

# **Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution**

Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union

**Jonathan Wheatley**



Post-Soviet Politics

GEORGIA FROM NATIONAL AWAKENING TO ROSE  
REVOLUTION

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# Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution

Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union

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 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2005 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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#### **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Wheatley, Jonathan

Georgia from national awakening to Rose Revolution :  
delayed transition in the former Soviet Union. -

(Post-Soviet politics)

1. Georgia (Republic) - Politics and government - 1991-

I. Title

320.9'4758

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Wheatley, Jonathan, 1964-

Georgia from national awakening to Rose Revolution : delayed transition in the  
former Soviet Union / by Jonathan Wheatley.

p. cm. -- (Post-Soviet politics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7546-4503-7

1. Georgia (Republic)--Politics and government--1991- 2. Democracy--Georgia  
(Republic) 3. Former Soviet republics--Politics and government. 4. Democracy--Former  
Soviet republics. 5. Comparative government. I. Title. II. Series.

JQ1759.7.A58W43 2005

947.5808'6--dc22

2005017371

ISBN 9780754645030 (hbk)

ISBN 9781138259164 (pbk)

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## Preface

This book project began in 1999, the main theme of which was to be democratization in a small and little known former Soviet republic. Since its inception both the project and the polity on which it has focused have been reconceptualized and restructured. First, it soon became clear to me that the notion of democratization was itself an oversimplification of a reality in which the informal rules of the game often took precedence over the formal institutions of statehood. This realization was informed by the inspiring, if sobering, conversations I had in Georgia in 2001 and 2002, which brought home to me how helpless most citizens of that country felt about their ability to change not only the political life of the state, but also their own personal and professional circumstances. Later, the ground shifted once again as peaceful demonstrations forced the resignation of President Eduard Shevardnadze in what became known as the 'Rose Revolution'. This event thrust Georgia into the limelight and onto television screens across the world, and this little known Soviet republic became a talking point for journalists, world leaders and political scientists alike. The 'Rose Revolution' also provided new impetus and material for this book as I had the unique opportunity to observe the events first hand.

Since my first visit to Georgia in 1997, the country has been on a rollercoaster ride between hope and despair. The joy in the faces of those who thronged Tbilisi's main thoroughfare, Rustaveli Avenue, following President Eduard Shevardnadze's resignation on 23 November 2003 was contagious and imbued all those present with inspiration and great hope for the future. Since then, as the ever distracted eyes of the world have shifted to other dramas in other corners of the world, the excitement has cooled and the focus has shifted once again to the very real problems that Georgia still faces. It is the task of this book to look beyond the mood swings and to give a more sober assessment of events.

The data presented in this book has been obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary source material was collected over a four-year period from 2001 to 2004 by means of 160 interviews with politicians, state bureaucrats, political scientists and representatives of NGOs. Wherever possible, all information obtained during interviews was cross-checked with secondary sources. These secondary sources were mainly media reports obtained via the Internet. These included online copies of the *Georgian Times*, the *Georgian Messenger*, and *24 Hours*, as well as the BBC Monitoring Service, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Civil Georgia online magazine. I was also able to obtain hard copies of the weekly English language edition of the Georgian daily newspaper, *Rezonansi* for the period November 1997 to June 1999. Finally, back copies of official Russian language newspapers *Zariya Vostoka* and *Svobodnaya Gruzziya* from the



