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Annie Verderosa: Post-Postcommunist Authoritarianism: Democracy and Second Transitions

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Abstract

Since the collapse of European communism, several countries have undergone a second postcommunist transition, each beginning with the electoral defeat of a postcommunist authoritarian regime. Reformers swept into power, promising to introduce their countries to democracy. Why, then, do second transitions yield such varying results when it comes to the speed and success of achieving democratic gains? Taking second democratic breakthroughs as a starting point, this paper explores what happens once the authoritarian regime has been removed and the liberalisers take over the task of governing. It develops the hypothesis that the experience of postcommunist authoritarianism yields specific institutional and behavioural legacies that prove to be an additional obstacle to be overcome in second transitions. The examples of second transitions in Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia are used to support and frame the argument.

Introduction

The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was immediately heralded as a victory for political liberalism and the emerging new regimes invariably described as being in transition “to democracy.” Yet, well over a decade into that transition, it is clear that transitions from communism have only sometimes yielded democratic outcomes.¹ Several communist successor regimes did not democratise at all, and others slid back into authoritarianism following a brief democratic opening at the time of communism’s collapse.

Years after the initial transition, several of the less democratic states were back in the spotlight as they underwent another significant regime change. Whether the high-profile, mass “revolutions” that challenged election fraud in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), and Ukraine (2004) or the less disputed, but equally significant electoral turnovers that took place in Slovakia (1998) and Croatia (2000), second transitions have centred on elections that bring liberalising elites to power as turning points. Though a few of these countries did experience elections in the 1990s, semi-authoritarian leaders engaged a full range of methods to ensure that they were not fully competitive, making the breakthroughs all the more extraordinary when they did happen.² The phrase “second transition” thus describes a successful liberalising opening and implies a second chance at completing the transition to democracy.

As before, these breakthroughs were greeted with euphoria by opposition forces and international democracy promoters alike, and, once again, the outcomes have not always seemed to live up to expectations. Taking the second democratic breakthrough as a starting point, this paper explores what happens once the postcommunist authoritarian regime has been removed and the liberalisers take over the task of governing. The hypothesis advanced here is that the experience of postcommunist authoritarianism yields specific institutional and behavioural legacies that prove an additional obstacle to the reform governments leading a second transition. The examples of second transitions in Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia will be used to support and frame the argument. These three countries are similar in that they endured the first years of postcommunist independence under semi-authoritarianism, and in each case this mode of governance was later successfully overturned in favour of leadership promising democratic governance and reform. The cases nevertheless reflect important differences in the qualities of each country’s postcommunist authoritarian regime as well as in the speed and degree of gains made since the toppling of that regime, suggesting that a comparative study could yield insights into the character and potentially lasting impact of postcommunist authoritarian regimes.

1 See Carothers, Thomas: *The End of the Transition Paradigm*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 2002 (vol. 13), No. 1, pp. 5–21. See also McFaul, Michael: *The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World*, in: *World Politics*, 2002 (vol. 54), pp. 212–244.

2 The concept of semi-authoritarianism will be developed in the body of the paper. For a discussion of electoral “games” semi-authoritarians play, see Ottoway, Marina: *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003.

Enough time has passed since each country's second breakthrough moment to allow a picture to emerge. The outcomes may not be final, but the different trajectories are clear: Slovakia achieved substantial gains very rapidly once Mečiar was ousted; Croatia has made significant gains, but at a slower pace following the defeat of Tudjman's HDZ party; and Serbia has liberalised considerably since the "October Revolution" but appears to be stalling or stalled on the reform path. Why do second transitions yield such varying results when it comes to the speed and success of achieving democratic gains?

Research Design

The argument explored in this paper is based on the rich political science literature that has developed to explain how, when, and where democracies come to replace systems of authoritarian rule. As Guillermo O'Donnell has noted, two transitions are required to complete the transfer from an authoritarian to a democratic regime. The first transition involves the "installation of a democratic regime," while the second "consolidates" democratic institutions and practices, leading to the enduring and effective functioning of democracy as a system.³ The analysis presented here is concerned exclusively with how regimes develop beyond their initial moments of transition. This section outlines the theoretical framework and main assumptions, and begins to develop the argument.

