**REINTERPRETING THE DEMOCRACY DISILLUSIONMENT IN THE CEE DEMOCRACIES: Evidence from protest event analysis in 1989-2010**

**Work in Progress!**

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**Introduction**

Most of the available literature warns that although East-Central European countries have managed quite early after the 1989 democratic transitions to adopt democratic constitutions, develop free market economies, have free elections, and access the European Union, they are still lacking more developed democratic civic culture. The individual reports show evidence that over the last 20 years the countries experienced growing apathy and resignation of their citizens to take part in civic and political life (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007, Barnes 2006, Kostadinova and Power 2007). As a source of these processes the authors identify frustration and disappointment with the actual economic and political performance of these democracies that sharply contrasts with high expectations and enthusiasm about ideal of democracy as it was seen in the early 1990s (Mishler and Rose 1997, Catterberg and Moreno 2005).

Empirical evidence supporting this “honeymoon disillusion” theory has been developed only to a limited extent. The reason is that available research has not paid enough attention to the overtime development of non-electoral activism, which is, however, a crucial test for the “honeymoon disillusion” theory distinguishing it from other possible interpretations of how democratic citizenship develops in these countries. The goal of the paper is to provide such a test of the “honeymoon disillusion” thesis together with examination of other rival explanations of civic activism, namely “critical citizen” theory and the theory of political opportunities.

To do so we rely on a unique dataset of all protest events that took place in the four East-Central European countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia from late 1989 to 2010. These data are supplemented with quarterly data on political disaffection, economic development and political opportunities in individual countries. In general, the results show no support for the “honeymoon disillusion” theory. In contrast to its expectation, the individual countries do not show either long-term decline of conventional collective participation or dramatic increase in radical activism. Similarly, a number of time-series regressions show that in contrast to the theory, political disaffection in these countries does not dampen conventional activism while facilitating radical. Moreover, in the case of the Czech Republic political disaffection even increases activism, which gives support to a rival theory interpreting political disaffection through perspective of postmaterialist critical citizens. In other countries, it is rather political opportunity structure indicators and economic development and not political disaffection that affect civic activism.

**Democracy disillusion in the CEE countries**

The political mobilizations that marked the end of the Communist regimes in many Central-East European countries raised among scholars high expectations of reinvigorated active civic and political participation and vibrant civil society in the post-Communist countries. However, after a short period of enthusiasm it became clear that these hopes would not materialize in the foreseeable future. Numerous studies have repeatedly reported significantly lower voter turnout in this region in comparison to old Western democracies (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007, Norris 2002). A huge gap exists also in the case of other non-electoral political activities, such as signing petition, contacting politicians or demonstrating (Barnes 2006, Bernhagen and Marsh 2007, Vrablikova 2011). In general, East Europeans participate in politics by tens of percent less than people in most of Western Democracies. The same findings hold also when comparing the development of civil society and activity in associations and voluntary groups. Despite a developed population of small professional NGOs, Central East European countries do not have vibrant civil societies according to most observers, and membership in civil society groups displays a much lower level than in Western countries.

 Even more importantly, numerous studies have identified a further widening of the gap between the East and West. The available studies report an overall dramatic deterioration in a number of parameters usually attributed to well-functioning democracy. Researchers point at the declining voter turnout, which has decreased on average by ten percent (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007, Barnes 2006, Norris, López-Pintor, Gratschew and Sullivan 2002, Kostadinova and Power 2007, Kostadinova 2009). They also show a rapid declining trend for non-electoral political participation in this region while Western Europe has experienced an increase in these activities (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007, Barnes 2006). Similarly, civil society organizations and political parties display over the time withdrawal of their members (Barnes 2006). At the same time, other studies warn about rising extremism and radicalism in these countries. Particularly, increased political mobilization and collective action of rightwing radicals have attracted a lot of attention (Beichelt and Minkenberg 2002, Mudde 2005, Minkenberg 2002). There is also obvious increased voter support for radical parties, such as non-reformed Communist party in the Czech Republic (Linek 2011) and the rise of radical right parties in some of these countries (Bustikova 2013, Bustikova and Kitschelt 2009). As a result, when evaluating the quality of democracy in this region, observers usually provide a gloomy picture and are worried about the increasing passivity, disinterest and radicalism which threaten the stability of new East European democracies in the future (Sztompka 1997, Mishler and Rose 1998; Howard 2003, Hutcheson and Korosteleva 2006; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002, Linek 2009).

