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Expertise and Sphere of Interest

Timo Aarrevaara

ABSTRACT

East Europe has not been a widely spread subject for social science until this century. In humanistic there was research on Russia already in the 19th century. East Europe has always been studied by using the methods particular to that period. That's why there is no general method for studies on the East. It is possible to distinguish a clear line from the 1840s to the present day where approaches from very different starting points follow each other. Every approach discussed in this article still being used. Theories on East European studies has been dominated by western researches. When Soviet Union existed the theory in the East was mainly Marxist. Now East European researches direct their interest mainly to theorists who influenced before 1917. As an example of their interest I present M.O. Moltsanov's interpretations of M.P. Dragomanov's thoughts.

In Finland the interest on East Europe has traditionally been directed to so called kindred nations or Finno-Ugrians. This tradition continues in today's interest in the adjacent areas in Russia and the Baltic states. The scientific community should not, however, be satisfied in a point of view as narrow as this. It is difficult to make any predictions on these areas unless we are more familiar with the East European reality. The theories available provide us with a possibility to look at East Europe from a wider perspective. The Finnish expertise on Russia does not derive from our geographical position, but from the variety of approaches available. Financing directs researches mainly towards subjects on areas adjacent to Finland.

Keywords: East European studies, public administration, research funding

1. TARGET: EASTERN EUROPE

In Russia and the Ukraine, the public administration has had to work in constantly changing conditions throughout the 1990s. The administrative system of both countries were practically identical in the last days of the Soviet era in the

early 1990s, but since then, they have developed independently. In Russia, the changes in local administration can be summed up in two main points. Firstly, the system of *city soviets* was abolished by presidential decree in October 1993. Corresponding changes were also made for the *regional soviets*, which competed for the same resources as the city soviets. The presidential decree of 22 October 1993 also introduced *dumas* for the cities and stipulated the election procedure. Secondly, the presidential administration, which had been introduced by decrees in 1991–92, had become another basic element in the local administration.

The purpose of these decrees was to solve the 'horizontal conflict'. The idea was to strengthen the executive power with regard to the democratic bodies. Another aim was to occupy the crucial executive posts with local officials supporting the president – they were, in fact, often picked out by the president himself. Russia has seen the deliberate construction of a system of strong mayors and weak democratic bodies. The goal has been to demolish the former Soviet administration, but the outcome has sometimes been rather contrary. The democratic bodies are now manned with politically fairly inexperienced deputies. At the same time, the executive machinery seems to be manned, particularly at regional level, with officials who have won their spurs during the Soviet era and whose power the presidential administration seems to back up.

The Ukraine has seen similar reform, with local soviets abolished and *radas* (the Ukrainian equivalent to *dumas*) introduced. But there is a clear difference between the Russian and the Ukrainian system of local administration. In the Ukraine, a new law on local bodies which abolished the presidential administration came into effect on 4 February 1994. Compared with the solutions in Russia the year before, it supports clearly more the position of democratic bodies. This can be seen in the fact that the mayor also functions as the president of the *rada*, and has to enjoy its confidence. The new *radas* were elected in July 1994, and their mandate started

in August–September the same year (Zakon 2 Feb. 1994). After that, the Ukraine has also seen the takeover of many executive political posts from the democratic bodies to the president.

During the past few years, the systems have changed in both countries with the introduction of a new Constitution. However, it is worth noticing that the system of a strong president, which was introduced to be only temporary, is still in force.

The succession of administrative traditions will display features with implications for a wider field of political theories. The status of the administrative apparatus changes, and its new tasks will determine its new shape and dimensions. We are basically dealing here with a transformation of the local administration from being a part of the state administration into becoming a citizen-oriented autonomy. Thus, the internal activity of the administration is not crucial, but its external implications. The important thing is not e.g. the position of the authorities, but the distinction who defines what services are to be produced and from where the economic means are to be taken. The authorities have a central position in preparing, making and carrying out various decisions, and their political aims and means often decide the content of new political practices – and the position of the local administration.

