Assessment guidelines for STV2380 Between Authoritarianism and Democracy in the Post-communist Region. Ordinary exam, autumn 2023.

The exam was a 4-hour written examination. Students were asked to answer 3 of 4 questions. Each of the questions counts equally towards the grade. No answer counts as an F. Students were explicitly asked to provide definitions where appropriate. This applies to all questions.

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

Question 1. Discuss whether and how the radical right in the post-communist region differs from the radical right in Western Europe. Compare two radical right parties in post-communist Europe.

The most relevant syllabus are here the four chapters in Minkenberg (2017), but students may also want to draw on other course material and seminar presentations. While Minkenberg covers the radical right in the whole East European region we don't expect detailed knowledge of parties outside the six countries we focus on in this course.

The first part of the question is about the radical right in general. A good answer will include a definition of the concept of the 'radical right', and will spell out the differences between the post-communist radical right and the West European radical right in some detail – in terms of ideology, organisation, patterns of cooperation, and their relationship to previous regimes. The second part is about radical right *parties*. Here students need to be able to identify two radical right parties in the region. A very good answer will include a theoretically informed comparison focusing on similarities as well as differences between the chosen parties. Students are free to choose whatever parties they like, but it is better to choose cases that facilitate good comparisons.

Question 2. Discuss the main factors facilitating and constraining democratic backsliding in the post-communist region, using one or more articles on the syllabus as a point of departure. Consider the possible effects of the recent parliamentary elections in Poland or Slovakia on future democracy in the country.

The concept of democratic backsliding as such is mainly covered in articles by Bermeo (2016), and Bakke & Sitter (2022). Drivers and constraints are also (indirectly) discussed in the articles of Roháč (2021), Buben and Kouba (2023), Bill & Stanley (2020), Haughton (2003), Priebus & Végh (2022), and Bogaards (2018). There is of course no syllabus on the parliamentary elections held in October 2023 (but the results were mentioned in the summary lecture).

A good answer will include a definition of democratic backsliding, and will combine good theoretical discussion with empirical examples. A very good answer will explain in some detail how institutions and agency work together to facilitate or constrain backsliding. An excellent answer will in addition illustrate the arguments with empirically correct examples and will also mention the historical context. The second part of the question requires that the students know who won the recent elections, and more importantly, their previous democratic record. We are primarily looking for reflections on what, if anything, the change of government may mean for democracy in the chosen country.

3. Describe the theoretical framework of linkage and leverage proposed by Levitsky and Way. How can it help us understand regime change or lack of thereof in the post-communist region? Use examples to illustrate your arguments.

Apart from the article of Levitsky and Way, the chapter by Sedelmeier (2019) and article by Börzel, Tanja A., and Bidzina Lebanidze can help answer this question. An article by Tolstrup (2015) can help nuance the answer in a more creative way.

A good answer will describe what linkage and leverage are about and name at least one case demonstrating high linkage and high leverage that helped democratization or autocratisation. A very good answer will detail on the mechanisms of how linkage and leverage can help democratization or autocratisation, for example elaborating on how EU uses conditionality or ENP to encourage democratization or how Russia promises electoral support to promote autocratization. This can be integrated into the empirical discussion. An excellent answer will in addition thoroughly apply the theories to the empirical cases, discussing particular examples of democratic or authoritarian pressure in a particular country case or cases.

4. Discuss the impact of oligarchs on politics. Provide examples from the post-communist region to illustrate your arguments.

A good answer will give a definition of oligarchs, describe the ways they may influence politics discussed in Zubytska (2019), Magyar (2020) and other readings for the lecture, and give a brief illustration of how oligarchs influenced politics from one of the post-communist countries. A very good answer will have a more thorough discussion of mechanisms of how oligarchs can influence politics and more detailed empirical illustrations. An excellent answer will dwell on the examples more thoroughly and describe particular actions of particular oligarchs in the region and how they led to specific political outcomes. What distinguishes answers that deserve A and B is the amount of empirical detail and the ability to connect empirical detail with the theory.