
**Excerpts from 18 book reviews published on Divide and Pacify (2006)**

"One of the most challenging and provocative publications that has appeared so far on the transformation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) welfare states... One of the numerous positive aspects of the book is that it provides a re-worked version of Hirschman’s theory of exit, voice, and loyalty, which explains how politicians expanded the existing welfare state even in the presence of strong pressures from international institutions ... Of crucial importance...[is] 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. ... a must read."

"In the countries of Central Europe, postcommunist politics turned out to be surprisingly subdued. In spite of a severe recession, high unemployment, and increasing inequalities, the region saw no major upheaval. This was not the only odd thing about the region. In another strange turn of events, in Hungary and Poland during the early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of people suddenly became disabled and retired or simply vanished from the labor market. ... Pieter Vanhuysse, in his lucid and brilliantly argued slim book *Divide and Pacify*, shows how the second oddity goes a long way toward explaining the first one. By connecting two puzzles he solves them both. ... Vanhuysse does not confuse clarity with reductionism. His explanation is neither overly deterministic—the Czech case shows that governments had choices—nor does it rule out other factors. ... Anyone who wants to write a more complete history of the Central European transition will have to read *Divide and Pacify* ... Vanhuysse's work is a major contribution to the study of the postcommunist transition, and as it builds its case by carefully marshaling evidence from sociology, political science, and economics with lucid prose, it speaks to a wide audience."

"Pieter Vanhuysse ... gives some well-crafted and thoughtful explanations of the collective actions of the population in [CEE] countries regarding the shock of unemployment. ... Showing how only an interdisciplinary perspective can really aid in better understanding an apparently puzzling issue ... It is an informative, concise, and analytical book which deserves every scholar's and political researcher's attention ... a complex book which encompasses political, psychological, economic, and sociological elements ... Economists of the post socialist countries and the political decision makers can also use these experiences to review and analyze their own political decisions already implemented ... a highly recommended research book."

"Vanhuysse ... utilizes quantitative data in a useful way in generating his conclusions. ... [and] argues that traditional explanations that center on economic, corporatist, structural, and political variables do not work very well in explaining this phenomenon. Instead, he provides plentiful data in support of his hypothesis that strategic social policies promulgated by the state preempted protests by providing economic benefits to the disaffected groups. ... Summing up: Recommended."

"Pieter Vanhuysse has written a fascinating book on the phenomena of governmental policies and mass political behavior ... an important addition not only to the literature on transitional democracies, but to the larger body of democracy scholarship ... Vanhuysse explores a combination of macro- and micro-level determinants focusing on Polish, Hungarian, and Czech transitions from 1989 to 1996. The result is a fascinating theory that ties together governmental policies and mass political behavior. ... a vibrant synergy of political science, economics, and sociology rife with insights ... Vanhuysse significantly contributes to theoretical development in the field of democratic transitions and economic reforms as well as the field of comparative political economy of welfare states."


"An innovative and thought-provoking approach ... a creative interaction between the literatures on the politics and sociology of contention and the comparative political economy of welfare states ... The greatest contribution of this book is a systematic analysis of the significant political consequences of decisions made by states in early transition and the path dependence that emerged as a result ... Vanhuysse makes a significant contribution ... by introducing a factor, ‘strategic social policies,’ which has not previously been analyzed."


“Divide and Pacify ... not only offers a novel and provocative approach to the problems of policy and politics in transition, but also opens up an innovative research agenda for understanding the formation of political cleavages in East Central Europe today. ... There are several advantages to this approach, which render it an important contribution to scholarly inquiries into post-communist transition. For one, Vanhuysse emphasizes the strategic and purposeful action on the part of the governments, rejecting the accounts that see the development of social policies in the region as a byproduct of ad hoc, “emergency responses”, or alternatively as a continuation of policies already laid out under socialism. ... [this is] what gives the book its provocative edge and broaches an interesting research agenda ... Vanhuysse’s arguments ... outline a potentially very fruitful venue of inquiry: exploring the political decisions and cleavages of early transition politics in order to trace the ways in which these resulted in specific political configurations and potentials for conflict we observe today. As the second decade of transition unravels a lot less peacefully than the first, for anybody interested in the fate of East Central European democracies, this is a challenge that must be taken up.”


"A great book: smart, densely argued, tightly analysed and informative. We learn here a great deal about recent East European political history from what is a very original contribution. ... We learn a great deal about governance. ... Governments in Eastern Europe after 1989 have generally not benefited from overwhelming respect, but here a record is laid out that shifting governments have been effective and enlightened. We learn a great deal about social policy. This story is a confirmation of the proposition that social policies are always an instrument of rule, order and legitimacy. ... And we learn a great deal about political economy as an art of analysis. Vanhuysse presents theory, methodology and empirical analysis with equal force, blends them into a powerful and very interesting narrative.... Highly recommended" (Note: The only review published in this issue)

"A strikingly novel interpretation of the peaceful nature of economic transformation in the ex-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe ... with solid methodology and intelligent conclusions. ... Vanhuysse presents the rational calculations of the threatened workers to choose early labour market exit in a manner which can eradicate reservations of even the most committed rational choice sceptics. ... Vanhuysse shows that the legacy of applying informal solutions to the imminent problems has been an instinctive aspect of politics in East Europe. I consider ... [this] an original contribution to methodology literature as well as the literature of East European politics ... also presents clues to interpret some of the current economic and political problems in the CEE states. ... In order to understand the background for what is likely to come in East Europe, I would highly recommend Vanhuysse’s book as an immaculate contribution to regional studies, political economy theories, and methodology."


