Democracy

and

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Democracy and Democratization

Post-Communist Europe in Comparative Perspective

John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr

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The democracy trend and a new task for comparative politics

With the historic collapse of European communism at the end of the 1980s, the literature on democratization has quickly expanded to embrace the most recent and perhaps most important experiments in the recent 'democracy trend' since the end of the Second World War. The spread of democratization to a post-communist Europe has for the first time given comparative politics a truly global task in its study of democratic political development. How different this is from the situation which presented itself at the end of the Second World War, and the origins of the Cold War in Europe and in the world.

This text provides a comparative analysis of one portion of the most recent wave of democratization, in the East-Central European region. For

our purposes here, East-Central Europe comprises the nations of Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia, the area of the former communist East bloc which was historically associated with Central Europe, either as independent nations or as components of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, and later the Austrian and German Empires. Our main focus is on the three nations of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. The Slovak Republic is included in specific chapters and comparisons (and of course as part of the Czecho-slovak experience before the Velvet Divorce of 1993), while the small Slovenian state is only treated in larger cross-national comparisons. The 'big three' cases (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary) are the key to our analysis, since they are the first post-communist nations invited to join the NATO alliance, and they are also first-round nations (the so-called 5+1 nations including also Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus) which began negotiations in early 1998 to join the European Union. Democracy and democratization in these three key states provides a major test, and possible models for other transitional nations, in post-communist Europe generally; they represent the core group for our comparisons with other regions (Southern Europe, Latin America, East and Southeast Asia).

Democracy and comparative studies in the Cold War era

At the dawning of the East–West confrontation, the experiment in resurrection of a democratic politics in Germany, Japan and Italy rep-resented a major strategic effort to present an attractive alternative to Soviet communism, and to overcome the legacy of fascism in advanced industrial society. Robert Dahl (1995), in a review of the 'Time of Triumph' for democracy, reminds us that even in the stable Western democracies, there were major shortcomings (Dahl names the denial of voting rights for women in Switzerland prior to 1971, and the sup-pression of Black voting rights in the American South before the civil rights legislation of the 1960s) which by today's standards would disqualify a nation from democratic standing. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Western effort to support post-fascist democratization in these nations was one of the pillars of the postwar era, and the success of democratization in these nations was of great importance not only in solidifying the anti-communist alliance for the Cold War, but was a signal reason for the West's eventual victory in the Cold War struggle with Soviet communism.

Now, we would argue, the stakes in post-communist Europe are comparably high for the shaping of a post-Cold War world. The chance for democracy to prove itself once again in new and difficult circum-stances would complete the historic victory in the second half of this

century over the Leninist species of modern anti-democratic politics; the triumph of democracy in former communist countries would be comparable in value to the triumph of democracy in the former fascist nations. The new attention given by comparative politics to the fortunes of democratization in post-communist Europe has been deservedly great, in recognition, explicit or implicit, of the historic importance of the political developments now under way in that region. Within the post-Cold War global order, non-European regions may well play increasingly important roles, and it would be a mistake to rely solely on Western or European developments to characterize this new era. Democratization in post-communist Europe will be one of several major changes from the Cold War mapping of world politics, but it does represent in the clearest form the demise of the Leninist challenge, and the clearest commitment to adopt a democratic politics compatible with Western understandings.

Not since those early postwar years has so much been at stake in exiting from dictatorship and attempting to launch and consolidate a democratic politics. Democratization in post-communist Europe, it is safe to say, will be a focus of attention for policy makers and scholars for many years to come. The consequences of democratization in Europe after the Cold War, whether outstanding success, dismal failure, or limited achievements, will certainly be major elements in the reshaping of global politics in our times. To that end, this study applies the tools of comparative political analysis to the democratization process of post-communist Europe, with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary as the primary subjects. This study continues in the well-established tradition of comparative politics as it developed after the Second World War, the scholarship of liberal democracy as the system deemed most desirable for citizen freedom, economic prosperity and international peace.

The war had broken the tradition of American isolationism, and had involved American policy makers in Europe on a long-term and systematic basis. European fascism and communism had forced many talented scholars into exile in the United States, and they had introduced their own concepts of European political systems into American scholarly debate, enriching American scholarship and expanding its concerns in the fields of comparative politics and international affairs. These European émigré scholars had been scarred by European totalitarianism, and they turned their energies to study the causes of modern anti-democratic politics, in order 'to prevent any similar forms of fascism and totalitarianism from ever coming to power again' (Wiarda, 1985: 12).

Indeed, it was reaction to the failure of democratization in interwar Europe and the renewed communist challenge of the Cold War that gave an initial impulse (cf. Chilcote, 1994; Lipset, 1959a; Macridis, 1955; Wiarda, 1985) for the development of a new type of study of foreign government, one which was more consciously comparative, more realistic, and more like a science than the eclectic wisdom of individual

country specialists or 'old hands'. Howard Wiarda notes that among the first generation of postwar comparativists, most were committed to the Western Cold War agenda, which meant a clear commitment to Western models of democracy as well as a commitment to a new and radically different approach to studying different political systems. The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in the United States specifically commissioned the path-breaking work of Gabriel Almond and James Coleman on *The Politics of the Developing Nations* (1960), which extended the West's Cold War perspective in Europe to the entire developing world. 'Anyone seeking to understand this enormously influential volume in the comparative politics field, and the work of the SSRC's Committee on Comparative Politics, which sponsored the volume and whose views dominated the field for the next decade, should first read Almond's *The Appeals of Communism* (1954) or Lucian Pye's *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: Its Social and Political Meaning* (1956)' (cited in Wiarda, 1985: 13).