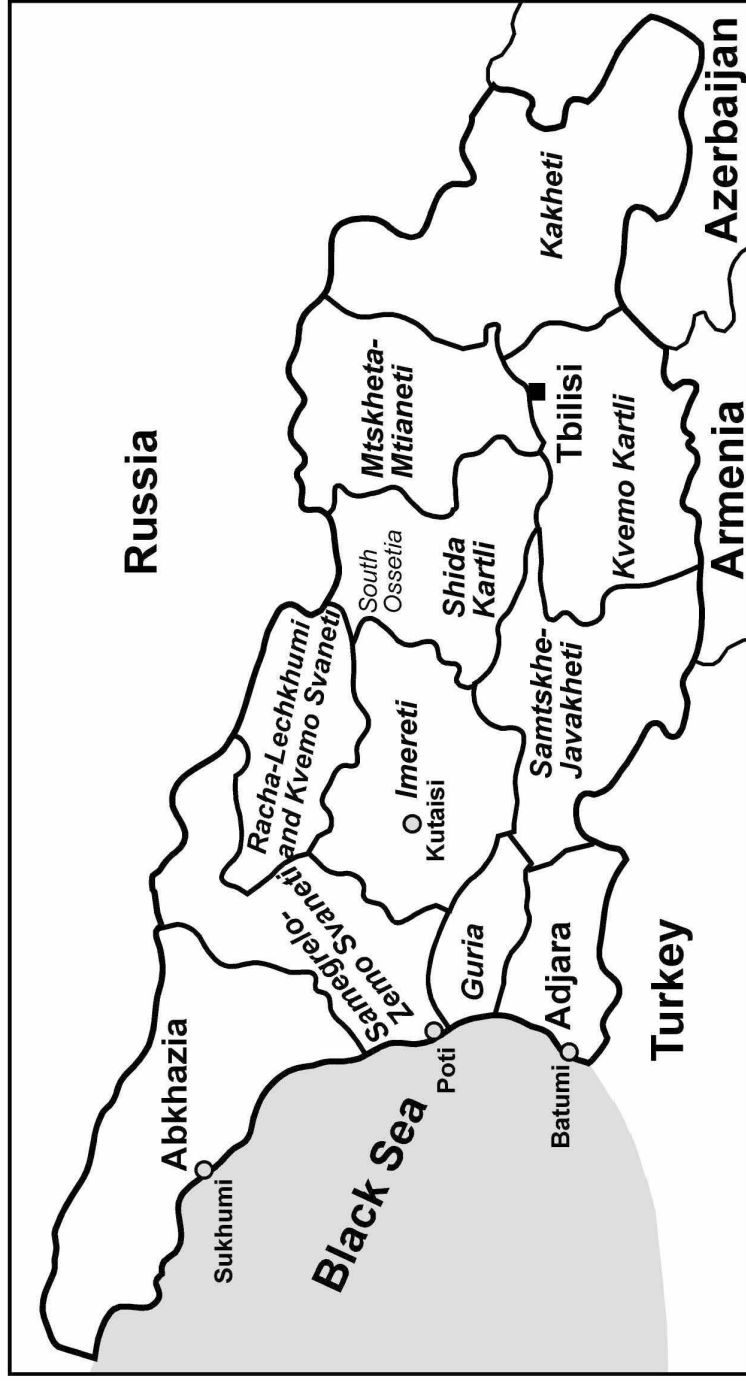
late 1980s and early 1990s provided extremely useful information of events in Georgia during the dying days of the Soviet Union.

Georgia captivates and enchants those who visit her. Few visitors remain untouched either by the warmth of her welcome or by the often tragic events that have convulsed her. For this reason, I will break with tradition and first acknowledge all those in Georgia who have helped me to write this book before turning to my colleagues in the European Union. I would first like to thank Ghia Nodia of the Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, who read the manuscript in its early days and offered valuable and constructive criticism. I am also very grateful to George Nizharadze of the International Centre of Conflict and Negotiation for his input into the research that informed the last chapters of this book. Others whose insights were an inspiration for me include Armen Amirkhanian, Marine Chitashvili, Zaur Khalilov, Giorgi Meskhidze, Marina Muskhelishvili, Alexander Rondeli and Nestan Tatarashvili. Finally, I would like to thank my compatriots Peter Nasmyth and John Wright for our long and illuminating conversations on different aspects of Georgian politics over fine Georgian beer in many of Tbilisi's bars.

Let me now turn to the place where this project was first conceived, the European University Institute in Florence. Without the support of the EUI, this project would not have been possible. First and foremost, I would like to offer my warmest thanks to Philippe Schmitter, professor at the EUI from 1996 to 2004. Philippe's endless enthusiasm and practical suggestions on how to structure the manuscript were invaluable. I also received enormous input and feedback from many other friends and colleagues at the EUI, in particular Senada Šelo Šabić and Verena Fritz, whose support and friendship sustained me. In addition, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Professor Robert Service for his careful reading of the manuscript and for his most valuable comments and criticisms.

For the later stages of this book I was highly fortunate to participate in the project 'Accounting for State-Building, Stability and Violent Conflict' (funded by the Volkswagen Foundation) at the Osturopa Institut of the Free University in Berlin. Within the framework of this project I profited both from the research opportunities that were made available to me, and for the valuable feedback I obtained from my colleagues. In particular, Christoph Zuercher and Jan Koehler acted as a critical audience for many of the ideas I express here and I am deeply grateful to both of them. I am also most grateful to Alexei Gunya (who designed the map), Scott Radnitz, Bahodir Sidikov, Azamat Temirkulov and Gunda Wiegmann for their comments and support for my work.

