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P. Vanhuysse, *Divide and Pacify. Strategic Social Policies and Political Protests in Post-Communist Democracies*. CEU Press, Budapest 2006, ISBN 963-7326-79-0, €32.95

Pieter Vanhuysse's book, *Divide and Pacify. Strategic Social Policies and Political Protests in Post-Communist Democracies*, is one of the most challenging and provocative publications that has appeared so far on the transformation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) welfare states. It consists of seven main chapters (including the introduction and conclusions counted as single chapters) all of which contribute to improve to understanding, not only of the systemic change occurring in these systems of social security, but also the political causes responsible for welfare state expansion and/or retrenchment. The countries under scrutiny are the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, but Vanhuysse's analysis can well be applied to other democracies in transition.

The *Introduction* (Chapter 1) summarizes the main argument of the book. One of the main driving forces of the CEE social policy reform process is a *divide and pacify* strategy aimed at reducing workers' mobilization capacity through the access to relatively generous welfare benefits (generous if compared to the real possibilities of these transition economies). Chapter 2, *The Unexpected Peacefulness of Transition*, provides an overview of the literature on economic reforms and austerity protests in transition countries, while offering, at the same time, detailed empirical evidences on how, despite increasing economic instability, the number of strikes has unexpectedly been lower in these new democracies if compared to the West. The reasons why workers remained so quiescent even in presence of strong windows for protests is explained in Chapter 3, *Political Quiescence despite Conditions of Conflict*. Here, the strategic role of social policies is mentioned as the key factor. Interestingly, despite high union density levels and an increasing number of threatened workers in many non-competitive firms and farms, the author demonstrates how malcontent has not been translated

into disruptive collective protests primarily because, as it is highlighted in the subsequent chapter (Chapter 4, *Preventing Protests. Divide and Pacify as a Political Strategy*), a *divide and pacify* strategy took place. At the core of the *divide and pacify* explanatory model lies the argument that ‘the work-welfare status of individuals can be manipulated by governments in order to reduce the capacity of reform losers for mobilizing’ (p. 49). As mentioned, this reduction of the workers’ mobilization capacity is ensured through the access to relatively generous welfare benefits. Chapters 5 and 6 provide compelling empirical evidence in support of this thesis. The unusual increase in welfare provisions and beneficiaries that occurred in countries with a low budget capacity is explained by the future political benefits that a social stabilizing strategy would have brought for these democracies in transition. Finally, in Chapter 7 (*Conclusions*) empirical evidences and theory-grounded observations are discussed, while a brief description of the causal mechanisms associated to this *divide and pacify* strategy is offered (esp. Fig. 7.1, p. 135). These causal mechanisms are identified in: (a) *increasing social network isolation*, (b) *increasing distributional conflicts*; and (c) *informal exit rather than collective voice*. All of them have certainly been crucial elements in further raising the hurdles for reform losers to mobilize in later years (pp. 135-136).

One of the numerous positive aspects of the book is that it provides a re-worked version of Hirschman’ theory of *exit*, *voice*, and *loyalty*. This explains how politicians expanded the existing welfare state even in presence of strong pressures from international institutions (such as the World Bank and the IMF) and budget constraints. This guaranteed social stability, which governments in the region realized, directly or indirectly, by dividing those professional categories that might have represented more serious threats and a possible source of disruptive protests. Governments have, in brief, reduced the *voices* of threatened workers, by increasing their *exit options*, while providing, at the same time, sufficient incentives for *loyalty*. Of crucial importance for scholars interested in welfare state research is, in this context, not only the argument according to which welfare provisions can play a

functional *social pacifying role*, but also, and this is the extremely innovative element proposed by Vanhuysse, *dividing functions* which do not necessarily lead to system-instability.

The only slight criticism of Vanhuysse's line of argument concerns the fact that while it is true that a 'pacifying strategy' took place in Eastern Europe, it still has to be clarified whether the 'dividing strategy' was intended, or whether it was an unintended outcome of policies that simply aimed at preventing the return to an authoritarian system. Despite this slight hesitation, *Divide and Pacify* remains one of the most intriguing studies on CEE social policy reforms. This is a must read for any scholar in the field of welfare state transitions in Central and Eastern Europe.

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