This pattern of Cold War thinking, embedded deeply within the field of comparative politics in the West (and especially in the United States), provided the foundations for forty years of work, with its achievements and shortcomings, for both the supporters of Western Cold War policies and for their critics. Supporters of Cold War anti-communism were led into collaboration with intelligence agencies committed to anti-communism at any price, including support for the nastiest right-wing dictators and for Western intervention abroad. The leading comparative scholar Karl Deutsch, in his 1970 American Political Science Association presidential address, raised the question of 'why political scientists had failed to provide policy solutions during the US debacle in Vietnam' (Chilcote, 1994: 32–33).

At the same time that comparative politics had achieved a new mission and sponsorship in the Cold War, there were limits on mainstream thinking and criticism. What has been learned from the era of Cold War comparative political analysis, and can these lessons be of use in our study of the post-Cold War democratization in post-communist Europe?

First, over the course of the Cold War, comparativists did come to recognize their preoccupation with *the* Western model of political development in contrast to the communist model. This overconcentration tended to blind researchers to other variations and other paths; always the question was whether a particular regime was tending towards the Western path of development, or was deviating towards the Soviet path. Clearly, over the years, the charges of Eurocentrism from dissident voices brought fuller realization of the poverty of the East–West schematic approach. Other varieties of political development, including Latin American corporatism, Third World dependency politics, indigenous systems, and most recently East Asian developmentalism, have made their way into the comparative politics literature. Mattei Dogan and

Dominique Pelassy have argued: 'Comparative studies point out and denounce ethnocentrism, and in this way they certainly contribute to its lessening. One must test one's own limits in order to transcend them. Like any discipline, international comparison will progress by correcting a series of errors progressively revealed' (1990: 13).

Mainstream comparative politics in the West once had visions of achieving higher status as a 'science'. In part because Marxism claimed to represent 'scientific socialism' and in part because of the high status accorded to the hard sciences at the end of the Second World War (and especially to physics), Western comparative politics also set out on a quest to achieve a new value-free and rigorously scientific paradigm (Holt and Richardson, 1970). Despite the seemingly obvious Western bias of modernization theory, this effort too was considered an important element for comparative politics in the Cold War combat. To the extent that a new scientific paradigm could be developed and widely recognized, the comparative researchers could then pursue normal science, with predictive capabilities that would lie beyond partisan emotions or unscientific moralizing (cf. critical commentary on this effort by Lapalombara, 1968; Sartori, 1970). This forced march towards a physics-type model for comparative political science, in dubious admiration of Thomas Kuhn's notion of the 'paradigm revolution' which physics had achieved, ended in a muddle by the mid-1970s. The futility of trying to duplicate any of the natural sciences gradually was recognized, as was the self-deception of any value-free position for the researcher (Chilcote, 1994). In general, the field of comparative analysis has become much more aware of its own limitations as an organized branch of social science, and has given up the illusion of being able to deliberately re-engineer itself along the lines of any natural science. Especially in regard to predictive capacity, comparative analysis has learned a great deal of humility (cf. Dogan and Pelassy, 1990: esp. ch. 24).

Comparative politics and regional studies of democratization

Comparative politics began as a clearly Eurocentric field of study, and even in the early postwar years this concentration on Europe and the conceptualization of politics from European perspectives was still very pronounced. It is still a matter of some contention as to how Eurocentric comparative politics remains today, and it is important to note that some leading East European scholars have warned that Western European ideals and democratic values are being inappropriately assumed for the post-communist East. Six years after the fall of communism, Vladimir Tismaneanu, dismayed at the rise of anti-democratic ethnic nationalism in post-communist Europe, asks: 'Whatever happened to the ethical,

transnational project of "civil society" and "Central Europe"? Was the celebration of dissent more the result of the Western intelligentsia's narcissistic projection and search for political atonement than expression of homegrown intellectual and moral trends?' (1996: 533). This is the classic question for comparative analysis, of whether those political values and concepts which emerged first and most clearly in the West are in fact universal in potential application (Zakaria, 1997), so that there can be no generalized accusation of Western bias or cultural imperialism when it comes to values of human rights and personal liberties (Goldfarb, 1992).

The field of comparative politics grew in geographical scope in the postwar years in stride with decolonization, with the birth of new nations in Africa, South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean. To this one must add the increased attention to Latin America within the context of the Cold War. Comparative scholarship began a long process of struggling with questions of Eurocentrism and Eurocentric bias as the field of comparison widened to encompass a global community of nation-states.

With the expansion in the number of independent nations, fewer than fifty at the end of the Second World War and nearly 200 today, the field developed regional concentrations of research and analysis, which grouped regional trends and exceptional or counter-trend cases together, in the belief that broad regional similarities (sociocultural background, political history and economic level of development) would allow researchers to focus more clearly on political system variables which could explain differences in outcome. At the same time, comparisons within a given region would permit some overall generalizations about the politics of Latin America, or the politics of Africa, or of East Asia. While it was recognized that there were considerable variations within each region, the regional concept has remained a strong conceptual organizing tool for comparative analysis. In fact, one might argue that after the nation-state level of analysis, it has been the regional level of grouped nation-states that has achieved most attention. This has also led to growing comparisons between regions, with regional trends and patterns providing the basis for generalization and theorizing about regional differences.