 Although the individual-level studies examine different indicators drawing on different sub-disciplines, there seems to be some agreement on the cause of these negative overtime processes. Calling it the “post-honeymoon disillusionment” (Catterberg and Moreno 2005), “disenchantment” (Pacek, Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2009; Kostadinova 2009) or the “betrayed dream” (Linek 2009) they attribute the above described worsening of the CEE democracies to the mismatch between people’s high expectations resulting from their idealized view of democracy and the everyday not-so-good performance of the extant regimes. In a nutshell, since post-communist citizens were so optimistic and enthusiastic about the upcoming democratic regimes, they are now even more frustrated and disappointed by their performance. Significant groups of the CEE citizens experienced a severe worsening of socio-economic conditions during the transformation and political performance of new democracies was heavily lowered by political and corruption scandals. This general disappointment and frustration should then lead the CEE citizenry to a number of negative outcomes, such as political disinterest and apathy, which result in low participation in politics, and destroys support for established democratic forces and gives support to radical anti-democrats either in the form of their electoral support or increased collective mobilization (Linek 2011, but see Pacek et al. 2009).

While we do not challenge particular empirical findings provided by the individual-level studies, we disagree with the general evaluation of the CEE democracies that most of the studies deduce from their results. Specifically, we do not intend to contest the fact that there is a gap between CEE and old democracies in a number of important democratic indicators and that for instance the voter turnout is declining in this region. However, we argue that the available studies do not tell the whole story. Taking into account also other evidence might bring not that straightforward and simple picture, as provided by most of the literature; on the contrary, it can provide us with a different perspective on the democratic dynamics in the CEE countries.

Our main critique is that most of the available studies have paid attention mainly to voting and political trust. However, even Western democracies have over time displayed a declining voter turnout, alienation from traditional politics and decreasing political trust; and still, a significant group of researchers do not see these trends as threatening democracy (Norris 2011, Catterberg and Moreno 2005, but see Putnam 2000). The processes that should be dramatically different in Western democracies and CEE countries are the development of non-electoral political and civic participation. However, this phenomenon has so far not been studied in more detail. Specifically, when diagnosing the declining trend, the available studies use mostly survey data and rely only on two or three time points in the 20-year period. Being aware of the huge overtime variation of non-electoral participation that has been observed in other countries, these data are limited in their capacity to report overall trends. Hence, reliable overtime analysis of citizens’ political activism beyond voting in the CEE is the missing part in the mosaic.

This study aims to provide a more robust test to this “honeymoon disillusionment” theory. To do so we will present overtime data from 1989 to 2010 on collective action organized in the four countries and examine whether there is really an overall declining trend as suggested by the honeymoon thesis. Testing this theory further, we will examine the relation between frustration, disillusionment and public collective mobilization also together with rival explanations of public mobilization. The next section will first specify in detail expectations of the “honeymoon disillusion” theory. Then we will, drawing on different – not area specific – literature, offer alternative explanations of why protest fluctuates in the four studied countries.

**Honeymoon disillusion hypotheses**

Catterberg and Moreno (2005) attribute the honeymoon effect to countries undertaking democratic transition in general. Braun (2011: xx) explains it that “shortly after a system transformation, citizens are excited by the general idea of a democratic system, but this enthusiasm fades in the course of the time or even reverts into feelings of nostalgia” (Dalton 1994: 491; McDonough 1998: 232; Sztompka 1993: 85). For the citizens of communist states the transition to democracy did not mean only the standard exchange of political elites. It signalled a promise of an unprecedented improvement in their lives in general: from gaining political freedoms, possibility to travel abroad, removal of old corrupted communist systems and badly functioning public services to individual economic well-being. However, countries going through transformation of the core parts of the social, economic and political system unsurprisingly faced difficulties. Not long after 1989 most citizens of Central East European countries started to notice that these expectations are not coming true. Most of the citizens realized that capitalist economies have also dark sides, which they were not aware of before, and all of this was also accompanied by corruption and political scandals, which concerned even people who were well off in the new democratic regimes. The “honeymoon” perspective explains that this original enthusiasm, which manifested itself for instance in a mass outsize participation in demonstrations and elections at the time of the birth of these new regimes, was replaced by frustration. The core point here is that since the expectation were so high, according to some commentators even unrealistic and never achievable, the frustration and disillusion is so deep, prevalent and worsening.

 Simultaneously, these authors explicitly argue that political distrust and its decline in CEE countries is qualitatively different and displays an opposite dynamics than it does in Western democracies (Catterberg and Moreno 2005). The reason is that even old Western democracies show over time overall decreasing trend in political trust. However, while this process is a result of “silent postmaterialist revolution”, which brought intergenerational value change in Western democracies and means critical participatory citizens, in the case of CEE countries political disaffection does not mean healthy criticism but harmful frustration and apathy (Catterberg and Moreno 2005, Mishler and Rose 1997). Put simply, while decrease in political trust in Western Europe means critical citizens, in Eastern Europe it is apathy.

