

Historical Legacies and Political Stability: A Qualitative Comparative Analysis of 27 Former Soviet and Eastern Bloc Countries

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Abstract

This article examines why post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia experienced markedly different levels of political stability after the collapse of communist rule. Existing scholarship has largely focused on democratic transition, institutional design, or external democratizing pressure, while paying less attention to the historically embedded conditions that shaped political order after regime change. From the perspective of historical legacies, this article conducts an empirical study of 27 post-communist countries. The correlation results indicate that post-communist political stability is closely associated with cross-national differences in historical legacies. Qualitative Comparative Analysis further shows how specific legacies and their combinations are associated with political stability. The findings suggest that four conditions are particularly robust: the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background, a predominantly Western Christian religious background, a relatively high economic reform index before transition, and a relatively strong communist bureaucratic institutional legacy. These results do not imply that religion or any single legacy mechanically determines political order. Rather, they suggest that post-communist political stability is embedded in longer historical configurations that conditioned state capacity, social integration, reform adaptability, and the institutional resources available during transition. The article therefore argues that post-communist stability cannot be explained only by immediate institutional choices or short-term political strategies; it must also be understood through the interaction of cultural, economic, and institutional legacies.

Keywords: historical legacies, political stability, post-communist countries, former soviet and eastern bloc countries, qualitative comparative analysis

1. Introduction

The collapse of Soviet and Eastern European communist regimes between 1989 and 1991 has long been a central subject in comparative politics and post-communist studies. Yet the trajectories of post-communist states in the first decade of the twenty-first century were far from uniform. Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and Georgia experienced regime overthrow; Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan faced pressures associated with color revolutions; while countries such as Turkmenistan maintained regime continuity despite not necessarily ranking highly on broader governance-based measures of political stability. These divergent experiences raise a basic question: what explains the striking variation in political stability across post-communist states?

To answer this question, this article turns to the historical differences that existed at the beginning of transition. The central claim is that the political stability of post-communist regimes was not produced only by the institutional choices, leadership strategies, or external pressures of the post-1989 period. It was also shaped by overlapping social, economic, cultural, and institutional legacies inherited from earlier historical periods. These legacies affected the capacity of new states to manage reform, absorb political contention, maintain social cohesion, and build stable patterns of rule.

The article examines 27 post-communist countries located in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It first reviews the literature on political stability and historical legacies in post-communist studies. It then constructs a set of legacy variables covering geography, religion and culture, economic structure, social modernization, and political institutions. On the basis of correlation tests, the article employs Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) to identify the necessary conditions and configurational patterns associated with high political stability. The results show that the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high level of pre-transition economic reform are necessary conditions in the sample, while Western Christianity, low energy intensity, and communist bureaucratic legacies form important overlapping configurations associated with political stability.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Political Stability

Western scholarship has examined political stability in former Soviet and Eastern European countries from several major perspectives. The first line of research focuses on forms of government and institutional design. Stykow (2019), for instance, compares the effects of constitutional regime types, especially president-parliamentary arrangements, on regime performance and stability in post-Soviet Eurasia. Anceschi (2021) examines power transfers in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by focusing on the degree of personalism in ruling structures. Other studies examine specific domestic institutions or policy arrangements. Tsygankov (1998) analyzes local gubernatorial elections in Russia and discusses how institutional arrangements combined democratic and authoritarian features to stabilize political rule, while Pikulik and Bedford (2019) analyze the paradoxical effect of democracy-promotion assistance on the persistence of Belarusian non-democracy.

A second line of research stresses political culture. Leshchenko (2008) argues that Belarusian national ideology, especially its egalitarian nationalist discourse, provided an important basis for the resilience of the Lukashenka regime. Richter (2020) studies divergent collective memories of famine and collectivization in Ukraine and Kazakhstan and explores how memory politics shapes regime cohesion. Renz (2019) similarly shows how Russian discourse on external threats and the changing character of war has served domestic centralization and internal order since the 1990s.

