

FAVORABLE CONDITIONS AND ELECTORAL REVOLUTIONS

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From 1996 to 2005, a second wave of democratization rolled across the region comprising the 27 states of East-Central Europe, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union. This wave was just as regionwide in scope and just as powerful in its democratizing effects as the first wave that occurred during the years from 1988 to 1992. The first wave came in response to Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms, outbreaks of mass protests, and the dissolution of communist-party hegemony and the Yugoslav, Soviet, and Czechoslovak states.¹ It brought democratization to Poland, Hungary, what was then Czechoslovakia, Slovenia, and the Baltic States. The second round of democratization began in Bulgaria and Romania and then moved on to Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan. In each of these cases, the political turning point was an election that led to the defeat of illiberal political forces and a victory for the liberal opposition.

This was a wave of electoral revolutions that shared certain characteristics across cases: 1) the conscious deployment of an electoral model of democratization; 2) an upsurge in mass participation, not just in elections, but also in the streets before and sometimes after the elections; 3) a major turnover in governments, sometimes to the point of regime change as in Serbia-Montenegro and Croatia; and 4) significant improvement in democratic performance after the election. Like the first round of democratization in this region, moreover, the second round testified to the power of diffusion effects. It was not just that the earlier cases illustrated to others in the region that the electoral model could work; it was also that "graduates" of the earlier cases provided direct assistance to liberal activists elsewhere in their postcommunist neighborhood.

In some ways, these electoral revolutions have been consistent with global patterns. They have built upon a model of democratization that has been used successfully in electoral autocracies in other parts of the world—for example, in the Philippines, Chile, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Peru, and Mexico. In all these cases, the goal has been the same: to transform rigged electoral rituals into fair elections, thereby facilitating a transition from an illiberal to a more liberal government. The tools used have also been the same: 1) formation of a unified opposition; 2) efforts to increase voter registration and turnout and to improve the quality of voter lists; 3) efforts to focus campaign debate on the costs of the incumbent regime and the benefits of participation to opposition members and citizens at large; 4) utilization of international and domestic election monitoring as well as the media and public-opinion polls, where possible; and 5) preparations for public protests if incumbents or their anointed successors try to steal the election.

This second wave of democratization in the postcommunist region also conforms to some of the large-scale patterns characteristic of the global “third wave” of democratization. In the world as a whole as in the postcommunist area, democratization seems to have diffused within regions, and countries that have acquired some democratic features have tended to improve their democratic credentials over time. Mass engagement in democratization has also been critical to both the founding and consolidation of democracy in the postcommunist region, as it has been elsewhere.²

These similarities aside, the second postcommunist wave displays distinctive and sometimes even puzzling features. A survey of Freedom House (FH) political-rights and civil-liberties scores for this region since the first round of democratization from 1989 to 1992 suggests that *the* primary source of improvement in democratic performance has been one type of event—namely, an electoral revolution. Moreover, since the early 1990s the only countries in the world that have jumped straight from the Not Free to the Free category in the FH rankings are Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro, each of which made its dramatic leap following pivotal elections in 2000. Then too, the countries in the region that did not emerge as full-scale democracies in the early 1990s, and that have not experienced dramatic electoral shifts since, have generally followed one of two political trajectories. Either they have been stuck at Partly Free (for example, Albania, Armenia, Macedonia, and Moldova) or Not Free (for example, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan), or they have slid back toward authoritarianism (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia).³

Just as perplexing is the sheer *frequency* of electoral revolutions in this region. Since 1996, pivotal elections that have either enhanced or introduced democracy have taken place in eight countries, or 40 percent of the twenty postcommunist countries that remained eligible for

such revolutions in the wake of the first wave (democratic polities had already emerged in seven countries between 1989 and 1992). This percentage would be even higher if we left out the two countries (Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) that refuse to allow any legal opposition to compete for power, while leaving on the “still-eligible” list the four countries where serious protests broke out in response to incumbents’ claims of electoral victory in fraudulent elections but then fell short of changing the results or the system.⁴