Finally I would like to thank Mark Mullen for his critical reading of parts of the manuscript and for his extremely useful comments and suggestion.



Map of Georgia's Provinces



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## Chapter 1

# Actors and Structures: The Anatomy and Evolution of Regimes

What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.

Francis Fukayama, *The End of History?*

The euphoria that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union led many analysts to believe that a new age of democracy had dawned in the former communist bloc and even elsewhere in the world. Communism had been defeated; democracy and the free market had triumphed. According to Fukayama<sup>1</sup> the 'end of history' was at hand – all states in the world would soon converge towards the same free-market, liberal and democratic blueprint. Initially events appeared to confirm his predictions; all Soviet successor states declared their adherence to the principles of democracy and a free market economy and most took concrete steps towards ending the Communist Party's monopoly on power and towards introducing a measure of economic reform.

However, more than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union such heady optimism had evaporated. According to a 2005 survey by the international organization Freedom House, out of the fifteen republics of the former Soviet Union, only Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia rated as 'free' in terms of political rights and civil liberties, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine were rated 'partly free', while the other eight republics were categorized as 'not free'. This survey appeared to suggest that only three former Soviet republics were democracies, four – semi-democracies and eight – full-blown authoritarian regimes.<sup>2</sup> Liberalism seemed in short supply as well: according to international human rights groups, torture by police and security forces was commonplace in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and was not unknown in the other non-Baltic republics of the former Soviet Union either.<sup>3</sup> As far as media freedoms are concerned, the picture here too was bleak: while Freedom House rated the media as 'Free' in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia in 2003, and 'Partly Free' in Georgia, the media in all other former Soviet republics was rated 'Not Free'. Moreover, corruption was rampant; according to a 2004 survey by Transparency International, which rated perceptions of corruption in 145 countries on a scale from 1 (most corrupt) to 10 (least corrupt), nine of the fifteen former Soviet republics surveyed (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan,

Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Uzbekistan) ranked 110<sup>th</sup> or lower, with a score of less than 2.5. Only three former Soviet states (the Baltic republics) finished in the top half of the table.<sup>4</sup>

So can we really speak of 'transition' in the non-Baltic republics of the former Soviet Union? Certainly, it would be hard to argue that these republics have made a successful transition to democracy, but it is equally true nevertheless that some real political changes have occurred. In most of these republics, opposition parties play some (albeit often highly restricted) role in public life, and in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova, they play a relatively major role. In most republics too there is considerably greater freedom of expression than there was during the Soviet period, and in some republics (most notably in Georgia, but also in Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Armenia and even Azerbaijan) a significant degree of media freedom has been established. In some, especially Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, more or less free and fair elections have been held from time to time.

This discussion leads us to make three general comments about the place of post-Soviet transitions within the wider universe of transitions in the world as a whole. First, post-Soviet transitions are not unidirectional; early trends towards democracy have subsequently been reversed in several republics (such as Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Russia). Second, they are highly complex and in most cases consist of several simultaneous transformations: building an entirely new state, transforming a state-run economy into a market-led one and changing from an authoritarian Soviet system of government to a democratic one. Finally, even if no significant reverses towards authoritarianism have occurred there is still the tendency for post-Soviet transitions to remain *partial transitions* in the sense that some attributes of the political regime change, while others remain the same. In many ways, partial transitions are more useful to the researcher than full transitions, because by comparing those elements of the regime that have changed with those that have not it is possible to hazard a guess as to the relative degree of difficulty involved in transforming each aspect of the regime – at least in the context of the former Soviet Union.

However, in order to identify which elements of a political regime have changed and which have not, it is necessary to define clearly what we mean by a *regime* as well as the 'elements' or 'aspects' that constitute it. Although a plethora of regime types ('totalitarian', 'post-totalitarian', 'sultanistic', 'authoritarian', 'neo-patrimonial', 'democratic' and many others) have been identified in the literature, few analyses of regime change and democratization have included a definition of the edifice on which these epithets are to be hung. A clear conceptualization of what constitutes a political regime will provide us with a valuable tool of analysis for investigating regime change in Georgia within a comparative framework that includes the other republics of the former USSR.