 According to the proponents of the “honeymoon perspective”, this special type of political disaffection specific to countries shortly after the democratic transition should have generally two effects. First, citizens can opt for exit strategy. Original enthusiasm, which resulted in high participation, when substituted with frustration and disillusionment should presently lead to lower political participation. In other words, frustration results in inactivity and political apathy. The second expected reaction is a voice strategy that is in contrast to the first one associated with increased political activism, which however potentially threatens democracy, either in the form of voting for extremist parties or radical collective mobilization vládě (Linek 2009). From the “honeymoon disillusion” theory we can then derive two expectations: there will be a negative over-time effect of political disaffection on conventional protest and positive over-time effect on radical activism.

**Critical Citizen**

The opposite view to the “honeymoon disillusionment” theory suggests that the processes we observe in the case of the CEE new democracies rather resemble those identified by some authors in Western countries as development of critical citizens’ culture (Dalton and Shin 2011). From this perspective, political disaffection in CEE countries is not an area specific expression of early experience with the democratic transition but indicates the overall global modernization trend that results in the development of self-expressive culture (Inglehart 1978, Inghlehart 1990, Inglehart 1997, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Dalton and Shin (2011) explicitly point out that distrust in the CEE countries is not an indicator of dysfunctional democracy, but an attribute of mature democracy, in which critical citizens search for alternative venues of political expression.

As specified by Inglehart and others, post-industrialization brings value change in terms of more emancipative values, individualism, autonomy, emphasis on human choice at the expense of traditional values, conformity, and deference (Inglehart 1978; Inghlehart 1990; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Inkeles 1983; Nevitte 1996). In the realm of citizen politics, the self-expressive culture has consequences for people’s expectations about politics, how they evaluate it and their behavior. People are not deferential to political authorities any more, rather they are more demanding, critical and hence dissatisfied. Because of that the postmodernization process should be responsible for a decline of political trust and satisfaction with politics in Western democracies in the last decades (Dalton 2004).

Importantly, this emergence of “critical citizens” (Norris 1999) does not go hand in hand either with resignation and apathy or with anti-democratic radicalism. The culture of “dissatisfied democrats” (Klingemann 1999) is not a mere non-constructive and passive criticism of politics but also expresses the aspiration of citizens to take responsibility to actively contribute to social and political well-being of their societies. As Dalton (2008, 2007) describes it on the case of the US, the prevailing perspective on what a good citizen should think or do used to be based on “allegiance to law and order” that implied only a limited participatory role for citizens (Dalton 2008, ch. 2; Almond and Verba 1963: 24-26). This old type of citizenship is being driven out by new values of engaged citizenship that emphasizes more active and more involved political and social participation, formation of independent opinions and solidarity to others (Dalton 2007, 2008). While decreasing “disciplined and elite-led” types of political participation, such as voting and party membership, which based on “hierarchical structures” and too distant from people and specific issues, the self-expressive culture of critical citizens facilitates non-electoral activities, such as political consumerism, protest, direct contact, working with public interest groups. The reason is that these activities are more direct and more issue oriented, rather self-organizing, more spontaneous, more active and autonomous, which is congruent with the self-expressive culture of critical citizens (Dalton 2007, Inglehart 1997, Inglehart and Welzel 2005: 44; Welzel et al. 2004; Dalton 2004; Norris 2002; Stolle et al. 2005). As Norris (2002: 19) points out, this process is supposed to “have increased demands for more active public participation in the policymaking process through direct action, new social movements, and protest groups....”

Similarly, political disaffection understood as self-expressive culture of critical citizens should not result in non-democratic radicalism as suggested by the “honeymoon disillusion” thesis. Democracy is still the most preferred political system in post-industrial societies and it does not decline in terms of its popular support. Moreover, these studies show that the critics of contemporary performance of politics and political elites are those who belong to the strongest democrats that very much value principles of democracy (Dalton 2004, Norris 2011). From this perspective, “elite challenging” participation resulting from political disaffection should not threaten democracy because the culture of self-expressive critical citizens does not go hand in hand with non-democratic radicalism. Hence based on the “critical citizen” theory, we derive the opposite expectations for the effect of political disaffection than in the case of the “honeymoon disillusion” theory: higher political disaffection should result in more conventional protest and should decrease radical collective action.

