

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSTRUCTIVIST, STRUCTURALIST AND RATIONALIST THOUGHTS

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RELAȚIILE MULTIDIMENSIONALE ÎNTRE GÂNDIREA CONSTRUCTIVISTĂ, STRUCTURALISTĂ ȘI RAȚIONALISTĂ

Abstract. *Theories of political constructivism (culturalist), structuralist and rationalist accounts are approaching the collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) from various angles. However, this paper argues that the above-mentioned traditional schools come to complementary conclusions (that are not mutually exclusive) despite their distinct starting points. One only has to put together the puzzle, because no single modern approach can process at once all the intricacy of contemporary global politics and historical events or happenings. For instance, the influence of structural realism has declined nowadays due to its incapability to predict the collapse of the SU. However, academics managed to resuscitate this theorem by skilfully melting it with agent-centred designs. Conversely, not even constructivism can estimate long-term historical change, such as the end of the Cold War because adepts of this approach do not think about how interests were created. They suppose that everybody has the same interests but by supposing this, one would totally ignore the topic of inequality. Interests are coined by power and political or economic influence, even if rules and values could change over time through diverse interactions. Political thinkers developed competitive theoretical schools by putting emphasis on diverse causes by clarifying various political, historical, social or cultural issues. Rational choice (rationalist), constructivism or culturalist and structuralist views have*

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their own research tools and suppositions, but interestingly the predominant approach is none of these competing traditional schools, because currently neo-institutionalism seems to overcome all of them. This development is simply astonishing, also because scholars of post-communism mostly applied rationalist methods in their analyses. This is especially true if considering the wide-ranging fields of comparative politics and history (outcomes of comparative analysis). Authors of this paper do not want to construct a hierarchy among these systematic explanations, because (in their opinion) these approaches can function in a complementary way, especially if someone wants to observe and explain socio-historical, political or other problems.

Keywords: *collapse of the USSR, democratisation process, Perestroika, Glasnost, identity-formation, Marxism, neo-institutionalism.*

Abstract. *Teoriile legate de constructivismul politic (varianta culturalistă), structuralism și raționalism se apropie din diferite unghiuri de momentul prăbușirii Uniunii Sovietice. Cu toate acestea, această lucrare susține că școlile tradiționale menționate mai sus au concluzii complementare (care nu se exclud reciproc), în ciuda diferitelor puncte de plecare. Este doar necesar de a pune împreună puzzleul pentru obținerea unei perspective anume, pentru că nicio abordare unică modernă nu poate procesa simultan toată complexitatea politicii globale actuale și evenimentele istorice sau întâmplările recent petrecute. De exemplu, influența realismului structural a scăzut în zilele noastre enorm din cauza incapacității sale de a prevedea faptul prăbușirii fostei Uniuni Sovietice. Cu toate acestea, mediul academic a reușit să resusciteze această teoremă cu măiestrie, topind-o cu un design care este acum centrat pe agenție. Acesta este doar o modalitate de flexibilitate academică. În schimb, nici chiar constructivismul nu poate estima schimbările istorice pe termen lung, cum ar fi de exemplu sfârșitul Războiului Rece, deoarece adepții acestei teorii nu se gândesc cum se formează interesele. Astfel, se presupune că toată lumea are aceleași interese, dar o astfel de presupuziție ar înseamna, pe de altă parte, că tema inegalității s-ar ignora cu totul. Dar interesele sunt formate de putere prin influență politică sau economică chiar dacă între timp normele și valorile se pot schimba prin diferite interacțiuni. Gânditorii politici au elaborat școli teoretice competitive, punând accent pe diverse cauze în clarificarea diverselor probleme politice, istorice, sociale sau culturale. Fiecare dintre teoriile amintite mai sus au propriile lor*

instrumente de cercetare și supoziții, dar abordarea predominantă dintre aceste școli tradiționale concurente este în prezent neo-instituționalismul. Această evoluție este pur și simplu surprinzătoare și datorită faptului că cercetătorii post-comunismului au aplicat mai ales metode raționaliste în analizele lor. Acest lucru este în special adevărat în cazul în care luăm în considerare domeniile cuprinzătoare de politică și istorie comparată (rezultatele analizelor comparative). Autorii acestei lucrări nu doresc să construiască o ierarhie între aceste explicații sistematice, pentru că (în opinia lor), aceste abordări pot funcționa într-un mod complementar în special dacă cineva vrea să observe și să explice probleme socio-istorice, politice sau de altă natură.

Cuvinte cheie: *prăbușirea URSS-ului, procesul de democratizare, Perestroika, Glasnost, naționalismele, formarea identității, marxism, neo-instituționalism.*

Authors of this paper are searching for scientific approaches that are adjacent to contemporary history and by the example of the collapse of the Soviet Union (SU) they offer a brief overview of significant research traditions in political analysis that are also applied in history, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. The basic assumption is that methodological designs and deductions of these competing traditional approaches are processing pertinent information that helps the viewer to discover new interdisciplinary insights for contemporary history as exposed here by the case of the breakdown of the SU. This topic involves other ones as the end of the cold war and the start of the democratization process in Eastern Europe. The collapse of the SU and an emerging Russia with new associates has mainly coined the post-communist development of East European countries and the Balkans. Restructuring of the political system was programmatic and spontaneous as well as nation-states were starting their particular pathways towards democracy by implementing different market-based economic measures by privatising state property, entering NATO and the European Union.

Authors are trying to catch the Communist collapse moment of the power bloc (USSR and old associates) and they are giving a more general review about the contradictory features of the Soviet regime. This track possibly provides insights into human nature and events. In this way, the continuity or disruption of events can offer comprehensions of how a

reorganised Russia and Eastern European states are searching for their own status in the global world.

Political thinkers developed competing theoretical schools and accentuated diverse causes when elucidating different political, historical, social or cultural issues. Rational choice (rationalist), constructivism or culturalist and structuralist views have their own research tools and assumptions, but the predominant approach between these competing traditional schools is neo-institutionalism. Some of these analyses are dealing with factual circumstances and contemporary events. Circumstances change and facts are permanently significant, but scholars of post-communism mostly applied rationalist methods in their analysis. This is especially true if considering the wide-ranging field of comparative politics or history. Authors of this summarising outlook do not want to construct a hierarchy among these explanations,¹ because (in their opinion) these can work in a complementary way by observing and explaining contemporary issues as the August coup and the dissolution of the USSR. Guiding questions to such complex issues could be:

What led to the breakdown of the Soviet Union? Was it internal or external or perhaps both? Is factual history relevant by interpreting political events?

A brief historical review follows: the Russian Revolution in 1917 established a communist state that became totalitarian. It tried to create a unified and centralised state where national and ethnic dissimilarities were reduced or eliminated. The main historical problem of Russia was that Communism never took root and quickly lost influence because of economy of scarcity. The second problem was that centrally planned economy failed to meet the needs of the state and the arms race with US weakened the system. The third problem was that non-Russian ethnic groups were resisting assimilation and russification. Underlying causes were the years of Soviet stockpiling of weapons and a high military budget at the expense of internal development. Another cause was that economic growth delayed because of a stagnant economy. Additionally there were failed attempts at reform, the war in Afghanistan, the nuclear explosion of Chernobyl and a wide-ranging feeling of dissatisfaction, particularly in Eastern European states and the Baltic republics.

¹ With Fish's words: "The key of democratization for the structuralist is to change underlying socioeconomic or cultural conditions; for the rationalist, to create the right incentives for powerholders; for the transitologist, to craft appropriate political arrangements; and for the political constructivist, to deconcentrate and pluralize power in all major realms (state, society, and the economy)." Steven Fish (1999): p. 811.

As Mikhail Gorbachev comes to power in 1985, he inherited various problems but recognized the need for change. He considered that the economy needed fundamental reforms. Thus, Gorbachev introduced two-tiered program of reform to meet the needs of the Russian state. Glasnost essentially means the freedom of speech and free elections (1989). Unconsciously unchecked reactions and unadventurous party-political tensions that had been collected for decades will clash. Perestroika means economic reform and rebuilding, thus, the complete economic restructuring of the Soviet system. However, it did not have the immediate results that Gorbachev had hoped for and had officially forecasted. It was unsuccessful because of bureaucratic corruption and individuals used their freedom of expression to criticize Gorbachev.

