

elected government in case it does not do as promised, whereas in a consensus democracy, it is more difficult for voters to blame only one party for the successes and failures. All governments are affected by external factors, unions, interest organisations and lobbying actors. Yet, some democracies have a stronger tendency to let those affect the policies and ultimately have a greater effect on the support or opposition towards it.

Finally, the book lacks a clear theoretical framework or conceptual model for understanding policymaking. While Grube's analysis is informed by a range of historical perspectives, the book does not offer a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding policymaking processes and outcomes. This may limit its appeal to readers seeking a more theoretically rigorous analysis of policy.

Despite these limitations, this work remains a valuable contribution to the field of policy analysis and design. Grube's analysis is supported by a range of case studies from around the world and provides a wealth of practical recommendations for policymakers seeking to navigate complex institutional environments. The book also emphasises the importance of attention to detail, effective communication, stakeholder engagement, evidence-based policymaking and leadership in driving effective policymaking. By highlighting the challenges and opportunities involved, this work provides a valuable resource for policymakers, scholars and practitioners seeking to improve policy outcomes.

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**Sabrina P. Ramet: *East Central Europe and Communism: Politics, Culture, and Society, 1943–1991***

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This work is an insightful addition to the already vast literature on the communist takeover of East Central Europe, which led to the creation of the communist societies that dominated this part of the world from the end of the Second World War to the end of the 1980s and early 1990s. Ramet primarily focused on examining politics, culture and society, with particular attention to 'the unintended, dysfunctional consequences of communist policies' (p. 2). This somewhat sets her book apart from other volumes that deal with the same topic. At the very beginning of the volume, she highlights two principles that the communists in Europe wanted to attain as their ultimate goals in creating new societies: 'equality (even though not to the exclusion of privileges for high-ranking communists or of the political dominance of the Politburo and Central Committee of the communist party) and control of political life, the economy, the arts, and social life in general, as well as, in those countries where it was possible, the religious organizations' (p. 3).

The volume reads very well; it is easy to follow because it is organised chronologically and is divided into several sections devoted to different periods in the development of the communist regimes. The section preceding all others, *Communism's unintended consequences: An introduction*, provides information on the objectives and the rationale of the volume, setting the tone and direction taken by the author's writing. Here, Ramet first introduces information on the general traits of the communist system in East Central Europe, effectively defining the given system and the manner in which it functioned. At the same time, she provides contextual information on the states she is about to discuss in more detail in the following sections.

The three following sections, *The Soviet bloc, part one: 1944–1956*, *The Soviet bloc, part two: 1956–1980*, and *The Soviet bloc, part three: 1980–1989*, respectively, are devoted to the three different phases in communist thinking and systems as implemented in East Central Europe. Each period is further marked by a significant milestone, usually an event or series of related events that eventually came to represent a watershed in the development of the societies in question. In Ramet's words, these include 'the emergence of "people's democracies" in East Central Europe, Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito's defiance of Stalin's imperialism, post-Stalin disenchantment, Nikita Khrushchev's onslaught on Stalin's "cult of personality", the Polish October, the Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring, Romania's "national Stalinism"' (Foreword, p. xvii), etc. In that respect, Ramet develops her arguments by contextualising the main political, economic and cultural developments, additionally showing the interconnected relationships between them.

After having defined 'Communism', the way it operates and the ways in which communists came to power in the introductory section, Ramet discusses Poland, East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, as it was officially called), Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania by approaching various issues, including women's rights, gender inequality, music, arts, political developments and socio-economic issues, among others, within the three perspectives of politics, culture and society. The Soviet Union looms large in her analysis, as she shows the overwhelming influence and grip Moscow had over the societies in question.

The last two sections, *Socialist Mavericks: Yugoslavia and Albania, 1943–1991* and *Epitaph*, respectively, mark the portions of the volume in which the author first approaches Yugoslavia and then Albania. Arguably, these two countries can be considered—each in its own right—peculiar po-

litical, economic and social experiments in implementing rather specific policies in ways that set them apart from the rest of communist Europe. The author then continues her discussion, presenting her final thoughts on the systems the communist leaders wanted to instal and making ample references to what has already been argued in the previous sections of the volume.

The final two sections of the book, particularly those that deal with Yugoslavia and Albania, are smaller in length and may seem somewhat less informative. However, this appears so only at face value, as Ramet has provided quite a few references to both Yugoslavia and Albania in the previous sections, mainly intending to compare these two states to the rest of then-communist East Central Europe. In fact, at the beginning of the volume, she refers to Robert K. Merton's work, this time in *Epitaph*, again explaining her choice of having tackled 'unintended consequences as there can be problems also with consequences which are anticipated but not intended or chosen' (p. 317).

Indeed, Ramet's volume is a valuable addition to a rather large and ever-increasing body of literature on the topic that still fascinates many political scientists, historians and political economists, among others, mainly because her analytical angle is somewhat different from those of other authors who have written on the topic. In that respect, university students at both undergraduate and graduate levels, professionals in the field and history enthusiasts will all welcome this book. This is because, by assuming an insightful analytical angle and offering insightful comments, the author provides a brief-though-effective examination (review style) of the main events in the communist world in the period after the Second World War. Some of these comments came from the author's personal experiences while visiting and doing research in the countries mentioned. There may be readers who will read said comments as a

disadvantage of the book though these, in my opinion, also have informative value. It is, however, essential to note that the volume is largely based on the author having used mainly secondary sources. Hence, the volume and the information provided in it may not be as novel, but rather partly recycled knowledge already presented in other academic treatments dealing with the same topic.

All in all, the book deserves credit for trying to tell the story of communism from a slightly different and partly more engaging perspective and for doing so in a compelling but concise manner that will undoubtedly be appreciated not only by those who are familiar with Ramet's scholarship.

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