11. *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1

‘One of the unambiguous advantages of the book is its clear and rigorous style of narration. Despite a highly complex research agenda and a contentious theoretical framework, the monograph, nevertheless, enjoys a swift yet powerfully persuasive logic and language of narration. This is further supported by a straightforward structure observing, in a professional academic manner, a theoretical framework dually immersed in the extensive body of scholarship and detailed analysis of collated evidence ... The study emerges as well-researched and skilfully crafted to accommodate the author’s own theoretical assumptions. As a result, the book offers a cogent and substantiated account of events yielding a plausible explanation of how and why some countries effectively managed to avoid political discontent in undertaking painful and humanly costly economic and political reforms. The author succeeds in making his argument powerfully convincing and relevant to the area beyond the cases studied. For example, his theory sheds light on some seemingly contradictory social policies undertaken by governments in Russia and Belarus in particular. ... The book excels in delivering a novel and indeed persuasive analytical framework that complements existing explanations ... a must to peruse for students across a broad field of social sciences and ... by all accounts, an appealing and illuminating read.’


"In his thought-provoking book, Vanhuysse’s main focus is on the early transition period. ... From the first word to the last, this well-written book is one straight line of thought, which makes it a pleasure to read and easy to capture and remember (and summarise). Additionally, it is very well embedded in the existing literature. Vanhuysse argues persuasively that – in spite of conditions for disruptive protests – the dual transition to capitalism and democracy evolved remarkably peacefully, against expectations. ... drawing mainly on political science, sociology and psychology, Vanhuysse constructs an innovative explanatory framework in which the strategic use of social policy and the role of local social networks are key variables. ... With his empirical analysis Vanhuysse not only confirms his thesis, but also presents an interesting account of how these early social policy choices led to different paths of social policy reforms within East Central Europe."


"This book aims to provide an explanation for the acquiescence of populations in east-central Europe in the face of falling living standards and rising unemployment in the early and mid 1990s. A central place in the argument is given to social policy as part of a ‘divide and pacify’ strategy ... These social policies were important support both for the economic transformation and for the institutionalisation of democracy. ... Vanhuysse has directed attention onto an important issue in social policy formation in east-central Europe in the early 1990s. ... He provides a strong argument that elements of social policy served to reduce the potential for protest."

"Vanhuysse does a good job of showing how aggrieved social actors in particular economic sectors or regions were politically isolated ... makes an important connection between the strategic allocation of welfare benefits and political consolidation of liberal market democracy—something you do not hear much about from the neo-liberals, who like to take credit for east-central Europe’s historic transformation. ... The book makes a valuable contribution to the political economy of the post-communist transitions. The findings will be of interest to specialists in East European politics as well as generalists in labor and protest politics. It also should be required reading for policy technocrats, who, when it came to Eastern Europe’s post-communist transition, were so forthcoming with economic advice and so reticent about political consequences."


"Pieter Vanhuysse’s book takes a fresh look at social policies in post-communist Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. It addresses the question of why, despite the severe social hardship of post-communist transformation, East European societies hardly engaged in distributive struggles and protest. The book’s main claim is that policy makers in the region clearly understood the potentially explosive situation and strategically adopted social policies to ‘divide and pacify’ the working population. Thus Hungary and Poland, amid a steep transformational recession, adopted generous pension policies which allowed an important share of the working population to exit from the labour market by means of early retirement or disability pensions. ... This stands in contrast to the Czech development, where reformers initially prevented layoffs through softer budgetary constraints and therefore were able to avoid the pitfalls of a pensioners’ welfare state... ...The book is well structured and written, and it adds an original argument to the literature on postcommunist social policies."


"In this well-written and lucidly argued book, Vanhuysse ... adds a convincing picture of how [employment and pension policies] were systematically applied as well as new data on their distributive effects. ... A fine first book by a young scholar who has entered forcefully into the conversation about dual transitions and comparative welfare states. ... It can profitably be read by specialists on the region as well as on labor and welfare politics, sociologists, political scientists, and economists and will be accessible and interesting to students of these topics at all levels."


"PIETER VANHUYSSE’s thought-provoking study takes as its starting point the question...: why did widespread early predictions that post-communist democracies would be convulsed by Latin American-style waves of social protest prove so wrong? ... Divide and Pacify develops a coherent, wide-ranging and persuasive re-interpretation of the politics of post-communist transformation, which smartly integrates work on comparative democratization, social movements, the sociology of unemployment, and the political economy of pension reform. As such, it offers both considerable food for thought and a powerful springboard for future research."


"A double transition of momentous proportions has characterized the face of modern Central and Eastern Europe. The first is the shift within communist countries to post-communist societies; the second is the recent membership of the European Union of ten of these nations. [Divide and Pacify] provides intriguing insights into both of these changes. ... Vanhuysse seeks to marshal empirical data on industrial disputes to demonstrate that collective unrest was defused by the ‘divide and pacify’ strategies ... The use of the literature on collective action and protest, and the ‘politics of contention’, by the author is especially welcome. It is to Vanhuysse’s credit that he, in contrast to certain other sociologists, openly acknowledges his debt to Tilly, as well as to other writers, and seeks to adapt their insights in order to develop the analytical framework. ... [This book makes] welcome contributions to the debate and this reviewer, for one, sincerely hopes that more authors will shortly follow suit."

(Note: The only review published in this issue)
"Vanhuysse's analysis is underpinned by robust examination of a range of data. … In collective action terms, abnormal pensioners did not represent 'disruptive dynamite' that had to be defused in the short-term. Rather they became a medium-term time bomb undermining welfare-state finances. All in all a very interesting, methodical analysis of how strategically informed socio-political strategies helped to institutionalise democracy and the market while leaving a heavy price tag in the form of belated macro-economic instability."