The breakdown of the SU began on the peripheries as Baltic nationalist movements demanded autonomy for their republics. Another challenge to glasnost was that non-Russian minority groups agitated for independence during this period. Beginning in September 1989, a wave of massive protests surprised Communist governments across Eastern Europe. Massive stream of East German emigrants streamed through Czechoslovakia and Hungary into the West, damaging the power of the Communist despots who still stuck to power in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). To sum up, on the night of 9 November 1989, German people poured through the Berlin Wall and the GDR rapidly disintegrated. By the end of 1990, the former GDR had been incorporated into the prosperous and influential Federal Republic of Germany.

Communist regimes in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria either collapsed or experienced restructuring. The Communist single party rule in Romania fell after a week of bloody street fights between everyday citizens and police, who protected the ancient regime to the end. As the strong control of the centralized Soviet state softened and the growing disaster of the government to sufficiently feed and clothe its people, nationalism in the republics emerged and autonomist actions endangered the survival of the SU. Gorbachev decided to not to use military force to control the revolutions in Eastern Europe and by permitting uprisings to run their course would peel the USSR away.

Finally, all these processes and events eroded the authority of the SU during 1989 and 1990. Radical change finally reached the Soviet heartland in August 1991, when thousands of Russian citizens poured into the streets to defeat a reactionary coup d'état because hard-line Communists overthrow the government. That was the final effort to save the USSR, but the state turned into disturbances. There were massive

protests, but soldiers themselves rebelled that they cannot fire on their fellow citizens. The coup collapsed within three days.

The results of the August coup were that Gorbachev was unable to re-establish real control in Moscow. The negotiated change of power was unavoidable because it was the will of the people and all non-Russian republics declared independence (1 Dec. 1991). Political movements, which had emerged since the implementation of glasnost, resulted in immediate fall. The Communist party rapidly collapsed, and the SU began the hard and uncertain process of reorganizing itself as a loose confederation of independent republics. The new entity emerged as the "Commonwealth of Independent Republics", thus Russia and 15 independent former USSR states. Thus, the SU, with its centralized political and economic system, had ceased to exist in December 1991.

Boris Yeltsin, who headed the Russian Republic, replaced Gorbachev as president of a much-diminished country. Gorbachev found that there was no SU to govern and retired into private life. Gorbachev won the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize because he brought a non-violent end to the cold war, and intense change to his state's economy, though not in the way he planned. The Cold War and the MAD threat was over, brought to an end not by the weapon arsenals of the key co-conspirators, but by the mutual courage and strength of mind of everyday people.

Supporters of Ronald Reagan claimed much of the credit for ending the Cold War. Reagan's open criticism of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire," along with his administration's military stock, were said to have encouraged eastern bloc protesters at the same time the arms race exhausted the productive capacity of the SU and other ineffective Communist governments.

The collapse of the SU transformed the whole world's political situation, thus the redesigning of political, economic and military alliances was indispensable. Consequently, America remained the sole military and world hegemonic power, but its superpower role became challenged, because the bipolar world system ended.

Political constructivism and/or culturalist perceptions

Constructivism is distinctive among the theories considered here because it can be applied to elucidate domestic policy processes as well as foreign affairs. What is a policy process? Policy process is a process when agents produce political outcomes in given structures (institutions) according to their preferences.

The main source for this approach is Alexander Wendt's article entitled "Anarchy is What States Make of It".² According to Wendt, nation-states, transnational establishments, and minority ethnic communities are not fast in forgetting their history. National struggle persists because of a long factual history of conflicts. Example: NATO threatens Russia and NATO was founded to counteract Soviet expansionist intentions, and Iran is aggressive with the US because it backed the policy of the Shah. The past, however, is not inevitable, - this is what Wendt describes in his additional theory,³ which enlightens how nations change their synergy. Therefore, interaction with other states produces shared thoughts and information, which in turn become indispensable for the creation of national identity and interest.

Wendt claims that the essential state is a necessary basis for studying national identity. His statement is that there are elementary components of the state, which make possible to name an entity a state. It is because of these features that one distinguishes state from a sport team, an international society or anything else for that matter. The essential state is therefore indispensable for better comprehending both national identity and the regime. It is an accepted fact that states are the focal actors in an anarchical system, but the essential state offers the viewer the properties to distinguish states from other actors, and allows academics to create assumptions about them.⁴

Nevertheless, constructivist theory refuses the fundamental statement of neo-realist theory that the state of anarchy⁵ is a structural condition, which is inherent in the system of states. Rather, Wendt's words are required here "anarchy is what states make of it". Thus, anarchy is condition of the system of states as states in some respect decide on to do it in this way. Anarchy is the consequence of a developments that constructs the principles or rules that guide the interaction of states. The condition of the system of states nowadays as self-helpers in the centre of anarchy is an outcome of the course by which states and the organisation of states was build up. It is not an inherent element of state-to-state affairs. Accordingly, the constructivist approach maintains that it is thinkable to change the anarchic property of the system

² Alexander Wendt's article entitled "Anarchy is what states make of it" published in 1992 is considered as a basis work of constructivist approaches.

³ Alexander Wendt (2003): pp. 124-125, and please see chapter 4 and 6 as well.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Anarchy is here defined as the lack of a higher authority or government.

of states. The three stages of change in international relations are the following:

The first stage: there is disagreement about national identity, thus, this point of the theory presumes that certain internal change is required to modify foreign politics. A number of crises frequently stimulate these modifications. The paramount working example of this process is the disintegration of the SU. The Soviet identity based on the pre-eminence of communism over capitalism and the toughness that interactions between communists and capitalists were intrinsically incompatible. The Soviet economic crisis induced domestic political crisis as it generated the widespread unpopularity of the communist government. Consequently, the population wanted change.

The second stage is the creation of new identities. It is a technique of creating novel national identities, which will influence both domestic and foreign policy. It is a development of the first stage. In the case of the SU, it needed constant internal governmental and economic restructurings. Besides, both the United States and Russia had to adjust their behaviours to each other that generated adverse interactions, as the stockpiling of armaments.

The third stage assumes interactions with other states. For long-lasting change to happen, other states must be willing to support the conflicted state. Example: If the international community continued to ignore Russia after the breakdown of the SU, democratic transformation could not have followed, as Russians would have seen insufficient political and economic incentives in changing their government. Though the people might obtain new freedoms, their new regime could not continue to exist if segregated from the international community. This is the idea behind sanctions and embargoes because if the global community thinks that a state has transformed in a negative manner, they reject to back the change and they are cooperating with the country only if this has again a positive course.

Steven⁶ also proposes „political constructivism“ in order to explain the collapse of the SU. He stresses that this approach is the best alternative compared to other contemporary approaches. According to him, political constructivism makes the process of democratization more understandable for East European states. Steven is relying on Rapaczynsky,⁷ who criticises (in 1987) - “the problem of `undetermined

⁶ Steven Fish (1999): p. 811.

⁷ *Ibidem* (please see footnote 39 at page 811.)

choice` is a real can of worms”⁸ - today`s widespread rational choice method among scholars. By using this method, even the multifaceted cause-effect relationship of democratization of former communist systems is better to comprehend. This approach includes both units: mass and elite by variants as human actions, choices and constructs as independent factors as these “together” generated the change of Communist regime respectively the collapse of the SU.

Is constructivism a complex theory?

The main idea of constructivism is that past interactions set the precedent for future dealings. This basic statement is central for constructivists because of its exactness. The past self-evidently does influence the present, thus when scholars write papers about how two states or institutions will relate to one another, they are inevitably considering their past as well. Therefore, they often include specific indications to their recent past. Constructivism offers a theory of change that can border on different constructivist interpretations in IR. Examples of international norms that change over time through interactions: the spread of the anti-war values of Japan as proposed by Katzenstein,⁹ the propagation of green politics as a value, the promulgation of right of men values, particularly the issue of women's rights. Accordingly, it seems to be a coherent theory.

However, constructivism is more about understanding certain political developments and processes as state creation and their interactions. Thus, it is to observe that by its original formula it is rather inapplicable to process complex international issues. Different efforts have been made to adjust constructivism to the discipline of international relations: the outcome is a moderated form of constructivist suppositions. By doing this, the main constructivist contributions are now combined with studies that are similar to rational-choice. Some of these melted outlooks¹⁰ are present in the subject literature related to Eastern Europe.