**Institutional opportunities**

An alternative view on the determinants of citizen activism in the CEE countries comes up with an institutional hypothesis, as opposed to cultural and value patterns of the society, resulting either from democratic transition or from postmodernization. As argued by social movement scholars (Tarrow 2010, Kriesi 2004: 74, Meyer 2004, Meyer and Minkoff 2004) and researchers analyzing overtime differences in political participation other than only voting (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003), citizen activism should be primary affected by political opportunities provided by institutions and political elites that shape incentives of potential participants and mobilizing actors in a rational choice manner. Specifically, it should be the contemporary political situation understood as cyclic patterns of the political system and changing relationships among political actors, such as elections or party composition of a government, that influence collective action. These theories then expect that political elites, such as politicians, media or social movement’s activists, mobilize individual participants depending upon these political opportunities (Kriesi 2004, Meyer 2004, Meyer and Minkoff 2004, Rosenstone and Hansen 2003).

Tarrow (1998: 76-80, 1996) distinguishes among four dimensions of political opportunities responsible for overtime variation in protest. The first dimension is increasing possibility of access to the political system, which is the best indicated by elections. Similarly, Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) theorize that political leaders are more likely to mobilize citizens when decisions or conflicts are near resolution and connect it explicitly to a seasonal calendar of institutions. They also identify elections as such moment and show that Americans participate more in conventional politics, such as contacting and signing petitions, when elections take place (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003: 35). Also Meyer and Minkoff (2004) show in their study of political opportunities and the mobilization of the American civil rights movement between 1955 and 1985 that election year really has a positive effect on creating civil rights social movement organizations.

Further dimensions that Tarrow (1998) specifies are shifting alignments, which imply electoral instability and possibility of change of the governing party, and division among elites, which means a higher number of autonomous political actors, who can affect final decision is higher. Similarly Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) explain this effect that people are more likely to participate when outcomes hang in balance. Regarding division among elites and unsure political outcomes, Rosenstone and Hansen show higher participation when elections are so close that a few votes can make a difference (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003: 35). However, Meyer and Minkoff (2004) show a negative effect of contested Congressional elections on the number of created civil rights social movement organizations. Similarly they report negative effect on the number of created civil rights social movement organizations for contested Congressional elections that indicate division among elites (Meyer and Minkoff 2004).

As fourth dimension Tarrow specifies the possibility of finding influential allies, which can act as “friends of the court”. Meyer and Minkoff (2004) show a positive influence of Democratic Party advantage in Congress and to Democratic Presidents on the number of protest events that were sponsored by US civil rights organizations. Democratic Presidents were also positively correlated with the frequency of creating civil rights social movement organizations.

Tarrow predicts increased protest politics when these four dimensions of POS are open in general and does not specify differences between “conventional” and radical protest. Although Kriesi at al. (1995) did not focus on overtime variation but on cross-national differences in collective actions of the new social movements, they showed that open opportunities facilitate participation in “conventional” non-radical non-violent collective actions while they decrease the share of participants in radical violent collective events. Drawing on the finding of Kriesi and his colleagues, we can expect that more open political opportunities will increase conventional protest while radical protests will be lower.

**Data and methods**

***Dependent variable***

In order to examine the overtime variation in citizens’ activism we use quarterly data on protest events organized in the four countries from 1989 to 2010. The protest event is defined here as either an actual gathering of at least three people, who convened in a public space, in order to make claims that bear on interests of an institution/collective actor, or a petition addressed to an institution/collective actor (see also Tilly 1995). Only actual episodes of collective action are included; threats of resorting to collective action, such as strike alerts, are excluded.

We used the electronic archives of national news agencies: Czech News Agency, News Agency of the Slovak Republic, MTI Hungarian News Agency Corporation and Polish Press Agency. The news agency archives include information on all important events that have taken place in the countries since the fall of communism. Certainly their archives present the single most important source of event data in the particular countries compared to the various newspapers, because there is no explicit political bias in favor or against a particular type of events or actors. For example, while strikes and events related to activities of trade unions tend to be overrepresented in leftist newspapers, the very same type of events is usually underrepresented in papers siding with the political right (Koopmans and Rucht 2002). There is no such explicit bias in the case of the national news agencies we are aware of. Therefore, if one has to select a single source of event data in the countries, the news agencies archives present the most suitable option. Undoubtedly the individual news agencies do not cover all of the protest events that happened in the countries during the 20 years. Their main goal is to select the most important events from the point of view of a broad audience.

We searched the news between the beginning of their coverage and December 2010 for selected keywords indicating collective actions. All news covering any protest event were selected and coded. The Czech dataset includes 5.964 protest events, Slovak 3.440 events, Hungarian 7.885 events, and Polish 4.942 events. The following variables were manually coded for each event: date, place, duration, collective participants and organizers, number of individual participants, main issues and framing, repertoire, reaction of elites, and police activity.