The distinctive character of the electoral model in the postcommunist area becomes even more noticeable when we consider other regions. One can contrast the recent failed protests over fraudulent elections in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Côte d’Ivoire with the electoral victories enjoyed by united democratic oppositions in Slovakia in 1998 and Croatia in 2000, and with the successful protests over fraudulent elections in Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, and Kyrgyzstan in 2005 (though how successful in the last case is still unclear).⁵ Moreover, a recent study seeking to explain why some liberalizing elections have occurred in electoral autocracies from 1990 to 2002 provides evidence of just how far the postcommunist region has exceeded sub-Saharan Africa in both the frequency and success rate of attempts to transform rigged elections into political turnovers.⁶ Applying that study’s definition of elections that allow for the possibility of turnover and updating the data to 2005, we find that 7 of 20 elections (or 35 percent) have brought more liberal-democratic forces to power in the postcommunist region while the comparable figure for sub-Saharan Africa is only 4 of 18 (or 22 percent).⁷ If we include the March 2006 elections in Belarus, where efforts to use the elections to create a movement to oust the Lukashenka regime were unsuccessful, the percentage of successes in the postcommunist region falls slightly, to 30 percent. Still, it is clear that electoral revolutions have been significantly more frequent and more successful in the postcommunist world.

Why the Postcommunist Region?

The postcommunist region, in short, has emerged as the primary site for democratization through electoral revolutions. Why is this so? Simply put, what we find in the postcommunist region is an interaction between favorable domestic conditions and international support. In this region as in others, the success of electoral revolutions ultimately depends on domestic factors, including the imagination, courage, and organizational abilities of democratic activists and democratically oriented political leaders, as well as the weaknesses and actions of authoritarian regimes. In turn, however, these domestic conditions have led the international democracy-assistance community to make this region a major priority, and these outside actors have influenced the ability of

activists within postcommunist countries to develop and implement successful strategies to apply the electoral model.

It is customary to observe that the legacies of the communist experience as well as postcommunist political and economic dynamics have served as brakes on democratization.⁸ It is true that many of the countries in this region lack robust democratic traditions and that communist dictatorships were unusually invasive and thereby harmful to the development of civil society. The simultaneous transition to capitalism also imposed stresses on the democratic project (though largely where the collapse of communism

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produced polarized politics). Yet when it comes to democratization, the postcommunist area brings to the table some distinctive assets, both political and social. Moreover, despite the desires of many postcommunist leaders to integrate their countries into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and the success of some in achieving this goal, the postcommunist countries share distinctive traits that continue to define them as a region. While these similarities are less prevalent than those that existed under communism, they are still important.

One of the distinctive features of political life in the postcommunist world is the absence of a tradition of a politicized military. The subordination of the military to civilian authorities stands in direct contrast to the situations in Latin America, much of sub-Saharan Africa, and southern Europe. In short, electoral outcomes determine political outcomes in the postcommunist area far more than in many other regions—a dynamic that also explains in part why there is such a strong correlation across *both* waves of democratization in this region between the electoral performance of the liberal opposition and subsequent democratic performance.⁹ When liberal oppositions win elections, democratization follows. When power is shared or divided, however, not only democratization but even economic reform and performance suffer considerably. In the postcommunist region, breaking with rather than bridging to the past is by far the more effective democratization strategy.