The dependent variable: democratic gains

For most authors, the process of "democratic consolidation" requires change on multiple levels of society and consists of – at a minimum – behavioural, attitudinal, and constitutional dimensions. Following Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan's definition, consolidated democracy is "a political regime in which democracy as a complex system of institutions, rules, and patterned incentives and disincentives has become, in a phrase, 'the only game in town.'"⁴ However, the literature does little to explain in theoretical terms how, when, where, or why democracy comes to settle as "the only game in town." A shortcoming of the theoretical work on democratic consolidation to date is that it defines the concept so descriptively that it is difficult to separate the elements that constitute it from those that caused it. It is therefore exceedingly difficult to observe the *degree* to which a regime is consolidated.

To avoid circular argumentation, this paper instead evaluates the concrete democratic gains achieved under the new regime. These are measured using the data collected annually by Freedom House and reported in the "Political Rights" and "Civil Liberties" subcategories of its annual Freedom in the World index. Progress is indicated by the extent to which scores improve whether they hold steady or continue to improve from one year to the next. How many years are required for substantial gains to be made is ultimately also of interest. The theoretical framework of democratic consolidation guides the understanding that improvements in democratic governance must endure, but using democratic gains as the indicator eliminates definitional problems that are beyond the scope of this essay.

Theoretical framework: postcommunist transitions and theories of democratisation

The standard canon of the democratisation literature analyses the string of regime transformations known as the third wave, which first began in the 1970s in Southern Europe and Latin America.⁵ When communism collapsed in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, the third wave framework was applied to study the transitions taking place in that region. This literature is characterised by an actor-centric approach that attaches great significance to the choices made by the actors involved in a transition situation. As such, it

3 O'Donnell, Guillermo: Illusions about Consolidation, in: Journal of Democracy, 1996 (vol. 7), No. 2, pp. 34–51.

4 Linz, Juan J. / Stepan, Alfred: Towards Consolidated Democracies, in: Journal of Democracy, 1996 (vol. 7), No. 2, pp: 14–33.

5 Huntington, Samuel P.: The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

represents a break with structural explanations, or those relying on factors such as economic development or culture to predict democracy, and instead attributes a regime's resulting characteristics to the strategic interaction of elites in a transition situation. The actor-centred orientation underlies the analytical framework that structures this paper.

For theorists of the third wave, new democracies can be crafted by political elites, and this relatively quickly.⁶ The theoretical model predicts that a democratic outcome is most likely in situations where the distribution of power is equal or unknown. Under such conditions, elites bargain to lock in at least partial gains, a system of checks and balances, and the opportunity for future challenge to the status quo – that is, democracy.⁷ Despite the central role attributed to the actors in the so-called “pacting” process, the dynamics of the transition situation remain the critical factor in producing democracy. As Michael McFaul underscores, “ideas, norms, and beliefs played little or no role in these transition theories.”⁸

As the postcommunist transitions have worn on, however, they have demonstrated patterns that challenge the third wave's hypotheses. Following McFaul's argument, which favours considering the postcommunist transformations in a separate analytical category, or a “fourth wave,” democratic outcomes have empirically been less a result of stalemated negotiations than of revolutionary transitions “from below.” Regime imposition “from above,” which third wave models predicted were likely to result in partial democracy, has instead yielded dictatorship in the postcommunist context. The dominant factor in determining regime outcomes in transitions from communism therefore appears to have been the stronger side dictating the rules of the game: “If the powerful believed in democratic principles, then they imposed democratic institutions. But if they believed in autocratic principles, then they imposed autocratic institutions.”⁹ In short, it is people – not structural factors or certain transition dynamics – that are the first necessary prerequisite for establishing democratic regimes.¹⁰ This observation is also significant for theorising about second transitions, particularly given the democratic principles and values proclaimed by the leaders who triumphed in those transitions.

McFaul's framework, which is taken as the basis for this analysis, regards the challengers to the incumbent regime as democrats and the ruling elites as autocrats. In accepting this framework as a starting point, it is recognised that the idea that regime challengers are committed democrats may be an oversimplified assumption. Nonetheless, it seems a reasonable one in this context, given that second transitions invariably brought to power groups of elites that defined themselves in opposition to the authoritarian style of their predecessors. This is substantiated by the observation that the winners in each of these elections mobilised support around such themes as deposing the semi-authoritarian regime or returning to normalcy. It would be impossible to examine objectively the extent of each set of elites' commitment to democratic principles and ideals at the time of transition; thus, the analysis accepts that those who came to power in second transitions represented a certain orientation towards democracy, change, and reform.