This regional focus has often been combined with a research concern for political democracy, its success or failure, as part of the overall research agenda since the end of the Second World War and the emergence of the Cold War. After the breakdown of so many new democracies in Europe in the interwar period, the subjects of democratic transition and democratic consolidation (cf. Linz et al., 1995) became grand themes of comparative research and theorizing. The initial concern was the redemocratization in irreversible form in postwar Germany, Italy and Japan, the building of a democratic capitalist bloc of industrial nations to oppose the emergent Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe

and China (before the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s). In West Germany especially, tremendous attention was given to every sign of democratic stability, and tremendous anxiety was raised by any signs of democratic weakness (the 'Weimar syndrome') or the revival of any neo-fascist politics, for example through the right-radical NPD in the latter 1960s (Nagle, 1970). From this starting point, comparative scholars in the West have been drawn to each new 'wave' or 'wavelet' of democratization, as well as to reverse 'waves' and 'wavelets'.

With the consolidation of the East–West Cold War logic as a global conceptual framework both for Western policy making and for mainstream Western scholarship, political leaders hoped that the developing nations in each region would emulate the Western pattern of economic modernization and political development (or at least not challenge it openly), and feared that political instability in this area would give opportunities for the competing Soviet communist model. Each nation in the developing world became a test case, with an elevated importance; even small nations (Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada) which clearly challenged the Western pattern became objects of severe discipline (especially from the United States), and efforts to bolster pro-Western forces. After the Cuban Revolution had clearly veered toward communism, for example, the Kennedy Administration in Washington undertook offensive overt and covert actions to overthrow the Castro regime, and a major new effort to boost democratic forces (as long as they were also pro-American) in Latin America through the Alliance for Progress. This effort, while extremely flawed, demonstrated the ideological importance placed on avoiding any wider (regional) political trend which might bolster communist claims as an alternative for modernization. In principle, the West was committed to the proposition that, in the long run, democratization was the appropriate political correlate for economic development; in actual practice, Western governments often supported anti-democratic regimes in various regions as a better defence against presumed communist threats, domestic and international. The severe internal contradictions of Western policies were revealed after every failure of democratization, especially when these failures were clustered by time and region.

A wave of democratic breakdowns in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, coming after the illusory early optimism of President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, gave rise to military juntas throughout that region, and a whole new literature was devoted to analysing that general phenomenon. This breakdown literature (cf. esp. Linz and Stepan, 1978) voiced concerns about the 'inevitability' of democratic expansion, about the whole prospect for Western-style political development to accompany economic modernization in other regions, and about Western relations with non-democratic authoritarian regimes in the Cold War environment. The field of comparative political analysis during the Cold War developed much of its research and theorizing on democratization

by reacting to apparent clusters of success cases or failure cases, most
often in the form of regional groupings of nations.

With the birth of the so-called Third Wave (Huntington, 1991) of
democratization in the late 1970s (primarily focusing on Southern
Europe and then Latin America), again new interest was generated
in making broad comparisons between democratization processes in
different regions. Attention would later be extended to democratic
trends in East Asia and South Asia, some anti-dictatorial movements in
Africa, and finally to the stunning democratic breakthroughs in com-
munist Europe. Only the Islamic societies of the Middle East region
have been largely left out of this growing literature; the failures of
democratization in Islamic societies generally have left them out of the
democratic trend of recent decades.

Studying democracy and democratization: conflicting views

The new task for comparative politics in studying democratization after
the Cold War has been made more complex because of two longer-term
developments: (1) the study of democracy in the Western nations
during the Cold War era, which generated debate about the proper
extent of citizen participation in modern democracy; and (2) studies of
the increasing pressure on the Keynesian welfare state democracies in
the West since the 1970s, which have raised questions about the
capacities of nation-state politics in a global economy.

In the midst of the struggle with European fascism and Soviet com-
munism in the 1930s, the Austrian political economist Joseph Schum-
peter (1942), pessimistic about the chances for fulfilling the ideals of a
citizen-based and grassroots democratic polity, borrowed from the
insights of classic elite theorists (especially from Michels, Pareto and
Mosca) to produce a new major conception which came to be known as
an elite theory of democracy (Nagle, 1992). Schumpeter stressed in his
formulation a minimalist role for the citizen, and a much more promi-
nent role for political elites, as the key to building and maintaining a
stable democracy. Schumpeter viewed this elite-oriented democratic
theory as a mark of political realism, the best that could be hoped for if
the dangers of fascism and communism were to be avoided. Schum-
peter's critique of classic democratic idealism as dangerous utopianism
was clearly a product of his times, in which many interwar democracies
in Europe had collapsed and been replaced by right-wing authoritarian
or fascist regimes. His theory of a realistic democratic politics sought to
recognize what he regarded as weaknesses of these interwar demo-
cracies, and to reconstruct a short and more practical list of requisites
for democratic politics.

According to the view we have taken, democracy does not mean and cannot mean that the people actually rule in any obvious sense of the term 'people' and 'rule'. Democracy means only that the people have the opportunity of accepting or refusing the men who are to rule them. But since they might decide this also in entirely undemocratic ways, we have had to narrow our definition by adding a further criterion identifying the democratic method, viz., free competition among would-be leaders for the vote of the electorate . . . (Schumpeter, 1942, cited in Etzioni-Halevy, 1997: 81)

For a successful (that is, stable) democracy, Schumpeter stressed the need for a political leadership of 'high quality,' for which it would be important to 'increase their fitness by endowing them with traditions that embody experience, with a professional code and with a common fund of ideas' (1997: 82). These elites would require a high measure of autonomy, that there be a capable and independent bureaucracy, and that the public and the opposition exercise self-restraint. Citizens should not put undue pressure on their elected representatives. Schumpeter suggested that such practices should be avoided both formally and informally – 'also less formal attempts at restricting the freedom of action of members of parliament – the practice of bombarding them with letters and telegrams for instance – ought to come under the same ban' (p. 84). For Schumpeter, the English system came closest to his realist theory, since it rested upon a wide and traditional elite consensus on rules of the political game.