Another political asset in postcommunist countries is long experience with elections in general and fraudulent elections in particular. As studies of communist systems suggested many years ago, elections in these contexts involved considerable mass mobilization. Although the communist party determined outcomes, the election process as a whole nevertheless taught people to link regime legitimacy with the act of voting and to use elections not just to assess the quality of regime performance with respect to service delivery, but also to make demands for specific changes in public policy—demands that were facilitated by

one-on-one discussions between citizens and election canvassers (who were often local party activists) in preparation for the elections.¹⁰ While communist elections usually did not involve choice (though there were some experiments with multicandidate elections in several of these countries in the 1950s, and competition between party-approved candidates was introduced in Hungary in 1985), they did advertise the gap between “socialist democracy” and Western democracy, albeit not in ways that the communist regimes intended. Elections also contributed to the clear distinction in the public mind between “us” and “them,” which was vital for mobilization when the regime weakened, whether during communism or after. “Rigged rituals” though they were, communist-era elections still carried important lessons about politics, policy, and protest. After communism collapsed, such lessons became relevant, as regular elections continued, new versions of rigged rituals appeared, and it became easier to focus on specific individuals who could be held responsible for political and economic disappointments.

The communist legacy is also distinctive with respect to the very high levels of education enjoyed by peoples across the entire region. The familiar international pattern of a strong relationship between the level of economic development and average educational attainment (as measured by years of schooling per citizen) does not hold in the postcommunist world. Instead, levels of education are high across the board in the postcommunist region, particularly compared to other world regions. This difference is particularly striking given the unusually large differences across this region in per-capita income (PCI). These differences testify to the impact of state dissolution (which was accompanied in some cases by internal wars, but which in all cases highlighted significant differences within the region’s ethnofederal states) and to significant differences in economic performance across countries since their transitions began.

Some brief examples highlight the distinctiveness of educational patterns in the postcommunist world.¹¹ First, the three most educated populations in the world (as measured by mean years of education) live in the United States, Canada, and Russia. Second, the total mean years of education in the postcommunist region is 10.66; it is 3.0 in sub-Saharan Africa, and 5.26 in Latin America. Third, although Mexico and Russia are roughly equal in PCI (as measured at purchasing-power parity), the mean number of years of education in Russia is 13.7, compared to slightly more than half that in Mexico. Finally, the contrast between the postcommunist region and Latin America is even sharper when we focus on the poorest countries in these regions: Tajikistan (PCI US\$1,150) features a mean of 11.6 years of education, whereas in Haiti (PCI US\$1,680) the comparable figure is 3.93 years.

High levels of education, especially where they are regionwide, are helpful to democracy in general. They make the postcommunist region

an attractive focus for democracy promoters, and they encourage the spread of electoral revolutions. All else being equal, education facilitates citizen access to information and provides support for the development of a rich civil society (which is one reason why there has been a significant growth over time in the number and quality of non-governmental organizations throughout this region).¹² Education also tends to correlate with support for civil liberties and political rights. A relatively egalitarian educational structure facilitates the development of a dense web of political networks independent of the state. Educated citizens are more capable of identifying their interests and organizing themselves, and are in a better position to participate in the complex work of electoral revolutions, such as registering to vote, following campaigns, and participating in both elections and protests. At the same time, it is far easier in such contexts for international democracy promoters to identify local collaborators. It is also far easier for electoral challenges to illiberal rule to diffuse across states when there are high levels of education in neighboring countries, and when citizens in neighboring countries share a common political and economic past.

Diffusion Dynamics

The communist region was unusually “regional”: Communist regimes shared the same structure, with common goals, mutual enemies, and a very high level of political, economic, and military integration. These features had the effect of forging a regional environment unusually prone to the cross-national transmission of party weakness and strength, the quality of economic performance, and popular compliance or public protests. It was far from accidental that leadership splits and succession struggles in Moscow led to protests both within the USSR and in Central and Eastern Europe. Protests and reform efforts in communist-ruled Central and Eastern Europe—as in 1953, 1956, 1967 to 1968, 1970, 1976, and 1980—tended to take similar forms, embrace similar agendas, use similar techniques, and spread as a “package” from one country to the next. The protests that started the Soviet Union’s unraveling during the Gorbachev era spread from republic to republic within that country (as they had in both Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia during and at the end of communism), as well as to Central and Eastern Europe.¹³

