



# Problems of Post-Communism

ISSN: 1075-8216 (Print) 1557-783X (Online) Journal homepage: [www.tandfonline.com/journals/mppc20](http://www.tandfonline.com/journals/mppc20)


## Is Post-Communism Over? What Is and Is Not Distinctive about Eastern Europe and Eurasia Three Decades after Communism

Anton Shirikov, Dmitrii Kofanov & Yoshiko M. Herrera


To cite this article: Anton Shirikov, Dmitrii Kofanov & Yoshiko M. Herrera (2024) Is Post-Communism Over? What Is and Is Not Distinctive about Eastern Europe and Eurasia Three Decades after Communism, *Problems of Post-Communism*, 71:6, 493-507, DOI: [10.1080/10758216.2024.2304246](https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2024.2304246)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2024.2304246>

 View supplementary material 

 Published online: 06 Feb 2024.

 Submit your article to this journal 

 Article views: 857

 View related articles 

 View Crossmark data 



## Is Post-Communism Over? What Is and Is Not Distinctive about Eastern Europe and Eurasia Three Decades after Communism

Anton Shirikov<sup>a</sup>, Dmitrii Kofanov<sup>b</sup>, and Yoshiko M. Herrera<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>The Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York, NY, United States; <sup>b</sup>Center for Governance and Markets, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, United States; <sup>c</sup>Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI, United States

### ABSTRACT

The distinctiveness of the post-communist region has been hotly debated since the end of the Cold War. Using cluster analysis with a wide range of demographic, political, socioeconomic, and attitudinal variables, we find that 28 post-communist countries do not form a distinct region along most of these dimensions. This analysis suggests that the “transition” paradigm is outdated, and researchers should use the concept of “post-communism” with caution. Yet, we do not dismiss the concept of a communist legacy, which may exist on dimensions not captured by conventional indicators. We also emphasize that regional knowledge on post-communist countries remains vital.

The Russian war on Ukraine has brought up many questions about the “post-communist” region. Many regional scholars are rightly reconsidering what we did or did not know about Russia and Ukraine, and the move to “decolonize” the study of post-communist countries has brought up questions about what are appropriate comparisons and referent points. One of the big questions for the current moment is how much the present-day post-communist countries have in common. In this paper, given the more than three decades since the end of communism in the region, we return to the question posed by regional scholars just after the end of the USSR and in the intervening years, and we ask: given the further passage of time, in what ways are the 28 post-communist countries similar to each other and different from other countries in the world? What are the variables that distinguish the post-communist region, if any?

There is little question that on many economic, political, and social variables, communist countries were distinct. The communist economies of the 1980s were marked by state ownership of property, central planning, and administratively set prices, as well a range of other market restrictions, and an expansive welfare state. Politically, the ruling communist parties held a lot of power, and their mirror apparatuses of disempowered state institutions were also a way in which communist countries were similar to each other and different from noncommunist countries. Moreover, there had been a social revolution in the USSR, an imposed ideology, and a set of propaganda institutions among communist countries that would lead us to think there were attitudinal differences in communist and noncommunist countries which might still persist.

As we know, a sweeping “triple transition” proceeded from 1989 on. The annual *Transition Report* by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which measured the pace of the political and economic transformation in “transition countries,” became a critical data source for post-communist social science scholarship. Teleological critiques aside (Gans-Morse 2004), the label “transition countries” became widely used for post-communist countries in the 1990s and remains in use in many contemporary comparative politics textbooks.

But since the end of communism in Eastern Europe, there was heated discussion among scholars about what methodological approaches were best suited to the study of the sweeping political, economic, and social changes in the region (Fleron and Hoffmann 2019), and what made the region distinctive (assuming that it was). The latter question, three decades on, still does not have an obvious answer.

On the one hand, Malia (1992) wrote, “Postcommunism will be unique in human history, because communism itself was unique,” and some prominent regional specialists argued the case that the distinctiveness of the post-communist region warranted primarily within-region rather than cross-national or cross-regional comparisons. Bunce argued in 1995 that “state socialism was different along virtually every dimension that economists, sociologists and political scientists recognize as important” (Bunce 1995a, 1995b).

By the early 2000s, the question of post-communism was no longer about regional homogeneity, or even comparability, but about whether and how the experience of communism influenced or continues to influence politics, the economy, and society in post-communist countries – in other words, the question was about the communist legacy (Jowitt 1992).<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the importance of the concept of legacies for the study of post-communist countries manifested itself in two ways: first, the large number of studies which directly analyze communist legacies per se (e.g., Chaisty and Whitefield 2015; Ekiert and Hanson 2003; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017), and second, the extensive use of the post-communist regional “dummy variable” in quantitative social science, suggesting many researchers believe there is something distinctive enough to warrant its inclusion.

On the other hand, “transitologists” saw an opportunity to compare regime changes in the post-communist region with Southern Europe, Latin America or other places (Laitin 2000; Schmitter and Karl 1994). Similarly, some saw the end of the USSR and the end of “Soviet studies” as an opportunity to press the point that the countries of the post-communist region were actually quite diverse and had been so even under communism (Janos 2000; Rothschild 1989). Indeed, the very different character and uneven pace of political and economic transitions in individual post-communist countries became more and more evident. Rather than moving from a coherent group of communist institutions to a recognizable transition bloc, the differences across post-communist countries have grown over time, as measured by a wide range of variables (Bunce 1999; Fish 1998; Gehlbach and Malesky 2014).

Some scholars reasoned that it was time to move beyond studying the post-communist region as a closed unit (Rogers 2010; von Hirschhausen et al. 2019). Recently, Müller argued that it was time to abandon the concept of “postsocialism” altogether because it “as a concept, has both lost its object and comes with problematic conceptual and political implications” (Müller 2019, 534). From a different perspective, Shleifer and Treisman, generalizing their earlier controversial claim about Russia, stated that after 25 years of “transition,” post-communist countries can be considered “normal,” that is, they “look just like any others at similar levels of economic development” (Shleifer and Treisman 2014, 93).

Researchers dissatisfied by “area-studies” particularism and interested in theoretical questions of universal significance have been compelled in their scholarship to “break boundaries” separating post-communist countries from each other and the rest of the world (Bernhard and Jasiewicz 2015; Tucker 2015). As Tucker argues, referring to Eastern Europe, “[a]s time passes, it will become harder and harder to a priori justify this classification without reference to a specific theoretical argument for which the classification is appropriate” (Tucker 2015, 421). A recent special issue of *Critique of Anthropology* examines the epistemic utility of the related concept, postsocialism, and considers leaving behind “the spatial and temporal boundedness that it had in the 1990s,” focusing more on the socialist ideas, practices, and traces of socialist development in a variety of settings across the world (Gallinat 2022).

In order to shed light on this continuing debate, in this paper we revisit the question of what post-communist countries have in common by examining them through key variables that much social science research has relied on in studying the region. We begin our analysis by reviewing ways that post-communism has been used as a dummy variable. This summary analysis establishes some common

attributes that post-communist countries are theorized to share. Next, we use cluster analysis to examine a set of 154 countries across the world, including 28 post-communist countries.<sup>2</sup> The analysis is based on a broad set of 43 indicators reflecting demographic, economic, political, and social characteristics, as well as values and attitudes in the countries under consideration. We examine these data in three periods – the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. We also analyze whether there are distinctive sub-regions within the region, most notably the divide between Eastern Europe and the former Soviet states, but also whether there is evidence of distinctiveness of Central Asia.

The novelty of our empirical approach is that instead of estimating average differences between former communist and other countries on selected indicators, as many previous studies have done, we use clustering to understand whether and to what extent post-communist countries group together, and separately from the rest of the world – or, in other words, how distinct and cohesive they are or were as a group, and on what specific dimensions they are or were distinct, if any. Another advantage of our clustering method is that it allows us to examine the distinctiveness of post-communist countries across multiple dimensions at once. Thus, our study contributes to the debates on whether a distinctive “post-communist” region still exists, and if so, which countries are a part of it, and what variables distinguish this region from other parts of the world.

To foreshadow our argument, we find little evidence of a single distinct post-communist region based on these variables. In most cases, post-communist countries are grouped together with various other countries across different dimensions, although on some dimensions, there is greater homogeneity among post-communist nations. Moreover, there is some evidence of post-communist distinctiveness in terms of values and attitudes, mainly in the 1990s, but this distinctiveness largely disappears in the subsequent decades.

We emphasize that our analysis does not suggest that there are no similarities between post-communist countries or that communist legacies no longer exist, but we do clarify where such legacies are not likely to be found, namely among the broad set of 43 indicators we analyze. Post-communist countries, or individuals living within post-communist countries, may still have some things in common. Scholars should further investigate other arenas, for example, in specific attitudes or values, patterns of voting or political behavior, cultural and organizational practices, language, urban environments, and other dimensions not captured by the set of common social science indicators considered in the current analysis. Far from criticizing regional comparisons or regional knowledge, we hope this article advances previous debates and takes us a bit closer to understanding more precisely what countries of the region have or do not have in common.

