

achieved through contrasting their values and attitudes with democratic ideals, but certainly we can also contrast it with other ideals, such as authoritarian, romantic or militarized ideals. Understanding the transformation of politics, in particular related to former rebels, in post-war settings is crucial for facilitating both peacebuilding and democratization processes. Here, Professor Lyons and myself share an interest which I hope we will have the opportunity to continue to discuss in the coming years.

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**Engvall, Johan, 2011. *The State as Investment Market: An Analytical Framework for Interpreting Politics and Bureaucracy in Kyrgyzstan*.**

Anmälan av Henry E. Hale

How should we understand the state? This question has been widely addressed for Western countries, but we know much less about what it is that we usually call "the state" once we travel east or south. Johan Engvall has written and defended an important dissertation addressing this question with respect to Kyrgyzstan, arguing that here and in similar countries, we can usefully understand the state as a kind of "investment market". This original proposition is sure to advance not only our understanding of post-communist transition, but to spark debate among theorists on the nature of the state and how best to understand the relationship between formal and informal authority, between states and markets, and between corruption and transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule.

Engvall begins by noting that standard treatments of the state found in the theoretical literature do not fit well with reality in Kyrgyzstan, a small remote country bordering China in post-Soviet Central Asia. It cannot be called a modern state, as recruitment into state offices is clearly not carried out according to merit. It sits uneasily with standard descriptions of the Soviet state since Kyrgyzstan's state is not all-encompassing. Examination of African states suggests the possibility of a "shadow" state dominated by clan and tribe, but Engvall shows that Kyrgyzstan's state involved far more than this.

The model Engvall advances is compelling, the idea that a state can itself be a kind of *investment market*. Specifically, he argues that access to state office is frequently determined not by merit or personal or clan connections, but instead by actual financial payment. Office typically goes to the highest bidder. Families and clans do play important roles, but these roles are primarily ones of mediating the process. That is, families and clans frequently facilitate access to the bidding process or act as a kind of filter regarding who gets to bid without being able to monopolize the process or prevent the highest bidder from taking the job.

The crux of Engvall's insight is that this payment is not simply a bribe, but actually constitutes a form of investment. Would-be officials buy offices to secure not just a single service or favor, as would be the case with a simple bribe, but to obtain access to a stream of income associated with an office for a particular period of time, not always clearly specified. Needless to say for those who know Kyrgyzstan, this stream of income is not so much the miserly official salary that the state provides, but the opportunity to use one's position to extract various kinds of rents. Office also comes with obligations, however, as Engvall shows that officials typically need to pay regular "fees" to superiors in the state hierarchy. The state, therefore, constitutes essentially a market where access to rent-seeking opportunities is auctioned off.

This has many implications for how we understand the behavior of the state. For one thing, it implies that state officials are primarily engaged in making money for themselves, for their families, and for their bosses. Since the purchased opportunities do not last forever, and indeed Engvall finds that turnover is fairly rapid, Kyrgyzstan's investors in the state tend to have short time horizons, seeking to steal as much as they can while they have the opportunity to do so, making sure to make good on their investment.

Needless to say, this has extremely negative

impacts on governance. Kyrgyzstan's citizens must deal with a state that is highly corrupt, provides public goods only at a low level, and privileges the wealthy in providing access to actual goods and services. It also facilitates political instability; this happens not only by creating popular dissatisfaction and cynicism, but also by creating a situation in which once the state starts restricting access to the bidding to too narrow a circle, other actors who want in tend to resort to violence.

Engvall's research is impressive. He focuses on what he calls the "core of the state" in Kyrgyzstan, looking at the cases of taxation, enforcement, and the judiciary, as well as considering the sphere of education. It is based on a year and a half spent on the ground in Kyrgyzstan – clearly, Engvall knows this country well. He has interviewed dozens of participants and experts and draws on a wide variety of documents and texts, each of which requires sophisticated reading since this is a secret investment market, even though it is the kind of secret that is widely understood to exist.

In terms of structure, the dissertation begins with a chapter on theory, then describes and defends the chosen method before giving a brief history of Kyrgyzstan. It then presents successive chapters on market access (recruitment to the state), motives for buying public office, how investors get their return, and implications for market stability and instability. The concluding chapter compares Kyrgyzstan with Georgia, which had a remarkably similar "investment market state" prior to reforms initiated shortly after its 2003 Rose Revolution.

This dissertation is sure to make a mark, and indeed already appears to have done so in Kyrgyzstan itself, where the recently elected President Almazbek Atambaev publicly referred to a Swedish doctoral dissertation documenting the systemic nature of corruption in Kyrgyzstan, indicating both a dire need to reform and that this would take

considerable time and effort (AKIpress Kyrgyzstan, May 3, 2012).

As with all strong research, the conclusions Engvall reaches raise a number of questions that should become the subject of future research. One is just how pervasive the investment activity Engvall documents is, which presents a major challenge since the activities are by their nature illicit and undocumented. This leaves open the possibility that at least some of this may be a kind of “fish story” that insiders enjoy telling since rampant corruption makes for a good story, although surely it does not usually present the tellers in the best possible light. And of course, is Kyrgyzstan an extreme case, or are there many other countries facing similar institutional blights? Engvall’s comparative case of pre-Rose-Revolution Georgia seems well chosen to demonstrate that Kyrgyzstan is not unique, as its office-selling in certain sectors (such as the traffic police) was not only well known, but reportedly even formalized to a surprising degree before the practice was largely eliminated under current President Mikheil Saakashvili. There is surely also research to be done on the origins of the investment market state, a question that is beyond the scope of Engvall’s dissertation.