Without doubt, there are a number of explanations concerning the collapse of the SU. One of them is the rise of ethno-nationalism and national identity in the Soviet republics and East European satellite states. These issues combined with the decline of on-site Soviet military presence contributed to the breakdown of the SU: national characteristics

⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁹ Source: http://www.japanfocus.org/-Peter_J_-Katzenstein, accessed on 01.02.2014.

¹⁰ One example in this respect is Fischer`s comprehensive work of 2003. (Fischer Sabine 2003: *Russlands Westpolitik in der Krise. Eine konstruktivistische Untersuchung*, Frankfurt/ New York: Campus.)

of certain ethnicities were roughly suppressed during the Cold War and/or have been replaced by Soviet identity.

All the same, the sense of national identity always existed under the surface and as the opportunity was given under Gorbachev's reforms, the desire to act was taken seriously by certain nationalist leaders to set free their nations from the SU. All this events and processes occurred in the 90s and were based on national principles as the idea of national identities. Therefore, as this approach exposes the importance of national identity and values, it can be treated as a culturalist explanation.¹¹

In fact, one could observe that there was also an objective behind emancipation attempts in order to realize the idea of sovereign nations (identities) and to split up from the SU, which in that case can be explained by the rational choice theory as well. However, rational choice theorists take actors interests as given, whereas culturalists are principally examining the origin of interests.

Another possible explanation of the breakup of the SU would be, that it turns out to be unsuccessful because of the disillusionment of the people with the idea of Soviet type Communism and socialist utopia, but the foundation of the USSR was driven by other influences too, such as ideology and sense of cause, at least in the general public.

According to the culturalist approach, although culture does not explain integrally certain political processes and circumstances, but it is frequently a serious part of any reasoning: this is especially the case with nationalism¹² and democratization. Therefore, it is to point out that according to cultural arguments, culture has the power to unify, motivate and bring people to singular or collective actions, which can be a key issue in situations when persons are ready to act as a group in order to achieve political changes.

Democratization within the church

It is to accept that culture does not explain all aspects of the chosen topic, but it is often a critical part of cultural approaches. This is especially true if considering democratization. Nonetheless, mobilization is part of the rationalist or structural reasoning as well, but cultural analysis goes deeper by asking: why are certain persons ready to risk their

¹¹ For this passage, please see in Graham Smith (1990): pp. 54–71.

¹² An example of a well-known study of nationalism (1991) based on cultural approach is Benedict Anderson's work: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.

own lives to support certain targets? What kind of interest brings people together, what coins their willingness to react as a group? Cultural contexts comprise more generally keywords as main beliefs, moral standards, religion, religious faith and ideologies. Without doubt, anti-government demonstrations against repressive systems as in Libya, Syria, Egypt, Burma, Iran, China, Philippines or elsewhere as in Europe (Poland) are proving this track. Here people risked their lives and died by the hope that they are helping their fellows to live in much more freedom as before.

These cases are also showing that principles of important cultural organizations and institutions can induce political change, which sometimes happens in critical circumstances. For example, the role of the Catholic Church in the Philippines proves in several ways the cultural perspective. The Filipino Archbishop, Jaime Sin (along with Fidel Ramos and Corazon Aquino) was one of the main designers of the “People Power” movement that collapsed the authoritarian regime of Ferdinand Marcos. Thus, the EDSA revolution was a peaceful and non-violent struggle, which began in 1986.¹³

Even if there were other forces involved (opposition, oligarchs, communists and military officers), but the crucial role of the Church remains evident. All these features were leading to the end of the 20-year rule of Marcos and his associates, even if the (deep-rooted) oligarchs were able to maintain their influence until today in this country.

What did the Church do in the Philippines? It gave the People Power Movement authority and concomitantly de-legitimized Marcos’ government. It openly motivated the public to take risks that they might otherwise have very possibly avoided. Thus, the Church acted as an inspirational but institutionalized actor and counterbalanced the coercive power of the regime. This proves that principles of leading cultural institutions can induce and generate political change, sometimes in thought-provoking and catastrophic settings.

That what happened at the Philippines beginning with 1986 helps to focus on the salient aspect of cultural argument as is tied to the process of democratisation. More exactly, it shows how the relationship between religion and democracy interacts.

¹³„In 1986, four days of huge public protests brought down President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. Kate McGowan, in Manila, talks to the leading Filipino novelist, Jose Dalisay, about the demonstrations.” Source: BBC WORLD SERVICE (2011): Witness (People Power in the Philippines) <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p014g7z7>

Without going deeper in this aspect here, it is to point out that, the role of the Church was relevant also by the turnarounds of 1989/90 in Eastern Europe.¹⁴ Solidarność (Solidarity), which had considerable sustenance from the influential Polish Catholic Church, proved how a working-class association could re-give a whole nation confidence and political authority. The collapse began in 1980 when striking Polish workers organized Solidarność as self-regulating trade union of almost 10 million followers. The Polish military drifted Solidarity in the underground by 1981. Nevertheless, in 1983, Solidarity's leader, Lech Walesa, won the Nobel peace prize and in 1990, he would be the first freely voted head of state of the Polish nation in more than sixty years.

However, this worked in the opposite direction as well, because when the Church was constrained by authoritarian governments, it had no problem to search for compromises and expected protection in return. Certainly, the Church was ready to back dictators, including Hitler, Stalin and others.

The key change in the dogmatic policy line of the Vatican happened in 1963 as the Church officially validated human right and democratic standards. Since then, the Church's hostility toward liberal democracy changed considerably, thus even its readiness to cooperate with autocrats shrinks to a minimum. Under John Paul II, the Vatican learned to be a protector of human dignity and democratic principles, but the history of the Church's involvement in democratization is multifaceted, ever changing and seldom even contradictory. It remains to be seen if this experience might be applied to the relationship between Islam and democracy.

Accordingly it is to point out that cultural constructivism is constructed on four concepts: social structure (example: political-, economic-, legal systems of a state), culture, norms and ideas. It focuses on ties that bind (interaction) humans to institutions and the cultural practices that make people to that what they are. Constructivists think that rules and values are changing over time because of interactions. They also believe that humans have diverse identities, but there is no universal identity. People's different identities are constructed by how they spend their lives by networking (interacting) in the social structures of their own state. This is why people see the world in their own ways. Moreover, they

¹⁴ The case of the "dissident" Reformed priest, (László Tőkés). He played a key role in the early stage of revolutionary events in Romania. Source: http://www.ceausescu.org/ceausescu_texts/revolution/revolt_daybyday.htm, accessed on 22.01.2014.

also think that states are not the only and the most significant actors. According to Wendt, anarchy depends on prevailing perceptions, norms and beliefs. States do not worry about all other states. Examples: America feels concerned about North Korea that has one nuclear-powered weapon, but not about UK, that has a hundredfold. Germany and France were archenemies and fought often in the past century, but today they lead together the EU.

Conclusively, culturalists were frequently applying interpretivist techniques using ethnographic investigation, phenomenographic and ethno methodological approaches as well as case studies. Positivist researchers¹⁵ designed pertinent cultural accounts on crucial political developments.

Structuralism

Structuralism is associated with the systemic level of analysis and it maintains that the structure of the international system accounts for the behaviour of states. It stresses that the main concern of all states is their own survival and it highlights that the international system is anarchic. Further, structural realists concentrate on security and the dispersion of power of the most influential states in the system. Absolute power is less significant than relative power. Thus, they are working with polarity that can be unipolar, bipolar and multipolar.

Specialists in political science often applied Marxism as theoretical framework, and without a doubt, this is one of the most recognised structuralist approaches. It deals with such a structural dynamism as “class fight”. Accordingly, class struggle is the driving force (“locomotive”) of history. Even though classical Marxism worked with topics as political development and human agency, certain researchers¹⁶ did not pay any attention to agency and stressed the superiority of structures.

Contrariwise, critics of Marxism claim that this approach tries to reduce politics to economics, but humans are interested in other things as

¹⁵ Robert Putnam’s classical research of 1993 (*Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*) is only one example, but there are such names as Michel Foucault or Max Weber because they were open for cultural arguments.