## Post-Communism as a Variable

Perceptions of distinctiveness of the post-communist region are, among other things, reflected in the use of “post-communist dummies” – dichotomous variables intended to capture characteristic features of the countries in the region. At

the country level, a post-communist dummy takes the value of 1 if the country is one of the post-communist countries of Eurasia, and sometimes communist or post-communist countries in other regions (e.g., China, Cuba, etc.). At the individual level the variable might be coded as “1” if an individual lives or lived in a post-communist country. The post-communist dummy usually stands for a certain type of political, economic, or social institution or process that is not captured by other variables in the analysis, and its use implies some theoretical expectations about shared country-level or individual characteristics.

To examine how the post-communist dummy variables are used in existing scholarly literature, we relied on a sample of research studies obtained via Google Scholar search results. We entered the search phrases “postcommunist dummy” and “communist dummy,” the latter of which allows for several ways to spell the name of the dummy variable: “post-communist dummy,” “ex-communist dummy,” “former communist dummy,” “communist dummy,” etc. Then, we extracted all the search results between 1990 and 2019. After eliminating unpublished drafts, the results were a list of 126 articles, book chapters, books, and working papers published by research institutions.<sup>3</sup>

This is not an exhaustive list of all the scholarly work that involves the use of post-communist dummies. Rather, our goal is to illustrate the typical uses of such variables. We categorized the 126 studies based on how the authors conceptualize the post-communist dummy variables and what features of the communist experience these variables are intended to represent.

Table 1 shows that scholars use the post-communist dummy to capture a great variety of institutional or other factors that are currently at work or might have been at work at some point in the past. These could be political institutions, including one-party rule, replaced by excessive fragmentation (van Biezen and Rashkova 2014), or the role of civil society (Bernhard et al. 2017); economic institutions, such as central planning (Mulligan, Gil, and Sala-i-Martin 2004), social institutions (e.g., family policies that discouraged patrilocality, Grogan 2015), or cultural aspects: attitudes, values, and social traditions inculcated both by the experience of living under communist regimes (Inglehart and Baker 2000; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017) and the vagaries of the transition period (Guriev and Zhuravskaya 2009). In 39 out of 126 studies, the dummy represents multiple kinds of institutions at once – e.g., political and economic institutions

(Mulligan, Gil, and Sala-i-Martin 2004) or social institutions and cultural values (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). In 40 studies, the dummy is about current communist institutions or about both current and past institutions (e.g., whether a country has been under a communist regime at some point in the previous 50 years). Finally, in 18 studies, the dummy is included to account for issues experienced during the post-communist transition period. While some of these factors are observable (e.g., communist party rule or certain policies), their full implications may not be well-captured by existing commonly used indicators.

In 50 of the studies (more than one third), the dummy variable is a substantive variable of interest, meaning that researchers are interested in learning about the differences between post-communist and other countries on some dimension. For example, the post-communist dummy is included in a regression of party system volatility on a number of country-level characteristics (Kselman, Powell, and Tucker 2016) to determine whether there is evidence of greater party volatility in post-communist countries. In such cases, the post-communist dummy may stand for the legacy of the ruling communist party or, say, economic disruption during the post-communist transition.

In 76 studies, the dummy is a control variable that may stand in for some unobserved confounder that could be present among the countries that the dummy captures. For example, Rich (2014) examines whether electoral system rules affect turnout, and the post-communist dummy is introduced to account for the fact that post-communist countries might be likely to have particular electoral systems and to have higher turnout. However, in many cases (33 out of 76), not only did researchers not provide a justification for the use of the dummy, but also they did not even specify what kinds of variables it was supposed to account for or what it might be an indicator of. For instance, Keefer and Knack (2007), studying how the quality of governance and political checks affect public investment, include a communist dummy in some specifications, but do not explain how it might be related to either the dependent or independent variables. Likewise, Downes and Loveless (2018), examining determinants of the popularity of radical and center-right parties in the European Union, include post-communist dummies as controls without specifying potential omitted variable biases it addresses or why voting for the right should be different in formerly communist countries.

**Table 1.** Attributes Associated with the Post-Communist Dummy Variables, Results from the Analysis of Google Scholar 1990–2019, with the Search Phrase “Communist Dummy” or “Postcommunist Dummy”

	Political	Social	Economic	Cultural	Multiple attributes	Not specified	Total number
<i>Role</i>							
Variable of interest	9	5	7	3	26	0	50
Control variable	13	3	12	2	13	33	76
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>126</b>
<i>Level of analysis</i>							
Country	17	7	16	3	25	29	97
Individual	4	1	1	2	14	2	24
Other	1	0	2	0	0	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>126</b>

In addition, most of the studies in our pool (97 of 126) use country-level post-communist dummies, which implies an assumption about something shared at the country level. But in 24 cases, the analysis is at the individual level. For example, Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2011, 2017) examine the data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and a number of other individual-level surveys, focusing on the effects of political and developmental legacies of communism on political and social attitudes.

Our brief analysis of the use of post-communist dummy variables highlights that many scholars think there is something theoretically coherent and important among the countries of the region (hence the use of the dummy in so many works), but it also suggests the myriad ways in which the post-communist region is typically thought to be distinct: political institutions; social and sociodemographic characteristics; economic attributes and institutions; cultural and attitudinal characteristics, as well as other unspecified, and possibly heretofore unknown ways.

### Post-Communism as a Cluster

Statistical clustering estimates the partitioning of a given set of countries into different groups based on their properties, and this approach allows us to answer the question of whether post-communist countries constitute a distinct group along specified dimensions. Empirically, we follow the approach of Ahlquist and Breunig (2019), who used statistical clustering to challenge the established comparative political economy typologies of developed countries. The resulting groupings failed to match existing categorizations such as “liberal market economies” or “coordinated market economies” and presented a challenge to reified typologies (Ahlquist and Breunig 2019, 2).

We apply the same approach to the post-communist region as a whole as well as the subregions of former Soviet Union (FSU) states, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. Each country can be characterized by a set of variable values reflecting different socioeconomic, political, and demographic dimensions. Following Ahlquist and Breunig (2019), we use model-based clustering (MBC), which presumes that each country-level characteristic (e.g., average life expectancy or government effectiveness) is normally distributed. This method sorts countries into clusters in which particular combinations of variable values are most likely to be observed. The MBC approach allows us to cluster countries based on any selected set of variables, and its primary advantage over the more common k-means and hierarchical clustering models is that it does not require any prior beliefs in terms of the number of clusters or their content, which are determined on the basis of statistical inference rather than arbitrary decisions by researchers.<sup>4</sup>

We use two complementary criteria to interpret the results of statistical clustering and infer whether there is a reasonable basis for considering post-communist countries a distinct regional group. The first is whether there are any clusters that primarily include post-communist countries – specifically, whether at least 50% of the countries in any given cluster are post-communist countries. The second criterion is whether post-communist countries primarily fall into a single cluster –

specifically, whether at least 50% of the post-communist countries are grouped together within a single cluster. Both criteria are important: if post-communist countries are a truly distinct group, most or all of the post-communist countries should fall into one cluster, and this cluster should include very few other, non-post-communist countries.<sup>5</sup>

### Data

For this analysis we needed a set of indicators related to the most important aspects of politics, economy, and society in the countries – i.e., the concepts that would capture what it means to be a post-communist country. After careful consideration, we chose a set of 43 such indicators, which are all relevant to social science research on the region and capture much of what might be theoretically included in a post-communist dummy variable as discussed above.

We first decided on five dimensions of the analysis: demographic, economic, political, social, and attitudinal. Then, for each dimension, we tried to find the most substantively important and commonly used indicators. We acknowledge that other sets of variables are possible and could produce different results. However, we believe that our choice of indicators provides a relatively comprehensive picture of the countries under study along each particular dimension, and results would be robust to inclusion of other similar variables.<sup>6</sup>

The variables and their sources are reported in Table 2. We were able to collect these data for 154 countries, the majority of countries of the world.<sup>7</sup> We standardize the variables in order to obtain comparable estimates of distance between clusters.

We consider three post-communist decades because examining these three periods allows us to see whether convergence between post-communist and other countries has taken place. For reasons of data availability, we focus on the years 1995, 2005, and 2015, and where possible, we use three-year averages centered on these years; otherwise, we take the closest available value. In some cases, we imputed missing data using linear interpolation and extrapolation if a clear trend was present. The data on attitudes were derived somewhat differently: we used the data from the WVS for the years that were available, and if a particular country was surveyed more than once within a decade, we chose the survey that was the closest to 1995, 2005, and 2015, respectively.