For many years after the end of the Second World War, Schumpeter's realist or elite-oriented theory of democracy gained in acceptance as the standard by which democratic politics should be judged. Given the still-vivid challenges of anti-democratic alternatives, proponents of democracy were generally more willing to accept a watered-down and elite-oriented version of democratic theory. Democratic leaders were regaining their confidence, and were still attempting to avoid the worst, rather than seeking to maximize citizen participation. Some scholars took Schumpeter's ambiguity about the citizen's democratic potential even further, expressing an inherent distrust of popular participation in the era of modern mass society (Kornhauser, 1959).

Isaiah Berlin (1958), in his famous lectures at Oxford in 1958, stressed a related point, in urging first and foremost the defence of negative liberty (the freedom from tyranny) as opposed to positive liberty (direct citizen participation in governance). Berlin urged his listeners to take a modest view of liberal democracy's possibilities, and not to get overly confident about its abilities to solve all problems and master all social ills. Too much reliance on government, and too much responsibility placed on government, were not welcome. Berlin's defence of an anti-totalitarian definition of liberty fitted well with the ideas of a realistic and stable Schumpeterian democracy for the Cold War era.

Yet by the 1960s, the liberal democracies of the West, including the reconstructed democracies in West Germany and Italy, had proved their stability and their ability to govern effectively across a wide and growing range of policy issues. The rise of a Keynesian consensus across the political spectrum had reduced extremist parties to manageable proportions, political class warfare had declined markedly, and widespread economic prosperity had exerted a moderating force on political life generally. With rising standards of living and education, many citizens, especially among the younger generation, began to raise their expectations about political participation, and to question the legal or practised limits on citizen involvement in political life. A new cohort of scholars of democratic theory began to criticize the Schumpeterian model as too elitist, too compromised by its acceptance of the insights of Mosca and Pareto, who were at best ambiguous towards democracy and who had collaborated with Italian fascism (Nye, 1977). Building on the earlier criticism of the new and unaccountable 'power elite' growing within American democracy by C. Wright Mills (1956), left-liberal theorists like Peter Bachrach (1967), Jack Walker (1966) and Henry Kariel (1970) sought to retrieve more of the classic vision of a democratic politics, in which the citizen had more access to political information, more access to political leaders, and more direct input into political processes, both in choices of candidates and in shaping policy making. Their radical or participatory theories of democracy were more optimistic about citizens, and less willing to concede such large roles to political elites, whether elected or unelected (Bottomore, 1966; Jaeggi, 1969). The challenge from this new participatory democratic theory coincided with the student and youth rebellions of 1968 throughout the West, and continued on with the emergence of new social movements in the 1970s around issues of war/peace, environment, women's rights, gay rights and anti-imperialist solidarity. The most apparent vehicle for a more participatory politics in Europe was the environmentalist movement and then the Green parties. Die Grünen became in the 1980s a new German political party, able to force new ideas into national politics through its electoral challenge, and through the example of its own ideas (Markovits and Gorsky, 1993). By the end of the 1980s and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the Greens had become part of the normal political landscape, but had also helped to change ideas about how citizens could participate in political life beyond simply voting in elections.

The participatory democracy challenge to Schumpeterian elite democracy did not go unanswered of course; conservative thinkers like Edward Shils (1982), Sam Huntington and Michael Crozier warned of the threatened 'ungovernability' of democracy if citizen demands on the system continued to grow (Crozier et al., 1975); they argued that the new social movements were weakening the legitimacy of the established party system, without which leaders could not exercise their authority

(Eulau and Czudnowski, 1976). In their dark scenario, the liberal democracies of the West were becoming ungovernable. This response coincided with the early decline of the Keynesian consensus, which since the 1970s has come under ever greater pressure, as growing budget deficits, slow growth, and rising unemployment in an ever more globalized financial and trade-oriented economy have sapped public confidence in their national government and in the major political parties. One result has been a gradual downsizing of government responsibilities, privatization of public enterprises and roles, and deregulation of private market forces. The Thatcher and Reagan politics were a first response to the perceived oversizing of government, an attempt to reduce the burdens of responsibility, especially for social problems, on democratic governance.

Yet once the new social movements had taken hold, there was little possibility for a return to the type of party politics which had been built up in the first phase (up to the early 1960s) of the Cold War. The new social movements and their participatory democracy orientation did not in any case completely displace the established party system and established elites, but they did carve out some significant political space for themselves in their long march through the institutions; moreover they had enough impact to force the established party elites to reformulate the political agenda to include the main issues of these movements. The liberal democracies did not become ungovernable, but they did move away from the more narrow-gauge Schumpeterian model of the immediate postwar years.

