

INTRODUCTION

Towards Electoral Control in Central and Eastern Europe

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Comprehensive information about parliamentarians, candidates, and parties is a fundamental resource that citizens need to cast judgment on the electoral system. It allows citizens to critically evaluate the parliament, an important political body that represents citizen interests and produces the policy that impacts daily life. How can we hold the legislature accountable if we do not have a clear record of who the parliamentarians, candidates, and parties are, and of what they have done?

Theories of democratic accountability tell us that voters can use elections to control parties and politicians. Theorists assume that political representatives anticipate sanctions for poor individual and party performance and thus have an incentive to implement policies that correspond with citizens' interests. Citizens lose control when their electoral voice does not compel parties and politicians to act according to the interests of the people who put them in power. Repeated free and fair elections are supposed to function, then, as a mechanism of electoral control.

To empirically examine electoral control, we need the right data. Many previous empirical studies on parliamentary elections, even in Central and Eastern Europe, have critical shortcomings, as they typically (i) limit analyses to elected parliamentarians although all candidates are equally important for understanding the process of electoral control; (ii) fail to adequately incorporate the history of elections although voter decisions are usually based on the assessment of the past performance of candidates' political parties; and (iii) do not have

appropriate contrasts in cross-national settings: examining different electoral systems allows researchers to properly assess the extent to which our knowledge about the determinants of winning and losing can be generalized across the region.

In this edited book, we present a step towards electoral control with the East European Parliamentarian and Candidate dataset (EAST PaC). EAST PaC is composed of the candidates who stood for national parliamentary elections in Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary and spans the 1990s to the 2010s (Polish data goes back to 1985). Candidates are matched over time, rendering a dataset that allows researchers to track the political careers of every candidate, from the thousands who never won to the few political lifers whose parliamentary careers are decades long. By covering every parliamentary election and situating them in their particular historical moments, scholars can identify trends and dynamics of the political party systems and achieve major insights into electoral politics of the region. EAST PaC is an opportunity for scholars to better test theories of accountability, representation, and political inequality in Central and Eastern Europe from the fall of Communism to the present.

The goals of this book meet the main goals of the Electoral Control project funded by Poland's National Science Centre (see Preface and Acknowledgments). The Electoral Control project brought together young and established scholars in sociology, political science, and area studies to form a multi-disciplinary scientific research team that (a) updated existing data on parliamentarians and candidates used in prior publications and made these data easily accessible and freely available; (b) trained graduate students and set the research agenda for the use of these data around the topics of accountability, representation, and political inequality; and (c) produced methodological and substantive works based on these data.

This book is designed to meet the methodological aims of the project, which were to provide users with all of the information they need to use these data for substantive analyses and to provide a roadmap for collecting these data in future elections and other countries (see "Conclusion: Lessons Learned and New Questions," this book). As for substantive works, an aim of this project was to specify how and to what extent winning and losing in the parliamentary elections depend on a combination of party and candidate characteristics within

social, economic, and political contexts. To that end, we are preparing a separate edited book based entirely on substantive analyses of EAST PaC data, in addition to a series of publications in academic journals due in 2016 and 2017. This methodological book both accompanies the substantive analyses that will appear in various academic outlets over the next few years and serves as the means to further methodological advancement in the field of electoral politics in CEE and elsewhere.

THE SURPRISE OF ELECTORAL CONTROL IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Several high-profile studies on electoral control in Central and Eastern Europe based on earlier versions of EAST PaC data formed the basis for the Electoral Control project. Jakub Zielinski, Goldie Shabad, and Kazimierz M. Słomczyński's (2005) "Electoral Control in New Democracies: The Perverse Incentives of Fluid Party Systems," published in *World Politics*, was a crucial work. They asked whether repeated elections function as a means of accountability; their case study was Poland during the 1990s. Using a dataset that was an earlier version of EAST PaC, they found that economic performance influences vote decisions: incumbents are elected (or not) based on how well their constituencies fare economically. Though 1990s Poland is characterized by high levels of party switching, electoral control works through political parties in a manner substantively similar to Western Europe. Zielinski et al (2005: 391) expressed surprise at their findings:

"Given the historical legacy of dictatorship and the broad sense of uncertainty that accompanies the early stages of democratization, one might have expected that it would take considerable time before voters learn how to use elections to control their representatives systematically. It appears, however, that such learning is very rapid. As a result, there seems to be no fundamental difference between new and old democracies with regard to this basic nature of the electoral process."