Three things were crucial to regional support for diffusion dynamics. The first was a pattern of declining violence on the part of elites facing popular protests. This decline can be glimpsed by comparing the Soviet Union’s reaction to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution or the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia with the lack of any direct Soviet intervention in Poland after Solidarity emerged in 1980. With the regional enforcer signaling less will to use force, mass publics had a wider opportunity to express their political concerns through peaceful

protest—an opportunity that they seized in 1989. A second defining aspect was the growth during the communist period of both the cross-national diffusion of ideas and techniques and the establishment of cross-national contacts among dissident groups. Both were in clear evidence in the linkages between the Prague Spring and developments in Ukrainian politics in the late 1960s, between Solidarity and the politics of the Baltic states, and, more generally, in the role of Polish, Hungarian, Czech, and Yugoslav dissidents as regional disseminators of various models of political resistance. The third crucial aspect was the realization by challengers to the existing order that they could learn a great deal from events in other countries ruled by communist regimes. Because of a belief that communism had created similar opportunities and constraints, dissidents, political incumbents, and citizens in general all believed that what happened in one country in the region could happen in others. This situation sowed ongoing fear among the Soviet leadership, fear that we can see living on in the anxieties about the “electoral virus” that Russia’s President Vladimir Putin shares with his allies in Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan.

This assumption of similarity and the perceived potential for importing developments from the “near abroad” is yet another distinctive feature of the communist and postcommunist world. In regions such as Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, dictatorships as well as economic and social systems varied far more, and as a result there was a strong belief that each country was distinct. In the postcommunist world, however, the belief in similarity remained strong even after communism failed, given the similar assets and liabilities across these states and their similar transition agendas. The precedent of rapid and successful transitions to democracy and capitalism in some of the region’s states also encouraged continuity in regional mentalities, thereby facilitating the spread of electoral revolutions.

Participants in second-wave postcommunist electoral revolutions consistently told us in interviews that they believed successful cases of transition anywhere in the postcommunist region to be highly relevant to their own respective countries.¹⁴ These activists found it important that others in the region had used elections to bring down dictators and that the political contexts in which these electoral revolutions took place were similar to their own: regimes that the first wave had missed and where authoritarian rulers had stayed in power, but in which there nonetheless remained some chance for change through regular and at least formally competitive elections. The conviction that liberal oppositionists could benefit from working closely with “graduates” of nearby electoral revolutions who could provide ideas, strategies, and precedents for change was also of value to them. The longer-term expansion of postcommunist civil society fueled the process, as did experiences gleaned from previous rounds of protest (not just in the first wave, but

also thereafter in most of the sites of the electoral revolutions); gaps left open by illiberal incumbents who had become too confident, corrupt, and careless; and the optimism, hard work, courage, and creativity of local citizens and opposition activists.

Electoral revolutions were the product of such activists, aided by the international democracy-promotion community. Yet many elements of the second wave of democratization from 1996 to 2006 also built upon the experiences of both the communist past and the transition from communism. The Slovaks drew help from Bulgarians and Romanians, who had themselves been influenced by Serbia's remarkable protests in 1996 and 1997; Slovak activists in turn helped their Croatian and Serbian counterparts in 2000. Graduates of the Serbian election of 2000 assisted the Georgians in their 2003 showdown with Eduard Shevardnadze. Finally, Serbs and Georgians, along with Slovaks, Poles, and Czechs, contributed to the eventual victory of Viktor Yushchenko over Viktor Yanukovich in the Ukrainian presidential contest of late 2004.