It is fitting to note that the great liberal thinker Isaiah Berlin (1907–1997), in the development of his later writings, moved gradually to a position which included more elements of 'positive freedom' and stressed the need for a balance between negative and positive freedoms in a healthy democratic society (Joas, 1997). Berlin recognized that his concept of negative liberty was only one competing version, and he avoided any dogmatic view that this was the last word on the subject. In his last interview, Isaiah Berlin, while standing by his life-long defence of negative freedom, expressed some regret that he had not given more credit to the ideals of positive freedom and to the darker potentials of negative freedom (for example the exploitation of child labour under *laissez-faire*). 'I still stand by that today. But I should have stressed the horrors of negative freedom and where they have led more strongly' (1997: 14, authors' translation from the German).

Long-time theorist of democracy Robert Dahl, who started out very close to the Schumpeterian model, has moved somewhat forward in his definitions of democracy, at least in terms of minimal standards. Dahl still defines democratic regimes as those which provide 'selection of top officials in free and fair elections, extensive freedom of expression, wide access to alternative and independent sources of information, rights to form relatively independent associations and organizations, including

political parties entitled to compete in elections, and an inclusive elec-torate' (1995: 4). But Dahl acknowledges that standards have risen even within the West, so that 'modern democracy, at least if it is defined by the full set of political institutions I just described, is distinctly a creation of the twentieth century, a fact that suggests the following arresting thought: even in the oldest existing democracies . . . demo-cracy in the full-fledged modern sense is younger than its oldest living citizens' (p. 5). We will be studying the democratization process in East-Central Europe as a part of this ongoing struggle between competing conceptions of democracy.

Varieties of democracy and democratization

In the current era, the spread of democracy and democratization to most regions has shifted the attention of comparative analysis from concen-tration on democracy versus anti-democracy, which was so central in the struggle against fascism and communism, to a growing interest in the possible varieties of democracy. Our contention is that com-parative politics as a field is now better prepared to take up this issue, having exercised considerable self-criticism over its early Eurocentric bias, and having overcome its earlier illusions about developing a scientific paradigm with strong predictive powers. While these issues were never entirely resolved, comparative political analysis now is much more likely to recognize important differences among nations and between cultures in terms of the nature of its political life, without trying to squeeze each nation (or culture) into just one-size-fits-all democratic model or else into the anti-democratic category. The end of the East–West struggle and the painful transformation of Keynesian welfare state democracy in the West have both facilitated a greater openness to greater variation within the camp of democracy.

Fareed Zakaria has worried that as democracy has spread around the world, there is a new danger in what he terms the rise of illiberal democracy, that is, elected regimes lacking constitutional liberal founda-tions. 'There are no longer respectable alternatives to democracy; it is part of the fashionable attire of modernity. Thus the problems of governance in the 21st century will likely be problems within democracy. This makes them more difficult to handle, wrapped as they are in the mantle of legitimacy' (1997: 42). Zakaria, an unabashed proponent of Western liberal democracy, fears that in the rush to embrace the current wave of democratizations, important qualitative differences will be glossed over. By his count, at the end of the 1980s, 22 per cent of democratizing nations could be termed illiberal democracies, but by 1997 this figure had risen to 50 per cent. We need a clear recognition of the conceptual distinction

between democracy and liberalism, which have generally gone hand-in-hand in Western experience, and the greater disconnection between the two which now seems to be emerging in many regions. Zakaria argues that Western policy should try consciously to 'encourage the gradual development of constitutional liberalism across the globe. Democracy without constitutional liberalism is not simply inadequate, but danger-ous, bringing with it the erosion of liberty, the abuse of power, ethnic divisions, and even war' (1997: 42–43). Zakaria's point is that the new terrain for political struggle is among competing visions that characterize the quality of the democratic order.

The experience of post-communism has already given rise to new issues of how far previously developed concepts of democratization can be stretched. Philippe Schmitter and Terri Lynn Karl (1994) have argued, for example, that post-communist transitions are quite comparable to other regions of the world. They support the general comparability of post-communism with post-authoritarianism generally. Valerie Bunce (1995), on the other side, argues the uniqueness of the post-communist experience, and is suspicious of stretching the notions of democratic transition to Russia and much of post-communist Europe, because a too general comparison will neglect the unique circumstances of post-communism and miss the chance to understand it on its own terms (cf. Koff and Koff, 1997). The general issue may not be settled through deductive reasoning, but only through empirical research. The results of this research will then provide the evidence as to whether the differences between post-communism and other post-authoritarian experiences are qualitative in nature. Democratization in East-Central Europe offers a good test of this argument, and we will be attentive to the issue of how these new democracies are related to democracies in the West and in other democratizing regions.

2

Historical Legacies of Regional Democratization

From empire to nation-state: impact on the 'lands between'

Historian Alan Palmer has characterized the societies of East-Central
Europe as 'the lands between', the lands between Germany and Italy on
the West, and Russia on the East, lacking natural frontiers. 'Open to
wandering races from the east and attracting colonial settlement from the
west, this region became the home of at least fifteen distinctive nation-
alities even though it covers, in area, less than two thirds the size of
Western Europe' (1970: 1). This region was, in medieval times of western
expansionism, the easternmost part of Western Catholic culture, and in
times of Russian or Slavic strength, the westernmost reaches of Slavic
civilizations. With the rise of the modern nation-state in the West, and
the successes of Russian imperialism in the East in the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries, the peoples of this region were challenged to
maintain their national identities even when they had lost, for extended
periods, their independence. By the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the
Congress of Vienna in 1815, Poland had been divided up among Russia,
Prussia and Austria, and Hungary and the Czech and Slovak lands

existed as constituent parts of the Austrian Empire. This region therefore had a rich history of various coexisting and often conflicting cultures, each adding its weight to the politics, economic development and social identities of each nation, whether that nation was independent or whether it was incorporated within the boundaries of a powerful neighbour.

