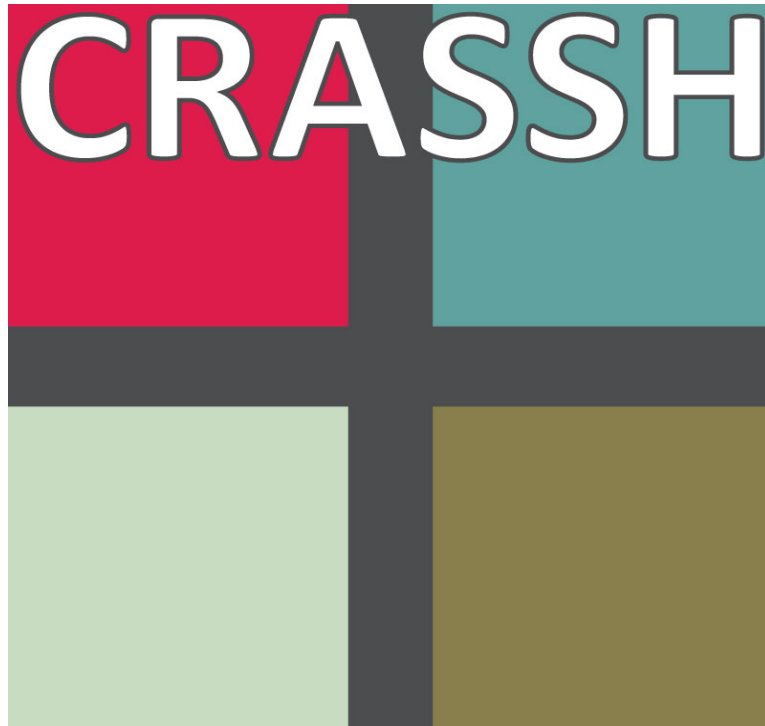


Why Democracy for the Post-Socialist Societies?



at
CRASSH
17 Mill Lane
Cambridge

5 November 2010
10.15 - 18.30



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Programme

- 10.15-10.45 Registration and coffee
- 10.45 -11.00 **David Lane** (University of Cambridge)
Why Democracy for the Post Soviet Societies? Introduction
- 11.00-12.45 ***Defining and 'Managing' Democracy***
- John Dunn** (University of Cambridge)
Democracy and Political in Post Communist States
- Jeanne Wilson** (Wheaton College, USA)
Elite Visions of Democratization in China and Russia
- 12.45-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00-15.45 ***Democracy and Modernisation***
- Ivaylo Gatev** (University of Nottingham/Ningbo, China)
Democracy and Sovereignty in the Post-Socialist World
- Richard Sakwa** (University of Kent)
Comparative Democratisation and Neo-Modernisation
- 15.45-16.00 Tea Break
- 16.00 - 17.45 ***Prospects for Democracy in China and Lessons in Europe***
- Zhu Guichang** (Shandong University)
Interests For and Against Democracy in China
- Stephen White** (University of Glasgow)
What are the Lessons for China of the Democratisation Process in the Commonwealth of Independent States.
- 17.45-18.30 Reception at CRASSH

Convenor

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Abstracts

John Dunn (University of Cambridge)

Democracy and Political Direction in Post-communist States

The merits of every government depend on a balance between the services it effectively renders and the personal threats which it poses to each and every one of its citizens (or subjects). Democracy in its current western understanding prides itself on striking that balance in a handsomely positive direction and with a high degree of reliability. That claim is far better founded at present over the minimization of personal danger than over the guarantee of effective service. "The most fundamental principles of democracy are that the people is sovereign and the people select their government."(Charter08): a drastically stylized characterisation of the facts in every state, but more flagrantly mendacious in some than others. In post-communist states (or still notionally communist states) the regime case against the western interpretation of democracy's requirements prioritizes the imperative of effective service over the responsibility to furnish duly individuated protection and security under law and often resists any effort to impose any such responsibility, whether from within civil society or from within its own ranks, with considerable tenacity. The actuarial prospects for regimes with this priority are no simple function of their success in furnishing such services, but they must be at least probabilistically connected with such success over long periods of time. A state which appears ineffectual, as well as corrupt and brutal, to most of its citizens for any length of time is unlikely to be in a position to draw on much personal loyalty in face of challenge from internal enemies and has no way of spreading the burden of responsibility for its failures over the citizenry at large. In the very long run, there are systemic conveniences in the western model of democracy even for incumbents; but these can be hard or impossible to access in the short run or even the medium term. The core of that comparative advantage is the imposition of complicity in governmental failure on the citizenry at large through presumptively free and fair elections: a highly implausible model for deliberative felicity in outcome, but a quite precise device for assigning responsibility far beyond the ranks of the government.