Modern political science tries to understand the changes in society by, among other things, conceptualising mechanisms of social development and social managing. It is impossible to understand the realities in eastern Europe without taking into consideration the financial, political, ethnic and cultural factors in the country. I have adopted this view from professor V.M. Knyazev. He is known, above all, as a developer of methods of social technology (Князев 1995, 13–14). Eastern Europe is an area of many identities. This is important to remember, the more so since there is a tendency in political studies on the country to see things from the viewpoint of the central government. When the administration is studied from a local viewpoint, local features, preferences and traditions become an important factor. The tradition of centralised planning is stronger within the central administration than at local level. Problems are solved and innovations made in different manners at central and local levels.

Russia and eastern Europe have been widely studied by social science only in this century. I shall view the main streams of studies in this field because they are still relevant in the 1990s. Al-

ready in Germany in the 1840s, there was a school which studied Russia particularly in terms of language and folklore. But its research had societal implications, too. For example, surveyor baron von Haxthausen in the 1840s defined the peasants' concept of *mir* to mean common ownership of land. Due to this definition, *mir* was promoted to a rank of admiration among scholars of slavonics as well as socialists. As Alexander II liberated the serfs, attempts were made to arrange common ownership among peasants. Thereby particularly the socialists thought that *mir* as a form of common ownership would prove Russia's edge over western Europe. The development of peasant autonomy was then interrupted by the murder of Alexander II. His successor was not ready to develop this progressive system. Thus, Russian peasant autonomy never came to be a phenomenon of the sort that would have aroused subsequent scholars' interest.

In the 19th century, scholars' interest was mainly targeted on the Russians. But in Finland, the emphasis first lay on the Finno-Ugrians. Only by the end of the century did attention turn clearly towards the history and social development of Russia itself. After the First World War and particularly the October Revolution, studies on Russia came to concern the development of the new social system. The early 1920s brought along the foundation of the Soviet Union, which linked research on Russia and the rest of eastern Europe more closely together. Before the world war, research in this field had mainly taken place in Europe, particularly Germany, but after the war, more and more was conducted in America, where many scholars had moved. For example Pitirim Sorokin, who developed the theory of convergence, is one of the scholars having moved from Russia to the USA in the 1920s.

During the Second World War, research on the Soviet Union mainly concerned regional studies. And the simultaneous development of theories on states created a good growing ground for research on the Soviet Union. The Second World War also added, in a grim way, to the provision of research issues. These were important particularly for the theories of state in the sense that people were now looking for theoretical background also among the theories of state. The 1950s brought along the Cold War, which was reflected in research as the period of totalitarianism studies. The popularity of this branch cannot be ascribed entirely to the ready funding of such issues particularly in the USA. The reasons for its strength are to be found in the internal logic

of the Soviet research and the social sciences' development. The concept of totalitarianism was nothing new in the 1940s, but its scientific meaning and purport developed only then. A kind of culmination is Karl Popper's "Open Society and its Enemies", where he drew an uninterrupted line from Platon's 'political' programme all the way to 1930s Soviet Union. The concept was deepened in the 1950s by e.g. Hannah Arendt, who emphasised the demand for totalness and the method of the ideology. The 'totalitarianist school' saw the socialist states as unchanging, similar systems. As a rule, they were perceived as total opposites to western democracies. The Soviet society was penetrated deeply by scientific theory, and the analysis of the political system was equally total. Various branches of society were never studied apart from each other but always as parts of a whole. The totalitarianist school sought for the internal logic of the system rather than for a precise description of the structures (von Borcke and Simon 1980, 71).

In 1964, Arthur E. Adams published very much to the point describes those properties that a scholar should possess, from a totalitarianist point of view. First, he should be thoroughly familiar with the theories and models of his own field, but he should also know the crucial political, economic and military issues. Second, he should know the latest five-year plan and the latest outcome, plus the the basics of marxism-leninism and the rituals of the Greek-Orthodox church. Furthermore, he should take an interest in classical Russian literature from Pushkin to Tshenov and have a nearly perfect command of the Russian language. Jyrki Iivonen remarks that the members of this school have a very understanding attitude towards their target of study (Iivonen 1984, 7). The totalitarianist school also included a state theoretic movement. Its representatives Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, in fact, created the famous concept of the totalitarian state, by means of which they wanted to draw parallels between 1930s Germany, Italy and Soviet Union. According to Friedrich and Brzezinski, distinctive features of a totalitarian state would be an official ideology, one centrally governed mass party, a secret police with extensive rights, control of the mass media, state monopoly of arms and the use of violence and state control over the whole economic system.

