case no one knows it), but also at the Tajikistan borders with Afghanistan. These conflicts involved pro independence related street protest (Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost), predominance of Tajik culture over Russian culture, Tajik language vs. Russian language. They led to the Tajikistan's "bloody five years long civil war" of the early 1990s. Pro-democracy and anti-Russian protests also materialized over the subsequent years. These demonstrations led President Nabiyev to resign. Over the next decade, street protests also concerned new women's rights, such as those linked to the abolishment of the death penalty for women, but a reduction of the number of crimes to be pursued for men. Opposition leaders continued, however, to be often arrested, such as Mahmadrusi Iskandarov. Ethnolinguistic conflicts are also present in Tajikistan. President Rahmonov (Rakhmon) introduced, for example, a set of laws that allows citizens to be no longer registered under Russian-style surname. Inter-ethnic conflicts concern, for example, the 2012 and 2020 new gas supply protests that emerged against Uzbekistan economic blockades (see BBC News Timelines 2022).



Source: NASA (2014-2022)

Last but not least, in coastal but oil and gas dependent **Ukraine**, during the period 1986-2022, continuous social and distributive conflicts have been reported. These can be traced back to the 1960s anti-Russian demonstrations, as well as environmental reasons with subsequent street protests that occurred against the Chernobyl nuclear power station explosion of 1986. Pro-Ukraine independence riots from Moscow's Russia also emerged in the early 1990s (the Act of Declaration of Independence in 1991 let Leonid Kravchuk become the new President). Other social and distributive conflicts involved the *deplacement* (displacement) of Crimean Tatars, the succession of Leonid Kuchma to Leonid Kravchuk (1994 to 2004), mass protest campaign (Orange Revolution) led by opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko in 2004 who became president in 2005. They also involved steel and gas protests due to the global financial crisis of 2008-2011. Pro and against Yushchenko street protests followed, as followed Viktor Yanukovich's presidential victory and Yulia Tymoshenko unjust arrest. In 2014, in the port of Odessa and in Kiev, thousands of protesters joined the Euromaiden revolt, which culminated in the collapse of the Yanukovich government in 2014. During the same period, civil conflicts emerged also in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In May 2018, President Vladimir Putin officially opened a bridge linking southern Russia to Crimea. A song in a Moscow TV station portrayed a proud, beautiful Russian woman going shopping in the Crimean bridge. In an hilarious response to some other opposition candidates in the Eastern region, an actor astonishingly similar to the newly elected President Zelensky states that they will also have the words "Servant of the People" being tattooed on their belly: a sign of the Ukrainian new democratic instinct. War in Crimea, in Donbass, in Luhansk and beyond, unfortunately, follow Russian illegal occupation. The demands of the striking miners (**Stakhanovs finally on Strike**) (Haggard and Kaufman 2016) are now overcome by citizens' new demands for peace. Volodymyr Zelensky, Vladimir Klitschko and Vitali Klitschko are the new symbols of resistance to Russia (see BBC News Timelines 2022).



Source: NASA (2014-2022)

Conclusion

Over these years, I've had the chance to reflect upon "The conquest of freedom, peace, prosperity, happiness and justice" which remains, for me, crucial. Jean-Paul Sartre once powerfully summarized: "There should have been two prizes, one for men and the most beautiful word would be Honour, one for women and I would have won, I would have said Happiness". People don't have the right to joke with these conquests. This is still one of my core values and driving motive. This has to do also with a full understanding of world citizens' fears. Similar to Samuel Beckett's Theatre of the Absurd (or Theatre of Non-Communication), over these years, I've also acquired teaching and research experience on people's and judges' INADMISSIBLE EVIDENCES (such as the hardships of their life, fears and memories, assurances, brave hearths, their unconfined rages, and crimes received. I remember a part of a play by John Osborne (1929-1994): "(Jimmy): I think you and I understand one another all right. But you haven't answered any question. I said: have you ever watched somebody die? (Helena): No, I haven't". "Money makes the world go round", sang once Liza Minelli. Money is decisive (Ettrich, 2007, pp. 5, 7). Its philosophy of language and of its spirit, its linguistic decoding and its translation from languages to thoughts (Recanati 2008) and how these interfaces affect the construction of generalized trust among citizens have to do with: who have/not have, what is right or what is wrong, what is true and what is untrue, who stays in government and who stays in the opposition. Civil rights, socialization and communitization (Vergesellschaftung/Vergemeinschaftung) have a clear impact on the exiguity (Knappheit, scarceness) of life (Ettrich, 2007, pp. 5, 7, 15), as well as on the stationarity of politics, economics, social and public policy. And the story is that the Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience (W. Blake) of people in Eastern Europe and around the world talk about people's chains, the work by certain world leaders talks about how to break them. The instinct of democratic citizens and politicians in Eastern Europe-Asia can help to lead the dance in our conquest of freedom, peace, prosperity, happiness and justice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank several so-called “friends” and “accomplices” for critical and constructive comments. It goes without saying that whatever faults remain are entirely my own responsibility.