The patterns of instability that this situation can engender also might give rise to fruitful theorizing. I wonder, for example, whether there might be a certain cyclic dynamic at work here: Once a president comes to power, he or she has incentive to increasingly concentrate access to these investments to a narrow circle of family and close friends, which in turn can lead others to mobilize to overthrow the president, only to lead once again to a new president, starting the process again.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, one of the important research

agendas that Engvall’s dissertation directs us to is how a country can transform its state from an investment market to a real state. Clearly, just getting rid of the old president will not do it, as Engvall notes this dynamic occurring both before and after Kyrgyzstan’s “Tulip Revolution” in 2005. As Engvall demonstrates, Georgia suggests that strong willed leadership and a strong strategy can do the trick for at least some institutions, like the traffic police. One thing that remains to be seen is whether a change in institutional form can have such an effect, in particular Kyrgyzstan’s decision (in the wake of yet another revolution in 2010) to end its strongly presidentialist system for a divided-executive system designed to prevent any one force from gaining a monopoly on formal and informal power. On one hand, this could have the effect of creating multiple centers of power that have incentive to thwart each other’s attempts to be the auctioneer who captures the investments made by people wanting to buy office. In addition, if people are unhappy with an investment market state, political competition has the potential to create at least some incentive for officials to genuinely reform it, the incentive to gain political points and brand the opposition as more corrupt. On the other hand, one might fear that dual executives (president and prime minister) could lead to even more competitive bidding and even shorter time-horizons, potentially increasing corruption. This will be an interesting subject for research as the years pass and we can evaluate the success or failure of Kyrgyzstan’s reforms.

Overall, Engvall’s is a dissertation well worth reading, one that will become a significant part of debates on theories of the state and corruption as well as the nature of postcommunism.

1 This might also be suggested by another outstanding recent dissertation, by Barbara Junisbai (2009), who finds that the concentration of a country’s state and non-state assets in the hands of a president’s own family tends to be one of the most potent predictors of when presidential

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allies will break with the president and go into open opposition.

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Öhberg, Patrik, 2011. *Politiker med karriärambitioner – en omöjlig självklarhet. En studie om karriärambitionerens betydelse i den representativa demokratin*. Göteborg Studies in Politics 125. Göteborg: Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet.

Anmälan av Tommy Möller

### SAMMANFATTNING AV AVHANDLINGEN

För att nå toppositioner inom politiken krävs en stark drivkraft. Det förstår alla. Men att belägga makthavares drivkrafter är metodologiskt komplicerat eftersom det är tabubelagt att öppet erkänna att man eftersträvar makt. Det gäller därför att kamouflera sina motiv att få makt, annars är det omöjligt att erövra positioner som ger makt. I svensk politik har detta varit särskilt tydligt när partierna ska utse partiledare. Dessa processer har fram till alldeles nyligen följt en särpräglad logik, där det säkraste sättet att misslyckas med att bli vald tycks vara att klargöra att man faktiskt vill bli vald.

Genom att uppmärksamma politiker med

karriärambitioner vill Patrik Öhberg i sin doktorsavhandling öka förståelsen för den representativa demokratins funktionssätt. Med avstamp i premissen om maktkampens centrala roll för den representativa styrelsen betraktas politikernas karriärambitioner som en grundbult för att demokratin ska fungera väl.

Öhberg konstaterar att redan de gamla grekerna intresserade sig för frågan. Exempelvis framhöll Aristoteles vikten av att ledarna har god karaktär, och den fråga vi alltid måste ställa oss när någon vill bli ledare är vilka motiv som driver den personen. Öhberg hänvisar till psykologisk forskning som visar att människor intuitivt kan se skillnad på personer som drivs av egna personliga maktmotiv och personer som drivs av altruistiska motiv. Följaktligen är det problematiskt om politiker som tillhör den förra kategorin dominerar våra beslutande församlingar. I förlängningen hotas, hävdas det, rentav demokratins legitimitet.

Avhandlingens syfte är således att vidga vår förståelse för "vilken roll de personliga drivkrafterna spelar i den representativa demokratin" (s. 24). Ett viktigt påpekande är dock att det är själva ambitionen, inte motiven bakom, som intresserar Öhberg. Men han finner teoribildningen kring motivintresseväckande och redogör i kapitel 2 för några inflytelserika teorier på området. Det finns sedan länge en överlappning mellan statsvetenskap och psykologi, där sådant som framstående politikers uppväxtförhållanden och självhävdebehov står i förgrunden. En pionjär är Harold Lasswell (1930), som var inspirerad av Freuds psykoanalytiska arbeten och betonade kopplingen mellan bekräftelsebehov och maktlystnad. Enligt Lasswell och en del efterföljare till honom är det framförallt människor med dåligt självförtroende, med ett starkt bekräftelsebehov, som kommer långt i den politiska världen. Hypotesen att makt är ett kompensatoriskt värde har sedermera verifierats av Alexander George