### Findings

#### Political and Socioeconomic Indicators

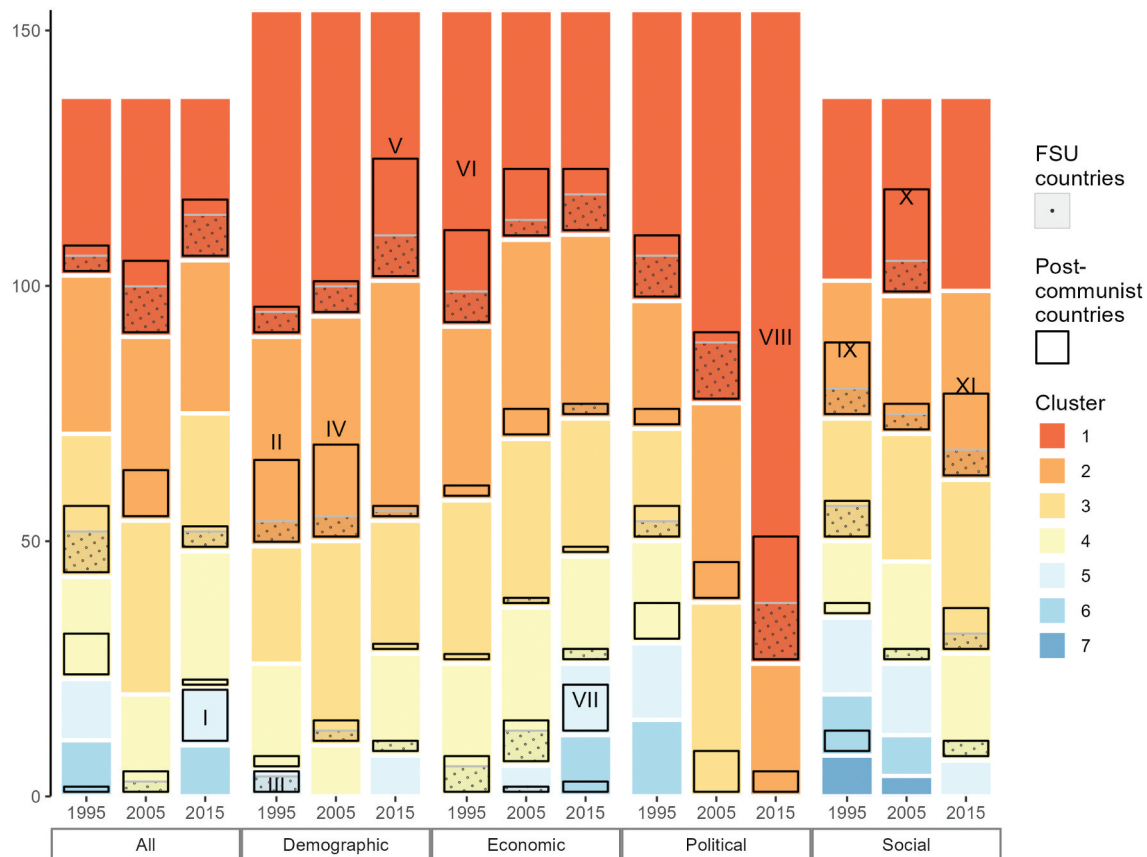
Figure 1 reports our main results of the cluster analysis for the three periods of interest along the five dimensions of analysis, as well as for all these indicators taken together (labeled “All” in the figure).<sup>8</sup> In the figure, each bar represents the clustering on a particular dimension in a given year, and each colored portion of the bar represents a single cluster. The black boxed areas represent post-communist countries, and we overlay additional gray boxes with a dotted pattern for former Soviet republics to see whether these countries form distinct clusters. Figure 1 illustrates that on all dimensions, former communist nations are spread out across multiple clusters as noted by the

**Table 2.** Variables for Cluster Analysis

Variable group	Indicators
Demographic	Life expectancy at birth, population growth rate, fertility rate, infant mortality rate (World Bank 2022)
Economic	GDP per capita (logged), agriculture as share of GDP, trade as share of GDP, foreign direct investment as share of GDP, unemployment rate, inflation rate (World Bank 2022)
Political	V-Dem Electoral Democracy index and V-Dem Political Corruption index (Coppedge et al. 2021) Government effectiveness from Worldwide Governance Indicators (Kaufman, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2010) Freedom of the Press score (Freedom House 2017) Human Rights Protection Scores (Fariss 2014)
Social	Gross tertiary education enrollment, gender equality in schools, ratio of female to male labor force participation rate, share of immigrants in the population, share of urban population, fixed phone subscriptions as share of population, share of internet users (World Bank 2022)
Values <sup>a</sup>	<i>Traditional vs. secular-rational values (Inglehart–Welzel):</i> importance of God and religion, autonomy index, justifiability of abortion, national pride, respect for authority <i>Survival vs. self-expression values (Inglehart–Welzel):</i> post-materialism index, signing petitions, happiness, justifiability of homosexuality, generalized trust <i>Variables from the study by Pop-Eleches and Tucker:</i> attitudes toward democracy (support for democratic system, preference for a strong leader, preference for army rule); support for private ownership of firms; preferred government responsibility for the needs of citizens; attitudes toward gender equality (whether men are better leaders, whether it is more important for boys than girls to have college education, whether it is more important for men than women to have jobs)
Additional variables (included only in Appendix) <sup>b</sup>	Gini index, suicide rate, public employment as share of total employment (World Bank 2022)

<sup>a</sup>Calculated from Inglehart et al. (2014). Traditional vs secular-rational values and survival vs self-expression values are based on: “Inglehart-Welzel Cultural Map,” World Values Survey, accessed on September 1, 2021, <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSCContents.jsp?CMSID=Findings>. Other attitudinal variables are based on Pop-Eleches and Tucker (2017); some survey questions were excluded for data availability reasons.

<sup>b</sup>The results for these three additional variables (Gini index, suicide rate, and employment in the public sector) are not included in the main analysis for reasons of data availability. Because they are important conceptually, we analyzed them individually and reported the results in Appendix Figure A21. The results are similar to the main analysis.



**Figure 1.** Clustering results for all three periods, all variables. 75 clusters in total, post-communist countries are bordered in black, FSU countries are shaded in gray with a dotted pattern. Roman numerals denote clusters satisfying at least one of our criteria of the distinctiveness of post-communist countries.

**Table 3.** Clusters with Evidence of Post-Communist Distinctiveness (11 Out of 75 Clusters)

Number in Figure 1	Category	Year	Number of countries in cluster	Cluster size as percentage of all countries in sample	Number of post-communist countries in cluster	Distinctiveness	
						Percentage of post-communist countries among all countries in cluster	Percentage of post-communist countries in cluster among all PC countries
I	All	2015	11	8%	11	100%	42%
II	Demographic	1995	41	27%	16	39%	59%
III	Demographic	1995	5	3%	5	100%	19%
IV	Demographic	2005	44	29%	18	41%	67%
V	Demographic	2015	53	34%	23	43%	85%
VI	Economic	1995	62	40%	18	29%	67%
VII	Economic	2015	14	9%	9	64%	33%
VIII	Political	2015	128	83%	23	18%	85%
<b>IX</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>54%<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>X</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>77%</b>
XI	Social	2015	37	27%	15	41%	58%

<sup>a</sup>Here and in Tables 4 and 5, clusters that satisfy both of our criteria of distinctiveness are emphasized in bold.

black bordered regions, and in most cases, they constitute less than 50% of countries in a given cluster, meaning that they group together with other, non-post-communist, countries.

Table 3 lists the 11 clusters that satisfy any of our two criteria of distinctiveness out of a total of 75 clusters for all years and variables.<sup>9</sup> The rows in Table 3 correspond to the 11 numbered clusters in Figure 1. There are only two clusters that satisfy both criteria of distinctiveness, which are found in the clustering for social variables in 1995 and in 2005 (clusters IX and X on Figure 1). In these cases, post-communist countries made up 52% (14 of 27) and 51% (20 of 39), respectively, of all the countries in the cluster, and 54% (14) and 77% (20) of 26 post-communist countries that were examined in these clustering analyses (depending on data availability, the number of post-communist countries slightly varies between the dimensions of our clustering analysis). In both cases, there were almost as many other non-post-communist countries in these two clusters. So, while there is evidence that post-communist countries tended to group together on the social dimension in the two earlier periods in the analysis, these countries still did not form a highly distinctive group. Moreover, evidence of distinctiveness on the social dimensions becomes even weaker in 2015; in that period, cluster XI includes more than half of post-communist countries, 58% (15), but it does not satisfy the other criterion: only 41% (15) of all 37 countries in the cluster are post-communist.