References

- Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J. (2012). *Why Nations Fail: Historical Origins of Poverty*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.
- Alenius, K. & Kaubrys, S. (2022). *Balancing between National Unity and “Multiculturalism” National Minorities in Lithuania and Finland 1918–1939*. Leiden: Brill, 2022.
- Amable, B. (2003). *The Diversity of Modern Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BBC News (2022). Bbc News Country Timelines. BBC: BBC News online available at <https://www.bbc.com/news>.
- Cederman, L-E, Hug, S., & Wucherpfennig, J. (2022). *Sharing Power, Securing Peace?* Cambridge University Press.
- Cederman, L-E, Weidmann, N. B. & Gleditsch, K. S. (2011). "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison." *American Political Science Review* 105(3), 478-95.
- Cerami, A. (2008). "New Social Risks in Central and Eastern Europe: The Need for a New Empowering Politics of the Welfare State." *Czech Sociological Review* 44(6), 1089-110.
- . (2013) *Permanent Emergency Welfare Regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa. The Exclusive Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- . (2015). "Social Aspects of Transformation." In *Central and East European Politics from Communism to Democracy - Third Edition*, edited by S. L. Wolchik and J. L. Curry (99-120). Washington DC: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Cerami, A. and Stubbs, P. (2013), *Post-Communist Welfare Capitalisms: Bringing Institutions and Political Agency Back In*, in Hill, M. (ed.), *Comparative Public Policy*. Four-Volume Set. Volume II, London: SAGE Publications, pp. 347-370.
- Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Collier, P., Hoeffler, A. & Rohner, D. (2007). "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War." Oxford: University of Oxford.
- Durkheim, É. ([1893]1933). *The Division of Labour in Society*. Translated by George Simpson. New York: Free Press.
- Echeverri-Gent, J., Armijo, L. E., Blecher, M., Brumberg, D., Bunce, V., Chaudhry, K. A.,

- Harbeson, J. W., Huber, E., Leebaw, B., Rudolph, S., Hoerber, Ryter, L., Sinha, A. & Woodward, S. L. (2008). "The Persistent Problem: Inequality, Difference, and the Challenge of Development. Report of the Task Force on Difference, Inequality, and Developing Societies." 44. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association. Available at: <http://www.apsanet.org/~globalinequality/>.
- Ekiert, G., and Kubik, J. (2018). "The Study of Protest Politics in Eastern Europe in the Search of Theory." In *The Routledge Handbook of East European Politics*, edited by Adam Fagan and Petr Kopecný, 197-209. London and New York: Routledge.
- Ettrich, F., Bergsdorf, W., Kill, H. H., Lochthofen, S. (eds), (2007): *Am Gelde Hängt, Zum Gelde Drängt... Ringvorlesung Der Universität Erfurt, Band 13*. Weimar: Verlag Der Bauhaus Universität." In *Am Gelde Hängt, Zum Gelde Drängt... Ringvorlesung Der Universität Erfurt, Band 13*, edited by Wolfgang Bergsdorf, Frank Ettrich, Heinrich H. Kill and Sergej Lochthofen. Weimar: Verlag der Bauhaus Universität.
- Fearon, J. & Laitin, D. D. (2003). "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1), 75-90.
- Frye, T. (2010). *Building States and Markets after Communism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Golubeva, M. (2010). 'Different History, Different Citizenship? Competing Narratives and Diverging Civil Enculturation in Majority and Minority Schools in Estonia and Latvia', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 41(3), 315-329.
- Golubeva, M. & Gould, R. (2010). *Shrinking Citizenship: Discursive Practices that Limit Democratic Participation in Latvian Politics*. Book Series *On the Boundary of Two Worlds: Identity, Freedom and Moral Imagination in the Baltics*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Grybauskaite, D. (2022). *Cowardly West? Or Accomplices to Putin's War Crimes?*, Speech in Vilnius Lithuania, 2 March 2022. Online available at <https://grybauskaite.lrp.lt/en/press-centre/press-releases/cowardly-west-or-accomplices-to-putins-war-crimes/32864>
- Grybauskaite, D. (2004), *Policy challenges and budgetary means of the enlarged Union 2007-2013*, COBU (Budget Committee), European Parliament Brussels, 30 November.
- Haggard, S. & Kaufman, R. (2012). "Inequality and Regime Change: Democratic Transitions and the Stability of Democratic Rule." *American Political Science Review* 106(3), 495-516.
- Hall, P. (2006), "Stabilität Und Wandel in Den Spielarten Des Kapitalismus." In *Transformationen Des Kapitalismus*, edited by Jens Beckert, Bernard Ebbinghaus, Anke Hassel and Philip Manow. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Hankiss, E. (1991). "The "Second Society": Is There an Alternative Social Model Emerging in Contemporary Hungary?" In *Crisis and Reform in Eastern Europe*, edited by Ferenc Fehér and Andrew Arato (303-34). New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers.
- Häusermann, Silja. *The Politics of Welfare State Reform in Continental Europe, Modernization in*

