



Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919-2004

By Tomasz Inglot

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This is the first comparative-historical study of welfare states (social policies) in the former communist region of East Central Europe. Inglot analyzes almost one hundred years of expansion of social insurance programs across different political regimes. He places these programs in a larger political and socioeconomic context, which includes the most recent developments since the advent of democracy. Based on this research, he argues that despite apparent similarities the welfare states of East Central Europe, Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic and Slovakia since 1993), Poland, and Hungary have pursued distinct historical paths of development and change. He examines the highly unusual evolution of these welfare states in detail, tracing alternating periods of growth and retrenchment/reform, which he links to political and economic crises under communist rule. Inglot uses this comparative analysis of welfare systems to examine the continued influence of history over the politics and policies of the social safety nets in Eastern Europe.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a remarkably careful, yet ambitious study of welfare states in east-central Europe--from their imperial founding through the inter-war period and communism up to the admission of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to the European Union. Inglot makes a very persuasive case for both the cyclical nature of welfare state development in these countries and the power of history to over-ride not just the repeated changes in regimes and states so characteristic of this region, but also the homogenizing pressures of the communist experience."

-Valerie Bunce, Cornell University

"No other topic has generated as many controversies and misunderstandings as the welfare state reforms in postcommunist Europe. Tomasz Inglot provides a richly documented, balanced, and theoretically compelling account of these reforms and their historical antecedents. He has brilliantly captured the problems and dynamics of welfare state transformations and their historical trajectories across the region, dispelling many persistent myths in the process. This is essential reading for all who strive to understand the nature and outcomes of postcommunist transformations. Inglot's book represents comparative politics at its best and makes a significant contribution to ongoing debates on welfare states and social policies."

-Grzegorz Ekiert, Harvard University

"By deftly recounting the creation and evolution of welfare states in east central Europe from the end of WW I to the recent expansion of the European Union, Inglot makes a valuable contribution to the burgeoning literature on social policy reform. His work stands apart as one of the few cross-national historical studies of the welfare state in a largely non-democratic setting. Inglot analyzes the political struggles and periodic crises of welfare policy in the inter-war and communist periods and traces their lasting impact on social policy reforms in the postcommunist era. This work reminds us of the persistence of institutional and policy legacies even in the face of massive political change."

-Timothy Frye, Columbia University

"In an account rich with historical nuance, Inglot traces the development of the welfare state in East Central Europe. This is an important and welcome study of a much-neglected topic."

-Anna Grzymala-Busse, University of Michigan

"Welfare States in East Central Europe is ambitious, conceptually innovative, and largely successful in providing an original and convincing historical-institutional account. It "brings history back in," reinterpreting the development of ECE welfare states across different political regimes and integrating them into the comparative literature on welfare expansion and retrenchment, as well as on broader institutionalist theory. It adds greatly to our knowledge about their early development and engages contemporary debates about the extent and determinants of post-communist reform. The book will be of great value to scholars who share these interests."

Perspectives on Politics, Linda J. Cook, Brown University

About the Author

Tomasz Inglot is currently Professor of Political Science and Director of the International Relations Program at Minnesota State University. His articles appeared in *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, *Perspectives on Political Science*, and *Polityka Społeczna* (Warsaw) and he co-edited the collected conference papers of the 2005 meeting on East European social policy at the Woodrow Wilson Center for

International Scholars. He is also the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, IREX travel grants, and an ACLS Postdoctoral Fellowship in East European Studies.

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