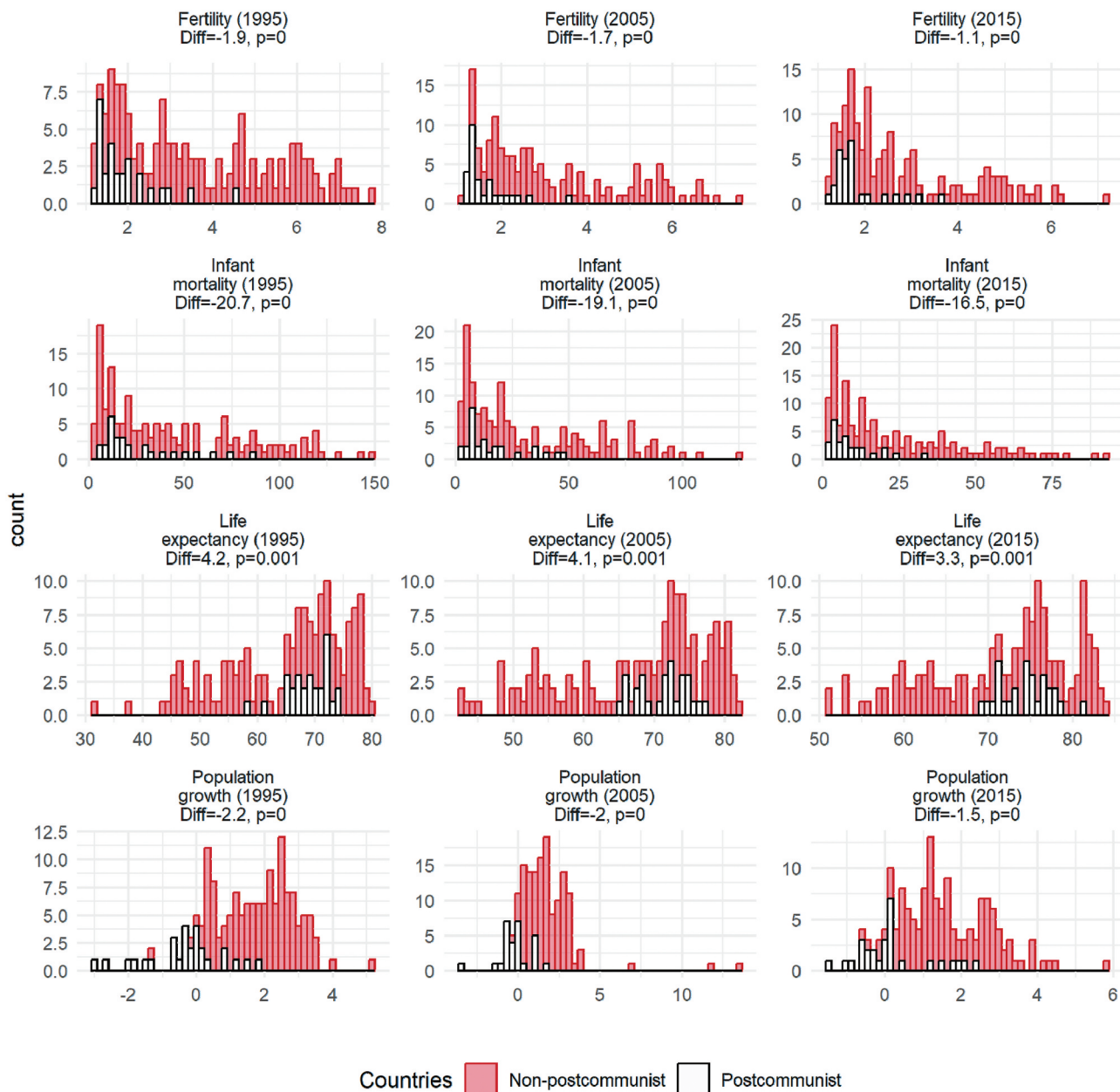
As for other clustering dimensions, cluster I (all variables, 2015) and cluster III (demographic variables, 1995) are two which contain only post-communist countries (100%, 11 and 5 countries, respectively). However, these clusters represent only 42% (11) and 19% (5) of 26 post-communist countries, respectively; in other words, they are small subsets of post-communist countries. Cluster I includes Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. This may indicate some general similarity among the newer EU members (all of these countries, except for Montenegro, are EU member states), but such grouping hardly suggests the distinctiveness of the post-communist region as a whole. Further, cluster III includes Albania, Armenia, Bosnia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan, which is not a recognizable sub-region. The next highest percent of post-communist countries in one cluster is cluster VII

(economic in 2015), with 64% (9 of 14) of the cluster being post-communist countries, but only 33% (9) of 27 post-communist countries are in that cluster, the majority are not.<sup>10</sup>

In eight cases (clusters II, IV–VI, VIII–XI), more than 50% of all post-communist countries fall into the same cluster. However, in six of these clusters (all but IX and X), post-communist countries constitute less than 50% of the countries in the cluster (second to last column on right). For example, we see that there are 128 countries in cluster VIII (political variables in 2015). Of post-communist countries, 85% (23 of 27) are in that cluster, but they constitute only 18% (23 of 128) of all the countries in that same cluster. That is, while many post-communist countries are similar to one another along this dimension, they are also similar to most other countries in the analysis.

Another way to analyze post-communist distinctiveness is to consider individual variables rather than the macro categories and examine how much post-communist and other countries differ from each other on the specific variables that we cluster on. In Figure 2, we take a deeper dive into the clustering found in Figure 1 and Table 3 with regard to demographic variables: we plot the distributions for the four individual demographic variables in that category and report the differences in means and *p*-values between post-communist countries and the rest of the world.

On average, post-communist countries exhibit lower fertility, lower infant mortality, higher life expectancy, and slower population growth, and all these differences in means are statistically significant. However, examining the histograms suggests that there are a number of other countries that are similar to the former communist countries. In Figure 2, the white bars are post-communist countries, and the red bars are the other countries. Considering fertility in 1995 (the upper left panel of Figure 2), we see that most post-communist countries had fertility rates of under three, but so did many other countries. That is, while post-communist countries might be similar to each other in their values of some of these variables, there are many other countries that share those same characteristics, which suggests that post-communist countries are a part of that larger group rather than a separate, distinct group.



**Figure 2.** Histograms for demographic variables (PC countries vs. the rest). The numbers under the variable name indicate the difference in means between post-communist and other countries and the  $p$ -value for this difference. The y-axis is the number of countries, and the x-axis is the variable value.

Moreover, the difference between post-communist and other countries on many indicators has lessened over time. For example, the gap, which is noted in the figures as “Diff = ...,” with respect to the fertility rate decreased from 1.9 in 1995 to 1.1 in 2015. There is similar convergence on other demographic variables, on most political and economic variables, except for trade and agriculture as a share of GDP, and on several of the social variables.<sup>11</sup> That is, not only do post-communist countries generally not form distinct groups on these dimensions, but they have also become substantially closer to the rest of the world over the past two decades.

In addition, Appendix Table A3 summarizes evidence on other countries that fall into clusters with a major presence of post-communist countries (there are 10 such clusters). The table shows that post-communist countries do not systematically cluster with countries from any particular region. In

6 out of 10 clusters, the overwhelming majority of “other” countries are non-OECD members, that is, more likely to be developing and non-democratic. Yet, in four cases, the majority of “other” countries are OECD members.

Further, if we consider individual countries that fall into these 10 clusters (see Tables A6-A10 for full lists of countries in each cluster), no particular pattern emerges. Out of 33 countries that fall together with post-communist countries at least four times, 15 are Latin American, but the rest include Italy, Thailand, Greece, Iran, Turkey, China, Israel, Portugal, and South Korea, among others. A number of these countries have historically maintained close ties with Russia or the Soviet Union, but others did not. Moreover, if we consider all clusters across all dimensions that contain some post-communist countries, there are 54 countries that fall into clusters together with post-communist countries at least 12 times. Among them,