A third perspective explains regime stability through legitimacy. For many late-developing states, economic performance and the living standards of the population are closely connected to political stability. Makarkin and Oppenheimer (2011) view Russia's social contract as a stabilizer after the disorder of the 1990s. Hopf (2002) further distinguishes between legitimization and naturalization as different processes through which transitions become politically stabilized. Within this perspective, Way and Levitsky (2006) analyze coercive capacity in post-Soviet Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, and Ukraine and show that the capacity of the state to coerce opposition actors had important implications for autocratic stability.

A fourth body of scholarship highlights the impact of the third wave of democratization and external actors. Pikulik and Bedford (2019) examine how international democracy assistance shaped Belarusian stability, electoral turnout, and economic indicators. Pridham (2009) studies Latvia and shows how European Union political conditionality interacted with domestic trajectories of democratic consolidation and political stability.

2.2 Historical Legacies

Beyond these approaches, scholars have increasingly examined the impact of historical legacies on political outcomes in post-communist countries. Unlike explanations that emphasize immediate institutions, elite choices, or short-term external pressures, the historical-legacy perspective stresses durable mechanisms of continuity. Wittenberg (2015) conceptualizes historical legacies by distinguishing three elements: an outcome, an antecedent, and a candidate mechanism linking the antecedent to the outcome. This logic is consistent with Stinchcombe's argument that present outcomes may have historical causes rooted in earlier moments of social formation.

In early research on post-communist democratization, Jowitt (1992) argued that Leninist legacies would shape the path of democratic transition. Political forms and socioeconomic structures produced during the communist period could therefore impose lasting constraints on transition. With respect to political stability, some studies also noticed the importance of historical legacies. Pridham (2009), for example, identifies historical ethnic cleavages and party development in Latvia as factors affecting political stability in a new democracy. Nevertheless, early studies tended to focus on isolated legacies and did not systematically examine the broader causal mechanisms through which different legacies interacted to shape political stability.

2.3 Attribution Analysis in Historical-Legacy Research

As the literature developed, the analysis of historical legacies moved from single factors to the comparison of multiple causal conditions. Quantitative techniques were gradually introduced to test the relationship between

different legacies and post-communist outcomes. Horowitz (2003) divides historical legacies into economic structure, political culture, war, presidential power, and party systems. De Melo et al. (2001) disaggregate initial economic conditions into indicators such as GDP and urbanization in order to evaluate their impact on political and economic reform. Katchanovski (2000) examines how civil society, economic ethics, social capital, religion, and history affected economic performance after transition. Ekiert (2003) emphasizes institutional legacies and explores how the interaction between communist institutions and earlier historical legacies shaped divergent transformations in Central and Eastern Europe.

A series of regression analyses has identified a broad set of factors that may influence political stability in post-communist countries. The existing literature has generally reached a consensus that political, cultural, material, and institutional legacies, as well as combinations of these legacies, may either facilitate or obstruct regime stability. Pop-Eleches (2007) made an especially important contribution by incorporating a wide range of legacy variables from previous scholarship into a multivariate regression model. He classified historical legacies into five categories and operationalized them as 17 variables. His analysis identified several influential factors, including Christianity, Islam, urbanization in 1989, previous independent statehood, pre-war Soviet republic status, minority population share, and energy consumption per unit of GDP.

Although Pop-Eleches's regression analysis offers a valuable foundation, it also reveals the limits of traditional statistical approaches. Regression models may misestimate the effects of legacy variables, average causal effects may have limited power in explaining particular outcomes, and the interaction of multiple conditions may be overlooked. This article therefore builds on the historical-legacy literature but uses QCA to examine how different legacies combine to generate political stability.