International Donor Support

Donors have made the postcommunist countries a priority, and international funding has poured in. A recent study of U.S. democracy-promotion efforts evaluated democracy assistance given by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 120 countries from 1990 to 2003.¹⁵ A close look at these data reveals that the postcommunist region stands out as a clear priority for USAID with respect to democracy assistance in general; there is also some evidence that electoral assistance may account for a higher proportion of total support in the postcommunist region than in other regions, such as Latin America. If we compare the number of states that are in theory available for such aid by the standards used in this study and the actual receipt of such aid from 1990 to 2003, we find that only in the postcommunist region has *every* qualifying state received USAID assistance. By contrast, in Asia the number is 17 of 25; in Africa 39 of 48; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 22 of 31.¹⁶ The average duration of assistance has also been longer in the postcommunist region (as well as in Latin America and the Caribbean) than in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁷ While Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole are favored as a percentage of all USAID democracy aid during this period, the postcommunist region emerges as the leading regional recipient if we combine Central Europe, the Balkans, and the Soviet successor states into a single category. The concentration of assistance in these states is even more pronounced if we take into account the number of countries in each region and the relative size of the regional populations.¹⁸

USAID has not been alone in providing funding to the postcommunist region. From 1990 to 2003, this region also received considerably

more funding than any other from the nongovernmental National Endowment for Democracy. There are no available data for the support provided by the Open Society Institute (OSI), but it is safe to guess that most of this funding, until recently, has concentrated on the postcommunist region. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union have also provided financial support, some of which involves democracy assistance. Some of this funding has gone to the new members who joined the EU in 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and to countries that currently have accession agreements or are close to signing them (Bulgaria and Romania in the first instance, Croatia in the second). The OSCE and the EU have also given financial support to a large number of other states in the region that do not fit into these categories, providing assistance through various partnerships, cooperation and association agreements, and soon the European Neighborhood Instrument.¹⁹ A recent study of European political foundations indicates that their primary focus has been on elections and political-party development, with 25 percent of their expenditures going to the postcommunist region; 21 percent to Central and South America; 20 percent to Asia and sub-Saharan Africa; and 14 percent to North Africa and the Middle East.²⁰

Why has the postcommunist region received such favorable treatment compared to other regions with regard to democracy assistance? Does this pattern reflect habits dating from the Cold War, national interests, or more opportunities to make a difference? Habits and interests certainly play a role. During the Cold War, a sizeable percentage of personnel in the U.S. State Department and the CIA specialized in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, and if for no other reason than the familiar one of organizational inertia, such regional priorities are likely to prove persistent (although recent efforts to redirect personnel and resources to the Middle East may portend further changes in this respect). Moreover, one can note that an unusual number of states in the postcommunist region are well-positioned to appeal to U.S. and European economic and security interests. Many of these states border “Western” Europe, the EU, or such strategically important states as Afghanistan, China, Iran, North Korea, and Turkey. A number of the postcommunist states have either significant oil and gas deposits or, as with Ukraine and Georgia, pipelines that deliver oil and gas to Western consumers. Finally, there is Russia: Dominant in the region, it possesses nuclear weapons, assists in the war on terror, has substantial oil and gas endowments, and wields influence because of its continued involvement with its “near abroad” and its proximity to strategically important countries.

Due to factors already noted, the international democracy-assistance community also has excellent reasons to expect that its influence on democratic development will be greater in the postcommunist region

than in other parts of the world. Donors tend to focus on countries where there are reasonable prospects for positive impact.²¹ Democracy assistance is more likely to bear fruit in states that 1) have kept one foot in the democratic door, perhaps by holding regular and at least somewhat competitive elections; 2) have parties and a developed civil society that can act as local allies for democratization efforts; 3) exhibit short-term democratization-friendly trends such as increasingly competitive local elections, popular protests, vigorous legislatures and courts, cooperation among opposition groups, and popular opposition leaders; and 4) share borders with states that are both democratic and similar to them.

Many states in the postcommunist region fit this description unusually well. It is helpful to remember that, while the collapse of the communist order from 1988 to 1992 produced at least some rapidly institutionalizing democracies, the kinds of regimes found bobbing in communism's wake were more likely to be fragile democracies or hybrids of democracy and dictatorship. In weak and hybrid democracies alike, elections were regularly held, but they were sometimes stolen and sometimes really won by the communists or their successors because they were more cohesive than the opposition. In either case, a tension was created between democracy and dictatorship that opened the window for democratization.²² These initial patterns of postcommunist regime change suggested to both international democracy promoters and their local allies that democracy could develop after communism and that there was good reason to expect that democracy would spread throughout the region.