The political economy of empire (Germanic, Ottoman or Russian), the provision of tribute in return for security, allowed for many peoples and cultures to be brought into or exit from imperial control on a constantly shifting basis. The decline of empire and medieval institutions in Europe reflected the long-term basic shift from one form of institutionalized political economy (pre-industrial empire) to a more successful and more powerful one (the modern nation-state). Beginning with the challenge of the French Revolution to the *ancien régime*, political intellectuals and their followers within these societies began the long search for a modern and independent nation-state of their own. This search was not just limited to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak lands. It also affected the Germanic peoples of Central Europe, and increased the complexity of the issue for 'the lands between'. Napoleon's final disbanding of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806 gave birth to the 'German Question' in Central Europe, the question of how Germany could be revitalized as a modern nation-state, under whose leadership, and with what consequences for Europe? The German Question, with its associated search for a modern German nation-state, proved to be both an example for East-Central Europe, and a threat; from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, the unification of Germany was associated with territorial expansionism to the East at the expense of its neighbours. Further to the East, during the same period, the prolonged decay of tsarist rule in Russia, and the search by the Russian intelligentsia (Westernizers, Slavophiles, Marxists) to find their own new success formula, would also pose alternative visions and new dangers for national aspirations within East-Central Europe.

Decline of empire in Europe would elevate the hopes of the peoples of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak lands; the chances for independence, for national liberation, were increased in times of weakness of Austrian, German and Russian power. But at the same time, revitalizations of Germany to the West or Russia to the East would restore their considerable influence in the region, and perhaps impose a modernized German or Russian concept of political economy. For the political intelligentsia of East-Central Europe, this was a period of great searching for an appropriate path to modernity and national success, within a general atmosphere of the end of an era in Europe. Is this historical legacy now continued after the end of communism? Does the concept of the 'lands between' still apply in the current period?

The Concert of Europe and the idea of national liberation

The Congress of Vienna and Metternich's Concert of Europe were designed primarily to prevent any recurrence of French revolutionary fervour in the west, but this also meant a continuous imperial watch-fulness against nationalist rebellions in East-Central Europe. The last century of monarchic great power rule in Europe was marked by reaction and repression for the peoples of 'the lands between'. In this environment, the idea of freedom for the peoples of this region was nationalist to the core; other political ideologies were to be measured by their service to the goal of national independence. With the defeat of the great Polish uprisings of 1830–31 against Russian rule, thousands of political exiles made their way to Paris, London, the United States, or even Latin America, and came to startlingly different conclusions as to what kind of politics could free their peoples and offer a happier future. Some remained strong supporters of an enlightened aristocratic rule (Czartoryski) for a sovereign Poland, others (Lelevel for example) came into contact with the new socialist revolutionaries in Brussels and London. Welcomed and financially supported by the liberal regimes of Paris and London, the emigré community had a strong cultural influence through their literature (Mickiewicz, Krasiński, Slowacki) of romantic nationalism (Palmer, 1970: 44–5).

In the Austrian Empire, as the Hungarian nobility became junior partners (and finally in the Ausgleich of 1867 formal co-rulers of the Dual Monarchy of Austria–Hungary), they enforced a Magyarization in the Eastern provinces which they governed. The educated Hungarian upper class, almost all aristocratic landowners, assumed that the political emancipation of Hungary would require reinforcement of the Magyar language throughout the Middle Danube region. The notion of Hun-garian liberation and its cultural renaissance was therefore effectively combined with disregard for other (Slovak, Croatian, Ruthenian) minori-ties. Even within the broad definition of Hungarian liberal nationalism, the debate over Magyarization between the moderate Count Istvan Szέchenyi and the radical Lajos Kossuth was won by Kossuth in the court of popular opinion.

> But, by 1848, the Magyar people – especially the lesser nobility – were far too proudly headstrong for political restraint: Szέchenyi's protests at Magyariza-tion had destroyed his following; and it was the brilliant orator and journalist, Lajos Kossuth, who voiced such of the national will as was allowed to be articulate. . . . It was a tragedy for all Central Europe, and not least for Hungary, that his love of country should by its intensity have aroused a lasting hatred among those who were its victims. (Palmer, 1970: 50–51)

Hungary's treatment as a vanquished enemy nation at Versailles, rather than one of the liberated nationalities, impaired Hungary's democra-

tization and cooperation with its neighbours for most of this century. Hungary's extensive political contact with the West and with the beginnings of democratization in the Austrian realms became entangled with territorial revisionism after the Treaty of Trianon, which to this day remains a rallying point for conservative parties.

The nationalism of Central and Eastern Europe was intensely ethnic and patriotic, tied to the idea of blood belonging, and therefore defined in opposition to others of different lineage (Ignatieff, 1993; Kohn, 1945; Pfaff, 1993). Ignatieff in particular argues that German romanticism was responsible for the rise of ethnic nationalist concepts in East-Central Europe generally.