2. TWO BEHAVIOURIST APPROACHES

The period of change in the 1950s, the so-called Khrushchev era, undermined the totalitarianist school's ideas about the unchanging and monolithic character of the Soviet society. The rigid totalitarian model was not able to explain Khrushchev's strategy of change. In the USA, especially, research approaches shifted more towards what could perhaps best be called behaviourist, at least by its epistemological basis. This denomination does come from these new methods being linked by their behaviourist nature. Whereas the totalitarian school found the difference paradigm crucial, the behaviourist movement concentrated on the similarity. The basic idea of the behaviourists was that all societies share certain common features. They emphasised, in fact, that the foundation of society was the same regardless of the political system. They maintained that only the practices vary and that by studying the common basis and the variation in practices, it would be possible to explain the differences between socialism and western democracy.

The behaviourist approach was stimulated by the fact that the Soviet society became more open in the 1960s, with e.g. essentially more statistics available. The provision of data also improved through the birth of a behaviourist approach among Soviet social scientists, which antagonistically sought to prove western scientists wrong (see Norgaard 1984, 18). The behaviourists tried to find truth by eliminating the impact of pre-understanding and by rejecting methods which based themselves on understanding and interpretation. They paid special attention to quantitative methods, statistical ones in particular. It was therefore natural that the research topics would eventually slide from the theoretical level to practical issues, from the logic of society as a whole to a logic of structures.

Within the behaviourist school, two main approaches can be discerned, one being concerned with studies on elites and the other with the bureaucratic model. Behaviourist research on elites sought for reality elsewhere than in the official relationships between organisations. At that time, questionnaires became more common, but at the same time, various so-called Kremlogist interpretations formed an important part of the approach. Attempts were made at making conclusions about the development of society as a whole judging from such things as the order in which the elite would stand at the annual October Revolution parade. The behaviourist re-

searchers of the bureaucratic model concentrated on the internal processes of bureaucracy. They found their theoretical background in organisational theories, which showed that community planning and community control were becoming crucial problem areas. This approach at its most extreme is represented by Alfred G. Mayer, who described the Soviet Union as a company managed by a party nomenclature. He compared the party leaders with the managing board and the rest of the nomenclature with the shareholders. Mayer's picture of the Soviet Union became slightly similar to the USA that C. Wright Mills describes in his book *The Power Elite* (1956), where the elite operates in the institutions of the state machinery, the large corporations and the army (see Arvidsson and Fogelklou 1984, 48).

The company or corporation explanation in its technocraticness left several voids, the most important of which was the conception of the ideology. The totalitarian approach, in its turn, emphasised the importance of the ideology as a crucial factor in the Soviet Union, without which the internal nature of the system could not be described. It is more typical of behaviourism to see ideology as a ritualistic element. The elitistic approach also sees ideology as a secondary factor, the elite being united not by ideology but by careerism. The behaviourist approach can be seen as a necessary pre-phase to the subsequent pragmatic approach. Typical of the pragmatic approach is that problems are seen as measurable, and that the reasons for various problems can be traced back to societal phenomena. An example of this approach would be Ronald J. Hill's description of Moldavian city in "Soviet Political Elites – a Case of Tiraspol" (1977). In subsequent studies Hill has deepened his pragmatic approach and complemented the theory about the role of local administration that he presented in 1977 by pointing at some factors which steer social change. In the 1980s, the pragmatic approach appears clearly in Jeffrey W. Hahn's study "Soviet Grassroots". In this study, Hahn gives an empirically based description of the birth of various citizen movements in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. Whereas behaviourist studies in the 1960s and 1970s approached administration from the angle of external conditions and environment, Hill's and Hahn's studies were based on the internal processes of the local administration. Crucial for them were topics such as the activity of administration, civic behaviour at elections, the ability of bureaucracy to produce decisions and the internal efficiency of organisations

and bodies.