Specifically, from this dataset we use eight time-series as dependent variables:

1. the number of protest events organized by non-radical activists per quarter, which includes all events in the sample not organized by radical left or radical rightwing organizations;
2. the number of protest events organized by radical (left- and rightwing) activists per quarter, which is the number of events organized by these activists;
3. the number of protest events relying on non-radical strategies which includes legal and non-violent demonstrations, meetings, happenings, political theaters, petitions, litigation etc.;
4. the number of protest events using radical strategies that includes violent and illegal demonstrations, boycotts and hunger strikes.

The other four dependent variables that we use as a robustness check indicate number of reported participants in these types of events. We tried to use to the full the information in news reports on the number of participants when deciding on missing values. If the news article did not indicate any sign of the number of participants the event was treated in terms of number of participants as having no participants and hence excluded from the analysis. If the news article included at least some indication of the number of participants, we recoded them as follows: if the term “a few participants” appeared the event was assigned number 3 as the number of participants, for the term “a few tens or tens of participants” a number 30 was assigned, for the term “a few hundred or just hundreds of participants” a number 300 was assigned etc.

***Independent Variables***

*Political disaffection*

Political disaffection is measured as distrust in government. Since the wording of questions and offered answer categories vary across countries, the general rule we apply is that disaffection with government includes categories indicating active expression of distrust to government, i.e. we collapse the categories strongly or completely agree/distrust and rather disagree/distrust versus to all other categories regardless of whether they included the middle category or not. In the case of the Czech Republic and Poland we managed to collect quarterly data. In the Czech Republic the data come from the Public Opinion Research Center CVVM that organizes monthly surveys (excluding summer holydays) since 1996 that include the question on trust in government. Specifically we use quarter averages. Similarly in Poland the monthly surveys are organized by Public Opinion Research Center CBOS since 1993. Again we use quarter averages. Although monthly or quarterly data are not available for Slovakia, we managed to construct half year time series of trust in government on the basis of reports published yearly by IVO (Slovakia 1996-2010. Summary report on the society). Thus far, we have not managed to collect time series data on trust in government in Hungary.

*Political opportunities*

The dimension of open access or near resolution is indicated in this study by quarter or half year when the elections took place (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, Meyer and Minkoff 2004, Tarrow 1998).

The close result should indicate unsure political outcomes as individual political actors do not have a strong or clearly majoritarian position. This “narrow victory” is measured as a difference in the number of seats held by government and opposition in the lower chamber of the Parliament (see Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, Meyer and Minkoff 2004). This data come from the Parliament and government composition database (ParlGov) for the seleceted period and countries. The lower the difference, the less sure the political outcomes will be.

The operationalization of the possibility of finding influential alliesis rather problematic when not taking into account the topic of protest. However, it can be expected that leftist parties are more open to political participation of ordinary citizens. Firstly, a requirement of higher and more effective engagement of ordinary citizens in politics presents one of the major issues addressed by the New Left. Secondly, the leftist parties are usually interrelated with trade unions and advocate their requirements surely more than the right-wing parties. Thirdly, political participation studies show that protest is done more by leftists (van der Meer et al. 2009). Therefore, the likelihood of finding influential allies will be operationalized as the presence of a leftist party in the government. The same strategy was applied by Meyer and Minkoff (2004). This data come from the Parliament and government composition database (ParlGov) for the seleceted period.

*Economic development*

As controls we include two indicators covering the development of the economic situation in the country. Specifically we use seasonally adjusted quarter growth rate of GDP compared to previous quarter. These data come from the OECD library (OECD.Stat Extracts). The data are available for the Czech Republic only from 1996, for Slovakia from 1993, for Poland from 1996, for Hungary from 1996. The second indicator is the unemployment growth. Data on the Czech unemplyment come from the Czech Statistical Office, Slovak unemymployement come from the Slovak Statistical Office and Poland comes from Polish Statistical Office. These data are available for the whole period under study.

*Methods*

Since the dependent variables are count data we use Binomial Negative regression analysis. The Binomial Negative regression is a generalization of Poisson models able to directly account for overdispersion in the observed counts. We use time-series regression. The models presented include lagged dependent variables because protests in previous quarters affect protest in following quarters. For the Czech Republic and Poland we use one and two-period lagged dependent variable. For the Slovak data we use only one-period lagged dependent variable since this data are half years in contrast to quarters in Czech Republic and Poland. We also use control indicating usually lower number collective actions in the summer.

**Results**

Figure 1 presents time-series graphs displaying the number of protest events organized by radical and non-radical actors and the number of events using radical and non-radical strategies from the last quarter of 1989 to 2010 in the four studied countries. The “honeymoon disillusion” thesis expects the overall decline in citizen activism and an increase in radical participation. The presented data do not support this description. First, we do not observe overall declining trend of the events either organized by non-radicals or relying on conventional strategies in any of the observed countries. The only possible “honeymoon” process, if at all, can be observed only in the very early years of the Czech part of that time Czechoslovakia. After the exceptional heydays of 1989 mobilization the number of both conventional events and those sponsored by non-radical organizations dramatically declines during the next two or three years. However, already since 1993 we observe a gradual increase in both of the measures until 2000, since when conventional activism reaches a more or less flat general trend with only short-term fluctuations.