3. Research Design

This article examines the impact of historical legacies on political stability and the channels through which such influence operates. The dependent variable is derived from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), specifically the political stability indicator. The WGI dataset provides a set of indicators measuring political stability since 1996. In the early years of transition, post-communist countries generally experienced considerable instability, making pre-2000 data too volatile to capture stable political outcomes. Political stability is also a slow-moving variable, requiring a longer and more stable time-series window. Considering the prevalence of color revolutions in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the article uses WGI political stability data from 2001 to 2010 as the basis for constructing the dependent variable. This period provides a suitable basis for understanding which historical legacies were associated with regime stability during a politically turbulent decade.

The outcome variable, WGIR, is calibrated on the basis of the average WGI political stability ranking between 2001 and 2010. Countries whose average global ranking falls within the top 40% are coded as 1, and all others are coded as 0. For robustness testing, the threshold is raised to the top 30% worldwide. Table 2 reports selected biennial correlations between historical legacies and WGI political stability scores in order to show the stability of bivariate relationships over time.

Historical legacies are defined here as the structural, cultural, and institutional starting points of 27 former communist countries at the beginning of transition. The sample includes Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Mongolia, Romania, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan. The German Democratic Republic is excluded because of reunification with the Federal Republic of Germany. Serbia and Montenegro are excluded because their separation in 2006 creates substantial data limitations.

Given the broad scope of the concept of historical legacies, this article distinguishes five major legacy dimensions: geography, religion and culture, economic structure, social and modernization conditions, and political institutions. Table 1 summarizes the variables used in the analysis.

Table 1. Overview of Variables

Type	Variable	Code	Measurement	Source
Dependent variable	Political stability	WGI	Range from -2.5 to 2.5; higher values indicate greater stability	World Bank WGI
Geographic legacy	Border with the EU	euborder	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Geographic	Distance to	Indsteur	Log distance to the nearest EU	Pop-Eleches

Type	Variable	Code	Measurement	Source
legacy	Western Europe		capital	(2007)
Religious and cultural legacy	Predominantly Western Christian	wrelig	Yes = 1; No = 0; mainly Catholic and Protestant traditions	Author coded
Religious and cultural legacy	Predominantly Muslim	muslim	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Religious and cultural legacy	Imperial legacy	impleg	Western legacy = 2; mixed = 1; Russian/Ottoman legacy = 0	Pop-Eleches (2007)
Economic legacy	Exports to non-CMEA countries	ncmeaexp	Non-CMEA exports / total exports	De Melo et al. (2001)
Economic legacy	Energy intensity	engdpind	(Energy use per unit of GDP) ⁻¹ / (industry/GDP percentage)	World Bank WDI (2001)
Economic legacy	Natural resources	natres	Resource rich = 2; medium = 1; resource poor = 0	De Melo et al. (2001)
Economic legacy	1989 economic reform index	EBRD	Scale from 1 to 4; 1 = none, 4 = highest	EBRD Transition Report (2001)
Social and modernization legacy	1989 GDP per capita	gdpcap89	GDP per capita in 1989, purchasing power parity	De Melo et al. (2001)
Social and modernization legacy	1989 urbanization	urban89	Urban population / total population	World Bank WDI (2001)
Social and modernization legacy	1989 education level	hiedu89	Higher education enrollment rate, ages 19-24	UNICEF (2001)
Political institutional legacy	Independent statehood experience	intwar	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Political institutional legacy	Soviet republic before World War II	fsuold	Yes = 1; No = 0	Author coded
Political institutional legacy	Democratic experience	predemoc	Yes = 1; No = 0	Pop-Eleches (2007)
Political institutional legacy	Communist bureaucratic legacy	commleg	Bureaucratic-authoritarian = 3; national-accommodative = 2; mixed = 1.5; patrimonial = 1; colonial = 0	Kitschelt (2001); cited in Pop-Eleches (2007)
Political institutional legacy	Minority population share	lminng	Log percentage of ethnic minorities	CIA World Factbook (1992)

Geographic variables have been widely used to explain political development. In the East European context, the most important geographic dimension is proximity to Western Europe. This article measures proximity through the presence of a border with an EU member state and the distance to the nearest EU capital. Western proximity is expected to facilitate the diffusion of Western values and political institutions and thereby contribute to social progress and political stability.