When reading pragmatic studies of the above mentioned kind you cannot avoid noticing how much the printed press is consulted for source data. Particularly when the Glasnost era had begun, papers started writing openly about local problems. Thus the press became the most important source for pragma-sociologists studying the Soviet Union. And the issues studied by the pragma-sociologists often seem to originate from the problems discussed in the public debate. At the same time, western researchers got a stronger and stronger notion that science could actively solve problems emerging in the Soviet society. This had implications on practical administration, as western European and North American experts were increasingly consulted for issues of economy, democracy and administrations. They applied research on the 'laboratory of liberated Eastern Europe' with varying success.

3. THE INCREASING VOLUME OF STUDIES

The extreme emphasis on the pragmatic aspect caused a counter-reaction, which led academic research, in particular, in a constructivist direction in the 1990s. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought a situation where old structures changed and were no longer unambiguously identifiable. The dramaticness of the change was also reflected in the research approaches. Before 1991, the targets of administration research could be approached through literature and, for example, legislation. The change taking place in the amount of titles on administration published in Russian before and after 1991 is amazing. In 1991–92, practically no up-to-date literature on administration was published. Legislation developed in a direction which might be called declarational. The Supreme Soviets passed good laws which never came into effect due to a deficient hierarchy of laws. Thus the relationships between administration, citizens and political system were studied using the material that was available.

At first after the Soviet Union's dissolution, a host of studies on the formal structure of the system was published. As the structures continuously changed, these descriptive works could easily be interpreted to endorse a myth of perpetual change. According to this myth, everything is changing all the time, and it is not possible to describe it scientifically. Which is, of course, true if the scientific goal is to describe structures. But

if structures are described through their principles, research may explain or even forecast change. And indeed, in the early 1990s, the only thing that seemed sure to happen was change. Soon the studies describing structures were accompanied by studies on the operation and kinetic structures of administration. Social sciences would still use newspapers and various programme declarations as their main sources. In such a situation it is obvious that the language used in politics becomes an important topic. New tools and methods have increased interest in language. It gives us possibilities to estimate difference between common sense and official discourse (see e.g. Lagerspetz 1996, 138). The rise of constructivism was certainly also partly due to a simultaneous constructivist movement among western scholars. Another thing stimulating the constructivist approach was the fact that research topics were chosen among the big cities, particularly Moscow and St Petersburg, where social reality has in the last few years become more 'modern' than elsewhere in Russia.

However, constructivism did not replace but rather complement the pragmatic approach. The number of researchers concentrating on Russian and Eastern European politics and administration grew. At the same time, thanks to research funding there was also more practical research aiming at administration development. Extensive research programmes financed by the World Bank and the European Union increased the number of researchers.

In terms of methodology, constructivism can be seen a contrast to the totalitarianist tradition rather than the pragmatic one. If we recapitulate the earlier mentioned list of requirements that Adams thought a scholar of the totalitarianist approach should meet, it is easy to make a clear distinction between the constructivists and totalitarianists. Just a few years ago, classical Russian literature could still, you might say, convey a picture of the Soviet society through its role models. This applied, for example, to Ukraine in 1991, where the local policy-makers described their own experiences in terms of parallels to literary classics. In Tsernigiv 1991, the idea of Potemkin Villages was brought forward to describe the Soviet society (see Aarrevaara 1994, 67). No such allusions are made in the material that we collected for our study of Ukraine in 1995. Besides, one of the interviewees called classical Russian literature "a nightmare from your school days". On the other hand, it is quite natural that Russian literature no longer has its former strong

position in independent countries like Ukraine.