¹⁶ Structuralism experienced an intellectual revolution in the 1960s. “For Marx” (1968) written by Louis Althusser and published in France became the founding text of the school of structuralist Marxism. Source:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/althusser/>, accessed on 01.02.2014.

well, not only in the financial side of life. Besides, Marxists have an inappropriate perception of history, because after all, people's decision and choice matters, not only the lawfulness of history. Marxists expected peace between communist countries and the end of capitalism. Communism was applied in several countries over the world at its peak,¹⁷ but currently only, a handful of states are applying communist ideology: China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos and Cuba. Furthermore, Marxists assume that the state is a simple instrument of the wealthiest class, which have diverse interests, but certain non-wealthy groups have access to power as well.

Another relevant variant of structuralism develops in the 1960-1970s under the name of Dependency theory. It deals with the stunted development of the Third World states and it is an additional example of structuralist ideas that are applying Marxist elements. Dependency theory focuses on the effects of imbalanced conditions of trade between the less developed and the technologically advanced states.

Structuralist researchers are studying the functions of such structural powers as state, status, ethnicity, gender and social class in political developments. Structures are perceived as issues tied to social, civic and political relations and interactions of humans. The main and characteristic methodological statement of structuralist specialists is that specific components of any structure only have sense in terms of their interactions with each other. For that reason, structuralists always concentrate on networks and interactions between several components of the system and the development of such connections.

According to the structuralist view, the key of democratization is to adjust underlying socioeconomic or cultural settings to it. Therefore, after Gorbachev came to power in 1985, he intended to open (Glasnost) and restructure (Perestroika) Soviet society. Characteristic to his plans were the freedom of opinion and speech as well as less official control. In turn, the cohesive supremacy of communism elapsed because people were given more self-determination that was civically used. As a result, suppressed nationalism such as in Eastern Europe, the Baltics or Moldova

¹⁷ Former communist countries were in Africa (Angola, Benin, Congo, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Mozambique) , Asia (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mongolia, and Yemen), the Soviet Union (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia), and the Soviet controlled Eastern bloc countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia).

again appeared after these countries were occupied by 1940. In consequence of the breakaway of these mentioned states, former Soviet Republics also declared their independence, as they did not see any more reasons to stay within a weak politico-administrative union. Resulting pressures and warfare as in Nagorno Karabakh or Tajikistan contributed to the breakdown of a superpower (SU) until certain equilibrium has been re-established again and the newly independent Russian Federation has emerged. Besides, as an institutional fact one has to consider the Soviet constitution of 1977 that partially allowed the Republics to be self-directed. The innovative goals to restructure communism in the SU was a rational choice of Gorbachev and his supporters because they may have recognized that Moscow and its political system would breakdown if it is not renewed. One could assign these results to structuralism, because nationalism generated the breakdown after it emerged due to less public suppression. Ethnicity can be the keyword as it is a common nominator of nationalism and structuralism. Firstly, it is a significant feature of nationalism, and secondly it has to be seen as a structural force of structuralism as well.

Makarychev argues that thoughts, standards and rhetorical frames are imperative ideational arguments to clarify policy results in specific Russia's region and in the whole system of Russian federalism. The study of Russian decentralization, therefore, can be improved by engaging with and adopting the new notions and tools bringing attention to the influence of local identities as demonstrated in different kinds of dialogues. Thus, „post-structuralist conceptualizations of space, territoriality and regional subjectivity”¹⁸ is an additional frame to democratization. That is why regions with strong regional identities have to develop a sense of balance between accentuating their distinct differences, on the one hand, and following some collective values appealing to broader political background, on the other.

Nevertheless, can one explain the collapse of the SU by structuralist approach only because there is a certain structure? Without the policy of *détente*, the Soviet elite may not have experienced their high difference to the West and may not have seriously thought about their commitments to the Soviet State. The SU had used to be completely isolated but under the period of *détente*, even the communist elites were able to interact with western countries.

¹⁸ Makarychev Andrey (2012): Identity and representation in Russia's regions: Adopting a critical theory perspective, Journal of Eurasian Studies, Elsevier.

The high living standards and human right norms of western structures influenced the economic downturn of the SU in the eighties. Even Gorbachev became acquainted with the West and introduced glasnost into the public sphere. In the meantime, obligations of elites to the Soviet regime were loosened and the public gradually questioned the legitimacy of communist rule.

One can focus on the economic facet of the collapse of the SU. Paradoxically, the command economy with its centralism led to quick industrial “modernisation” after the Second World War. Nonetheless, by the middle of 90’s the same economic structure became unable to sustain itself, which led to reformist efforts. Thus, the main causes of the SU collapse are to be searched in command economy. The nature of this explanation could be a structuralist approach, because it explains the breakdown with the economic circumstances, focusing on interaction of several economical features.

The Soviet prototype of centrally planned economy had a crucial shortcoming because it was inflexible. Capitalism was promoted through media channels but the Soviet system was remaining backward and becomes contested. There was an obsession of the nomenklatura concerning the future communistic utopia. Moscow has built on the principle of dictatorship of the proletarians, thus, only a step towards the paradise of the future, but in constant confrontation with the capitalistic West. According to this dogma, leadership expected that the people of the SU do sacrifices: give up their basic freedoms in order to move toward the final goal, positioned in the distant future.

If one wants to demonstrate the structuralist approach, one can give as an example the basic contrast between dissidents and nomenklatura because of the shortage of capital and a ruined welfare state. All this happened due to a poor command economy, thus the SU collapsed from inside, because the party-political, financial, and social conditions that existed within the SU became unmanageable. The Soviet budget, the pillars of which held a gigantic military complex has lost the arms race. This trauma meant that global competitiveness with the West was lost by Moscow. Administrative and social circumstances that contributed to the demise of the SU were interlinked. The party-political and public circumstances were associated because when the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe and Afghanistan war revealed mistakes in top strategies, the base of the system, thus the people became more and more disappointed.

Can the above presented general remark really represent a mono-directional explanation of the collapse of the SU?

After the turnaround of 1989, the presidency of Yeltsin was the first relevant political pattern in the Eastern European region. But the activity of Yeltsin's government is linked mostly to negative terms because certain circumstances simply ceased to exist and it was not necessarily the Yeltsin team as they were inducing controversial processes in Russia.

Indeed, certain circumstances just have had to cease becoming obsolete, but it is remarkably that very few of the newly introduced institutional systems survived the destructive manner of the turnaround period. Many administrative frameworks and functional structures were simply swept away or put aside without replacing them by other perspectives.

Now, back to the collapse moment as in the Russian case, disintegration and unification were going hand in hand in the 1990's.

The rhythm of political, economic and societal disintegration has increased enormously in comparison to the period before. But the central structure of the state machinery as communist party, army or KGB were almost untouched, yet they were not able to interfere in affairs, because "they" have positioned themselves in the watch and see situation.

The society has begun to fall apart in more and more particular political and economic segments. Nevertheless, this falling apart period has not generated new legal, political or economic entities, and there were also no new kind of contracts or another work-sharing process as before.

What has followed was isolation in which autarchic processes were strengthened enhancing animosity with the danger of total disintegration, but this time not only with the central government but also among each other, the big Communist project (the SU) was in real danger.

The heavy-handedness, the disorientation and subjection levels of the society were ending in an explosive phase, meanwhile the paternal central state slowly became history and local influence with its dangerous barons was growing up. Therefore, the former Soviet society shows an increased dependency level towards whatever authorities (oligarchs) were jump-started during the disintegration period of the former USSR.

However, structuralist view, studies the social and political relationships that are coining the economic developments while the rationalist approach would focus on how the target orientation and rational behaviour of politicians was distorted with the impolitic constrains leading to disorganisations in resource allocation, corruption

and vertical negotiating. It is different to the rationalist method, where analysis is caused from human behaviour; or the approaches applied by culturalist scientists, whom basic elements are norms and rules, structuralists instead, were identifying changes that are coming from underlying socio-economic and cultural settings.¹⁹ Consequently, because political, economic and social powers created situations that led to the self-dissolution of the SU, it is therefore that the approach undertaken by structuralist is acceptable here. This offers a view that comprises full expression to the disintegration of the communist power bloc. The approach best explaining the economic aspect could be the combination of structural and rational one.