Religious and cultural legacies have also played an important role in explaining political development in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Previous scholarship debates whether religious traditions facilitate or hinder political development. To better capture the influence of historical legacies on political stability, this article includes religious variables. The variable *wrelig* is defined as a predominantly Western Christian religious background,

mainly referring to Catholic and Protestant traditions. The variable muslim refers to a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background. The analysis also includes imperial legacy, since the influence of different empires over several centuries shaped not only religion but also institutions, civic values, and conceptions of the state. Areas shaped by Western imperial rule may therefore differ from those historically shaped by Russian or Ottoman rule.

Economic legacies are equally important. Given the difficult process of economic adjustment after communism, inherited economic structures may impose constraints on both reform and political stability. Energy intensity is used to capture the inherited economic structure at the end of the communist period. Trade dependence is measured by exports to non-CMEA countries, since excessive reliance on intra-CMEA trade may have generated instability after the collapse of the communist bloc. Natural-resource endowments are included to capture the political effects of resource wealth. Finally, the 1989 EBRD economic reform index is used to capture variation in reform starting points before transition.

Social conditions and modernization levels are measured through GDP per capita, urbanization, and education. Although communist regimes attempted to reduce socioeconomic differences through planned economic systems, large gaps remained among Central Europe, Eastern Europe, parts of the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union. These differences may have become antecedent conditions for divergent levels of political stability.

Finally, although the countries in the sample shared a common history of de facto one-party rule, they differed significantly in political institutional legacies. Pre-war Soviet republic status captures the durability of communist institutional experience. Previous democratic experience may also have an independent effect on stability. Independent statehood and minority population share capture more basic state-building challenges: limited statehood experience may weaken governing capacity, while ethnic fragmentation may complicate social integration and political order.

Table 2. Correlations Between Historical Legacies and Political Stability

Variable	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010
euborder	0.40*	0.27	0.36	0.38*	0.37
lndsteur	-0.37	-0.44*	-0.47*	-0.34	-0.35
wrelig	0.55*	0.55*	0.59*	0.50*	0.58*
muslim	-0.49*	-0.50*	-0.61*	-0.44*	-0.47*
imleg	0.54*	0.54*	0.57*	0.52*	0.54*
ncmeaexp	0.50*	0.46*	0.42*	0.35	0.31
engdpind	-0.53*	-0.55*	-0.54*	-0.49*	-0.38
natres	-0.19	-0.27	-0.21	-0.07	-0.01
ebrd	0.50*	0.52*	0.54*	0.44*	0.50*
gdpcap89	0.34	0.37	0.48*	0.37	0.40*
urban89	0.32	0.33	0.46*	0.29	0.37
hiedu89	-0.03	0.04	0.09	-0.13	-0.08
intwar	0.30	0.20	0.28	0.18	0.22
fsuold	-0.47*	-0.54*	-0.49*	-0.37	-0.36
predemoc	0.27	0.30	0.34	0.26	0.30
commleg	0.64*	0.63*	0.68*	0.50*	0.56*

Note: The table has been transposed for readability in the submission format. It reports selected biennial correlations between historical legacy variables and WGI political stability scores. An asterisk indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

The correlations between historical legacies and political stability in Table 2 confirm that post-communist stability is deeply rooted in historically formed cross-national differences. Religious and cultural legacies constitute the most coherent group of explanatory factors. The 1989 economic reform index, communist bureaucratic legacy, and minority population share also demonstrate long-lasting influence. Energy intensity and pre-war Soviet republic status have somewhat weaker but still notable explanatory power, while exports to

non-CMEA countries also show some relevance. By contrast, geographic legacy, natural resources, education, urbanization, independent statehood, and prior democratic experience do not display a consistently significant effect on political stability.