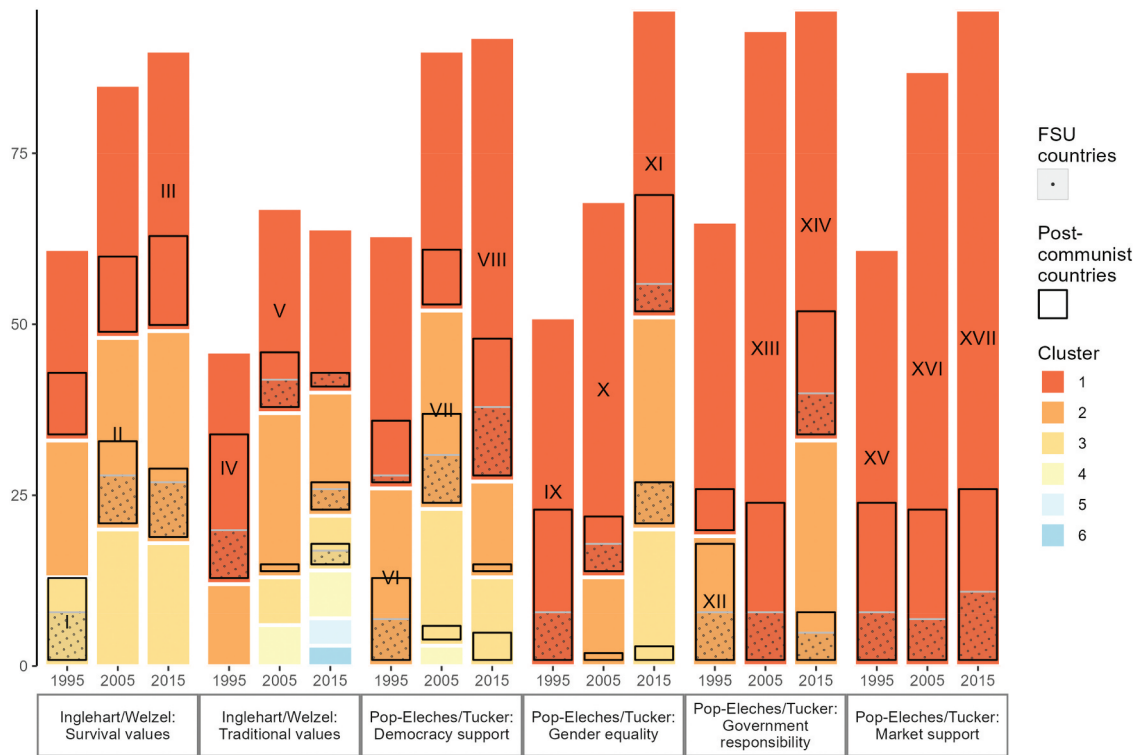
there are many developing countries, but also Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Portugal, France, South Korea, Spain, Austria, Belgium, the UK, and Germany. Therefore, clusters that include post-communist countries are not groupings of countries in a specific region or a sphere of influence.

**Values**

In addition to the demographic, economic, political and social indicators discussed above, we also examine the clustering of values and attitudes, using the data from the WVS for 1991–2020. In this case, we again perform clustering for three periods, but the sets of countries in each period with respect to particular attitudes are somewhat different. If we restricted the

analysis to countries for which all the attitudes of interest are present in all three periods, the resulting set of countries would have been much smaller and much less representative of both the world and the post-communist countries. We were able to include 68 countries in the analysis for the 1990s, 93 for the 2000s, and 96 for the 2010s.<sup>12</sup> For each period, we have calculated weighted country averages of responses to survey questions.

We have examined multiple sets of attitudinal variables. The first two sets include attitudes from the Inglehart–Welzel Cultural Map, which is based on the WVS data; these two dimensions are traditional values (vs. secular-rational values) and survival values (vs. self-expression values). Four other sets of variables are based on the recent



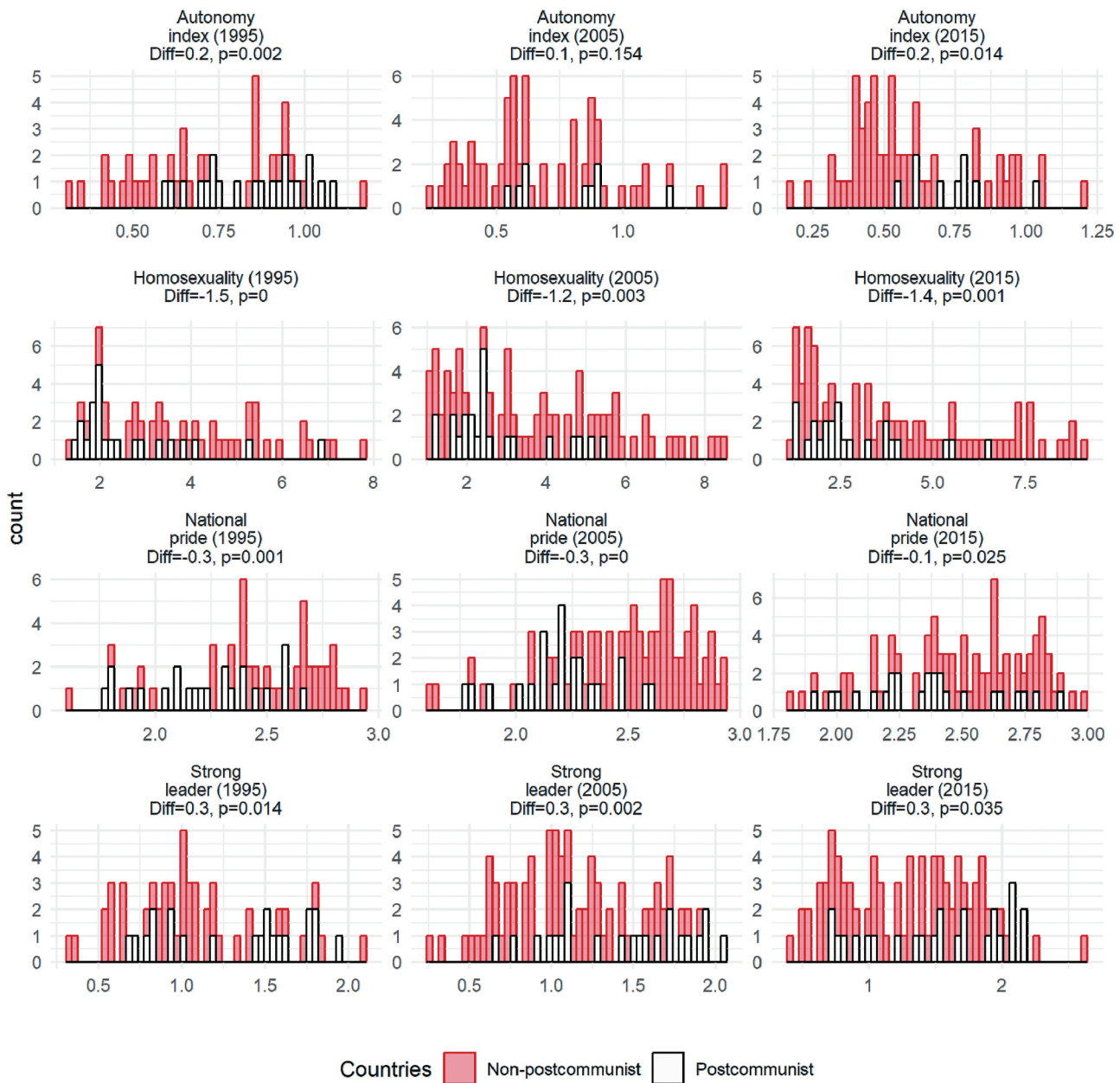
**Figure 3.** Clustering results for all three periods, all values variables. 44 clusters in total, post-communist countries are bordered in black, FSU countries are shaded in gray with a dotted pattern. Roman numerals denote clusters satisfying at least one of our criteria of the distinctiveness of post-communist countries.

**Table 4.** Clusters with Evidence of Post-Communist Distinctiveness, Clustering on Values, Inglehart–Welzel Variables (5 Out of 44 Clusters)

Number in Figure 3	Category	Year	Number of countries in cluster	Cluster size as percentage of all countries in sample	Number of post-communist countries in cluster	Distinctiveness	
						Percentage of post-communist countries among all countries in cluster	Percentage of post-communist countries in cluster among all post-communist countries
<b>I</b>	<b>Survival values</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>59%</b>
II	Survival values	2005	28	33%	12	43%	52%
III	Survival values	2015	41	46%	13	32%	56%
<b>IV</b>	<b>Traditional values</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>100%</b>
V	Traditional values	2005	30	45%	8	27%	89%

**Table 5.** Clusters with Evidence of Post-Communist Distinctiveness, Clustering on Values, Pop-Eleches and Tucker Variables (12 out of 44 Clusters)

Number in Figure 3	Category	Year	Number of countries in cluster	Cluster size as percentage of all countries in sample	Number of post-communist countries in cluster	Distinctiveness	
						Percentage of post-communist countries among all countries in cluster	Percentage of post-communist countries in cluster among all post-communist countries
VI	Democracy support	1995	26	41%	12	46%	57%
VII	Democracy support	2005	29	32%	13	45%	57%
VIII	Democracy support	2015	65	71%	20	31%	80%
IX	Gender equality	1995	51	100%	22	43%	100%
X	Gender equality	2005	55	81%	8	15%	89%
XI	Gender equality	2015	45	47%	17	38%	68%
<b>XII</b>	<b>Government responsibility</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>74%</b>
XIII	Government responsibility	2005	93	100%	23	25%	100%
XIV	Government responsibility	2015	63	66%	18	29%	72%
XV	Market support	1995	61	100%	23	38%	100%
XVI	Market support	2005	87	100%	22	25%	100%
XVII	Market support	2015	96	100%	25	26%	100%



**Figure 4.** Histograms for selected values where the difference between post-communist and other countries is consistent over time. The numbers under the variable name indicate the difference in means between post-communist and other countries and the  $p$ -value for this difference.

comprehensive study of post-communist attitudinal legacies (Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017), and they cover attitudes toward democracy, gender equality, government responsibility, and market support.<sup>13</sup> See Table 2 for the list of attitudes in each set. Figure 3 illustrates the clusters for values similar to Figure 1, with post-communist countries bordered in black and FSU states shaded in gray with a dotted pattern. Again, we have numbered the clusters that we discuss below. Tables 4 and 5 report all of the clusters in the analysis of values that satisfy either of the criteria (more than 50% of countries post-communist, or more than 50% of post-communist countries in one cluster), out of the total of 44 clusters.<sup>14</sup> Table 4 focuses on

variables from Inglehart–Welzel, and Table 5 focuses on variables from Pop-Eleches and Tucker.