Beissinger²⁰ combines structuralist with actor-centered viewpoints in his book, where he explains²¹ how the collapse of the Soviet state became viewed from the impossible to the unavoidable within only a few years. While several books refer to the inherent logic of the communist regime as the main reason for its collapse, Beissinger underlines the importance of nationalist actions that took place during the years 1987 to 1991.

Author argues that the crucial impact of these nationalistic actions and their cross-country effect coined contemporary history, in which institutions were reformed not as the outcome of a natural logic, but rather through the whole development itself.

Beissinger's examination relays on useful combination of comparative sociological and transnational examination by using rich quantitative and qualitative data. Author explains in the second and fifth chapter of his book how the transnational glasnost combined with nationalism developed and why certain movements of nationalism prospered while others failed. Beissinger describes the success of nationalist movements from a transnational viewpoint, but in the understanding of the authors of this paper, the failure of movements can rather be explained from a comparative perspective, as it will be demonstrated below.

Although the SU collapsed in August 1991, activities until December 1992 are built-in to avoid the problem of right censoring as well as to consider the impact of the collapse itself. Beissinger collects

¹⁹ Fish Steven (1999): p. 811.

²⁰ Former professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and director of the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS).

²¹ Mark R. Beissinger, 2002: *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*.

data from 185 protests and 50 violent demonstrations from 1965 to 1986, which serves as significant information²² concerning the development of events.

The “noisy phase of nationalism”²³ is measured on a huge scale 2,177 violent events and 6,663 massive demonstrations from (January) 1987 to (December) 1992. Statistic was collected of contemporaneous media²⁴ and author follows the constructivist perspective of close relation between agency and structure by focusing on nationalism in order to elucidate the breakdown of the SU.

Beissinger searches to clarify why particular structural settings led to collective nationalist events, and how actions then coined national identity. This theoretical context is the basis for an empirical examination that relays on the study of nationalism in terms of political mobilization and activities of then.²⁵

Beissinger’s main trace regarding the role of nationalism for the collapse of the SU is the cross-country effect of nationalist groups and he thinks that without the crucial influence of one movement on another the fragmentation of the USSR would not have been imaginable. Institutions have been transformed not because of certain pre-requirements, but rather through the development of demonstration itself²⁶ in this stage of history with its various happenings.

Beissinger shows in his study that the development of glasnost tied to nationalism was an exceptional but unusual period of history, which coined other nationalist events in Europe. Author classifies four particular features of the former SU that influenced the growth of nationalist movements, specifically the socio-political (ideological) and organizational (institutional) crises, the close connection of state and government, the ethnic mischief and the Soviet outplay abroad. Thus, following features²⁷ were crucial for the rapid spreading of nationalisms: problems in the ethno federal organizational structure, individual

²² Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p.44.

²³ Ibidem (inclusively p.45).

²⁴ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 473.

²⁵ Author formulates in this way: “An ‘eventful’ perspective places time and action centrally in its analysis and seeks to probe the relationship of action to subsequent outcomes, controlling for the influence of other factors. More than that, it implies that nationalism needs to be understood not only as a cause of action, but also as the product of action” Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 11.

²⁶ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 36.

²⁷ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): pp. 450-451.

linguistic outlines, a high level of suburbanization, a large population size and –the key point– frequent interactions with other nationalist groupings.

The feature of problems inside the ethno federal organizational structure refers to the multi-ethnic facet of the SU. Beissinger points out²⁸ that if a minority group succeeded to preserve its political influence for example by native-language education, this would be a guarantee for nationalist achievement.

A comparable tool applies for the linguistic design because if a movement was able to stop linguistic absorption to the Russian, it improved its own identity as well as its organizational unity. The high urbanization degree feature²⁹ is important because of the social networks it generates, thus, it was more probable for nationalist leaders to win supporters in urban as rural areas. The breakdown of the SU was the result of several interrelated actions. Moreover, early rising nationalist movements had additional structural gains, whereas late rising movements could have used the fame of the early risers or with Beissinger's words, this was the "bandwagoning effect"³⁰ of nationalist movements. Consequently, the breakdown of the SU occurred suddenly, because several types of nationalisms surprised Moscow Kremlin. Accordingly, this is one of author's main ideas³¹ tied to the importance of studying the cause of the events and their effects. Therefore, he proposes the above-mentioned way, instead of concentrating too much on the study of judgements and concepts.

Beissinger analyses the glasnost connected to nationalism and identifies the prerequisites, which made the SU helpless to separationist events. Author directs his attention rather on how these actions and movements turned into a transnational stream of nationalism, inspiring and encouraging each other. The entire second chapter tries to give answers to the question: how did that happen?

Beissinger's reasoning shows that there were two crucial demonstrative acts in the summer of 1987 that influenced the outline of future protests, these were, the demonstration of the Crimean Tatars and the protest march at the Freedom Monument in Riga. Due to the divergences in Moscow over the problem of how to deal with these on-going objections, other actions, for example the Armenian movement on the Karabakh topic were motivated to switch to further demonstrations.

²⁸ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 50.

²⁹ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 451.

³⁰ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 454.

³¹ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): pp. 455-459.

Author finds out that all activities at the beginning of nationalist mobilization can be defined within the “domino theory”³² as these have a knock on effect and are working together in a chain reaction.

Beissinger remarks that after the Nineteenth Party Conference, nationalist conflict had become diffused and usual, so that amplified interrelations among the nationalist groups were more inconsistent as before. In author’s understanding, “tide” is an unusual power and attraction and these issues worked across multifaceted frameworks, thus, within “the cycle as a whole”³³ nationalism was the main tidal dynamism in the former SU. Author justifies this process not only by the synthesis of state and regime, the ethno federal state system, the ethnic grievance and the transnational interaction, but also by the influence of action on consequent action and the institutional transformation.

This argument is based on statistical data and author shows clearly that the comparable structure of periods of substantial institutional transformations in several states of the former Eastern bloc. As protests were growing in number and frequency and as public opinion shifted towards objective attitude, such behaviours become usual.

Author works with large-n and small-n patterns in order to study the structural impacts of nationalist mobilization and by using nonlinear event-history and event-count outlines, he also addresses the problem of endogeneities. Moreover, the method of process tracing makes possible to discover causal relationships and according to Beissinger, it is rather difficult to catch the changes of the public opinion in the former SU by opinion polls, as there were no efficient barometers accessible when the USSR was falling apart. The emphasis on temporal event and dynamic investigation is successful here, as it permits to detect the background details of nationalist movements and actions.

Authors of this paper are stating that Beissinger’s study comprises now even more than he does clearly promises at the beginning of his book. According to his interpretations, transnational effects were the main power behind creating the core of mobilization, but it is also to note that Beissinger continuously observes the interplay between agency and structure. Author outlines that Gorbachev ignored demonstrations in a way that strengthened further protests, even if he wanted to prevent them.

³² Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 68.

³³ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 79.

Thus, it was dangerous to react³⁴ to opposing nationalist actions at first with authoritarian strength.

Beissinger outlines a mobilizational phase among groups as they regularized and influenced each other episodically, tracked by “a broadening of challenge to encompass new groups and a growing causal role for the event”.³⁵ A transnational cyclical development becomes conceivable, when certain changing features, such as contiguity in time and place, geographic proximity, bandwagon effects, and related matters are suddenly coming together. It is the Soviet situation, because the ethno federal structure, the economic system, and the changes in radical directions were parallel productions that encouraged the shift to transnational mobilization.

The importance of transnational influences becomes once more evident by examining the core of the mobilizational setting. Whereas during the Breschnew era of the SU opposition was unusual and not evidently directed towards the state, this has changed due to glasnost, because the reduction of official just control increased the chances of public objection. All demonstrative movements had one thing in common, more exactly the transnational domination of Moscow, which led to the appearance of the mobilizational phase in cyclical events by having one main goal: to free oneself from Soviets.

Besieger’s analysis in chapter two can be summarised in this way: the rise of the mobilizational cycle and the rise of the nationalist tide were transnational developments that would not have been possible without institutional change and the impact of action on subsequent action. All these characteristics together and considering the circumstance that political institutions were not able to react in time to the events, Besieger’s observation can be accepted. Therefore, the institutional collapse of the Politburos can be treated as a transnational result of international mobilization.