This article uses Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA). QCA is a case-oriented method designed for medium-N research. It identifies the factors or combinations of conditions that are associated with a particular outcome. The decision to use QCA after correlation analysis is based on two considerations. First, the sample contains 27 post-communist countries. This number is larger than the range suitable for traditional small-N comparative methods, but still too limited for conventional large-N statistical analysis. QCA is therefore appropriate for this medium-N research design. Second, QCA complements regression analysis. Regression is powerful for estimating average effects in large samples, but its results are sensitive to model specification and indicator selection. QCA, by contrast, focuses on necessary and sufficient conditions and is less vulnerable to the problems of autocorrelation and multicollinearity. It is especially useful for identifying multiple causal configurations associated with the same outcome.

Table 3. Outcome and Condition Variables

Variable type	Variable name	Calibration
Outcome variable	Political stability ranking (WGIR)	Average WGI political stability ranking in 2001-2010: ranked in the top 40% worldwide = 1; otherwise = 0
Condition variable	Predominantly Western Christian (wrelig)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Predominantly Muslim (muslim)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Western imperial legacy (wim)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Russian or Ottoman imperial legacy (eim)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Exports to non-CMEA countries (ncmeaexp)	Above the mean value of 0.34 = 1; below the mean = 0
Condition variable	Energy intensity (engdpind)	Above the mean value of 3.19 = 1; below the mean = 0
Condition variable	1989 economic reform index (ebrd)	Above the mean value of 2.49 = 1; below the mean = 0
Condition variable	Soviet republic before World War II (fsuold)	Yes = 1; No = 0
Condition variable	Communist bureaucratic legacy (commleg)	Bureaucratic, national, and mixed legacies = 1; patrimonial and colonial legacies = 0
Condition variable	Log minority population share (lminng)	Above the mean value of 2.89 = 1; below the mean = 0

4. Results

The QCA procedure follows two steps. First, each condition is tested to determine whether it constitutes a necessary condition for the outcome. Second, the analysis examines the coverage of combinations of conditions, thereby estimating the explanatory power of different configurations. The calculations were conducted with fsQCA software. Table 4 reports the results of the necessity analysis.

Table 4. Necessity Test

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
wrelig	0.800000	0.888889
~wrelig	0.200000	0.111111
muslim	0.000000	0.000000
~muslim	1.000000	0.526316

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
wim	0.700000	0.636364
~wim	0.300000	0.187500
eim	0.500000	0.227273
~eim	0.500000	1.000000
ncmeaexp	0.700000	0.538462
~ncmeaexp	0.300000	0.214286
engdpind	0.100000	0.100000
~engdpind	0.900000	0.529412
ebrd	1.000000	0.769231
~ebrd	0.000000	0.000000
fsuold	0.100000	0.090909
~fsuold	0.900000	0.562500
commleg	0.800000	0.888889
~commleg	0.200000	0.111111
lnminng	0.400000	0.250000
~lnminng	0.600000	0.545455

Note: The symbol ~ denotes the absence of a condition.

All condition variables in Table 4 are calibrated as binary variables. A value of 1 denotes the presence of the condition, while a value of 0 denotes its absence. The symbol ~ before a variable indicates that the condition is absent. Consistency measures the degree to which a condition is associated with the outcome. A consistency score above 0.90 is commonly treated as a strong threshold for necessity, while a score of 0.90 can be read as a borderline or near-necessary condition.

Among the ten condition variables, two clearly reach the threshold of necessity: the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high level of the 1989 economic reform index. Both conditions reach a consistency score of 1. In other words, among the countries ranked in the top 40% worldwide in political stability, none has a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background, and all had a relatively high 1989 EBRD economic reform index. The six predominantly Muslim countries in the sample — Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan — did not maintain high political stability as measured by the WGI ranking in the period examined. Conversely, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Mongolia, Estonia, Poland, Latvia, and Croatia all had high economic reform index scores and maintained relatively high levels of political stability.