In the case of Poland we even observe an opposite trend than the declining one expected by the “honeymoon disillusion” theory. Over the last 20 years conventional collective activism displays rather a revers U shape in this country. Both number of conventional events and those organized by non-radicals gradually grew since the beginning of the 1990s, peaked after 2000 and since then again declined. Conventional activism in the other two countries – Hungary and Slovakia – displays a rather flat trend compared to other two countries with a slight increase after 2000. Both of the countries display significant peak mobilizations, namely Hungary in 1997 and in 2004 and 2005, and Slovakia in 1993 short after the establishment of independent Slovak state. However, these exceptional mobilizing events did not have more significant effect on the long term trend.

Taken from the overall general trend perspective, contrary to the “honeymoon dissolution” theory, conventional activism in the four countries does not display a “long-term dramatic decline”. Rather we observe a long term flat trend or fluctuation. From the short term perspective three of the four countries, namely Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, display isolated peaks of conventional activism that in terms of the numbers goes far higher than political mobilization connected to the 1989 revolutions.

The “honeymoon disillusion” thesis is not supported even in the case of the second expectation about the growth of extremism and radicalism in these countries. None of the observed countries displays long term dramatic increase in the number of protest events organized by radicals or the growing number of events using radical strategy. In all of the countries the radical events display overtime flat trend with short-term fluctuations. Moreover, the proportion of events organized by radicals compared to non-radicals is quite low in all of the countries. Both indicators of radical events are positively correlated with their non-radial counterparts. This means that collective activism in general follows similar over-time pattern. In times when there are more non-radical events there are also more radical events. The only exceptions are graphs showing the number of events using radical strategies in Hungary and Poland. In Hungary we do not see any increasing trend but the number of these events is comparable to the number of conventional non-radical events. In the case of Poland there is an obvious slight increasing trend in the number of radical strategies around 2000. However, as the comparison with the graph on data showing events by radical organizers makes clear, these events were not sponsored by extremists.

The results for the number of participants according to the four types of events that are not displayed here reveal the same general interpretation. There is no overall decline in the number of participants in events sponsored by non-radical organizations or the decline in participants in events using non-radical strategies. Similarly, there is no obvious increasing trend in the number of people mobilized by radicals or participating at events using radical strategies. The only difference is the presence of a few outlier peaks indicating quite unique events that attracted exceptional number of people such as the for-good-governance campaign “Thank you, Time to go” in 1999 in the Czech Republic.

– GRAPH 1 –

The finding that collective actions do not show a long-term declining trend in the four democracies, does not completely disprove the “honeymoon disillusion” theory. Still, the “honeymoon disillusion” can be reflected in the short-term dynamics of individual democratic regimes. Specifically, times characterized by deeper disillusion, i.e. higher political disaffection, can result in less non-radical citizen activism and cause an increase in radical protests than times of lower political disaffection. Table 1 shows results testing these expectations in the three countries for which the political trust data are available. The models also include variables derived from the political opportunity structure theory and indicators of economic development and control for summer holydays. The table is organized by countries where the same model is tested first for the number of events organized by non-radicals, the number of conventional events, the number of events organized by radicals and the number of events using radical strategies.

 The first row of Table 1 shows results for the effect of political disaffection which is to test the “honeymoon disillusion” and critical citizen theory. The former predicts a negative effect on conventional non-radical events and a positive one on radical events because it sees political disaffection as the source of apathy and radicalism thanks to the popular frustration from the democratic transition. The later expects political disaffection to positively affect non-radical conventional protest and dampen radical events because political disaffection is in this perspective understood as an expression of the self-expressive culture of critical citizens.

As we can see in the first row of the table 1, political disaffection does not show any effect in most of the models. Specifically, in Poland none of the models shows support for either of the two theories. Neither radical nor conventional protest is driven by cultural or value climate in this country. However, in the Czech Republic political disaffection plays an important role for civic activism. The first two models support critical citizen theory because the more people distrust the government the higher probability of conventional protest and of protest organized by non-radicals. This finding is the exact opposite to the prediction by the “honeymoon disillusion” theory. The results in the third model testing the theory for the number of events organized by radicals seem to support the “honeymoon” hypothesis. Political disaffection facilitates also this type of activism. However, taken from the general perspective of the overall results in the Czech Republic we might interpret it as a finding indicating the common general trajectory of all types of protest in the given country. The results show the negative effect of political disaffection on the number of events using radical strategies organized in Slovakia. The higher is disaffection with government the lower number of radical strategies per month. This finding should give support to the critical citizen theory, however given the lack of the effect for other, mainly conventional strategies, this result is hard to interpret. To sum up, the displayed results do not give a support to the “honeymoon” theory in any of the countries. Critical citizen theory was supported only in the case of the Czech Republic.

