Generic assessment guidelines for STV2380 Between Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Post-communist Region. Ordinary exam, autumn 2022.

The exam is a 4-hour written examination. Students are asked to answer 3 of 4 questions. Each of the questions counts equally towards the grade. No answer counts as an F.

GENERALLY, we look for answers that combine good, theoretically informed discussions with sufficient empirical knowledge to flesh out the arguments.

Question 1. Define the concept democratic backsliding, using one or more articles on the syllabus as a point of departure. Compare the institutional set-up of at least two post-communist countries and discuss how institutions facilitate or work as constraints on democratic backsliding in the chosen countries, alone and/or in combination with other factors.

The first part of the question (the concept of Democratic backsliding) is covered in four articles on the syllabus: Bermeo (2016), Bakke & Sitter (2022), Roháč (2021), and Vachudova (2020). Lührmann & Lindberg's article on autocratization is arguably also relevant. We have discussed the concept in seminars as well as lectures, so all students should be able to get something out of this part of the question. Definitions diverge on whether they include backsliding only in existing democracies or also in hybrid regimes and autocracies; within regimes or between regimes; whether they include only gradual change or also abrupt change (coups); and on what counts as democratic backsliding. If the answer to the first part is limited to a (brief) definition, whether based on Bermeo, Bakke & Sitter or a combination, this part is maximum awarded a C.

The second part of the question requires some familiarity with the institutional set-up of the selected countries. This has been covered in lectures for all four Visegrád countries. In addition to the above-mentioned articles, students can draw on Bakke (2022) for the Czech Republic, Bill & Stanley (2020) for Poland, Bogaards (2018) for Hungary, and Haughton (2003) for Slovakia under Mečiar. Students are free to choose whatever countries they like, but the smart student will choose contrasting cases. Under institutional set-up we expect students to describe the system of government, chambers, electoral system, and what is required to amend the constitution. We expect them to discuss to what extent the institutional set-up provides efficient checks on majoritarian (abuse of) power in their chosen countries. It is a plus if they demonstrate how the combination of institutional factors facilitate or constrain backsliding in their chosen cases, or also discuss the impact of external forces and domestic opposition.

Question 2. What is the difference in party preferences between politically low- and high-trustful citizens? Explain the mechanism of how electoral success of a challenger party can increase the level of political trust. Choose a challenger party from one of the Visegrád countries and explain how this mechanism can work in the empirical context.

This topic was covered in the lecture on political trust, as well as (mainly) in the article by Hajdinjak (2022). To answer this question, students first need to make clear what a challenger party is. The first part of the question (party preference) applies to the distinction between low- and high-trustful citizens on the one hand, and between mainstream and challenger parties on the other hand. The second part of the question is about explaining (in theoretical terms) how the electoral success of a challenger party can increase the level of trust among those who voted for it. The third part is about choosing a suitable empirical example of a challenger party in one of the Visegrád countries and show how the electoral success of such a party may have affected trust in that country, which requires 1) that the students know what a challenger party is and 2) know enough about the party system of the chosen country to be able to make a plausible choice of party. The most important here is that the answer identifies the most relevant elements of the theory and supplies empirical evidence that embeds the theory in the political context of the chosen country.

A caveat is that Hajdinak's article is about <u>populist</u> parties, not challenger parties as such. The two examples of populists in power (Fidesz and PiS) mentioned in the article were neither new nor untried when they entered power in 2010 and 2015, respectively. If students choose one of these, they should make clear that Fidesz and PiS were not strictly speaking challenger parties.

Question 3. Discuss how external powers can affect democratization and autocratization in the post-Communist region. Describe both theoretical mechanisms and provide examples from selected country/countries.

This topic has been discussed in seminars as well as in lectures. The most relevant syllabus articles are the ones listed under the lecture on the international context (Börzel, Liber, Sedelmeier, Tolstrup, and Vachudová (2009)), but also the article by Hanley (2003) about Slovakia under Mečiar, and the articles on democratic backsliding.

The relevant external powers are here especially Russia and the EU. We expect students to discuss democracy promotion efforts by the EU as well as autocracy promotion efforts by Russia in the post-communist region. In the case of the EU this applies to conditionality in the context of accession as well as after membership. It is a plus if students use Levitsky and Way's concepts linkage and leverage to explain the EU's influence in the region (or lack of such). In the case of Russia, a key term is "black knights". Students should be able to mention the different ways in which they promote autocracy in the region. As for examples, we would like to see examples of both successful and unsuccessful cases of democracy and autocracy promotion in selected countries.

Question 4. Discuss the far right in the post-Communist region. To what extent is it different from the far right in Western Europe in terms of ideology and organization? How can we explain these differences? Feel free to refer to empirical examples of far-right parties or groups in the region.

This topic has also been discussed in seminar as well as in lecture. The most relevant syllabus articles are the ones listed under the lecture on nationalism and the far right (Minkenberg 2017 and Mudde 2016), but articles on the various countries may also be relevant. To be able to answer the question properly, students need to start with the concept of the far right (what the main characteristics of the far right are). The first part of the question is about the main differences between the far right in the post-communist region compared to Western Europe, in terms of ideology and organisation. In ideological terms, this is about the targets of "othering" and about how extreme the far right is. In terms of organisation, it is about the strength of organisation, the balance between parties, movements and subcultures, and the relationship between the far right and the mainstream. It is a plus if students point out that these differences were more striking in the past than today.

The second part of the question calls for an elaboration of Minkenberg's argument that we should see the far right as a reaction to modernization. It is a plus if students in addition elaborate on the influence of the Communist past and the characteristics of political systems and political behaviour (including institutional and cultural factors). A good answer should also include some empirical examples.