The understanding here is that the primary responsibility for institutionalising democratic structures and behaviour lies with people, most prominently the elites involved in orchestrating and implementing the transition. Yet crafting democracy is not simply a matter of human agency, for in no situation does political will alone guarantee the desired outcome. As in any political context, structural and environmental factors shape and constrain the choices available to actors. Perhaps more importantly, such factors influence not

6 Bunce, Valerie: *Comparative Democratization: Lessons from Russia and the Postcommunist World*, in: McFaul, Michael /Stoner-Weiss, Kathryn(eds.): *After the Collapse of Communism: Comparative Lessons of Transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 219.

7 Przeworski, Adam: *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 51–99.

8 McFaul, Michael: *The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World*, in: *World Politics*, 2002 (vol. 54), p. 213.

9 McFaul, Michael: *The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Noncooperative Transitions in the Postcommunist World*, in: *World Politics*, 2002 (vol. 54), p. 223.

10 McFaul, Michael: *Political Transitions: Democracy and the Former Soviet Union*, in: *Harvard International Review*, 2006 (vol. 28), Spring, pp. 40–45.

only actors' will, but also their capacity to implement the agenda of their choosing. Moreover, it has been argued forcefully that even the most incorruptible leaders require strong institutions and vigorous opposition to keep them honest.¹¹

The Independent Variables: The International and Domestic Environments

This paper takes as its point of departure the understanding that second transitions bring democratic elites to power and that democratic elites are a minimum prerequisite for democracy. The rate and extent to which second transitions produce democratic gains, however, may be constrained by factors present in the international or domestic environment. Specifically, it is reasonable to hypothesise that the external environment, particularly the presence of a perspective for membership in the European Union, plays a role in structuring domestic interests and policy choices to support reform. Therefore, the more credible the prospect of membership in the European Union, the faster and more substantial the democratic gains are likely to be. The presence or absence of an EU membership perspective might be proxied by statements made by both sides regarding the nature of closer relations as well as the level of financial assistance and type of partnership framework offered by the EU. As this paper is concerned only with the level of influence at the time of the second transition's onset, it therefore only considers developments within that limited timeframe. There is a two-way relationship between EU support and domestic behaviour, and this becomes even more difficult to differentiate over time. Most pointedly with respect to Serbia, for example, that country's currently diminished relationship with the EU can be attributed in large part to its lacking cooperation on the war criminals issue. In order to isolate the incentive of EU integration present at the time, the analysis only discusses the EU's stance toward membership at the beginning of the second transition.

The influence of the EU provides a powerful explanation for much – but not all – regime differentiation in the postcommunist world. All three countries in question lie in relative geographic proximity to Western Europe, though the level of openness to an EU membership perspective did vary some. This nevertheless calls into question how sufficiently the EU factor is able to account for the differing rates and degrees of success and to what extent lesser explored factors may have contributed. Accordingly, the focus of this paper lies on exploring a second hypothesis: that a strong factor in the domestic environment of states undergoing a second transition – namely the legacies of postcommunist authoritarianism – plays a significant constraining role.

Referring back to the understanding that establishing a democracy requires gains on the behavioural and attitudinal as well as the structural and institutional fronts, the fact of a postcommunist authoritarian experience poses a challenge in at least two ways: the legacies of the political institutions constructed during these years hinder the development of democratic structures, and the damage to public trust severely impedes the growth of a democratic political culture. Among the legacies referred to are incomplete reform of political institutions, cronyism in privatisation, restrictions on citizens' political freedoms, human rights, and civil liberties, and the institutionalisation of non-democratic behaviour by elites. While not a perfect indicator, legacies might plausibly be hypothesised to correlate with the number of years the semi-authoritarian regime held power as well as how oppressive it was, as measured by the same Freedom House "Political Rights" and "Civil Liberties" scores described above. The stronger these legacies, the slower and weaker the democratic gains realised in the second transition will be. The next sections explore the international and domestic dimensions further, both conceptually and empirically. Examples from the experiences of Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia will be used to support the argument.

11 Fish, M. Steven: *The Dynamics of Democratic Erosion*, in: Richard D. Anderson, Jr. et al., (eds.): *Postcommunism and the Theory of Democracy*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001, pp. 54–95.