The democracy-promotion community also recognized the utility of the electoral model of democratization. This model, which drew upon experiences outside the region, was fashioned through intense interactions among local and regional democratic oppositions, ambassadors and officials from more established democracies, and the U.S. and European democracy-promotion communities. Individuals involved in democracy promotion also reasoned that, while international assistance might matter only at the margins, there were still unusually good prospects for making a positive difference in this region. In addition, by the mid-1990s, many of these actors had come to the conclusion that a policy of democracy promotion was preferable to the export of democracy.²³ This distinction highlights the critical role of building strong partnerships with local groups that support democratic politics, rather than force-feeding democracy to societies with highly resistant local cultures that also lack organized and committed allies—as may be the case when exporting democracy.²⁴

Lessons Learned?

The electoral revolutions that have swept away illiberal governments in the postcommunist region since 1996 reflect two sets of factors which

are as important as they are difficult to disentangle: the favorable domestic conditions for such revolutions and the role of the international democracy-promotion community. International donors, including the United States and the EU, made helpful investments in civil society and supported opposition groups, the media, and others involved in the conduct of fair elections. They also signaled their displeasure with incumbents, placed pressure on them to run a more democratic ship, and reacted quickly to attempts by illiberal groups to steal elections in the cases of successful electoral revolutions.

It might be tempting to conclude from this analysis that the key factor in the success of this region's electoral revolutions was in fact the priorities of the United States and other democracy promoters, and that similar efforts in other regions would have similar payoffs. But this tempting conclusion should be avoided. First, it is extremely difficult to disentangle international and domestic influences.²⁵ In addition, the priorities of international donors reflected the structural advantages for electoral revolutions and democratization that the postcommunist region provided. Donor priorities were also influenced both directly and indirectly by the actions of leaders and citizens in the recipient countries. As the postcommunist world's electoral revolutions illustrate, international democracy promotion can never succeed in the absence of domestic democracy-promotion efforts. These in turn require a regime that allows pockets of political autonomy; a community of highly experienced activists committed to the ouster of the authoritarian leader; and a strategy to exploit the weaknesses of the authoritarian regime and mobilize citizen support.

Even within the region, after the successful defeat of authoritarian leaders, stable and liberal democratic orders were created at different speeds and with different degrees of success. It is telling in this regard to contrast political developments in Slovakia—where the OK98 citizens' campaign successfully mobilized voters to oust Premier Vladimír Mečiar's government in 1998—with those in Georgia after the Rose Revolution or in Ukraine or after the Orange Revolution. Slovakia's rapid and relatively smooth progress in restoring democracy and moving toward EU and NATO membership undoubtedly got a boost from the country's proximity to the EU and the incentives that both EU and NATO membership provided to adopt democratic practices and economic reforms. But the political capital and support for democracy created by a well-developed network of nongovernmental organizations and the ties that had developed among democratic activists both within and outside partisan politics also had an important impact on developments after Mečiar's ouster. Georgia and Ukraine, by contrast, have had weak civil societies and divided, poorly organized liberal oppositions, and thus have experienced far bumpier roads to democracy. The outcome of efforts to support electoral revolutions in parts of

the world that have less supportive structural conditions, less developed civil societies, less experienced oppositions, and less favorable attitudes toward the West and democracy is likely to be even more problematic and uncertain, even if these regions are given priority in international democracy-assistance programs.