> All the peoples of nineteenth century Europe under imperial subjection – the Poles and Baltic peoples under the Russian yoke, the Serbs under Turkish rule, the Croats under the Habsburgs – looked to the German ideal of ethnic nationalism when articulating their right to self-determination. When Germany achieved unification in 1871 and rose to world-power status, Germany's achievement was a demonstration of the success of ethnic nationalism to all the 'captive nations' of imperial Europe. (Ignatieff, 1993: 7)

This romantic nationalism of the region, born of serial defeats in the eighteenth century and the oppressive rule of the great monarchical empires of the nineteenth century, coincided with the (delayed) industrial and commercial revolutions of capitalism; in this sense too the societies of East-Central Europe were 'the lands between'. The foundations of the modern nation-state in Western Europe had been laid before the social turmoil (as Schumpeter called it, the 'creative destruction') of a modernizing capitalism, and the basic national identities had formed around issues of territorial citizenship; the 'Eastern nationalism' as Kohn describes it, revolved around ethnic identity (usually associated with language and religion), regardless of territory or of formal citizenship. Although the definition of just what constitutes a nation is still very much in dispute (Pfaff, 1993: ch. 2), there is widespread consensus on the impact that German romanticism (Herder) had in East-Central Europe among nationally conscious intelligentsia, and their efforts to inspire national liberation for Poles, Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks. The new intelligentsia of East-Central Europe often connected this romantic nationalism with the classic Western political values of conservatism, liberalism and socialism, producing *hybrid* political movements and parties, including anti-Semitic populism and fascism, liberal nationalism and socialist nationalism.

While the Germans achieved unification and the means to press for great-power, even super-power status under Bismarck in 1871, it was not until the end of the First World War that independent Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia appeared on the maps of Europe. These nations-in-waiting were definitely a part of Europe (and did not face the

Westernizer-Slavophile tension of the Russian intelligentsia), but at the same time they had missed the essential nation-building experiences of Western Europe. In this sense they stand apart from the Western experience, as borderlands. Krzysztof Pomian makes the key point that this 'zone' of Western civilization had for several centuries been subjected to Mongol or Russian or Ottoman domination, and thus was 'literally cut out of European history' (cited by Pfaff, 1993: 86). As these lands now seek to 'join the West' to which they really belong, they do so with little experience of national self-government and a very different perspective on the political values, in particular the values associated with liberal democracy, which have gradually and with no small difficulty evolved in the Western European nation-states over the past several centuries. The legacy of suppression of nationhood for the peoples of East-Central Europe was a strong factor in the weakness of liberal political thought, even among the middle classes. Samuel Huntington (1996), in his essay on the 'clash of civilizations,' thus treats these East-Central European lands as potentially assimilable borderlands, largely on the basis of their Western Christian heritage, but requiring a major effort on the part of both elites and masses.

But there was another perspective on the struggle for national liberation of the nations of this region, which was to grow in influence from the nineteenth into the twentieth century: the American liberal idea of international cooperation among free states. From the perspective of top American leaders, even in the first years of the Concert of Europe, the liberal formula on which the United States was founded had always seemed to be the answer to the wars and ethnic conflicts of the Old World. In an era of continual European warfare and failed peacemaking from the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 through the final military defeat of the Napoleonic armies in 1814, a core of American thinkers looked to their own experience as a radically new success formula.

This specifically American intellectual tradition would nurture, in another era of European warmaking (the First World War), the ideas of President Woodrow Wilson and others concerned with international peace and conflict resolution among nations. The First World War occasioned a new round of American Plans, each with its own distinctive features, but all grounded in peculiarly American (and thus liberal) understandings of the basic concepts of 'nation' and 'state', which were to be the components in a new 'United States of Europe' (Samuel Eliot Morrison of Harvard) or a 'new State, or new Power' (Darwin Kingsley of the League to Enforce the Peace) which would use the Constitution of the United States as its model (Kuehl, 1969: 250–259). These ideas, through their American intellectual history with which Wilson, the most intellectual President since Jefferson, was well acquainted, and through direct contact by their proponents with Colonel Edward House, Wilson's closest adviser, fed into Wilson's own Fourteen Points and his League proposals. Wilson's advisory group (the so-called Inquiry) set

out to redraw the borders of Eastern and Central Europe in accordance with the notion of self-determination of nations, understood as ethnic nationalities, with the intention of fostering liberal democratic governments throughout the region; it was the first attempt to super-impose an American Plan for a peaceful and democratic Europe on the realities of the Old World (Pfaff, 1992).

In general, the American backers for the new nations of the region were blind to the motives of the independence leaders, and conflated their drive for national self-determination with the establishment of liberal democracy. Ethnic tensions and ethnic self-aggrandizement were ignored or downplayed, whereas the postwar opening for democracy was seen as the inevitable victory of the 'modern' present and future over the 'reactionary' past. When the Czech leaders Masaryk and Beneš argued their case with American officials during the war years, they naturally presented an image of a Czech people brutally repressed by the Austrian authorities in Bohemia and Moravia, whereas the reality was much more complex.

Washington thus decided to back exiled leaders' claims for the new Czechoslovakia to the historic borders of Bohemia and Moravia despite the attempts by the German ethnic minority to have the German-populated Sudetenland in Bohemia recognized as a province of Austria after the 1918 armistice, while in Slovakia Washington agreed to Slovak claims to expand on historic borders in Slovakia and Ruthenia on ethnic nationalist grounds (cf. esp. Rothschild, 1974: 77–79). The Czechs also used their leverage with the Western Allies to gain control of the small but economically important area of Tesin from Poland in 1920. The true state of ethnic tensions in the new Czechoslovakia, between Germans and Czechs, but also between Czechs and Slovaks, began to emerge at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, but by then the die was cast, and the Allied leaders simply pressed on with their original commitments.