Ivaylo Gatev (University of Nottingham/Ningbo, China)
Democratisation and Stateness in the Post-Socialist World

This paper addresses the related themes of democratisation and stateness. The paper contrasts the process of democratic transition in the former Eastern bloc countries with the ongoing liberalisation of the East Asian socialist states (with an emphasis on China). It argues that a key feature of the transition that differentiates the East Asian from the East European experience is to be found at the level of the state. Whereas in Eastern Europe political reforms brought about the near collapse of the state and its institutions, in East Asia the latter has drawn strength from the reform process. The paper examines the implications of these diverging paths to democratisation for the politics, economics and societies of the post-socialist states. These range from social stability and economic growth, to internal and external sovereignty, to national identity and future prospects. The paper stops short of arguing that, in hindsight, the East Asian, and particularly the Chinese, path to liberalisation would have served the East European states better, given the difference in background conditions. That said, it contemplates the desirability of adopting certain features of the East Asian experience by essentially ‘bringing the state back’ into the political and economic governance of post-Socialist Eastern Europe.

Zhu Guichang (Shandong University)
Interests for and against democracy in China

With the transition to market economy and rapid economic growth, China has experienced profound social transformation. New social structure has emerged in contemporary China. Whereas different sociologists have attributed different characteristics to the emerging new social structure, they all agree that the new social structure has important impact upon the political reform in China. Facing the economic and social transition, the traditional political system in China is also undergoing deep transformation and facing huge pressure for change. Through an integrated analysis of the main social classes and interests groups in China, the paper argues that the major beneficiaries or privileged interests groups of the economic reform and current political regime such as political elites, economic elites, social elites prefer to support the status quo, and do not support radical political reform and rapid democratization. On the contrary, the losers of the reform and the vulnerable groups such as layoffs, unemployed workers, underclass, migrant workers may become important agent for supporting democratic reform in China. For the rising and expanding middle class in China, in general they support democratic reform but they prefer gradual and incremental political reform rather than radical one. The paper examines the implications of those diverging interests for and against democracy in China for the future development of Chinese political reform and democratization.

David Lane (University of Cambridge)
Introduction: *Why democracy for the post socialist societies?*

I note a number of different notions of ‘democracy’. Various justifications for the adoption and justification of electoral democracy are considered. Studies of the relationship between economic growth and democracy show ambiguous results, as is the relationship between inequality and democracy and between ‘happiness’ and democracy. It is contended that other factors – societal values, type of capitalism, forms of political organisation, and levels of state regulation – may be more important as drivers of economic and social outputs.

Richard Sakwa (University of Kent)
Comparative Democratisation and Neo-Modernisation

There has long been a debate over whether development is a prerequisite for democracy, and by the same token, whether democracy is a precondition for development. This debate is part of the larger literature examining problems of ‘transition’, a term which is at best no more than a code word for the processes shaping accelerated and conscious transformation of a society from one type of social order to another. The fundamental premise of modernisation theory is that there is some essential link between economic development and political change, yet the nature of this link remains contested. For some three decades the field of comparative democratisation has focused attention on the mechanics of political transition and the creation of new democracies, accompanied by analysis of the reasons for ‘failed transitions’, yet the

central issue of the political economy of transforming societies requires renewed analysis. While linear versions of modernisation theory have been discredited, the creation of capitalist democracies on the western model has encountered resistance in both Russia and China. The idea of neo-modernisation can help us examine the ‘transition’ dynamics of these two societies as well as providing a framework to critique existing theories, while generating culturally specific and historically grounded understanding of the dynamics of the interaction of universal models and particularistic modernisation strategies.

Jeanne Wilson (Wheaton College, USA)