The leverage of external actors (European Union)

As many authors have argued, geographic proximity has served an important function in the diffusion of democracy.¹² More detailed studies show that the EU's real contribution to the democratisation process lies in locking in democratic changes and providing incentives for the public and leaders to stay the course of reform.¹³ There are a number of ways in which the European Union might exercise its leverage. The influence can be direct or indirect: from the EU's "power of example" to the concrete mechanisms of conditionality and financial assistance.¹⁴ The EU has a uniquely powerful instrument at its disposal: the lure of closer integration and membership, with its many benefits, both material and ideational. Accordingly, Milada Vachudova argues, the EU can be seen to have a role in shaping the domestic political dialogue in transition countries, providing incentive for elites – significantly, also those from illiberal parties – to adapt their positions to EU expectations and presenting a focal point for cooperation among otherwise fragmented opposition groups.¹⁵ Analysts differ with respect to whether the "pull of the West" operates merely as a complementary influence within an already favourable domestic environment or whether it has a stronger catalysing effect.¹⁶ The cases explored in this paper seem to support a more complementary role for the EU factor.

For post-Mečiar Slovakia, there was a very strong EU membership perspective. In the early 1990s, the EU signed "Association Agreements" with ten Central and East European countries and, at Copenhagen in 1993, determined that "the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe that so desire shall become members of the Union."¹⁷ Slovakia was included in this group, and, like the others, independently submitted a formal application for membership in 1995. However, when the Luxembourg European Council of December 1997 elected to open accession negotiations with a number of countries from the region, Slovakia was pointedly left out. These events had the significance of making clear that Slovakia was squandering an opportunity; moreover, monitoring reports citing the shortcomings of its illiberal government pointed clearly to what needed to be done instead.¹⁸ At the time of the second revolution, it was reasonable for leaders to believe that Slovakia had a future place in the EU. Just a little more than a year after Mečiar's defeat, the 1999 Helsinki European Council moved to open negotiations with a second group of candidate countries, this time including Slovakia. The country then successfully managed to "catch up" with the first group of candidates, and all entered the Union together in 2004.

For the Balkan countries, where the EU was not as deeply engaged in the 1990s and where its involvement began in earnest in the form of peacekeeping after the destructive wars, there was a less immediate perspective for EU accession. But with the establishment of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe in 1999, the EU officially recognised that Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, and Serbia

12 Kopstein, Jeffrey S. / Reilly, David A.: Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Postcommunist World, in: *World Politics*, 2000 (vol. 53), pp. 1–37.

13 Grabbe, Heather: The Implications of EU Enlargement, in: Zielonka, Jan / Pravda, Alex (eds.): *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2: International and Transnational Factors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 253–166.

14 Smith, Karen E.: Western Actors and the Promotion of Democracy, pp. 31–57 in: Jan Zielonka and Alex Pravda, Eds, *Democratic Consolidation in Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2: International and Transnational Factors. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

15 Vachudova, Milada Anna: *Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of International Actors*. Stanford, CA: Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Working Paper No. 69, September 2006, p. 3.

16 Vachudova, Milada Anna: *Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of International Actors*. Stanford, CA: Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Working Paper No. 69, September 2006.

17 European Council: *Presidency Conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council, 21–22 June, 1993*. Brussels: SN 180/93, p. 12.

18 Vachudova, Milada Anna: *Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of International Actors*. Stanford, CA: Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Working Paper No. 69, September 2006, p. 23.

& Montenegro could eventually become full members of the EU. The priorities of peace and stability in the region led the EU to add several additional steps to the front end of negotiations with these countries, which now require a “feasibility study” even before an SAA, still a preliminary step in itself, can be opened.¹⁹

As Vachudova explains, the EU’s approach to the Balkan countries reflected the joint principles of meritocracy and conditionality at work. In the EU’s view, “[h]owever dismal a country’s past record of respecting democratic standards and human rights, it could ‘rehabilitate’ itself by implementing the necessary reforms under a future government.”²⁰ Thus, after Tudjman’s death and the HDZ party’s defeat in Croatia and Milošević’s ouster in Serbia, both countries had reasonable incentive from the side of the EU to pursue and remain on the path of democratic reform. Empirically, however, this has not been the case. Even in the early phases of the second transition, Croatia demonstrated progress – both in terms of democratic gains and negotiations with the EU – while Serbia stagnated. Croatia and the EU signed a Stability and Association Agreement in October 2001, relatively soon (18 months) after Croatia formed a new government. It formally applied for membership in 2003, and the Brussels European Council in June 2004 affirmed its status as a candidate country. For Serbia, the path has been less smooth. A feasibility study first positively assessed its progress in 2005, but the scheduled start of negotiations on an SAA was suspended in October 2005 and multiple times thereafter. As of June 1, 2007, Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn had confirmed that negotiations on an SAA could be resumed, but a date had not been set.²¹