The results for clustering on values are similar to our main set of results: in most instances, post-communist countries do not form distinct clusters. There are, however, a couple of notable exceptions – clusters I, IV, and XII in Figure 3 – that satisfy both of our criteria of post-communist distinctiveness. If we consider the clusters based on the Inglehart–Welzel variables (Table 4), Cluster I (survival values, 1995) consists entirely of post-communist countries (13 post-communist countries only), although it includes only 59% (13) of the 22 post-communist countries in this sample. Second, cluster IV (traditional values in 1995) includes all 21 post-communist

countries in the sample plus 13 other countries. While this is not quite a distinct post-communist group, this clustering suggests substantial similarity between post-communist countries on this dimension in 1995. In addition, if we consider the clusters based on the variables chosen by Pop-Eleches and Tucker (Table 5), cluster XII (government responsibility, 1995) consists mostly of post-communist countries (89.5%, 17 of 19 total countries) and includes most of the post-communist countries, 74% (17 of 23 in this sample). If there is any evidence of distinction, these three clusters are it, and notably, they are all from 1995.

Looking into the data further, the average attitudinal differences between post-communist countries and the rest of the world have diminished over time. Appendix Figures A16–A20 report histograms and differences in means between post-communist and other countries for all attitudes of interest in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. On most attitudes, the difference becomes much smaller and not statistically significant by the 2010s. For example, on the importance of God, post-communist countries scored more than 1 point lower on the scale from 1 to 10 in the 1990s. However, the difference was only 0.2 (and not statistically significant) in the 2010s. On happiness, the post-communist gap amounted to 0.5 (on a scale from 1 to 4) in the 1990s, but it shrank to 0.1 in the 2010s.

We observe a similar pattern on other attitudinal questions as well. The only exceptions are support for a strong leader, justifiability of homosexuality, an individual autonomy index, and national pride – on these dimensions, post-communist countries still differed from other nations in the 2010s. See Figure 4, where in these four cases, the difference between post-communist values and other countries remains statistically significant over time. In some cases, the difference in means, e.g., with regard to acceptance of homosexuality, masks the fact that many other countries are similar to post-communist countries, but for other indicators, e.g., support for strong leader in 2015 or national pride in 1995, there are some post-communist countries that are unlike any other countries. Scholars who are interested in the effects of communism – or possibly, earlier, pre-communist historical legacies – on contemporary attitudes might want to further investigate these four variables, and given the prominence of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric in Russia today, it seems the views on homosexuality especially deserve consideration. Yet, overall, the analysis of values suggests a convergence over time between post-communist and other countries on most variables.

## Conclusion

We started this paper asking to what extent the countries that make up the post-communist region are similar to each other and distinct from the rest of the world, and we tried to answer this question by looking anew at data from the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s on a variety of important demographic, economic, political, social, and attitudinal variables. Both our clustering analysis and our analysis of individual variables suggest that post-communist countries do not form a distinct region along these dimensions.

We also found little evidence of sub-regional distinctions, whether in Central Asia or in terms of the East-West divide, which sometimes appears as a difference between FSU countries and Eastern Europe. While in some clusters, there are more former Soviet republics than Eastern European countries, or vice versa, we do not observe a consistent pattern whereby former Soviet republics and Eastern European countries would consistently fall into different clusters across different dimensions.

Instead, on most variables included in this analysis, which we argue comprise many of those commonly used in social science research, post-communist countries generally turn out to be as similar to other countries as to each other, and this has been the case for some time. One exception may be the social dimension, which includes variables related to education, gender equality, urbanization, and adoption of communication technology. A number of post-communist countries tended to group together on this dimension in the two earlier periods in the analysis, but they were still not clearly distinct from other countries in the world and became even less distinct over time. Another exception concerns values: with respect to several attitudinal variables, post-communist countries appeared distinct from other countries in the samples in the 1990s, but much of that distinctiveness has disappeared over time with the few exceptions discussed in Figure 4.

There are four implications of these findings: First, while communism was a distinct political, economic, and social system, and while there were a range of important institutional changes in the late 1980s–1990s, there is no longer a coherent set of “transition” countries. Indeed, since the late 2000s, the EBRD gradually expanded the scope of its activities to the Middle East and Southern Europe (EBRD, *n.d.*). This expansion reflects the decreasing distinctiveness, in practical data gathering terms, of “post-communist” countries. Moreover, there have been other momentous political, economic, and social events since 1989/91 for many countries in the region, including EU accession, NATO membership, and wars (Russia’s invasions of Ukraine and Georgia), which makes the post-communist “transition” experience per se increasingly less relevant to or impactful on contemporary politics, economy, and society in many of the countries of the region.

Therefore, researchers should use the term “post-communism” with care and avoid assuming that having a communist past necessarily continues to make a country a part of a certain cohesive region or group. Scholars who make comparisons between former communist countries and other nations should be precise about the specific characteristics that, in their view, constitute the meaning of “post-communism,” because post-communism as a variable may represent very different institutions or experiences. Further research should continue trying to discover on what dimensions former communist countries are still distinct (if any).

Second, in quantitative studies, if researchers continue to use post-communist dummy variables, their meaning should be clearly specified, or the lack of understanding of what the post-communist dummy might mean should be made explicit. There are trade-offs, of course, to including additional variables in models, even as controls. A “kitchen-sink” approach may increase the explanatory power of the model, but while

eliminating some omitted variable biases, it can introduce new ones and complicate interpretation. At best, a post-communist dummy can be an important omitted variable or have no impact on other regressors' coefficients. At worst, it can introduce a post-treatment bias to the coefficient on an explanatory variable (Achen 2005; King and Zeng 2006) if the latter itself causes the post-communist status, or it could lead to a spurious association between an explanatory and the dependent variable (collider bias) if both of them cause (post-)communism but are otherwise unrelated (Keele, Stevenson, and Elwert 2019). Overall, it might seem to be less of a problem given that the relevant scholarship focuses on outcomes chronologically preceded by the formation of communist regimes and their collapse. However, the proliferation of communism itself was not random and can be associated with factors that are still in place: for instance, in Europe, formerly communist countries, in particular those that spent more time under communist rule, were also less developed from the beginning. In any case, the inclusion of a post-communist dummy requires a substantiated discussion of its potential role in the empirical models.

In addition, we found much inconsistency in the sampling of post-communist countries across or within studies. Overall, our results show that the post-communist dummy variable can mask significant heterogeneity within a group of countries, and this seems to be more true as time goes on. For instance, Bjørnskov and Foss (2008), examining the determinants of entrepreneurship, consider a sample of 29 countries with only three post-communist countries – Hungary, Poland, and Russia. In an analysis of party volatility, van Biezen and Rashkova (2014), consider “post-war European democracies,” including several Eastern European countries and selected former Soviet republics – the Baltics and Ukraine. Leeds and Marikova Leeds (2009) in their analysis of national sports successes consider 25 former communist countries, including 13 post-Soviet ones. Clearly, the meaning of “post-communism” may differ substantially across these studies, depending on which former communist countries are included. It also remains theoretically up for debate whether the concept of post-communism can be stretched to include other countries that have experienced communism or state socialism, such as China, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Tanzania, and Ethiopia (Chen and Sil 2007). Longitudinal studies involving a number of post-communist countries may run into the additional problem of changes in sample composition across time. E.g., the sample of surveyed countries in WVS changes a lot between waves, such that none of the post-communist countries actually appear in all waves,<sup>15</sup> which complicates period-to-period comparison.<sup>16</sup> These are external validity issues: what is true for one group of countries may not be true for a broader or just a different set of countries, which makes comparison across studies difficult.

Third, while we have found that post-communist countries are not especially similar to each other nor distinct from other countries, we do not dismiss the concept of a communist legacy. Though incomplete, our analysis suggests where communist legacies are unlikely to be. Such legacies are no longer evident with respect to key demographic, economic, political, and social variables commonly used in social science research, which we have included in our analysis.