Elite Visions of Democratization in Russia and China

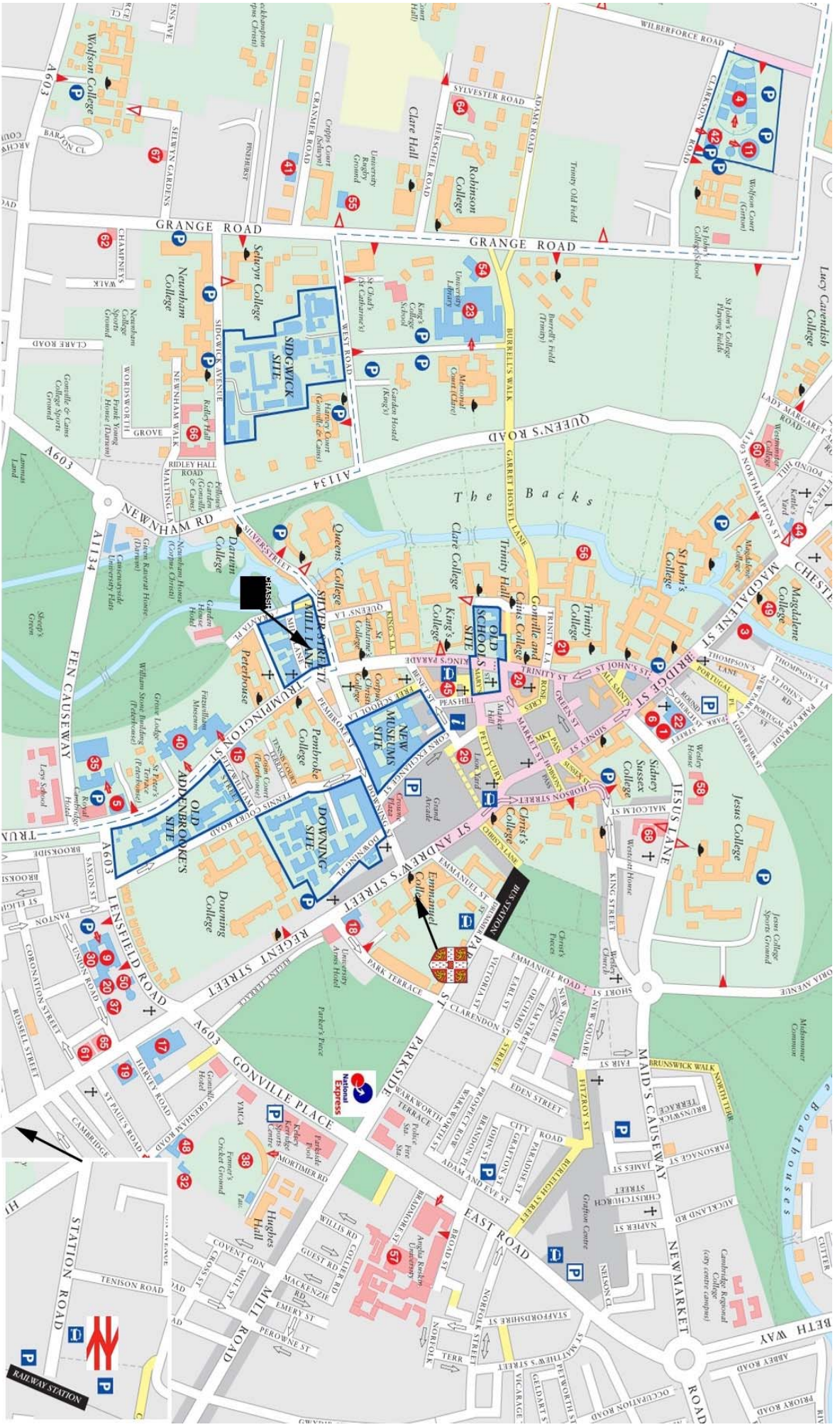
This paper sets out and compares elite visions of democratization in Russia and China. The first section provides a brief overview of the Western view of liberal democracy, its presumed prerequisites (or lack thereof) and the procedures of democratic transition. I then turn to a discussion of the perceptions of democracy held by the Russian and Chinese political elites respectively. The final section of the paper compares Russian and Chinese images of democratization and their relationship to the Western conception of democratic processes.

The Russian political elite is considered to embody two separate, if overlapping approaches to democracy and democratization: the “managed democracy” perspective which is advocated by Vladimir Putin, and Vladislav Surkov, and which serves as the conceptual underpinning for United Russia as a political party; and the liberal reformist approach which is articulated by the establishment intellectuals associated with the Institute of Contemporary Development (INSOR). The policy preferences of Dmitry Medvedev are difficult to ascertain, given his substantive if not formal subordination to Putin. His general orientation, however, is more in concurrence with INSOR than the managed democracy model. Despite certain convergent views, and a general agreement on end goals, these two groups differ in their interpretation of the extent of liberalization that is desirable in constructing a Russian version of democracy. The liberal reformists posit, as with a significant body of Western literature, that political liberalization is a necessary requisite for economic development, a conclusion that is rejected by the adherents to managed democracy.

In considering Chinese elite perceptions of democracy, I distinguish between the formal perspective of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as indicated in statements of the top leadership, government and CCP documents, and officially endorsed experimental initiatives; and the somewhat more reformist views held by a group of establishment intellectuals, often associated with the Central Party School. In addition, I briefly discuss the critique of the CCP stance on democratization issued by a group of retired Party elders who advocate an outright adoption of a Western parliamentary system for China. The continued existence of China as a Marxist-Leninist state organized under the leadership of the CCP constrains, to a greater extent than in Russia, the parameters of discourse. Although issues of political reform have been an ongoing concern of the CCP since the institution of the economic reform program in late 1978, the leadership has devoted an increased attention to democracy in the 2000s. The retreat of the state from society in the process of economic transformation has led to the emergence of an incipient civil society which the CCP has basically recognized as legitimate, if not the outgrowth of planned policy decisions. The Chinese leadership views democratization as a process of expanding political participation under the guidance of the CCP, an articulation of “democracy from above” that resembles Russia’s “managed democracy.” The Chinese establishment intellectuals do not contest this view or the underlying precept of the one-party state, but they do seek to move China in a liberalizing direction. Both Russian and Chinese elites perceive of democracy as a means to curb corruption and strengthen governance. The Chinese motivation for democratization, however, is closer to the Russian liberal reformists, in their conviction that democratization is a requisite for the continued modernization of the economy.

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