The direction of causality in these cases cannot be determined from this preliminary analysis. These two cases are a clear illustration of the interplay between domestic behaviour, conditionality, and the EU’s stance toward negotiations. Considering only the EU’s position at the time second transitions began, Croatia and Serbia enjoyed the same level of opportunity vis-à-vis the EU. That the countries subsequently developed so differently suggests other factors neutralised the impact of EU leverage on Serbia.

The legacies of postcommunist authoritarianism

Each country’s performance in the areas of political rights and civil liberties since their second transitions is presented in Table 1 below, making clear that their progress has varied in both speed and completeness. The scores in the table also reflect the fact that each of the countries began at a different starting point (cf. Table 2, p. 9). In its last full year of semi-authoritarian rule, Slovakia received scores of 2 and 4 on political rights and civil liberties, respectively; Croatia scored 4 and 4; and Serbia 5 and 5 (though in 1999 this was already a grade higher than the consecutive 6’s it had received in the years prior). Thus, Serbia had the farthest to come and also the most repressive postcommunist authoritarian regime legacies to overcome.

Table 1. Political Rights (PR) and Civil Liberties (CL) since Second Transitions²²

Country / Year		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Slovakia [Sept. 1998]	PR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	CL	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Croatia [Jan. 2000]	PR	...	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	CL	...	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Serbia [Oct. 2000]	PR	...	...	3	3	3	3	3	3
	CL	...	...	3	2	2	2	2	2

19 Vachudova, Milada Anna: *Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of International Actors*. Stanford, CA: Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Working Paper No. 69, September 2006.

20 Vachudova, Milada Anna: *Democratization in Postcommunist Europe: Illiberal Regimes and the Leverage of International Actors*. Stanford, CA: Center on Democracy, Development, and The Rule of Law, Working Paper No. 69, September 2006, p. 11.

21 Statement by Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn on Serbia [Press Release]. IP/07/742, Berlin, 6/1/2007 [online]. Available: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/742&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>, accessed on 6/6/2007.

22 Freedom House: *Freedom in the World Historical Rankings, 1972–2006* [online]. Available: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw/FIWAIScores.xls>, accessed on 6/3/2007.

Three cases of postcommunist authoritarianism

Taking the cases in chronological order, Slovakia was characterised from independence in 1993 until the Mečiar government's overthrow in 1998 by a concentration of political power, clientelism, ethnic nationalism, inadequate protection for minority rights, discrimination against opponent parties, intimidation of journalists, and disregard for the rule of law.²³ The civil liberties score of 4 reflected mostly government pressure on freedom of expression and minority rights, according to Freedom House.²⁴ Nonetheless, elections held were deemed to be free and fair, and Mečiar's comeback in 1994 after having been removed briefly from office was conducted legally. The new Slovak constitution written after independence established genuine democratic institutions, including a Constitutional Court which effectively intervened in repeated conflicts between Mečiar and President Michal Kovács. Though the Office of the Prime Minister did not achieve good marks on the democratic behavioural scorecard, fledgling democratic institutions prevented more egregious violations of the rule of law. Moreover, the regime lasted only 5 years, in contrast to the decade of postcommunist authoritarianism which Croatia and Serbia experienced.

Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991 and was led in this endeavour by "father of the nation" figure Franjo Tuđman. Elected to the presidency after his HDZ party decisively won the 1990 founding elections, Tuđman presided over a semi-authoritarianism that was even more nationalist in character than Slovakia's (though still less than Serbia's). The break-up of Yugoslavia implicated Croatia in ongoing nationalist conflicts and war, where it was both the victim of Serbian aggression and an aggressor in Bosnia.²⁵ The regime was ranked by Freedom House as a 4 on political rights and a 4 on civil liberties for almost its entire tenure in office. Presidential elections in 1997 were assessed as "free, but not fair."²⁶ The country was rife with nepotism and corruption, with Tuđman effectively controlling the judiciary, the security forces, the private sector, and the media.²⁷ During the first decade of "market reforms," ninety-seven percent of socially owned firms were privatised through the Croatian Privatisation Fund to entrepreneurs with close ties to the HDZ. Yet despite all of the unsavory electoral tricks, corrupt privatisations, intimidation, and manipulation, the Croatian political space was ultimately kept closed by the Tuđman regime's ability to exploit nationalism and war.²⁸ It was the protector of the Croatian state against the Serbian threat, and that won it legitimate support.