In the very aftermath of the collapse of empire, the conflict between nationalism and democracy was already emerging, and it was this singular tension between *ethnos* and *demos* that would bring an unhappy end to the interwar democratic experiment. The first birth of democracy in these new nations coincided with sharp ethnic conflicts and nation-alist irredentism, which would bedevil attempts to build social plural-ism, compromise and tolerance within a democratic politics.

The legacy of the interwar period: the triumph of ethnic nationalism over democracy

In the wake of the collapse of the Russian empire, the military defeat of Germany and the breakup of Austria–Hungary, the audacious Wilsonian

programme would promote and legitimize the successor states of East-
Central Europe, seen as the new foundation for building a democratic
and peaceful Europe. Although each was initially committed to a demo-
cratic politics, these new nations also contained many minorities and new
antagonisms with dominant majorities, as well as new border grievances
against neighbouring states. The young George Kennan judged that this
exercise illustrated the 'colossal conceit of thinking that you could
suddenly make international life over into what you believed to be your
own image, when you dismissed the past with contempt, rejected the
relevance of the past to the future, and refused to occupy yourself with
the real problems that a study of the past would suggest' (quoted in Pfaff,
1992: 68). Alan Palmer argues that, in retrospect, the Peace Settlement at
Versailles has been subjected to more criticism than was warranted, as a
first attempt at self-determination of nations in East-Central Europe.

> Even at the most generous estimate, national minorities constituted nearly
> a third of the population of Poland and Czechoslovakia . . . Six-and-a-half
> million Germans were neither citizens of the German Republic nor of
> Austria, more than five million Ukrainians were outside of the Soviet
> empire, and three million Magyars were beyond the frontiers of Hungary.
> . . . Over the whole area of East-Central Europe it is probable that one
> person in five was a member of a national minority; some accepted their
> position; some voiced their hostility from the earliest days; and many grew
> to resent it through years of frustrating inequality. (1970: 171)

Yet the peacemakers were aware of some of these problems, and there
were procedures and special treaties to protect minority religious, lin-
guistic and cultural rights. The League Covenant contained grievance
procedures to head off border and minority conflicts. And efforts were
made to offset economic losses and economic access problems caused
by the Peace Settlement. Palmer argues that 'the number of nationalities
which benefited from the various treaties was greater than those which
suffered, and it is probable that, given the temper of the times and the
excessively confused ethnic pattern in the major areas of dispute, no
fairer or more equitable system could have been devised by any
gathering of victors from a long and bitter war' (pp. 172–173). Joseph
Rothschild estimates that three times as many people were freed from
alien nationality rule as were newly subjected. What was lacking,
finally, was a change in mentality, which would have allowed grievance
procedures and minority protections to function effectively. The
redrawn borders did not reshape the climate of intolerance and historic
animosity which predated the war. 'What was reshaped in 1919–20 was
the map of Europe, not the habits of its peoples' (1974: 4).

    Still, the disappearance of Austria as a major power, and the simul-
taneous weakening of both Germany and Russia provided a historic
opportunity for the nations of the region to exercise real self-government;

and at the outset, the Western-style parliamentary democracy (mostly on the French proportional representation system) was the model to be emulated. Even during the suppression of leftist revolutionary uprisings in several areas at the end of the war, political leaders from the broad middle of the political spectrum moved to establish their credentials as new democracies, in an earlier 'joining the West' phase of optimism. Western constitutionalism, multi-party politics with a wide-ranging choice of parties, elected parliaments on the basis of broad franchise (except Hungary, which had a quite narrow electorate), a relatively free press and respect for personal liberty seemed to be the new defining characteristics of the politics of national independence.

Would the institutions of liberal democracy, instituted in 1919–20, find sufficient support among elites and masses to succeed, and produce an authentically Polish, Hungarian or Czechoslovakian democratic politics? Unfortunately, the answer was not long in coming, and it was negative, with the important exception of Czechoslovakia. In the first decade of post-First World War independence, most institutions of parliamentary democracy were largely corrupted or strangled in their infancy, giving way to more authoritarian practices under the cover of formally democratic institutional arrangements. In the second decade of independence, with the onset of the Great Depression, the last vestiges of democracy were swept aside in favour of anti-democratic right-wing regimes, in some ways drawing on the new 'success model' of European fascism in Italy and especially Germany. The bitter experience of this era, the failure of liberal democratic forces, was epitomized by the betrayal in 1938 at Munich of Czechoslovakia, the one viable democracy of the region, by the British and French governments, presumably the defenders of democratic freedoms in Europe. The interwar period belongs to what Huntington (1991) has called a 'reverse wave' of democratization, which destroyed liberal democratic politics and strengthened anti-democratic elites and mass movements of the left and right.

Even before the Great Depression, democracy in Eastern and Central Europe was in decline, with powerful elites determined to progressively undermine its key institution, a freely elected and politically powerful parliament. With so many enemies and so narrow a base of support, it is a testimony to the idea of democracy that it should have lasted as long as it did. Perhaps, given healthy economic growth and an extended period of peace, a democratic politics might have held on, and gradually regained the initiative, but this was not to be.

With the onset of economic crisis in 1930–31 throughout the region, there was a general trend towards a more explicitly anti-democratic politics, with fascism as the new model of modern successful politics, as exemplified by Italy and Germany. The new semi-fascist leaders and movements attempted to ape the features of fascism, first in order to gain power and then to bolster the power of the central government over independent and oppositional political and social organizations. The