Even the researchers are interested in the 'modern'. The difference is, in particular, that society is no longer unambiguously perceived as a continuation to history, and the certainty about social development that prevailed during the plan economy era has crumbled. Knowledge of Russian language and culture is still important, but its importance decreases as the Russians themselves no longer know or value their classics the way they used to. Adams' definition from 1960s has become obsolete for the simple reason that there is no Soviet Union anymore. Another, and even stronger, argument against Adams' list is that some basics of society have, in fact, changed. These very fundamental changes even outscore the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Today, in eastern Europe most important social, environmental and economic problem is the nuclear power. When Adams wrote his list, the entire nuclear programme existed only on the desks of planners. This perspective clearly describes the difference between the 1960s and the 1990s.

4. NO INSTITUTION REMAINS UNCHANGED FOREVER

The pragmatic approach has become popular also in the politology of eastern Europe. This has a very practical explanation. This approach is the fastest route to well-paid research jobs in western research projects. On the other hand, the boom for applying western methods is also explained by their applicability to Russian practices. This is because it is typical of Russia to construct various system models and to present them as the solution of problems. An example of this is the so-called presidential administration, where the executive powers are centred by virtue of decree to administrative bodies appointed by the president. Russian pragmatism, which emphasises the final results, however does not usually differentiate processes the same way as western social sciences. In eastern Europe, science has traditionally been given a pragmatic task in the sense that it has been supposed to contribute to the construction of a new social system. The main emphasis has lain, in Russia especially, on a 'scientific' solution to issues of the day (see Aalto 1993, 293).

In the Ukraine, politology often follows the same traditions as in Russia. But there is a clear difference: the Ukraine has its own theorists. One of them was Mikhail Dragomanov, an influential

researcher of administration and politics active already in the late 19th century. His theory of state has become relevant again, and his works are quoted frequently in modern Ukrainian literature in the field. The most important works of Dragomanov present the concept of “political regime”, to which he gave a meaning using concrete historical forms. His target were the relationships between central and local administration. Dragomanov emphasised continuous development and change as an inherent phenomenon in society. He maintained that no political or legal institutions remain unchanged forever and that the time which administrative decrees have effect is even shorter (Молчанов 1994, 9–10). Later Dragomanov started pondering over the concept of political and ideological power in a larger sense. His interest was directed towards the control between the individual and the authorities.

The relationship between church and state became problematic in Russia later than in the rest of Europe. The personification of the emperor with the Orthodox church had staged this inevitable conflict. In Russia, unlike many other European countries, the church was subjected to the state, which was represented by the emperor, the czar (ibid. 21). This had also been known in Germany in the 16th Century, where the idea was that the one who had the power had the right to say which was the right religion (Peace of Augsburg: “Cujus regio, ejus religio”). Dragomanov, of course, cannot be called a scholar of church history – he was a power theorist. When studying the relationship between church and state, he made considerable generalisations as to the relationship between political organisations and ideological systems. Tolerance and separation of the church from the state were cornerstones of Dragomanov's theory. He maintained that these principles would help preserve social peace and the state's existence even in cases where the inhabitants belonged to different religious organisations. Although this solution has many things in common with modern democracy, Dragomanov cannot be considered an elaborator of theories on democracy. He did not think democracy was the ultimate purpose of social reform, nor even a means of solving the fundamental problems.

Dragomanov's relevance today comes from what his theory brings to the principles of administration – and particularly federalism. He argued against centralism and defended local autonomy. Ukrainian federalists have later emphasised, on a similar note, the importance of politically inde-

pendent areas. This comes from the fact that in the Ukraine, areas differ from each other in terms of ethnic and cultural features. In the 20th century, new areas have been annexed to the Ukraine, thus increasing local difference even further. In Dragomanov's thinking, local areas form the foundations of a state. But he also emphasised the necessity of state governance, without which there would be anarchy – a phenomenon which, in his view, is wont to appear by itself. He argued in favour of national movements – the role of the central government thereby being to guarantee the political rights of the local bodies.

