

Memorandum

on the Table 4 of the professor Kornai's paper entitled "[The Great Transformation of Central Eastern Europe: Success and Disappointment](#)" delivered as a presidential address at the 2005 World congress of the International Economic Association

Draft (August 28th, 2005); Comments welcome at iphkuz01@ceu.hu

The concept of the electoral dismissal

- The purpose of counting "*electoral dismissals*" is to see whether the CEE8 countries passed the "democratic minimum," i.e. whether there was a peaceful transfer of power from the coalition ruling prior to elections to the newly elected coalition. The idea is inspired by concepts of Schumpeter (1942) and Rose-Ackerman (2005) and bears some resemblance to the Huntington's "*two-turnover test*"¹ of democratic consolidation.
- Related concepts used in the literature on transition are "*proportion of reelected governments*" (Roland 2002: table 1 – this is essentially an inverse concept to electoral dismissals, however the two concepts may differ due to different operationalizations) or "*main political executive turnovers*" of the government (World Bank 2002: table 10.3).

Operationalization of electoral dismissals

- The electoral dismissal can be defined as a major rearrangement of the governing coalition following elections, which typically includes the change in the government leadership and some shift in policy priorities. On the conceptual level this definition is quite clear; however its operationalization in the political context of the CEE8 countries requires some elements of judgment about what to regard as electoral dismissal.

¹ Huntington (1992: 267) defined the "two-turnover test" as an indicator of democratic consolidation. In his view a democracy "may be viewed as consolidated if the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transformation loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of later election". The count of the "electoral dismissals" differs in that it adds the initial election to the sum of total dismissals during the democratization period.

- In general, the political party systems in the CEE countries over last 15 years were in flux. Parties fell apart as their leaders and MPs dropped-off and formed new parties². Ruling coalitions and prime ministers typically changed many times in between elections and few governments finished their full term. There were also many caretaker governments and early elections.
- Moreover, at many occasions it was not clear whether the ruling coalition had a majority support in the parliament; in other words, it was not clear what parties and politicians form the ruling coalition to be dismissed or confirmed in elections. In some cases, governments were explicitly minority ones. In other cases they relied on ad hoc support from the opposition parties or new parties formed by drop-out MPs. There were also some unusual political innovations such as the “Opposition Agreement” in the Czech Republic (1998-2002), which had many characteristics of grand coalition, without being a grand coalition.

For the above reasons the Table 4 should be interpreted with some caution. We have tried to limit the ambiguity by narrowing down the focus only on “political” governing coalitions (i.e. not caretaker governments³) immediately before and after elections and comparing them to see whether voters dismissed or confirmed (at least the core of) the governing coalitions. Our conclusions are summarized in the table below. More details are given in the following tables for each of the eight countries.

Final Table 4

Electoral dismissals

| <i>Country</i> | <i>Elections 1989-2004</i> | <i>"Electoral dismissals"</i> | <i>Year(s) of dismissal(s)</i> |
|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Czech Republic | 5 | 3 | 1990, 1992, 1998 |
| Estonia | 5 | 4 | 1990, 1995, 1999, 2003 |
| Hungary | 4 | 4 | 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002 |
| Latvia | 5 | 4 | 1990, 1995, 1998, 2002 |
| Lithuania | 5 | 4 | 1990, 1993, 1996, 2000 |
| Poland | 4 | 4 | 1991, 1993, 1997, 2001 |
| Slovakia | 5 | 4 | 1990, 1992, 1994, 1998 |

² The first post-communist elections were won by the broad civic movements, which later disintegrated to number of political parties. Following the second elections, the original movement was succeeded by one of the new parties or parties rooted in the former communist party. In any case, the succession of the original movement was regarded as electoral dismissal.

³ By the caretaker government we mean a government headed and composed by “experts/bureaucrats” rather than major political figures; its sole purpose is to govern the country until the time of next early or regular elections.

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|----------|----|----|------------------|
| Slovenia | 5 | 3 | 1990, 1993, 2004 |
| CEE 8 | 38 | 30 | |

Note: "Electoral dismissal" occurs when there is (i) a major rearrangement of the governing coalition following elections, including (ii) the change in the government leadership and (iii) some shift in policy priorities; see the full explanation at the following website of Zdenek Kudrna <ies.fsv.cuni.cz/~kudrna>.