We have primarily examined variables at the country level, but to the extent we found evidence of differences among post-communist countries, it was in attitudes and values at the individual level. This finding is consistent with other work that finds persistent differences in values between post-communist and other countries (e.g., Chaisty and Whitefield 2015; Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2017), although, also in line with that work, we find that such differences diminish over time. Such attitudinal persistence may be driven by the intergenerational transmission of values, as well as by the vestiges of communist-era institutional or political cultures.

Moreover, the communist legacy may still live on through language, religion, material culture, architecture, etc., which are beyond the scope of this study. For example, post-socialist or post-communist cities are treated as a distinct phenomenon in urban studies, and the applicability of the conceptual apparatus of Western urbanism to their case is debated (Ferenčuhová and Gentile 2016). Persistent network ties are another possible way to conceptualize the communist legacy and the specificity of the Eurasian region and subregions, which could include the intensity of cultural and economic exchange (Kotkin 2007), the spatial diffusion of market institutions and democracy (Kopstein and Reilly 2000), and inter-governmental ties (Zakhirova 2012).

In addition, other work focuses on the pre-communist legacy as a way to explain contemporary differences across post-communist countries (Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006; Gehlbach and Malesky 2014). For example, Lankina and Libman (2021) consider the effects of the pre-Soviet middle class on later democratization. And, the increasing use of the term “Eurasia” as a label for post-Soviet countries (Herrera, Kofanov and Shirikov 2020) may signal a tendency to de-emphasize the impact of communism and turn to deeper historical legacies and geographic features. Moreover, as Ekiert (2015) notes, it is characteristic of “third generation” research on post-communist politics (which replaced the earlier “transition to democracy” paradigm) to focus on “a disciplined exploration of historical and cultural contexts.” Indeed, the coexistence of communist and pre-communist legacies and their uneven strength across different issue areas is a noteworthy phenomenon requiring further consideration (Pop-Eleches 2015).

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, our results in no way invalidate regional comparisons or the necessity for regional knowledge of former communist countries. Regional knowledge, including knowledge of languages, is still vitally important, and comparative research in the post-communist region has yielded many important social scientific findings. The results of our analysis do not change that, because the validity of comparative research within the post-communist region does not require the existence of a distinctive or cohesive group of post-communist countries. Instead, deep understanding of the attributes that former communist countries do or do not share is what leads to research designs and case selection that can provide causal insights (Frye 2012). It is also possible that there are distinct groups within the former communist countries based on variables in our analysis;

while our study does not reveal such subregions with respect to our broad set of indicators, they may emerge with respect to other variables, and it is important to explore such possibilities. We believe that our findings might lead to a more precise understanding of the region and a strengthening of the case for comparative analysis, as well as further work on clarifying the communist legacy.

## Notes

1. Not everyone agreed on legacies, however. Fish, for example, argued that political struggles at the time of transition were more consequential than “preconditions” (Fish 1999, 799). Others now make the case for pre-communist legacies; see Lankina and Libman (2021).
2. For our analysis, we consider “post-communist countries” to be the countries of the former USSR, Eastern Europe, and Mongolia. The full set of 154 countries (Appendix Table A1) also includes countries without a clean break with communism (China, Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea) and those that at some point had a communist government (Ethiopia, Laos, Tanzania, etc.).
3. Full set of articles available from authors upon request.
4. More technically, MBC treats the set of variables characterizing each country as a draw from a multivariate normal distribution of these variables. The sample of countries is assumed to be generated by a mixture of multivariate normal distributions, each of which corresponds to a cluster. The algorithm simultaneously determines the number of distributions (clusters), the parameters of each one (mathematical expectations and covariance matrices), and the weights with which each distribution enters the mixture. It optimizes the log-likelihood of the mixture of component densities and selects the mixture maximizing the value of the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; a statistic that minimizes prediction error penalizing for model complexity, that is, the number of estimated parameters). A given observation can in principle be generated by any of the distributions constituting the mixture and the countries are assigned to clusters based on maximum posterior probability. For more details, see Fraley and Raftery (2002); Everitt et al. (2011); Ahlquist and Breunig (2019). The results of the MBC analysis presented in this chapter were obtained using R package *mclust* (Fraley and Raftery 2002; Scrucca et al. 2016). We use the algorithm without setting limits on the number of clusters.
5. Our 50% thresholds are deliberately conservative: we allow ourselves to capture even weak evidence of post-communist homogeneity and distinctiveness. However, if a reader believes that these thresholds are too low, it is straightforward to reevaluate our analysis by applying stricter criteria (e.g., at least 75% of post-communist countries should be in one cluster, and at least 75% of countries in that cluster should be post-communist countries).
6. In the Appendix, we also report clustering results for each individual variable (Figures A1–A6 and A12–A15). These results are similar to the main analysis, which suggests that our results are not driven by the particular grouping of specific variables within larger dimensions.
7. The complete list of countries is in Appendix Table A1. For the analyses of “social” variables listed in Table 2, the sample size is somewhat smaller (137 countries) because of limited data availability.
8. For results of clustering on individual variables for each of these four dimensions, see Appendix Figures A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, and A6.
9. For the analysis of distinctiveness of the FSU (instead of post-communist) states, see Appendix Table A2. Appendix Table A4 lists results for all 75 clusters, and Appendix Table A5 lists results for all clusters analyzing distinctiveness of FSU states. The clusters in the appendix tables are listed in the order in which they are

shown in Figure 1: the cluster at the top of each column is #1 in the respective category and year, the second-from-the-top cluster is #2 in the same category and year, etc. Appendix tables also indicate the Roman numerals for clusters with evidence of distinctiveness highlighted in Figure 1 and Table 3.

10. For a listing of which countries are in each cluster, see Appendix Tables A6–A10.
11. Appendix Figures A7, A8, A9, A10, A11 report the histograms and differences in means for the remaining variables.
12. See Table A1 in the Appendix for which countries are included in each year.
13. In the original study, attitudes toward democracy and gender equality were analyzed as indices based on batteries of related questions. We use these survey questions (excluding some that were not available for most of the countries in the analysis) as individual variables.
14. In Appendix Table A11, we report all the clusters for all “values” variables for 1995, 2005, and 2015.
15. There are five post-communist countries surveyed in the second wave, 23 in the third wave, 7 in the fourth wave, 10 in the fifth wave, and 13 in the sixth wave. No post-communist country can be traced without interruption through waves 2–6 or 2–5.
16. We face this same problem in our analysis of attitudes using the WVS data in this paper.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## References

- Achen, C. H. 2005. “Let’s Put Garbage-Can Regressions and Garbage-Can Probits Where They Belong.” *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22 (4): 327–339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07388940500339167>.
- Ahlquist, J. S., and C. Breunig. 2019. “Model-Based Clustering and Typologies in the Social Sciences.” *Political Analysis* 20 (1): 92–112. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpr039>.
- Bernhard, M., and K. Jasiewicz. 2015. “Whither Eastern Europe? Changing Approaches and Perspectives on the Region in Political Science.” *East European Politics and Societies* 29 (2): 311–322. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325415587919>.
- Bernhard, M., D.-J. Jung, E. Tzelgov, M. Coppedge, and S. I. Lindberg. 2017. “Making Embedded Knowledge Transparent: How the V-Dem Dataset Opens New Vistas in Civil Society Research.” *Perspectives on Politics* 15 (2): 342–360. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592717000056>.
- Bjørnskov, C., and N. J. Foss. 2008. “Economic Freedom and Entrepreneurial Activity: Some Cross-Country Evidence.” *Public Choice* 134 (3–4): 307–328. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-007-9229-y>.
- Bunce, V. 1995a. “Should Transitologists Be Grounded?” *Slavic Review* 54 (1): 111–127. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2501122>.
- Bunce, V. 1995b. “Paper Curtains and Paper Tigers.” *Slavic Review* 54 (4): 979–987. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2501403>.
- Bunce, V. 1999. “The Political Economy of Postsocialism.” *Slavic Review* 58 (4): 756–793. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2697198>.
- Chaisty, P., and S. Whitefield. 2015. “Attitudes Towards the Environment: Are Post-Communist Societies (Still) Different?” *Environmental Politics* 24 (4): 598–616. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2015.1023575>.
- Chen, C., and R. Sil. 2007. “Stretching Postcommunism: Diversity, Context, and Comparative Historical Analysis.” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 23 (4): 275–301. <https://doi.org/10.2747/1060-586X.23.4.275>.
- Coppedge, M., J. Gerring, C. H. Knutsen, S. I. Lindberg, J. Teorell, D. Altman, M. Bernhard. 2021. “V-Dem Codebook V11.1.” *V-Dem Working Paper*. University of Gothenburg, V-Dem Institute. <https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/img/refs/codebookv111.pdf>.
- Darden, K., and A. Grzymala-Busse. 2006. “The Great Divide: Literacy, Nationalism, and the Communist Collapse.” *World Politics* 59 (1): 83–115. <https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2007.0015>.