NOTES

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1. On these revolutions, see Valerie J. Bunce and Sharon L. Wolchik, "Bringing Down Dictators: American Democracy Promotion and Electoral Revolutions in Postcommunist Eurasia," under review; Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik, "International Diffusion and Postcommunist Electoral Revolutions," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, forthcoming, September 2006; Michael McFaul, "Transitions from Postcommunism," *Journal of Democracy* 16 (July 2005): 5–19; Lucan A. Way, "Authoritarian State-Building and the Sources of Regime Competitiveness in the Fourth Wave: The Cases of Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine," *World Politics* 57 (January 2005): 231–61; Lucan A. Way, "Ukraine's Orange Revolution: Kuchma's Failed Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 16 (April 2005): 131–45; Vitali Silitski, "Is the Age of Post-Soviet Electoral Revolutions Over?" *Democracy at Large* 1 (September 2005): 8–10; Vitali Silitski, "The Long Road from Tyranny: Post-Communist Authoritarianism and Struggle for Democracy in Serbia and Belarus," unpubl. ms.; and Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia From National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union* (London: Ashgate, 2005).

2. On the first two points, see Daniel Brinks and Michael Coppedge, "Diffusion Is No Illusion: Neighbor Emulation in the Third Wave of Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 39 (September 2005): 1–23; Steven F. Finkel, Anibal Perez-Linan, Mitchell A. Seligson, and Dinorah Azpuru, "Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building: Results of a Cross-National Quantitative Study," USAID Final Report, version 34, January 2006; Scott Mainwaring and Anibal Perez-Linan, "Why Regions of the World are Important: Regional Specificities and Region-Wide Diffusion of Democracy," Working Paper 322, Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, October 2005. On the third point, see Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman, *How Freedom Is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy* (New York: Freedom House, 2005). See also Valerie Bunce, "Rethinking Recent Democratization: Lessons from the Postcommunist Experience," *World Politics* 55 (January 2003): 167–92.

3. According to Freedom House figures for 2005 (and adding our reading of the new state of Montenegro—as of June 2006—and recent developments in Kyrgyzstan), the region was divided as follows: twelve countries are Free (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia); nine are Partly Free (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, and Ukraine); and seven are Not Free (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan). See "Global Survey 2006: Middle East Progress Amid Global Gains in Freedom," 19 December 2005, at www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=70&release=317.

4. The four countries are Armenia (2003–2004), Azerbaijan (2005), Kazakhstan (2005), and Belarus (2006). On Azerbaijan, see Leila Alieva, “Azerbaijan’s Frustrating Elections,” *Journal of Democracy* 17 (April 2006): 147–60. On Belarus, see Vitali Silitski, “Preempting Democracy: The Case of Belarus,” *Journal of Democracy* 16 (October 2005): 83–97. His analysis of Belarus’s March 2006 presidential election appears elsewhere in this issue.

5. Scott Radnitz, “What Really Happened in Kyrgyzstan?” *Journal of Democracy* 17 (April 2006): 132–46.

6. Marc Morjé Howard and Philip G. Roessler, “Liberalizing Electoral Outcomes in Competitive Authoritarian Regimes,” *American Journal of Political Science* 50 (April 2006): 365–81.

7. Turnover, in fact, is exceptional in general in sub-Saharan Africa. As Nicolas Van de Walle has recently argued, of the 92 presidential elections that took place in sub-Saharan Africa from 1990 to 2004, only 13 produced electoral turnover. See “When Do Oppositions Coalesce in Electoral Autocracies?” Working Paper 01–05, Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, Cornell University, August 2005.

8. See Grzegorz Ekiert and Stephen E. Hanson, eds., *Capitalism and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe: Assessing the Legacy of Communist Rule* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Marc Morjé Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Postcommunist Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Bela Greskovits, “Rival Views of Postcommunist Market Society: The Path Dependence of Transitology,” in Michel Dobry, ed., *Democratic and Capitalist Transitions in Eastern Europe: Lessons for the Social Sciences* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer), 19–45.