Later, Shabad and Słomczyński (2011) returned to the idea of electoral control in Poland, but this time from the voters' perspective. They used waves from the Polish Panel Survey (POLPAN) and again found evidence that electoral control in Poland functions as theorized: "Voters take both

economic performance and political performance into account,” they wrote, “in deciding whether to reward or sanction governing political parties” (316). They warned that polarization in Polish politics could lead voters to harden their political loyalties, making them less likely to push out parties with poor economic performance and thus diminish the ability of elections to function as a form of democratic control.

Słomczyński, Shabad, and Zielinski (2008) turned their attention to Ukraine. “Fluid Party Systems, Electoral Rules and Accountability of Legislators in Emerging Democracies: The Case of Ukraine,” published in *Party Politics*, asked the same question they had posed to Poland: do repeated elections function as a mechanism of accountability? Examining an earlier version of EAST PaC Ukraine, from 1994 – 2002, again they were surprised: Ukrainian parliamentarians are sanctioned for poor economic performance.

“Our analyses also show that electoral control in Ukraine operates through political parties or partisan blocs. Despite the informational noise that exists in Ukraine’s party system and the deliberate confusion perpetrated by ‘the party of power’, partisan labels communicate to the voters which incumbents were or are associated with political forces supportive of the presidential administration and therefore should be held responsible for economic outcomes” (104).

Similarly, Andrew Roberts (2008), in his article in *Electoral Studies*, “Hyperaccountability: Economic voting in Central and Eastern Europe,” asked the same question as Słomczyński and colleagues, namely, whether repeated elections engender accountability in post-Communist nations. Roberts examined aggregate data of party vote shares across ten countries. The data are based in large part on the Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe at the University of Essex and span from the 1990s to the mid-2000s. Roberts, also expressing surprise, found strong evidence for electoral control based on economic performance.

“... the communist inheritance erected a number of barriers to electoral accountability. In particular, voters’ lack of experience and participation in politics, the high uncertainty of the transition, and unformed party systems might make accountability difficult to practice. Why did reality subvert these expectations?” (542)

Roberts suggested two reasons for this. First, he argued that Communism as practiced in the CEE produced educated and urbanized citizens who “were equipped with the skills to participate intelligently in politics if they so chose” (542). And, according to Roberts, they did so choose. Second, the region’s sustained radical social and political change heightened citizen interest in politics.

A healthy rate of entry and incumbency in electoral competition might indicate a robust participatory political culture expected in both new and old democracies (Almond and Verba 1963). The extreme political sensitivity of CEE voters that allow for electoral control also allow them to continually throw out incumbent parties (see Markowski 2006 and Svulik 2013). Poland, for example, had its longest period of political stability from 2007 to 2015. In 2015, despite a stable economy, Poles voted out the incumbents and voted in the opposition.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARLIAMENTARIAN AND CANDIDATE CHARACTERISTICS

The winning and losing of parliamentary elections should be considered in the broad context of demographic characteristics of candidates, of the party that they represent, and the electoral system. Thus, a key issue in this project is the relationship between the personal characteristics of legislative candidates and electoral outcomes. The Electoral Control project is concerned with questions directly related to how individual traits prove beneficial or detrimental to the winning of office in CEE democracies. The implications of such a relationship are wide-ranging – who political candidates are and where they are from, not to mention who the winners and losers of repeated elections may be, is consequential for the evolution of the quality of democracy in post-Communist countries in terms of representation, accountability, and political inequality of voice.

Political biographies and the demographic characteristics of those running for public office matter for the quality of democracy. Representation and accountability are central principles to a system of governance that goes beyond procedure alone (Dahl 2005; Schmitter & Karl 1991). Candidates’ backgrounds and participation in free and fair elections speak to the representativeness and accountability of

parliaments and parliamentarians. The characteristics of the winners provide us with a picture of the representativeness of parliaments and the professionalization of politics (Shabad and Słomczyński 2002). Depending on the type of electoral system, incumbent success matters in discussions about accountability.

EAST PaC Data

Two key features of EAST PaC data are completeness and historical relevance: (a) we include all elections that took place in Poland, Hungary, and Ukraine in the post-Communist era, and (b) we cover a long period of time that accounts for dynamics of the political party systems.

For each country, the data for all elections are pooled so that the candidate is the unit of observation, while personal characteristics and characteristics of electoral participation make up the values of variables. These data allow us to track the political experience of candidates, including dynamics of their partisan affiliations, across consecutive elections. The project, then, is concerned with the exact populations of candidates. The main sources of data on parliamentary candidates are official records from governments and state agencies responsible for maintaining election archives. For elections conducted in the early 1990s, these records were in the form of paper documents, while in later years they were stored as electronic files.