Source: Compiled on the basis of the Economist Intelligence Unit - *Country reports* at <www.eiu.com>.

Czech Republic

| Election year | 1990 | 1992 | 1996 | 1998 | 2002 |
|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Pre-election | Communists | CF/ODS | ODS coalition | caretaker govt | SocDem govt |
| Post-election | Civic Forum | ODS coalition | ODS minority govt | SocDem govt | SocDem coalition |
| PM | --- | Klaus | Klaus | Zeman | Spidla |
| Dismissal | Yes | Yes | No; not quite | Yes; more or less | No; new coalition |

Estonia

| Election year | Supreme Soviet 1990 | 1992 | 1995 | 1999 | 2003 |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Incumbent | communists (CPE) -> | Popular Front of Estonia | Fatherland + ENIP | KMU | Pro Patria Union |
| Post-election | Popular Front of Estonia | Fatherland + ENIP | KMU | Pro Patria Union | Res Publica |
| PM | --- | Laar | Vahi | Laar | Parts |
| Dismissals | Yes; independence in | No; new right-wing only | Yes; leftish post-comms | Yes; right-wing-back | Yes; new right-wing |

Hungary

| Election year | 1990 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|------------|------------|
| Incumbent | Socialist Party | Democratic Forum | Socialists | Fidesz |
| Post-election | Democratic Forum | Socialists | Fidesz | Socialists |
| PM | Antall | Horn | Orban | Medgyessy |
| Dismissals | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Latvia

| Election year | Supreme Soviet 1990 | 1993 | 1995 | 1998 | 2002 |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Incumbent | communists (LCP) -> | Latvian Popular Front | Latvian Way | changing coalition | shifting coalitions |
| Post-election | Latvian Popular Front | Latvian Way | complex coalition | Latvia way coalition | new pro-biz parties |
| PM | Godmanis | Birkavs | Sekele; non-partisan | Kristopans + 2 others | Repse + 2 so far |
| Dismissals | Yes; independence in | No; new parties only | Yes; but shifting coalitions | Yes; but shifting coalitions | Yes |

Lithuania

| Election year | Supreme Soviet 1990 | 1993 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| Incumbent | communists (LCP) -> | Sajudis | LDLP | Homeland Union | LSDP coalition |
| Post-election | Sajudis | LDLP ex-communists | Homeland Union | LSDP + LDLP; post-comms | LSDP coalition |
| PM | Vagnorius | Brazauskas | Vagnorius | Brazauskas + 1 | ??? |
| Dismissals | Yes | Yes; ex-communists in | Yes; ex-Sajudis in | Yes; ex-communists in | No |

Poland

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|---------------|------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Election year | partial elections 1989 | 1991 | 1993 | 1997 | 2001 |
| Incumbent | Communists (PZPR) | Communists (PZPR) | Solidarity | post-communists | post-Solidarity (AWS) |
| Post-election | Solidarity max 45% | Solidarity | Post-comms (SLD+PSL) | post-Solidarity (AWS) | post-comms (SLD) |
| PM | Mazowiecky (Sept 1990) | | | | |
| Dismissals | --- | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Slovakia

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|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Election year | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1998 | 2002 |
| Incumbent | Communists (KSS) | VPN + KDH | KDH + SMK | HZDS | SDKU |
| Post-election | VPN + KDH | HZDS | HZDS | SDKU | SDKU |
| PM | Meciar (Slovak PM) | Meciar -> Moravcik | Meciar | Dzurinda | Dzurinda |
| Dismissals | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Slovenia

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|---------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Election year | 1990 | 1992 | 1996 | 2000 | 2004 |
| Incumbent | Communists (LCS) | non-communists (DEMOS) | LDS lead coalition | LDS lead coalition | LDS lead coalition |
| Post-election | DEMOS (pro-independ.) | post-communists back | LDS lead coalition | LDS lead coalition | new SocDem coalition |
| PM | Peterle | Drnovsek | Drnovsek | Drnovsek | Jansa |
| Dismissals | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes |

See the paper for references.