Beissinger investigates the roles of coincidental and action regarding the success or the failure of nationalist groupings in the fifth chapter. Author distinguishes between three cases of nationalist success:

³⁴ In author’s formulation: “We will never know, whether Gorbachev’s assessment was correct, but the subsequent failure of the approach taken raises the question of whether a space for a nonviolent politics of internal boundary change would have altered the course of events.” Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 69.

³⁵ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 74.

mobilizational success,³⁶ issue success³⁷ and political success.³⁸ As in the SU some nationalist movements were unsuccessful mobilizationally others succeeded related to their issue and politically. Therefore, Beissinger offers five potential outcomes of mobilization³⁹ in the SU, which are based to the three cases of nationalist success mentioned above: irrelevancy,⁴⁰ failures of action⁴¹ failures of mobilizational effect,⁴² mobilizational failure but issue success⁴³ and mobilizational success.⁴⁴ For the reason that Beissinger's focus is on mobilizational and not issue success, type four is left out. Although author remarks that he leaves type for others to analyse, he does not mentions a cause for this.⁴⁵

The problematic regarding success or failure is in the following: Did the nationalist groups have the capability to use the tidal powers created by others? Beissinger studies about 40 movements and notices that they can be categorised to three out of the five types of result, namely type two, three and five. There are those movements, which failed to create major separatist mobilizational action (type 2), and whose movements produced some important activity, but not enough to break through institutional restraints (type 3), and finally those whose movements caused substantial power and exceeded the institutional constrictions (type 5).

The big size of the population, high ethno federal status, and individual linguistic patterns of the latter type assured their success, whereas the contrary of these elements of the former types led to their failure.⁴⁶ Concerning the problem of success and failure of nationalist activities in the light of transnational and comparative research for a

³⁶ In the first case, a wide resonance of nationalist undertakings can be perceived within society.

³⁷ In the second case, movement targets are adopted as basis for state policy and political strategy.

³⁸ In the third, case a movement gains control over the entire state apparatus.

³⁹ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 205.

⁴⁰ A specific frame is inappropriate and therefore unimagined.

⁴¹ A potentially relevant frame does not become the foundation for important efforts to mobilize.

⁴² Efforts to mobilize around a particular frame fail to become enough resonance to allow a grouping to overcome institutional restrictions.

⁴³ A challenging frame is tactically provided by the powerful even in the absence of powerful mobilization.

⁴⁴ A mobilizational frame gains enough resonance in order to allow a group to break through institutional restrictions, leading to state control or influencing its agenda.

⁴⁵ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 205.

⁴⁶ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 209.

second time, it is to point out that the viewer can interpret Beissinger's insights more generally as well. In relation to the success of the nationalist movements, author argues persuasively that even if the issues such as linguistic practices, population size or ethno federal positions were inconvenient, certain alliances could make nationalist actions effective.⁴⁷ Beissinger demonstrates for Tuvans, Bashkirs, Gagauz, Turkmen and Abkhaz that their undertakings were effective, because their leaders used the chance of planning.

Author differentiates between three episodes of separatism⁴⁸ that made the success of mobilization more possible. In such cases, where the above-mentioned inconvenient elements were at play, the groups relied on other factors, such as the results of prior tides of nationalism, the reforming guidelines of the regime, and their demographic advantages. Conclusively, in those situations mostly transnational features guaranteed mobilizational success, even if it had seemed completely impossible before.

Author accepts⁴⁹ in relation to the failure of groups that even if nationalism was possible at that juncture, structural difficulties could mainly obstruct success. Nevertheless, absolute failure was provoked by the combination of disadvantages and Beissinger shows this by referring to nationalist actions of Volga Tatar, Belorussian and Uzbek movements. Example: the Belorussian language was weakened by russification and the movement could not spread quickly because the lack of efficient urban networks. Aside from the fact that Russians had improved urbanization the Volga Tatars and the Uzbek movement had no potential of effective mobilization not only because of institutional constrictions, but also rather due to their secondary position in comparison to the Crimean Tatars. Evidently, a certain national configuration, especially applicable to Uzbekistan, Belorussia and Crimea made success unmanageable.⁵⁰

Conclusively, Beissinger's study shows that on the one hand, a transnational outlook is helpful to explain the intensity as well as the structure of nationalist groups in the former USSR. On the other hand, a comparative approach is necessary to make clear the failures of nationalist movements. Finally, author offers a unique theoretical construction by which structuralist and actor-centered viewpoints are intermixed.

⁴⁷ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 229.

⁴⁸ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 25.

⁴⁹ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 217.

⁵⁰ Mark R. Beissinger (2002): p. 252.

Rationalist viewpoint

What is rationalism?

Rationalism is “an individualist or agency theory, which requires an explanation of, first, actor preferences and, second, collective outcomes as a result of aggregated individual actions based on these preferences”.⁵¹

The rational choice approach has been used mostly for clearing up such political developments as social movements, the formation of interest groups, difficulties in public action and voting behaviour. Nonetheless, actor-oriented, rational choice researchers put emphasis on deliberate collaboration between actors.⁵² Although a number of theoretical models can be reasonably applied to explain the realities behind the disintegration of the former Soviet state, the “Revolt of the Elites” theory seems to be thought provoking.

This explanation stresses the central role of the former Communist elites in causing the disintegration of the USSR. During the Soviet era, the bureaucratic national leaders of the republics had been given sufficient scope to manage their own republics. Now confronted with the prospect of the collapse of the political system, these elites recognised that the best way for them to maintain control was to redefine the organizational items of the state. The breakdown of the Soviet state allowed them to preserve their influence. This description can be partially used to show the disintegration at the top. While in case of some parts of the Baltic States and Eastern Europe the nationalistic moods were strong, the fragmented Soviet Union could well have persisted in a reduced form stabile, as its togetherness idea was still widespread among the Soviet citizens. Nonetheless, during 1991 the republican phase leaders speculated that their interests were maximal if the Soviet states were drifting apart, thus, the union became decomposed.

According to the rational choice theory, elites were goal-oriented, because their target was to not to save the Soviet state, but to retain their own influence. Thus, leaders calculated their chances with the result that

⁵¹ For this section, please see Schimmelfennig, Rittberger (2006): pp. 73-95.

⁵² As presented in the theory of games. This did originally in the field of economics debate Neumann and Morgenstern. Please see in John von Neumann (1928): pp. 295-300 and John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern (1953): *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. Princeton, NJ. Princeton University Press.

Online:https://archive.org/stream/theoryofgamesand030098mbp/theoryofgamesand030098mbp_djvu.txt, accessed on 02.02. 2014

it is worth to transform their semi-autonomous republics into sovereign states. Rationalists are thinking related to democracy that there is a need to create the best reasons for key persons within a political system.

Thus, a potential explanation of the collapse of the SU is the end of several armed conflicts among the borders of the Eastern Bloc. Uprisings and social emancipations did spread under the pressure of East and West. However, with the fall of the Iron Curtain, these tensions faded and the artificial formations of CIS countries and Yugoslavia were emerging. Therefore, one can observe that less conflicts generate less coherence. Since there are sufficient statistics and facts about the armed clashes in these regions, one can search for potential explanations in several directions based on rational choice approach, which examines the quantity of conflicts and its causes. Rational choice is based on the methodical improvement of a sample based on a set of suppositions, established by the researcher. In this case, rational choice approach just examines one side of the story of the collapse of the SU but can provide one puzzle piece to a complete picture.

Another relevant aspect is that glasnost (openness) and perestroika (economic and political re-structuring) were introduced as reforms in order to overcome the economic and political structural deficits of the SU. The economic backwardness of the Soviet state compared to the modernism of the West was obvious.

Moreover, other factors as the incapacity of the communist command system to adapt to the latest industrial developments and the inactivity of monolithic political system aggravated the situation. Therefore, it becomes impossible to save both the Soviet model and the state and applied reforms set in motion, elite struggles, nationalisms that generated the destruction of the bases of Soviet system. It was impossible to make adjustments in all directions in the final stages and this led to the breakdown of the SU.

This account is also a rationalist explanation, since Gorbachev acted goal-oriented (to reform Communism and save the union) and planned optimum output of his actions. Although he assumed that loses power monopoly, but also hoped to gain public support for reforms in order to save the communist state. Unfortunately, these reforms were not practicable and finally he miscalculated himself. Both explanations are belonging to the rationalist approach.