9. See Valerie Bunce, “Sequencing Political and Economic Reforms,” in John Hardt and Richard Kaufman, eds., *East-Central European Economies in Transition* (Washington, D.C.: Joint Economic Committee, 1994), 46–63; M. Steven Fish, “Democratization’s Prerequisites,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 14 (July–September 1998): 212–47; and Valerie Bunce, “Enabling and Enhancing Democracy: Global Patterns and Postcommunist Dynamics,” paper prepared for the Project on Democratic Transitions, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, 10 December 2005.

10. Victor Zaslavsky, and Robert Brym, “The Functions of Elections in the USSR,” *Soviet Studies* 30 (July 1978): 362–71; Barnabas Racz, “The Parliamentary Infrastructure and Political Reform in Hungary,” *Soviet Studies* 41 (January 1985): 39–66; and Barnabas Racz, “Political Participation and Developed Socialism: The Hungarian Elections of 1985,” *Soviet Studies* 39 (January 1987): 40–62.

11. The comparative data that follow are all based upon *The World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development* (New York: World Bank, 2005), 284–85, 292–93.

12. See, for example, *The 2005 NGO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, May, 2006).

13. The communist region as an antechamber for wave-like changes has been analyzed by Valerie Bunce, *Subversive Institutions: The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Mark Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For an early analysis of such dynamics, see Zvi Y. Gitelman, “The Diffusion of Innovation from Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union,” Sage Professional Paper in Comparative Politics Series, Vol. 3, 1972.

14. This article draws on an ongoing research project for which we have conducted approximately 100 interviews with participants and observers in the United States, Europe, and the countries involved.

15. Steven F. Finkel et al., "Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building."

16. Steven F. Finkel et al., "Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building," 14.

17. In the absence of continued engagement, for example, the institutionalization of fair elections suffers. There is a large literature on this problem for sub-Saharan Africa. See Lise Rakner, "Electoral Administration in Sub-Saharan Africa: Why Does It Not Improve? The Role of Foreign Finances," paper presented at a conference on "External Actors and State (Re)-Construction," Mario Einaudi Center for International Studies, Cornell University, 11–12 November 2005.

18. Steven F. Finkel et al., "Effects of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building," 29–32.

19. See Sabine Fischer, "The EU Strategy of 'New Neighborhood' and its Impact on International Relations with the Former Soviet Union," paper presented at the International Studies Association, Honolulu, 1–5 March 2006.

20. See Jos van Wersch and Jeroen de Zeeuw, "Mapping European Democracy Assistance: Tracing the Activities and Financial Flows of Political Foundations," working paper 36, at www.clingendael.nl/publications/2005.

21. Countries with prospects for positive impact have "absorptive capacity," to borrow a phrase from analysts of development and state building. For more evidence on international assistance in general, including development assistance, see Arthur A. Goldsmith, "Fool's Errands? Nation-Building in the Twenty-first Century," paper presented at the conference on External Actors and State (Re)-Construction.

22. On the contradictions built into electoral autocracies, see Andreas Schedler, "The Nested Game of Democratization by Elections," *International Political Science Review* 23 (January 2002): 103–22; and Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13 (April 2002): 51–65.

23. This distinction was drawn most helpfully in Larry Diamond, "New Foreign Policies: Promoting Democracy," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1992.

24. There is a substantial literature on some of the unanticipated costs of civil society promotion in the postcommunist world. See Anna Aksartova, "NGO Diffusion in the Former Soviet Union and Its Effect," ch. 4 in "Civil Society Abroad: U.S. Donors in the Former Soviet Union" (Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 2005); Sarah Henderson, "Selling Civil Society: Western Aid and the Non-Governmental Organizations Sector in Russia," *Comparative Political Studies* 35 (March 2002): 136–67; Alexander Cooley and James Ron, "The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action," *International Security* 27 (Summer 2002): 5–39; and Sarah Mendelson and Theodore Gerber, "Local Activist Cultures and Transnational Diffusion: An Experiment in Social Marketing Among Human Rights Groups in Russia," unpubl. ms., April 2005.

25. See Wade Jacoby, *The Enlargement of the EU and NATO: Ordering from the Menu in Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).