 In addition to the role of the cultural factor of political disaffection the theory section theorized also the effect of political opportunities. Results for factors falling under this theory are displayed in the second, third and fourth rows of Table 1. Similarly to the two previous theories, even in the case of political institutions we do not see the same pattern of effects across all of the countries. While elections increase the number of events organized by non-radicals in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, they seem to dampen both radical and non-radical activism in Hungary. Similarly the close result when outcomes hang in balance, which is in our model indicated by the difference in seats in the Parliament between government and opposition, does not show any effect in most of the models. It only has a dampening effect on the number of events organized by radicals in the Czech Republic while facilitating effect on the number of events organized by non-radicals in Slovakia. The political opportunity variable that shows the most significant effects is the “potential for allies” which is indicated by the leftist government. Although it shows no effects in the Czech Republic, in Poland and Slovakia this is a significant variable. In contrast to the theoretical expectations, the leftist governments in Poland seem to decrease both radical and non-radical protests. In Slovakia leftist governments decreases actions organized by non-radicals but increases those organized by radicals. Summed up, although some results provide support for the political opportunity structure theory, when evaluated in general, the data do not show much support for this theory.

 Civic activism does not seem to be a function of economic development in the Czech Republic and mostly in Hungary. However in Slovakia both radical and non-radical protests are dependent on the economic situation. The effect is negative, which means that the higher growth of the GDP decreases protest. The unemployment rate increases radical strategies in Slovakia and actions of non-radicals in Poland and decreases Slovak event organized by non-radicals.

– TABLE 1 –

**Conclusions**

Our paper has focused on popular politics in the four postcommunist countries, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. While the prevailing interpretation of post-communist citizens is a gloomy picture of either disinterested and apathetic individuals not caring about public issues or non-democratic radicals challenging the very principle of the new regimes, our analysis has brought more complex results. Specifically, we tested the “honeymoon disillusion” theory, according to which growing political disaffection leads to increasing apathy and support for radical collective action. We did not find support for this theory in our data.

Our analysis has shown that in contrast to this theory, political disaffection in the studied countries does not decrease conventional activism while increasing its radical counterpart. Moreover, in the case of the Czech Republic political disaffection even increases non-radical activism, which gives support to a rival theory interpreting political disaffection through the perspective of critical citizens. In other countries, it is rather political opportunity structure indicators and economic development and not political disaffection that have affected civic activism.

We make two major contributions. First, by using protest event data we extend the view on political action, since we do not reduce it to voting only. This makes it possible to include also political developments from non-electoral political arenas, such as extra-institutional politics. Consequently and probably paradoxically, by including extra-institutional protest we show that growing political disaffection is not necessarily accompanied by political inaction and/or radicalization. It is not dreams betrayed and the disillusionment from the post-communist development (Howard 2003; Linek 2010) that have uniformly thrown post-communist citizens to apathy, inaction and/or radicalization.

Second, we not only show that political disaffection does not produce the results predicted by the “honeymoon disillusion” theory, but also that we need a richer portfolio of theories to explain political behavior in post-communist states. We can hardly rely on one simple answer to account for post-communist public collective action. According to our analysis, economic variables and variables derived form the contextual argument of the theory of political opportunity structure influence public collective action of post-communist citizens.

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**Graph 1: Number of protest events by organization and strategy in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia in 1989-2010 (quarterly data).**