## Regime

According to Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, a regime can be defined as 'the *ensemble* of patterns, explicit or not, that determines the forms and channels of access to principal governmental positions, the characteristics of the actors who are admitted and excluded from such access, and the resources and strategies that they can use to gain access'.<sup>5</sup> Gerardo Munck adopts a similar definition, although he extends it to include both the making of rules and the subsequent compliance (or non-compliance) of political actors with them.<sup>6</sup> These definitions, by focusing on the characteristics, strategies and rules of *elites* (i.e. *who* is able to get to positions of power and *how* they are able to get there), emphasize one important aspect of a regime. However, they tend to ignore another crucial element, namely how (and how much) ordinary citizens are able to participate in the political process without necessarily occupying any decision-making post.

In response, Harald Waldrauch attempts to 'bring society back in'. For Waldrauch, a regime is defined by four aspects of the relationship both between and within state and society: 1) 'inner-societal relations', i.e. the existence of political pluralism within society, 2) 'the influence of society on principal governmental positions' and the manner by means of which such influence is exerted, 3) 'the influence of government on society', which specifically refers to *how* the government influences society (i.e. through repression and terror, on the one hand, or through various forms of legitimization, on the other) and 4) the 'relations of governmental institutions to each other', i.e. the rules that restrain government institutions.<sup>7</sup> One problem with Waldrauch's definition, however, becomes apparent when we consider one of the key theoretical questions relating to regime change (and also the main puzzle of this study): the debate as to whether regime change can be explained by structures or actors. The first aspect of Waldrauch's definition, 'inner-societal relations', if it is not to depend on the other three aspects, would suggest that a regime is, to a certain extent, not only influenced but *defined* by the society in which it is embedded. Hence, from his definition it would seem virtually *self-evident* that regime transition depends upon social preconditions.

My own definition of a regime will incorporate the second and third parts of Waldrauch's definition and will integrate the fourth part with O'Donnell and Schmitter's concept. It will therefore include three dimensions: a) state structure, specifically the interconnectedness of the political elite, b) governance, i.e. state penetration of society, and c) representation, i.e. society's influence over government. I therefore define a regime as follows:

A regime is defined by a) the diversity and characteristics of those actors who belong to the political elite as well as the rules, both informal and formal, that govern decision-making within that elite, b) the capacity of the political elite to penetrate society either by means of repression or by legitimization of one form or another, and c) the extent to

which ordinary individuals and social forces independent of the state are able to influence state decision-making.

In the following paragraphs, I will look at the three dimensions in turn.

Four features of *political elites*, I would argue, play a role in defining the sort of political regime that exists. The first of these encompasses the mechanisms of control and subordination within state organizations, i.e. the nature of vertical links between power-holders at different levels of the state structure. The second is the extent to which political decision-makers adhere to formal rules in the exercise of power, i.e. whether state power is formalized and based on procedures, or whether it is arbitrary. The third feature is the extent to which power is *concentrated* in the hands of one individual or small group or whether it is *dispersed*, i.e. shared by a far wider circle of actors.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the fourth feature is the extent to which power is *contested* between various factions of the political elite.

Turning now to the second dimension of a regime – that of governance or state penetration of society – I will also divide this into four sub-dimensions: first the extent to which the political elite is prepared to use arbitrary repression to control social forces, second the extent to which the political elite uses ideology to legitimize itself to society and the way in which it does so, third the state's capacity (and willingness) to provide material and non-material public goods, and finally the state's capacity (and willingness) to provide (or impose) a framework of institutions, laws and/or instructions to regulate economic and political conflict within society (for example, state courts, constitutions, election laws, media laws, and laws on public associations). These last three aspects together describe the various mechanisms of legitimization: ideological, material and procedural.<sup>9</sup>

Finally the third dimension, representation, has three main components. The first is representation through *procedures* such as voting in elections and referendums. The second is representation by means of *organizations*; here I have in mind the plethora of associations that are generally referred to as 'civil society', i.e. trade unions, lobbying groups, NGOs, media organizations and even political parties if they are truly grass-roots based organizations. The final element of representation is representation through informal influence, e.g. through respected power-brokers or informal authorities.

This definition of a regime allows us to conceptualize a large number of regime types based on variations along these three dimensions and eleven sub-dimensions. It is clearly beyond the scope of this discussion to examine all the different graduations in regime type, but it is worth turning briefly to two 'ideal regime types' – totalitarianism and democracy – as well as several intermediate forms situated between these polar opposites.