- Hard Times. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Heyward, C. (2021). 'Is the beneficiary pays principle essential in climate justice?', *Norsk filosofisk tidsskrift*, 56(2-03), 125-136.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996) *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Hunziker, P. & Cederman, L.-E. (2022). "No Extraction Without Representation: The Ethno-Regional Oil Curse and Secessionist Conflict." In *Natural Resources, Inequality and Conflict*, eds. Hamid E. Ali and Lars-Erik Cederman. (37–69) Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Karle, H. & Möller, M. (2020). "Selling in Advance to Loss-Averse Consumers." *International Economic Review* 61(1), 441-68.
- Kauppi, N. & Madsen, M. R. (2008). "Institutions Et Acteurs: Rationalité, Réflexivité Et Analyse De L'ue [Institutions and Actors: Rationality, Reflexivity and Analysis of the Eu." *Politique Européenne* 25(printemps), 87-114.
- Kurer, T., Häusermann, S., Wüest, B. & Matthias (2019). Economic grievances and political protest Engggist. "Economic Grievances and Political Protest." *European Journal of Political Research* 58(3), 866-92.
- Laitin, D. D. (1998), *Identity in Formation The Russian-Speaking Populations in the New Abroad*, Ithaca, NY: Cornel University Press.
- Langer, A., Stewart, F. and Venugopa, R. (eds) (2011). *Horizontal Inequalities and Post-Conflict Development*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- LeBas, A. (2011). *From Protest to Parties: Party-Building and Democratization in Africa* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leca, J. (2010). "The Empire Strikes Back! An Uncanny View of the European Union. Part II – Empire, Federation or What?" *Government and Opposition* 45,(2), 208-93.
- Mykhnenko, V. (2007) "Strengths and Weaknesses of 'Weak' Coordination: Economic Institutions, Revealed Comparative Advantages, and Socio-Economic Performance of Mixed Market Economies in Poland and Ukraine" in Bob Hancké, Martin Rhodes and Mark Thatcher, eds., *Beyond Varieties of Capitalism: Conflict, Contradictions, and Complementarities in the European Economy*, (351-378), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) (2014-2022), VIIRS Nighttime Composites Version 1, product and database reassembled by Colorado School of Mines: Golden, Colorado.
- North, D. C., Wallis, J.J. & Weingast, B. (2009). *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Olson, M. (1965). *The Logic of Collective Action. Public Goods and the Theory of Groups.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Petersen, R. (2002) *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pierson, P. & Hacker, J.S. (2010). *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer--and Turned Its Back on the Middle Class.* New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Sageman, M. (2004) "Understanding Terror Networks." Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute.
- Scarcelli, M. (2011). "Beyond 'Greed and Grievance': The Causes of Civil Wars." Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Seattle, WA, 1-4 September.
- Schmitter, P. C. (2010), "Twenty-Five Years, Fifteen Findings." *Journal of Democracy* 21(1), 17-28.
- Sobek, D., Rohrer, S. & Harris, J. W. (2012). "Name Your Price: Economic Compensation and Suicide Terrorism." Paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, 30 August-2 September.
- Stewart, F. (ed.)(2008) *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Szélenyi, I. (1988), *Socialist Entrepreneurs.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Tilly, C. (1978). *From Mobilization to Revolution.* Reading MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Wolchik, S. L., & Curry, J. L. (eds.) (2015). *Central and East European Politics from Communism to Democracy - Third Edition, Central and East European Politics from Communism to Democracy - Third Edition.* Washington DC: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Zinoviev, A. (1990). *Katastroika : Legend and Reality of Gorbachevism.* London: Claridge.

FOOTNOTES

1 For the role played by ideas, interests and institutions in the process of institutional change, see Hall (1997).

2 The concepts of *functional*, *distributive*, *normative* and *institutional recalibration* have been introduced by Hemeijck (2012) to describe the changes that contemporary welfare systems are facing. According to the authors, not only an *institutional recalibration* is taking place in western welfare states, but also a *recalibration* of the main welfare functions, distributive aspects and basic norms.

Recalibration, as a result, is described as an on-going process of domestic lesson-drawing associated to cross-national social learning.

3 In the *Variety of Capitalism (VoC)* account (see Hall and Soskice 2001), “two institutions can be said to be complementary when the presence of one increases the efficiency of the other” (Amable 2003, p.6), thus, resulting in a comparative institutional advantage. For example, “flexible labour markets may be more efficient when financial markets allow for a rapid mobilization of resources and creation of new businesses that in return sustain labour demand” (ibid.). The key question here is to what extent do changes in one sphere of political economy influence or stimulate change in another sphere (Hall 2006, p. 191)?