Several other conditions approach the necessity threshold. Western Christianity, low energy intensity, the absence of pre-war Soviet republic status, and communist bureaucratic legacy have consistency scores of 0.8, 0.9, 0.9, and 0.8 respectively. They are therefore treated as important but secondary conditions rather than core necessary conditions. In the 27 cases, all Western Christian countries except Estonia maintained high political stability. Similarly, most countries with a strong communist bureaucratic legacy maintained a high level of stability. Regarding energy intensity, Lithuania was the only case that failed to meet the low-energy-intensity condition while still maintaining high political stability.

Table 5. Robustness Test of Necessity Analysis

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
wrelig	0.800000	0.888889
~wrelig	0.200000	0.111111
muslim	0.000000	0.000000
~muslim	1.000000	0.526316
wim	0.700000	0.636364

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
~wim	0.300000	0.187500
eim	0.500000	0.227273
~eim	0.500000	1.000000
ncmeaexp	0.700000	0.538462
~ncmeaexp	0.300000	0.214286
engdpind	0.100000	0.100000
~engdpind	0.900000	0.529412
ebrd	1.000000	0.769231
~ebrd	0.000000	0.000000
fsuold	0.100000	0.090909
~fsuold	0.900000	0.562500
commleg	0.800000	0.888889
~commleg	0.200000	0.111111
lnminng	0.400000	0.250000
~lnminng	0.600000	0.545455

Note: The robustness test raises the threshold for political stability from the top 40% to the top 30% worldwide. Under this stricter calibration, the principal results of the necessity analysis remain unchanged.

To test the robustness of these results, the definition of political stability is made more stringent: countries are treated as politically stable only if their WGI political stability ranking reaches the top 30% worldwide. As shown in Table 5, the principal findings of the necessity analysis remain unchanged under the stricter threshold. In particular, the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high level of the 1989 economic reform index continue to meet the threshold for necessity. The other variables identified as relevant in the correlation analysis do not clearly reach the strong threshold for necessity and therefore require further configurational analysis.

Table 6. Configurational Analysis: Parsimonious Solution for Outcome = 1

Configuration	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
wrelig*~engdpind	0.7	0	1
wrelig*~wim	0.1	0	1
~engdpind*commleg	0.7	0	1
~wim*commleg	0.1	0	1
~wim*engdpind*~fsuold	0.1	0	1
Solution coverage	0.8		
Solution consistency	1		

*Note: In QCA notation, * denotes conjunction, and ~ denotes the absence of a condition.*

Configurational analysis examines how different combinations of conditions are associated with the outcome when individual conditions do not constitute core necessary conditions. Because the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high economic reform index were identified as necessary conditions and confirmed in the robustness test, they are not included in the configurational analysis. Therefore, the configurations reported below should be understood as patterns operating under the shared background conditions of a non-predominantly Muslim religious-cultural setting and a relatively high pre-transition economic reform index.

The fsQCA software identifies five parsimonious solution terms, with a total solution coverage of 0.8 and a solution consistency of 1. Because the unique coverage of each term is 0, these results should be interpreted as

overlapping solution terms rather than fully independent routes. The first pattern combines Western Christianity with low energy intensity. The second combines Western Christianity with the absence of Western imperial legacy. The third combines low energy intensity with a strong communist bureaucratic legacy. The fourth combines the absence of Western imperial legacy with a strong communist bureaucratic legacy. The fifth combines the absence of Western imperial legacy, high energy intensity, and the absence of pre-war Soviet republic status.

These results indicate that, beyond the necessary conditions of a non-predominantly Muslim religious-cultural setting and a high economic reform index, Western Christianity, the absence of Western imperial legacy, and communist bureaucratic legacy are important contributors to the configurational explanation of political stability. A strong communist bureaucratic legacy is especially relevant because it enabled certain states to complete state-building more quickly, establish relatively stable political order, improve administrative efficiency, and preserve relatively high state capacity. Post-communist states faced the dual task of state-building and regime transformation. Where governance capacity was weak, this dual task increased the risk of instability; where bureaucratic-institutional resources were stronger, political order proved easier to maintain.