In a totalitarian regime the political elite exercises power through a single mass party in which no autonomous or semi-autonomous sub-units exist. The power structure resembles a pyramid in which state servants in one 'layer' invariably obey the orders of those in the layer above. The relationship is thus purely hierarchical and no vertical cleavages or any forms of factionalism are permitted

within the political elite. At the top of the pyramid, power is concentrated in the hands of a single leader or a small collective leadership. Political decision-making is arbitrary, and goal fulfilment takes priority over adherence to rules and procedures. State power deeply penetrates society by means of repression and at the same time legitimizes itself through a utopian ideology and the promise of a brave new world. The state also provides all public goods. Finally, social forces are not represented in a totalitarian regime since the very possibility of social forces having interests independently of the state is denied. The model of the totalitarian regime is an ideal type and few regimes, if any, can be categorized as fully totalitarian. However, both Nazi Germany and the USSR during the Stalin period come very close to this model.<sup>10</sup>

Given the fact that the 'totalitarian regime' is an ideal type and failed to capture the essence of the communist systems in Eastern Europe and the USSR in the 1980s, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan coined the term 'post-totalitarian' to explain these systems. The main distinction between the post-totalitarian regime and the Stalinist approximation to the totalitarian regime, they argue, was a moderation in the former of the state's use of repression and a reduction in the state's propensity to penetrate society. Ideology is reduced to hollow slogans that few – even those who propagate them – can identify with, and mobilization of the population for Party goals is less intense and frequent. However, within society 'the existence of a previous totalitarian regime means that most of the pre-existing sources of responsible and organized pluralism have been eliminated or repressed'.<sup>11</sup> The lack of pluralism within society means that few structures capable of representing societal interests remain. Thus, despite the state's less intrusive relationship with society, no meaningful mechanisms of *representation* exist in a post-totalitarian regime.

Another non-democratic regime type is authoritarianism, which was first identified in 1964 by Linz in his seminal study of the political regime in Spain. Linz defined an authoritarian regime as a political system 'with limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive nor intensive political mobilization ... and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits, but actually quite predictable ones'.<sup>12</sup>

The model of a democratic regime is the polar opposite of the totalitarian type. In the ideal type of democratic regime, institutionalized pluralism within the political elite mirrors a corresponding pluralism of interests within society. Power is dispersed amongst different branches of government and formal rules (often in the form of a written constitution) establish a system of checks and balances to ensure that the various branches settle any conflicts that may arise between them. Hierarchical relationships within state structures are based not on subordination or patronage, but on a two-way exchange of information and on the ethics of professionalism. In democratic governance, the state penetrates society and provides certain key public goods and services, but the exercise of repression is kept to within minimum accepted levels. The institutions the state establishes to



process social conflict are created through dialogue and consensus with the various social forces and are therefore seen as legitimate. The key element of a democratic regime is that of *representation*; the state legitimizes itself by representing the diverse interests of society, both through *procedures* such as elections and referendums, and by establishing a dialogue with civil society organizations that articulate and aggregate the interests of citizens. Thus, in a democratic regime the arrows of influence from society to state complement those that run in the reverse direction, unlike in a totalitarian regime in which all arrows run from top down.

Few political regimes fully correspond to the ideal type of democratic regime, even those that are commonly categorized as democracies. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, after the so-called 'third wave' of democratization had swept away many non-democratic regimes in Eastern and Southern Europe, South America and parts of Africa, most polities in the world were holding more or less competitive elections. According to a Freedom House survey, 119 out of 192 countries in the world could be described as electoral democracies in 2004.<sup>13</sup> However, many of these regimes were not true representative democracies and some were little more than authoritarian regimes sporting the fig-leaf of electoralism. This led some scholars to challenge the so-called 'transition paradigm', which, in the words of Thomas Carothers, is based on the assumption 'that any country moving *away* from dictatorial rule can be considered a country in transition *toward* democracy'.<sup>14</sup> Could not semi-democratic regimes either remain in the 'grey zone' between democracy and dictatorship or even revert to authoritarianism? As I explained above, this question is a highly relevant one for the successor states to the USSR.

The political elites of many 'hybrid' or 'semi-democratic' regimes exhibit pluralism and fierce competition can take place between various elite factions. However, the factionalism, scheming and intrigue that occur within the political elite are not reflected in any corresponding cleavages or divergence of interests within society. Despite (more or less) free and fair elections, the bottom-up mechanism of *representation*, which is fundamental to democracy, is at least partially dysfunctional. *Bureaucratic pluralism* within state structures does not reflect the diverse interests within society and therefore cannot develop into the sort of *democratic pluralism* in which these interests can be represented.<sup>15</sup> As we shall see, Georgia has been particularly vulnerable to this syndrome because of the 'atomization of society' that is a legacy of the communist (and even pre-communist) era.<sup>16</sup> If there is no aggregation of interests within society, political parties and other factions of the political elite will be hard-pressed to find a ready-made social base on which to strike anchor.