- Downes, J. F., and M. Loveless. 2018. "Centre Right and Radical Right Party Competition in Europe: Strategic Emphasis on Immigration, Anti-Incumbency, and Economic Crisis." *Electoral Studies* 54:148–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.05.008>.
- Ekiert, G. 2015. "Three Generations of Research on Post-Communist Politics—A Sketch." *East European Politics and Societies* 29 (2): 323–327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325414559052>.
- Ekiert, Grzegorz, and S. E. Hanson, eds. 2003. *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Assessing the Legacy of Communist Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). n.d. "The History of the EBRD." European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Accessed October 31, 2021. <https://www.ebrd.com/who-we-are/history-of-the-ebrd.html>.
- Everitt, B. S., S. Landau, M. Leese, and D. Stahl. 2011. *Cluster Analysis*. 5th ed. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.
- Fariss, C. J. 2014. "Respect for Human Rights Has Improved over Time: Modeling the Changing Standard of Accountability." *American Political Science Review* 108 (2): 297–318. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000070>.
- Ferenčuhová, S., and M. Gentile. 2016. "Introduction: Postsocialist Cities and Urban Theory." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57 (4–5): 483–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2016.1270615>.
- Fish, M. S. 1998. "Democratization's Requisites: The Postcommunist Experience." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14 (3): 212–247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.1998.10641453>.
- Fish, M. S. 1999. "Postcommunist Subversion: Social Science and Democratization in East Europe and Eurasia." *Slavic Review* 58 (4): 794–823. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2697199>.
- Fleron, F. J., Jr, and E. P. Hoffmann. (1993) 2019. *Post-Communist Studies and Political Science: Methodology and Empirical Theory in Sovietology*. Reprint, New York: Routledge. (first published in 1993 by Westview Press)
- Fraley, C., and A. E. Raftery. 2002. "Model-Based Clustering, Discriminant Analysis, and Density Estimation." *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 97 (458): 611–631. <https://doi.org/10.1198/016214502760047131>.
- Freedom House. 2017. *Freedom of the Press Report*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Frye, T. 2012. "In from the Cold: Institutions and Causal Inference in Postcommunist Studies." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15:245–263. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-043010-095817>.
- Gallinat, A. 2022. "The Anthropology of Post-Socialism: Theoretical Legacies and Conceptual Futures – An Introduction." *Critique of Anthropology* 42 (2): 103–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X221095943>.
- Gans-Morse, J. 2004. "Searching for Transitologists: Contemporary Theories of Post-Communist Transitions and the Myth of a Dominant Paradigm." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 20 (4): 320–349. <https://doi.org/10.2747/1060-586X.20.4.320>.
- Gehlbach, S., E. J. Malesky. 2014. "The Grand Experiment That Wasn't?" In *Property Rights, and Economic Growth: The Legacy of Douglass North*, edited by S. Galiani and I. Sened, 223–247. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grogan, L. 2015. "Son Preference Meets Technology: The Missing Girls of Albania." SSRN <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2615504>.
- Guriev, S., and E. Zhuravskaya. 2009. "(Un)Happiness in Transition." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 23 (2): 143–168. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.23.2.143>.
- Herrera, Y. M., D. Kofanov, and A. Shirikov. 2020. "Eurasia and Postcommunism: Weasel Words?" in "Weasel Words and the Analysis of Postcommunist Politics: A Symposium." *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 34 (2): 288–295. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325419900244>.
- Inglehart, R., and W. E. Baker. 2000. "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values." *American Sociological Review* 65 (1): 19–51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657288>.
- Inglehart, R., C. Haerper, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Díez-Medrano, M. Lagos, eds. 2014. "World Values Survey: All Rounds—Country-Pooled Datafile Version" (Dataset). Madrid: JD Systems Institute, Accessed January 20, 2022. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>.
- Inglehart, R., and C. Welzel. 2005. "Exploring the Unknown: Predicting the Responses of Publics Not yet Surveyed." *International Review of Sociology* 15 (1): 173–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906700500038611>.
- Janos, A. C. 2000. *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- To Postcommunism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Jowitt, K. 1992. *New World Disorder*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Kaufman, D., A. Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi. 2010. "The Worldwide Governance Indicators: Methodology and Analytical Issues". *Policy Research Working Paper 5430*. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/2340e37a-cb4f-5009-9c3b-ab8a254fbfcc/content>.
- Keefe, P., and S. Knack. 2007. "Boondoggles, Rent-Seeking, and Political Checks and Balances: Public Investment under Unaccountable Governments." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 89 (3): 566–572. <https://doi.org/10.1162/rest.89.3.566>.
- Keele, L., R. T. Stevenson, and F. Elwert. 2019. "The Causal Interpretation of Estimated Associations in Regression Models." *Political Science Research and Methods* 8 (1): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2019.31>.
- King, G., and L. Zeng. 2006. "The Dangers of Extreme Counterfactuals." *Political Analysis* 14 (2): 131–159. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpj004>.
- Kopstein, J. S., and D. A. Reilly. 2000. "Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Post-Communist World." *World Politics* 53 (1): 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887100009369>.
- Kotkin, S. 2007. "Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance across the Post-Mongol Space." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8 (3): 487–531. <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2007.0040>.
- Kselman, D. M., E. N. Powell, and J. A. Tucker. 2016. "Crowded Space, Fertile Ground: Party Entry and the Effective Number of Parties." *Political Science Research and Methods* 4 (2): 317–342. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.22>.
- Laitin, D. D. 2000. "Post-Soviet Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3:117–148. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.117>.
- Lankina, T. V., and A. Libman. 2021. "The Two-Pronged Middle Class: The Old Bourgeoisie, New State-Engineered Middle Class, and Democratic Development." *American Political Science Review* 115 (3): 948–966. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542100023X>.
- Leeds, M. A., and E. Marikova Leeds. 2009. "International Soccer Success and National Institutions." *Journal of Sports Economics* 10 (4): 369–390. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527002508329864>.
- Malia, M. 1992. "Leninist Endgame." *Daedalus* 121 (2): 57–75. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20025433>.
- Müller, M. 2019. "Goodbye, Postsocialism!" *Europe-Asia Studies* 71 (4): 533–550. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1578337>.
- Mulligan, C. B., R. Gil, and X. Sala-i-Martin. 2004. "Do Democracies Have Different Public Policies than Nondemocracies?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18 (1): 51–74. <https://doi.org/10.1257/089533004773563430>.
- Pop-Eleches, G. 2015. "Pre-Communist and Communist Developmental Legacies." *East European Politics and Societies* 29 (2): 391–408. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325414555761>.
- Pop-Eleches, G., and J. A. Tucker. 2011. "Communism's Shadow: Post-Communist Legacies, Values, and Behavior." *Comparative Politics* 43 (4): 379–408. <https://doi.org/10.5129/001041511796301588>.
- Pop-Eleches, G., and J. A. Tucker. 2017. *Communism's Shadow: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Political Attitudes*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rich, T. S. 2014. "Institutional Influences on Turnout in Mixed Member Electoral Systems: An Exploratory Analysis." *Representation* 50 (2): 161–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344893.2013.860912>.
- Rogers, D. 2010. "Postsocialisms Unbound: Connections, Critiques, Comparisons." *Slavic Review* 69 (1): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0037677900016673>.
- Rothschild, J. 1989. *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe since World War II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schmitter, P. C., and T. L. Karl. 1994. "The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should

- They Attempt to Go?" *Slavic Review* 53 (1): 173–185. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2500331>.
- Scrucca, L., M. Fop, T. B. Murphy, and A. E. Raftery. 2016. "Mclust 5: Clustering, Classification and Density Estimation Using Gaussian Finite Mixture Models." *The R Journal* 8 (1): 289–317. <https://doi.org/10.32614/RJ-2016-021>.
- Shleifer, A., and D. Treisman. 2014. "Normal Countries: The East 25 Years after Communism." *Foreign Affairs* 93 (6): 92–96, 97–103. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-10-20/normal-countries>.
- Tucker, J. A. 2015. "Comparative Opportunities: The Evolving Study of Political Behavior in Eastern Europe." *East European Politics and Societies* 29 (2): 420–432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325414559051>.
- van Biezen, I., and E. R. Rashkova. 2014. "Deterring New Party Entry? the Impact of State Regulation on the Permeability of Party Systems." *Party Politics* 20 (6): 890–903. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068812458616>.
- von Hirschhausen, B., Hannes, G. Kraft, C., Müller, D., and T. Serrier. 2019. "Phantom Borders in Eastern Europe: A New Concept for Regional Research." *Slavic Review* 78 (2): 368–389. <https://doi.org/10.1017/slr.2019.93>.
- World Bank. 2022. "World Development Indicators" (Dataset). Accessed 20 January 2022. <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/>.
- Zakhirova, L. 2012. "Is There a Central Asia? State Visits and an Empirical Delineation of the Region's Boundaries." *The Review of Regional Studies* 42 (1): 25–50. <https://doi.org/10.52324/001c.8133>.