DESIGN, CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book contains everything that scholars need to use EAST PaC data for various academic purposes – whether to use these data as they are or to combine them with survey and non-survey data. We designed the book for various audiences: for CEE experts and for those who are unfamiliar with the region; for seasoned scholars of representation, accountability, and political inequality, and for those who are newly interested in the analysis of these concepts. We hope to intrigue potential users of EAST PaC data and to attract new scholars to study electoral politics in Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary.

We divided the book into four parts.

Part 1 Theory and Concepts presents an overview of the main theories and concepts of the project that are fundamental for research using EAST PaC data and suggests theoretical directions. In Chapter One, Dubrow *et al* use recent and classic texts to explore representation and accountability that are the driving concepts of the Electoral Control project and the rationale for collecting the EAST PaC data. In Chapter Two, Dubrow considers the idea that, for as long as the structure of candidates and parliamentarians resemble the top of the stratification ladder rather than its whole, issues of electoral control are firmly connected to the issue of political inequality. We connect these ideas through descriptive representation, an ideal that is also an indicator of political equality. This chapter posits a theory of how parliaments become politically unequal places through the metaphor of an electoral market.

Part 2 Methodology covers the content and structure of EAST PaC data and the collecting, cleaning, and matching for Ukraine (Pohorila), Poland (Sawiński and Dubrow), and Hungary (Papp) written by the leaders of the data collection teams for those countries. The goal of EAST PaC was to create a high quality dataset of the universe of candidates who ran for national office and in which users can track candidates across elections. EAST PaC is matched data that covers three countries, 29 years, 23 elections, and 97,439 unique candidates. The problems and errors encountered were of various kinds: technological, bureaucratic, social and political. The solutions for matching were generally based on a combination of automatic coding based on gender, age, and political affiliation, and of manual coding, where the data collection team had to comb through the data to identify and resolve duplicate cases. The process required multiple technological solutions, some of them dedicated to this task and all of which we developed over time and improved our data. We hope that by describing these data and the process, future scholars and other data users can improve and build on these data for future elections.

Part 3 Context is composed of a series of chapters on historical and contemporary electoral politics in each country, including detailed descriptions of parties and changes to electoral laws and electoral outcomes. The purpose of this part is to provide the broader electoral context of Ukraine, Poland, and Hungary to profitably analyze EAST

PaC data. It proceeds country by country and begins with a brief political history of Ukraine that starts at the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 that created the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the electoral and social turmoil of Ukraine's post-Independent period (Pohorila and Taran). What follows is an in-depth description, with information found in EAST PaC, of the political parties, electoral systems and electoral outcomes in Ukraine from the first post-Independence election to 2014 (Palaguta and Kurowicka). Ślarzyński, Kurowicka, and Palaguta then cover the Polish electoral scene since 1985 (the first election covered in EAST PaC Poland), focusing on changes to electoral laws and the outcomes of parliamentary elections. Next, considering that gender and representation are key features of electoral politics, Dubrow provides a brief history of gender quotas in Poland. Kurowicka and Palaguta end this part with a fascinating description of the Hungarian electoral scene since 1990.

We then turn to the Electoral Control project itself as an object of study. Social scientists rarely provide in-depth reporting on the processes that led to their research. Knowledge of process is a deep layer of information that enables future scholars to critically evaluate past projects and make good decisions for their own projects. We present the “who, what, when, where, why, and how” of the project; it is a record of this project's history, aims, and critical decisions that led to these data, this book, and the seeds of future products. *Part 4 Collaboration* is a single chapter that features a description of the cross-national multi-disciplinary Electoral Control project (Dubrow and Zelinska). We describe the progression of the project and the process of facilitating collaboration among the multi-disciplinary mix of young and established social scientists that comprised the team. We learned best practices about the process of scientific collaborative work by developing and adapting our ideas over time.

The appendices present technical information. First is a coding scheme developed by Palaguta on how to code the issue stances of all major parties in Ukraine 2012 – 2014. This chapter goes well beyond the scope of the well-known Manifesto project and allows future scholars to usefully code new variables based on Ukrainian parties' political platforms. After, Zsófia Papp provides a codebook for the complicated EAST PaC Hungary data.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Electoral Control project was designed to build an international and interdisciplinary scientific team focused on the use of data on parliamentarians and candidates in Central and Eastern Europe to address critical issues in representation, accountability and political inequality. The future of democratic progress rests on knowing the past and present of electoral politics. In this regard, we hope that this book does its part for Central and Eastern Europe.

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