There is reason to pay attention to how Dragomanov wanted to strengthen local administration. He maintained that they should not be strengthened from above, but by granting liberties. He found examples in history where autonomy had best been strengthened by granting liberties. According to him, the Hetman's Power had showed a way how democracy could be implemented in the Ukraine. The republic should stick to its role as a republic, and means should be created for real local autonomy. Crucial for the development of autonomy was, in Dragomanov's view, the decentralisation, not the administrative allocation of existing resources. He claimed that almost all social problems can be solved at local level. And all the civil problems of a community should be solved by elected deputies. In this context, Dragomanov takes Switzerland as an example. In the 19th it was utterly unusual to heed the people's will at federal or local level. Also the Swiss institutions of referendums and legislative initiatives were unique at the time.

These thoughts are not new to scholars in West. Neither are they new in East. Dragomanov created a link between Anglo-American and Russian liberalism. He analyzed in particular the thoughts of George Kennan and tried to apply them in the zemstvo system (Драгомановъ 1889, 32–33). Dragomanov never gave up his historical approach. Maybe that is why his ideas received attention again in the Ukraine of the 1990s with all its national movements. He saw a country's institutions as the fruits of its cultural and social heritage. An important theme for him, namely the preservation of individual rights, was also a means for change and democratic reform. He thought the history of freedom is a history of limiting governmental power – not of expanding it.

5. THE MYTH ABOUT THE GATEWAY

All the approaches described above still exist. Also the Finnish researches apply them successfully. A versatile research tradition is enriching but to apply it in practise is another matter. At present, it seems that there is a tendency towards uniformity rather than pluralism. In Finland, the interest in East means, above all, interest in St. Petersburg, and the success of Russia means success of St. Petersburg. In this respect it is worthwhile to remember, what Dragomanov noted on the importance of decentralization. To study the centres is to support the centres. Another reason to avoid narrow approaches is the fact that when we subsidize the development of centres or big cities, we may diminish the possibilities of other areas to develop.

It is important to evaluate the consequences of our eastern research financing as a whole. The instruments for this evaluation are available. There is a risk, however, that our point of view is narrowed by two myths. They are myth about East and the myth about Finland as the gateway between the East and West. East is not and has never been, uniform. Neither was the social order in East historically an opposite of the order in West. Its history included more than landslavery. For example, features shared by East and West are the emergence of modern cities and application of Magdeburgian Law. Their influence is apparent even today. When talking about the gateway between East and West, it is good to remember that many East European countries have a large Russian minority. Once the situation is stabilized, that European Union will enlarge to the countries in the former Soviet Union. In a situation like this the EU would have a considerable Russian minority. These people would then have an excellent opportunity to provide their expertise on Russia and East Europe. Finland should consider its strategies from this perspective. This is concretely reflected, for instance, in the present infrastructural projects being developed. It is possible that at the beginning of the next century Finland is not anymore a gateway to Russian culture or expertise. This aspect is worth considering as Finland's aim is to function as a gateway for passenger and goods traffic. The old route from Central Europe to the big centres in Russia passed north or south of the Carpathians. Nowadays information, goods and people move fast. In a world like this it is equally important to know the aims of Mukatseve, the old centre of the protestant Transylvania, as the aims

of our adjacent areas.

There are similarities in the administration of the old and new Russia, both historically and geographically. To concentrate only on St. Petersburg and the area influenced by it does not give a true picture of Russia and East Europe. The Russian soul, or *русский дух*, that we look for in St. Petersburg, may not exist there. And maybe never existed. For Russians, St. Petersburg is an example of western thinking where you have to function in a different way than in other Russian cities. The perspective for looking at Russia must not be restricted to St. Petersburg. Within the EU, Finland places its emphasis on the adjacent areas. This is wise to a certain extent. As a national strategy, though, it is unfortunate both for Finns and Russians. Know-how should be based on expertise and its development. Our adjacent areas do not include societies into which our direction system and economic structure could be transferred. Transferring Finnish knowledge is not a question of geography. Research funding is now directed largely by the EU. From its point of view a divided sphere of interests may seem rational. In a short stage, this strategy may further the implementation of research programmes, such as TACIS. As a strategic choice, it is unfortunate from Russia's point of view, too. It decreases competition and genuine exchange of expertise.

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