As mentioned above, one of the ways to look at the breakdown of the Soviet state is through an explanation related to the behaviour of its party-political leaders, or their insurgency. It is imaginable that the

downfall was in some sense driven by leaders who were searching to redefine the guidelines of the system in such a way, which would help them to keep their supremacy. Yeltsin climbs to power on the edge of Russian nationalism, and his regime was one of the main driving forces behind the disintegration of the old Soviet state under Gorbachev. However, Yeltsin retained the concentration of power in his hands as the new state was coming into force whereas Gorbachev has lost control forever.

A different direction would be to assume that global interference or association of Western states, which were seeking to dismantle Soviet Union as a superpower and threat, could have pressured the politburo in such manner from outside that this collapsed, because of the tensions.

Both explanations are belonging to the rationalist view as these were focusing on actors and agents of change: in the first case the elites and in the second case foreign countries. Participants of these developments are goal-oriented in both situations, as elites want to gain or keep power and to abolish monitoring of the Communist state. Moreover, they want to try to maximize their control over relevant resources in order to maintain maximum power in the new state at suitable costs and to be participants as global players with a minimum of risk (petty expenses).

However, according to the opinion of the authors of this paper the breakdown of the SU cannot be interpreted as a rational choice, because elites and agencies did not know precisely what they wanted and what was to be expected politically. Example: leaders did not figured out the fall of the communist system in the early stages of Solidarność, thus the possibility to form trade unions remained as organizational frame to penetrate upwards from below. In addition, for the same reason, the spontaneous opening of the border between Hungary and Austria in 1989 was no real signal for communist elites to perceive the end of the cold war as people stove a hole on the Iron Curtain.

Furthermore, elites were not in conjunction with each other, thus they probably did not make a cost-benefit calculation about financial survival of the regime.

The cost of detention and discrimination in most cases overshadowed the assumed benefits of raising awareness about the repressive character of socialism. In verification of this, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Prague Spring of 1968 can be experimentally examined with culturalist methods by searching for collective (social) and individual identities.

Now let us go back to the collapse case of the SU. This was triggered by Gorbachev's reforms because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has had suddenly lost its government monopoly. Before this, resulting from Glasnost-Perestroika the Party lost its grip on the mass media, and so the corrupt sides of life in the big union became public that strongly weakened peoples' support toward the Communist system as the people became disappointed of it. People were breaking away with prevalent customs and standards that constitute individual and collective characteristics of a certain social unit and subsequently new rules and norms took their place that were coined of ethno-nationalist thoughts and ultimately induced strong desire for independence. However, these developments originated from institutional modifications as well.

In the same way, since this approach concerns the people's disillusionment as a main factor for the downfall of the SU, authors of this paper are supposing that the main assumption underlying this version is that individuals are reacting to a certain serious situation for the reason that they believe to have good prospects of change. The rationality in this is that since their necessities were not satisfied before, they answered realistically with protests by opting for something different in the hope that this would be more. Opting is certainly not the right word at this point, but it is required to demonstrate the similarity of this reasoning with the rationalist choice logic that explicates voting behaviour. Furthermore, because a new structure is in construction influenced by ethno-nationalism and strong independence struggles because of disappointment is a casual explanation. Fish notes by elucidating change⁵³ that - in the language of paradigm movement from one equilibrium to another - simply belongs to the rationalist approach.

Therefore, it can be stated that rationalist approach applies why-questions whereas the culturalist viewpoint works with research interrogations that are formulated with how. Furthermore, rational choice analysis also includes the analysis of limitations that are faced by actors, thus official guidelines, standards and other types of restrictions. It is also used to scrutinise voting behaviour in democratic regimes as party competition and coalition building.

As showed above, the rational choice approach has meta-theoretical characteristics and certainly, it is often applied in sociology, economics, history and political sciences. It demands an agency-focused

⁵³ Fish Steven (1999): p. 797

study based on particular suppositions concerning actors. The core suppositions are firstly, that human beings are goal-oriented, thus they know exactly what they want; secondly, actors take full advantage of their utility roles, thus they calculate expenses and profits of particular actions by trying to exhaust all possibilities for their benefits. Rational choice is a meta-analysis⁵⁴ including micro economical views that relies on a particular idea of an economic being (*homo economicus*), who thinks logically as it is self-centred by considering ways and means. It is essential to highlight that judiciousness or rational in the framework of rational choice method is not the same with the situation to be utilitarian or roughly, somewhat that is rational but rather as intentional in order to achieve certain objectives. Rational choice focuses on the methodical development of a pattern based on a set of options, demarcated by the scientist. These options do not necessarily have to be real, thus there is no need to be backed by experiential study. They may even be idealistic directions. The imperative is that the rational choice pattern made according to these options is suitable to elucidate and predict certain situations that are conditional probabilities.⁵⁵

Finally, it can be observed that the hypothesis-making segment of rational choice ultimately originates from empiric studies of natural sciences because there is an exogenously gathered knowledge.⁵⁶ The observing researcher can determine this experience by repeating an experiment several times and thereby comes into being the socio-ontological but also the epistemological constituent of rational choice. Tests, on the contrary, are frequently unmanageable or morally questionable in social disciplines. All the same, the leftovers of the natural sciences can be better understood in positivist investigation outlines, where academics are testing assumptions and variables but rationalist accounts cannot give details about peoples' willingness to die or destroy for spiritual, ethnic and traditional principles and representative things that cannot be included in cost-benefit designs.

⁵⁴Basic works relying on rational choice in political science are Anthony Downs' Economic Theory of Democracy of 1957 and Mancur Olson's The Logic of Collective Action of 1965.

⁵⁵This happens by what-if questions and analysis.

⁵⁶Alternatively, with other words regularities that have to be understood as laws.

Conflicting positions: balancing pros and cons

All methodical approaches presented above have their advantages and disadvantages.

Rational choice offers a vast and methodical examination. It permits to work with what-if questions in order to provide what-if analysis. The rational choice approach is mainly applied in political science to search for the features that cause human beings to act as a group instead of individually trying to fulfil their needs. Therefore, the formation of interest affiliations and political alliances can be studied. In addition, it can help to clarify cases when certain groups are doing things that seem to be publicly irrational but are impeccably coherent for the singular actor, who follows the accomplishment of his objectives. Yet, rational choice can only be advantageous⁵⁷ as soon as valuable hypotheses were previously offered. Prevalently, empirical study may be obligatory to be able to build significant hypotheses and occasionally, this will generate complications. Besides, multifaceted circumstances may not entirely be covered by a few hypotheses. Nevertheless, whereas comprising all hypothetically applicable features can then lead to an overly sophisticated study outline, decreasing the level of sophistication can lead to unproductive outcomes.

Paradigmatically preferences remain all the time the same. This is the way that they perceive reality, but Checkel⁵⁸ showed how constructivism could help to repair rationalism. Thus, according to Checkel social learning happens in new settings when external restrictions are low and in a less official condition.⁵⁹ How it functions in reality becomes obvious by two examples: high⁶⁰ and low⁶¹ politics. Checkel

⁵⁷ Moravscik defines preferences as the aggregated economic interest, while Hoffmann's definition is the security and sovereignty precariousness. Preferences remain all the time the same. For comparison, please see Moravscik (1998), pp. 14-49 and Hoffmann (1966): pp. 862-915.

⁵⁸ Institutions define preferences because of „social learning” in Checkel's formula the third outcome is: $\text{outcome} = \Sigma \text{ of preferences} \times \text{institutions}$ Please see in Checkel (2001b): pp. 562-563.

⁵⁹ Checkel thinks that such a new setting could be the EU and proves that outcomes are determined by actor's learning and by current institutions and while interacting in the previous institutions. The learning can change identities. Here is Checkel's model: $\text{outcome1} = \Sigma \text{ identities1} \times \text{institutions1} \Rightarrow (1) \Rightarrow \text{outcome2} = \Sigma \text{ identities2} \times \text{institutions2}$ but also $(2) \Rightarrow \text{outcome2} = \text{outcome1} \times \text{institutions2}$ Source: *Ibidem*

⁶⁰ The constitutionalization process of the EU community environment elucidates high politics: (1) creates the framework for arguing process; (2) community ethos is used as a resource of sustenance for the argument (3); actors are interested to foster their good

means that constructivism needs a more balanced epistemology because only explanatory and qualitative methods are insufficient. There is no clear answer if institutions are able to change the identity of actors. Probably, they only can modify their behaviour. Constructivism can be reduced to a collection of assumptions that are complementary to the results of rational theory.