Table 7. Robustness Test of Configurational Analysis: Parsimonious Solution for Outcome = 1

Configuration	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
~eim	0.714286	0.571429	1
wrelig*~ncmeaexp*~engdpind	0.142857	0	1
wim*~ncmeaexp*~engdpind	0.142857	0	1
~ncmeaexp*~engdpind*commleg	0.142857	0	1
wrelig*~engdpind*lnminng	0.285714	0	1
wim*~engdpind*lnminng	0.285714	0	1
~engdpind*commleg*lnminng	0.285714	0	1
Solution coverage	0.857143		
Solution consistency	1		

Note: The robustness test defines political stability as ranking in the top 30% worldwide. The term ~eim denotes the absence of Russian or Ottoman imperial legacy.

Table 7 reports the robustness test for the configurational analysis. The treatment is the same as in the necessity robustness test: only countries whose political stability index reaches the top 30% worldwide are treated as politically stable. In the robustness test, the condition with the highest coverage is the absence of Russian or Ottoman imperial legacy, with unique coverage rising to 0.571429 and total solution coverage rising to 0.857143. Western Christianity and communist bureaucratic legacy remain highly explanatory. Compared with the original results, however, Western imperial legacy, a high minority population share, and a high level of intra-CMEA export dependence also become more relevant in some configurations. Taken together, the robustness tests confirm that the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background, Western Christianity, a high economic reform index, and a high level of communist bureaucratic legacy are the most stable factors associated with political stability. Other factors may still matter, but their mechanisms are more contingent and require further investigation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This article has examined the relationship between historical legacies and political stability in 27 post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The findings demonstrate that post-communist stability cannot be adequately explained by focusing only on immediate regime design, leadership strategy, or external democratic pressure. These factors matter, but their effects are mediated by deeper historical conditions. Religious-cultural background, economic reform starting points, and inherited bureaucratic capacity shaped the room for maneuver available to post-communist states during the politically turbulent first decade of the twenty-first century.

The first major finding is that the absence of a predominantly Muslim religious-cultural background and a high pre-transition economic reform index operate as necessary conditions for high political stability in the sample. This does not imply that religion mechanically determines political order. Rather, it suggests that the social and institutional environments associated with different religious-cultural zones created different constraints for

state-building, social integration, and regime consolidation. Similarly, a higher economic reform index before transition indicates that some countries entered the post-communist period with more favorable reform capacity and institutional adaptability.

The second major finding is configurational. Political stability does not follow from a single historical cause; it emerges from combinations of legacies. Western Christianity, low energy intensity, and communist bureaucratic institutional legacy constitute several overlapping patterns associated with stability. This result highlights the analytical value of QCA. Instead of treating legacy variables as isolated independent causes, QCA shows how different historical conditions can compensate for or reinforce one another.

The third finding concerns state capacity. A relatively strong communist bureaucratic legacy contributed to political stability by providing administrative resources for order maintenance and policy implementation. In the post-communist transition, many states had to manage both political transformation and state-building. Where inherited bureaucratic capacity was more robust, governments had greater ability to respond to social disruption and institutional uncertainty. Where such capacity was weaker, political instability was more likely to emerge.

This article has two limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a medium-N sample and uses dichotomized conditions, which helps identify configurational patterns but inevitably simplifies internal variation within each country. Second, the mechanisms through which some factors operate, especially imperial legacy, minority population share, and trade dependence, require more detailed case-based investigation. Future research can combine QCA with process tracing in selected cases to identify more precise causal mechanisms connecting historical legacies to political stability.

Overall, the article shows that the political stability of post-communist states is embedded in long-term historical configurations. The collapse of communist rule created a common historical rupture, but it did not erase the effects of earlier religious, economic, social, and institutional legacies. Understanding these legacies helps explain why some post-communist states maintained stable political orders while others experienced recurring instability.

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