Serbia, then still Yugoslavia, was characterised throughout the 1990s by extreme nationalism, violence, and war. Slobodan Milošević, described as the "prototype 'nomenklatura nationalist', a former communist bureaucrat who turned to nationalism once the bankruptcy of communist ideology had been exposed,"²⁹ led the country into a series of destructive wars, the consequences of which included international isolation, economic collapse, and a NATO bombing campaign waged against it. Though it, too, was a hybrid, semi-authoritarian regime, its consistent scores of 6 and 6 on the political rights and civil liberties indices earned it the classification of "not free." Serbia was also the only one of the three countries in which the president manipulated and then disregarded the results of the elections that deposed him, leading to a

23 Bútorá, Martin: *The Present State of Democracy in Slovakia*, in: Mary Kaldor(ed.): *Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Pinter Publishing, 1999.

24 Freedom House: *Nations in Transit 1997: Civil Society, Democracy and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States*. Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997.

25 Ottoway, Marina: *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 109.

26 Freedom House: *Freedom in the World 1998, Country Report Croatia* [online]. Available: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/NISPAcee/UNPAN008467.pdf>, accessed on 6/3/2007.

27 Ottoway, Marina: *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 113.

28 Ottoway, Marina: *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 117.

29 Gallagher, Tom: *The Balkans since 1989: The Winding Retreat from National Communism*, in: White, Stephen / Batt, Judy / Lewis, Paul G. (eds.): *Developments in Central and East European Politics 3*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 75.

protracted standoff with visible masses of challengers. Table 2 shows how the postcommunist authoritarian regimes compared to one another.

Table 2. Political Rights (PR) and Civil Liberties (CL) under Postcommunist Authoritarianism³⁰

Country / Year		1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Independent Slovakia	PR	...	...	3	2	2	2	2	2	...	...
	CL	...	...	4	3	3	4	4	2	...	...
Independent Croatia	PR	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	...
	CL	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	...
Serbia (Yugoslavia)	PR	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	4
	CL	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	5	4

Abused beyond repair? Flawed and partially reformed institutions

From the descriptions above, it is clear that the years of postcommunist authoritarianism dealt a setback to the countries' hopes for democracy and prosperity. But were they qualitatively any different than an extension of the communist period? In many respects, they were already an improvement, a milder, softer form of authoritarianism (except perhaps in Serbia). So did these regimes simply delay the onset of democratisation, or did the fact that they represented each country's first experience with "democracy" and masqueraded more or less successfully as such fundamentally alter the character of transition? This paper argues that the answer to the second question is yes, and the first reason this is so is because the challenge of reforming flawed, incomplete, or misused institutions is far greater than building new ones from scratch (as was the case for reform governments taking over from communists).

Joel Hellman's seminal work on the politics of partial reform showed that there is a danger that the "early winners" of transition will attempt to preserve their concentrated gains, mostly economic, by blocking any reforms that eliminate the market distortions from which they benefit.³¹ This danger is exacerbated in non-inclusive political systems. Though partial reform carries significant social cost (for others), these winners – particularly in postcommunist authoritarian systems where privatisation and cronyism went hand-in-hand – are often in a position to leverage outcomes. Hellman argues that more inclusive governance arrangements allowed for the involvement of more groups in the process and, thus, produced more complete reforms.³² Where they did occur, however, flawed postcommunist privatisations allowed the winners to become deeply entrenched and influential, corrupting not only the prospects of economic reform, but also the political system itself. Indeed, the "window for democratic consolidation may not remain open forever,"³³ as after a certain point elites lose incentive to deepen democracy and instead act to protect their gains, both in power and property. Even with the elimination of the authoritarian regime, such gains could not be reversed, nor could the leaders of second transitions easily conduct a purge of society. The remnants remain active in postcommunist politics throughout the region.