Arising question: but has rationalism appropriately answered to the criticism of ontological blindness or the criticism of explaining transformation?

In contrast to rational choice, constructivism relays on the hint that there is no exogenous factuality and that the scientist does not perceive but is instead part of his environment, thus, it tries to elucidate. In that case, objective study is not possible. In contradistinction to rational choice, actor's behaviour becomes less transparent, as it is less reliant on inclinations (presumed that these are not stable ones) but rather is subject to interactive processes.

It is to point out that culturalist viewpoints are more common in history and anthropology than in political science. Cultural approaches are mostly essential for the study nationalist movements and indigenous policies. After the breakdown of communism, political science conquered Eastern European universities in the form of social constructivism. Although one cannot identify a unified constructivist line, one can recognise certain common hypotheses as in the scientific article of Wendt.⁶² He summarises⁶³ the key postulates of constructivism, explicitly that, actors, institutions and factuality as such have social origins. As mentioned before, rational choice relates to actors' preferences as coming from outside as usual in positivist tradition, whereas constructivists consider that preferences may change during negotiations or in the course of interactions. Nevertheless, the influence of norms, ideas, ideals and customs is thus more significant than preferences. Means and financial principles are losing their importance in illuminating actors' behaviour. Moreover, because other actors perceive a new actor as powerful even

images of credible and talented arguers. Rittberger and Schimmelfennig (2006): pp. 70-91.

⁶¹ Low politics for instance means here the creation of organic farming policy sector as a discursive process and it proves the ideational or spiritual nature of institutional transformation. Lynggaard (2007): pp. 290-313.

⁶² Moreover, Fearon and Wendt also compared the two meta-theories (constructivism and rationalism); please see in Fearon James and Wendt Alexander (2002): pp. 54-71.

⁶³ Please also see in: Alexander Wendt (1994): pp. 386-391.

authority can suddenly change. Constructivism is therefore not explaining changes in transnational affairs, because the measurement of concepts like perceptions or beliefs of actors are practically very difficult.

The structuralist approach shows that structures as such are not permanently recognizable, because these are often intricate social patterns as status. All the same, structures do have noticeable results and for that reason, these are relevant findings (particularly with regard to epistemology). Moreover, structuralist standpoints are fitting in the Realist school, which is contrary to the positivism of rational choice thinkers, because positivist academics are distinguishing between observable facts and theories. Positivists are considering observational facts as the source of thorough information. However, the study of observable implications and outcomes makes possible for structuralist researchers to detect unobservable issues as the above-mentioned patterns for example. Nowadays the power of structural realism has weakened due to its incapability to clarify the collapse of the SU. The resistance to reductivism stops structural realists from admitting the impact of changes inside the state.

Beissinger readjusted his study about nationalisms and its features related to the breakdown of Soviet Communism. In line with this, he follows again (2009) an activity-oriented and non-deterministic argumentation by stressing that not democratization, but nationalism was the central driving force behind different nationalist mobilizations.

Author tries to demonstrate this by applying empirical proofs in relation to the regularity or irregularity of separationist and autonomist requests in protests. He concludes in this paper that nationalism was able to diffuse the breakdown over multinational institutions of the Warsaw Pact and ethno federalism as well.⁶⁴

Constructivists argue that states are far from rational as they are developing their identities and interests on the inside. Their ideas, principles, and behaviours define the outcomes of the international system. The state's identity is constructed from their actions and interactions. Constructivists base on sociology and psychology as prototypes for their theories rather than on natural science and economics as the realists do. In principle, constructivists are claiming that international actors are constructing their own reality. Critics claim that constructivism is not a theory at all because it lacks any independent variables and no single aspect can guarantee whether interaction will

⁶⁴ For this section, please see in Beissinger (2009): pp. 330-345.

occur or not. Thus according to opponent's⁶⁵ constructivism is quite a disorder. Constructivists "see interests as socially constructed rather than pre-given, which means that regularities in the international system are the onsequence of collective... meanings".⁶⁶

Constructivism "demonstrates how European institutions can construct, through a process of interaction, the identities and interests of member states".⁶⁷

It is possible to invoke even other theories⁶⁸ in order to verify the case of the Soviet collapse or the downfall of "homo sovieticus"⁶⁹ in its communist setting, but this would overstep the limits of this paper. Durkheim names institutions "the gist of democracy", because these can ensure the constant flow of communication between state and society, but the development of modern institutions is tied to the process of democratization. This is a good introduction to the neo-institutionalist line even though there are light years between Durkheim and neo-institutionalist thinkers.

However, the neo-institutionalist view⁷⁰ is presently prevalent in political and contemporary historical analysis but it is a challenging task to apply the basic neo-institutionalist notions to East European cases as it studies the role of institutions⁷¹ in order to examine political developments and to create patterns of political interactions.

Nevertheless, informal institutes of Soviet-type structures generally obstruct post-Soviet restructuring struggles in Eastern Europe. While official right standards can be changed through governmental or legal decisions, informal constrictions imbedded in mentalities, formalities, customs, and precepts are intricate and need generations to change. However, institutional transformation takes place despite the problem of a very slow development.

Different academic lines of neo-institutionalism have diverse assumptions⁷² related to human compartment. Rational choice

⁶⁵ Christiansen, Jørgensen, Wiener (2001a): pp. 5- 10.

⁶⁶ Rosamond (2007): p. 130.

⁶⁷ Checkel (2001a): p. 52.

⁶⁸ "Three Theories Of Political Science, Pluralism, Elite Theory And Marxist Theory." (2011): please see conclusion of the essay.

⁶⁹ Alexander Alexandrowitsch Sinowjew (1978): please see in conclusions.

⁷⁰ Steve Solnick (1996): pp. 212 - 231.

⁷¹ The three new institutionalisms: rationalism, constructivism Rational Choice, Historical, Sociological, Calculus approach, Cultural approach. Please see in Taylor Hall (1996): p. 942; Rosamond (2007): p. 123

⁷² This can be rational choice based, culturalist or even sociological.

institutionalists focus on the examination of certain facets of social relations, particularly the relationship between leaders and agents, the consequences of transaction expenses, and the importance of proprietary rights. Different positions of institutionalism understand institutional change in different ways. Whereas in historical institutionalism and rational choice transformation happens quite slowly and comes from exterior sources, discursive institutionalism perceives change rather as a very dynamical element. It is based on regime theory, or institutionalism assuming that states develop rules, norms, laws, and institutions concerning diverse subject areas in order to improve and guard interaction.

Conclusions

Beissinger showed that comparative patterns might explain nationalist failure, while the use of transnational tools might help nationalists to succeed. Beissinger's examination has a rather broad-spectrum perception of nationalism and emphasises on the manifestation and structure of events; possibly, it would have been supportive to study different forms of patriotisms with diverse purposes. However, Beissinger's design would not function by applying various typologies, because its focal point rather lies in the elaboration of the impact of the transnational stream of nationalism. Beissinger succeeds to step out from theory into empirical directions by referring to events. It demonstrates in a general sense that transnational influences still have relevance when it comes to matters of nationalism. Consequently, nationalism and national independence in terms of comparative and transnational examination have to be considered essential themes, in society as well as in history. In addition, the interaction between agency and structure or between transnational and national issues can be extended in fact to contemporary mobilization processes as the Arab spring and the Ukrainian events of 2014.

It is to observe that finding explanations for the collapse of the SU is a challenging methodical experiment. In fact, the complexity of the process (the collapse of the SU) can only be grasped if using all possible approaches in order to prove or disprove assumptions. Generalizations can be used to tie to particular theoretical directions, but these ways do not cover the exceptions.

Authors of this paper are convinced about the circumstance that it is relevant to could position ourselves in the open minded thinker's

situation. In that case one can consider the “empirical” results of several applicable theoretical tracks in order to gather germs of truth to one’s current research section or contemporary topics by filtering and comparing data in such complex cases as the collapse of the SU or the implementation of the democratisation process in the eastern part of Europe.

Authors examined what is exactly different in explanations provided by political constructivism comparing with rationalist, culturalist and structuralist approaches by specifying certain parallels and counterparts of these competing viewpoints.

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