**Table 1: Negative Binomial Regression Estimates of Collective actions in Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland (1993/1996-2010).**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **CZECH REPUBLIC** | **HUNGARY** |
|  | **Non-radical sponsors** | **Conventional strategies** | **Radical sponsors** | **Radical strategies** | **Non-radical sponsors** | **Conventional strategies** | **Radical sponsors** | **Radical strategies** |
| ***Political disaffection* (a)**  | .013 (.003) | \*\*\* | .012 (.004) | \*\* | .022 (.008) | \*\* | .010 (.006) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Political opportunities*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Elections**  | .235 (.102) | \* | -.135 (.004) |  | .162 (.190) |  | .169 .169) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Close result**  | .002 (.001) |  | .001 (.001) |  | -.013 (.005) | \* | .169 (.009) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Leftist government**  | -.027 (.120) |  | -.070 (.116) |  | -.329 (.220) |  | .037 (.274) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Controls***  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **GDP per Capita growth (PPP) (a)**  | -.006 (.041) |  | -.004 (.038) |  | -.067 (.079) |  | -.031 (.079) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Unemployment (a)**  | .063 (.043) |  | .089 (.045) |  | .141 (.082) |  | -.052 (.079) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Summer holydays**  | -.564 (.115) | \*\*\* | -.568 (.109) | \*\*\* | -.373 .177) | \* | -.353 (.220) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Protest (t-1)** | .001 (.001) |  | .001 (.001) |  | .003 (.016) |  | .045 (.017) | \* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Protest (t-2)** | .002 (.002) |  | .001 (.002) |  | .006 (.011) |  | -.001 (.011) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Constant** | 2.938 (.355) | \*\*\* | 2.892 (.432) | \*\*\* | -.212 (.724) |  | 1.494 (.712) | \* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **AIC** | 10.811 |  | 10.793 |  | 6.618 |  | 6.618 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **BIC**  | -186.56 |  | -186.82 |  | -178.07 |  | -178.07 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Log-likelihood** | -298.135 |  | -297.613 |  | -178.617 |  | -178.617 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | **POLAND** | **SLOVAKIA** |
|  | **Non-radical sponsors** | **Conventional strategies** | **Radical sponsors** | **Radical strategies** | **Non-radical sponsors** | **Conventional strategies** | **Radical sponsors** | **Radical strategies** |
| ***Political disaffection* (a)**  | -.002 (.005) |  | -.001 (.004) |  | .004 (.007) |  | .002 (.004) |  | -.002 (.003) |  | -.010 (.005) |  | .002 (.020) |  | -.016 (.008) | \* |
| ***Political opportunities*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Elections**  | -.332 (.138) | \*\* | -.270 (.100) | \*\* | -.564 (.232) | \* | -.505(.303) |  | .255 (.123) | \* | .187 (.106) |  | -.203 (.445) |  | .543 (.298) |  |
| **Close result**  | -.001 (.001) |  | -.001 (.001) |  | .003 (.002) |  | .006 (.003) |  | .009 (.003) | \* | .002 (.005) |  | -.005 (.030) |  | -.003 (.011) |  |
| **Leftist government**  | -.342 (.138) | \*\* | -.072 (.116) |  | -.636 (.252) | \* | -1.159 (.380) | \*\* | -.303 (.099) | \*\* | -.356 (.183) |  | 1.837 (.752) | \* | -.332 (.259) |  |
| ***Controls***  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **GDP per Capita growth (PPP) (a)**  | -.010 (.017) |  | -.019 (.016) |  | -.089 (.041) | \* | -.009 (.029) |  | -.027 .013) | \* | -.021 (.010) | \* | -.071 .026) | \*\* | -.048 (.028) |  |
| **Unemployment (a)**  | .044 (.044) | \*\* | .030 (.016) |  | .141 (.082) |  | .054 (.031) |  | -.007 (.018) | \*\* | .011 (.020) |  | .170 (.109) |  | .075 .032) | \* |
| **Summer holydays**  | -.488 (.096) | \*\*\* | -.624 (.120) | \*\*\* | -1.069. (.262) | \*\*\* | -.484 (.156) | \*\* |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Protest (t-1)** | .001 (.001) |  | .004 (.002) | \*\* | .044 (.030) |  | .045 (.017) | \* | -.002 (.001) |  | -.002 (.002) |  | -.119 (.061) |  | -.034 (.016) |  |
| **Protest (t-2)** | -.001 (.001) |  | .001 (.002) |  | .035 (..024) |  | -.001 (.011) |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Constanta** | 4.463 (.256) | \*\*\* | 3.915 (.242) | \*\*\* | 1.932 (.494) | \*\*\* | 3.627 (558) | \*\* | 4.753 (.271) | \*\*\* | 5.090 (.564) | \*\*\* | -1.358 (1.83) |  | 2.607 (.705) | \*\*\* |
| **AIC** | 11.855 |  | 11.219 |  | 5.976 |  | 9.469 |  | 11.286 |  | 11.181 |  | 5.305 |  | 6.696 |  |
| **BIC**  | -133.54 |  | -134.06 |  | -121.50 |  | -124.79 |  | -133.54 |  | -53.42 |  | -44.92 |  | -48.038 |  |
| **Log-likelihood** | -262.68 |  | -248.05 |  | -127.46 |  | -207.80 |  | -262.68 |  | -131.7 |  | -58.31 |  | -75.705 |  |

Note: Newey-West standard errors are in parentheses. For the Czech Republic and Poland quarterly data are used, for Slovakia half year data are used.

\* p≤.05, \*\* p≤.01, \*\*\* p≤.001, (a) = variables measured at t-2 for the Czech Republic and Poland, at t-1 for Slovakia.