On a purely political level, postcommunist authoritarian regimes concentrated power in a single office or individual, and politics were often driven by personality. Besides creating institutions, such as an excessively strong presidency, that obviously prevent the emergence of democratic checks and balances, semi-

30 Freedom House: Freedom in the World Historical Rankings, 1972–2006 [online]. Available: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw/FIWAAllScores.xls>, accessed on 6/3/2007.

31 Hellman, Joel S.: *Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions*, in: *World Politics*, 1998 (vol. 50), pp. 203–234.

32 Hellman, Joel S.: *Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reform in Postcommunist Transitions*, in: *World Politics*, 1998 (vol. 50), p. 230.

33 Solnick, Steven L.: *Russia's „Transition“: Is Democracy Delayed Democracy Denied?*, in: *Social Research*, 1999 (vol. 66), No. 3, p. 813.

authoritarian regimes may also create pluralistic institutions that are democratic in name only. Courts and parliaments are scarcely independent bodies, but rather become objects of manipulation. Thus, it is not just the institutions themselves, but also the patterns of behaviour that become institutionalised within them, that must be broken down and established anew. The combativeness and distrust they spawn can often linger in the political discourse.

Euphoria turned disenchantment: the damage to political culture

The second set of legacies of postcommunist authoritarianism include the negative effects on the formation of democratic political culture and damage to citizens' and elites' perceptions and expectations of democracy. Specifically, it replaces the euphoria experienced at the onset of transition with widespread disenchantment at what it has delivered. Political culture plays an important role because a democracy of any substance requires freedoms, participation, and pluralism in addition to mere electoral competition.³⁴ The requirement for a democratic political culture extends to citizens as well as elites. Larry Diamond notes that consolidation encompasses a shift from "instrumental" to "principled" commitments to the democratic framework, a growth in trust and cooperation among political competitors, and a socialization of the general population.³⁵ In order to achieve a situation in which the democratic behaviour of actors matches the democratic "rules of the game," a transformation of political culture is essential.

The postcommunist authoritarian leaders enjoyed for a time a genuine degree of support, suggesting that political culture was not just being suppressed, but rather was developing in a non-democratic direction. On the other hand, that electoral revolutions came about in each country can be interpreted as a positive sign. The 1998 elections in Slovakia, for example, attracted an 84 percent voter turnout with a campaign organised around the theme of "change,"³⁶ suggesting that democratic political culture was taking root under semi-authoritarianism despite elite behaviour to the contrary. Either way, second transitions remain susceptible to what Marina Ottoway terms "transition fatigue." The initial transition was cause for much optimism, but, as she explains, "[i]t is difficult for people to be sanguine about renewed change when the transition they experienced has plunged the country into turmoil, war, or economic decline."³⁷ Exhausted by instability and hardship, citizens may be sceptical of the promise of a new "democracy."

Conclusion

By treating transitions from postcommunism as a separate phenomenon, this paper has attempted to shed light on a unique set of processes currently underway in Southeast and Eastern Europe. It uncovered the significance of factors in the domestic as well as the international environments of countries undergoing such transitions. Finding explanations that attribute primary influence to the magnetism of the European Union insufficient, the analysis demonstrated how some of the legacies of postcommunist authoritarianism can have lasting effects that pull transition polities in the opposite direction. While the general correlations expected for both variables were confirmed, a more detailed analysis is now required to delve into the mechanisms by which postcommunist legacies are transferred and preserved. Ultimately, the most important point for further explanation is how they might be combated.

The relationship between the factors in the domestic and international environments also appears to be much more complex than could be examined here. Many scholars in the field of EU conditionality empha-

34 Dahl, Robert A.: *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971, cited in Diamond, Larry: *Is the Third Wave Over?*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 1996 (vol. 7), No. 3, p. 21.

35 Diamond, Larry: *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

36 Bútorá, Martin / Bútorová Zora: *Slovakia's Democratic Awakening*, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 1999 (vol. 10), No. 1, pp. 80–95.

37 Ottoway, Marina: *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003, p. 185.

size that the EU's leverage depends at least as much on the country's susceptibility to pressure as on the EU's activities themselves. Though they rarely use the term "postcommunist legacies" and seldom treat postcommunist transitions as different from other transitions, it may still be possible to reconcile these two perspectives.

This paper has not been able to conclusively answer the question of why some polities develop differently than others in second transitions, but it has framed the problem in a new way and set up questions that detailed case studies might be better able to answer.