### Theories of Democratization

This leads us to the thorniest question of all in the study of regime change: is transition from one type of regime to another conditioned by social *structures*

(such as the above-mentioned ‘atomization of society’) or is it instead an *actor-driven* process? The key question here is whether socio-economic, institutional and cultural pre-conditions determine the outcome of transition by constraining the role of actors to such an extent that their autonomy is marginal, or whether the choices made and strategies adopted by actors at certain key moments of transition have long-term implications for the future trajectory of the regime. This puzzle has normative consequences for the current debate as to the feasibility or desirability of ‘democracy promotion’: if democracy is somehow structurally determined or at least structurally facilitated, to expect ‘regime change’ to be both rapid and possible virtually anywhere in the world appears both naïve and wrong-headed. On the other hand, if *actors* play the key role, the skilful crafting of democratic institutions by these actors may bring about a democratic outcome in settings that hitherto have appeared an unlikely breeding ground for democratic change. Understanding how and why political regimes change and the way structures and actors interact to bring about institutional change is the key challenge for this book.

Of those who hold that the predominant role in transition is played by structures or pre-conditions, some argue that the most important factor is political culture. The notion of a democratic ‘civic culture’ was first proposed by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in 1963 to explain divergences in the stability of democratic institutions in five countries in Western Europe and America. Almond and Verba argue that in order for a regime to become democratic, and still more to stay democratic, there must first exist a political culture that must, broadly speaking, include individualism, moderation, and some willingness to participate in the public sphere. Such a ‘civic culture’ they define as a ‘pluralistic culture based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that permit[s] change but moderate[s] it’.<sup>17</sup> It is notable, however, that Germany and Italy, which Almond and Verba claimed to be lacking a well-developed ‘civic culture’, have remained stable democracies since the time their argument was first presented.

Other scholars argue that in the long run it is modernization that determines whether or not the sort of ‘democratic culture’ that Almond and Verba identify is able to take root. The idea that such a culture is more often found in modern, industrialized countries than in rural, agricultural societies has a long pedigree. In ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte’, Karl Marx laments the inability of the small peasantry in France to unite and defend their common interests: ‘In so far as there is merely a local interconnection among these small peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no unity, no national union and no political organization, they do not form a class.’<sup>18</sup> Although Marx was referring to the revolutionary potential of the small peasantry (or rather the lack of it), the implication of his argument is that predominantly rural, non-industrial societies lack the kind of participatory culture that Almond and Verba describe and are therefore an unlikely setting for the consolidation of democracy.

Modernization and urbanization also go hand in hand with economic development, which is also often cited as a precondition for democracy. Seymour

Martin Lipset holds that economic development is conducive to democracy for two main reasons: first because it leads to higher levels of education, which in turn promote a tolerant, rational or 'civic' culture, and second because it ameliorates class conflict. Greater economic development will lead to higher levels of education amongst the working class and will give the dominant classes fewer grounds for excluding them from political participation. Class conflict is also less likely if a sizeable part of the population is not mired in poverty. Finally, Lipset argues that economic development promotes the expansion of a middle class, which is typically oriented toward democracy.<sup>19</sup> Lipset's view that it is not economic development per se but rather a cluster of 'developmental factors' that promote democratization is echoed by Larry Diamond, who claims that 'economic development produces or facilitates democracy only insofar as it alters favourably four crucial intervening variables: political culture, class structure, state society relations, and civil society'.<sup>20</sup>

A large number of surveys have been carried out to explore the correlation both of per capita income and of more inclusive measurements of socio-economic development with democracy.<sup>21</sup> All these studies show a clear correlation between socio-economic development (as measured by GDP per capita and by the UNDP Human Development Index) and democracy and some suggest a causal relationship flowing from the former to the latter.<sup>22</sup>

One other structural precondition that may also be relevant in the former Soviet Union is the existence of national consciousness. Before the official demise of the USSR the only opposition movements that existed in the non-Russian republics were fundamentally nationalist in their orientation. More will be said about this in the following chapter. Here, however, it is worth making the observation that in the non-Russian republics it was only the so-called 'national liberation movements' that had sufficient strength to give the incumbent Soviet era elites the required 'push' to remove them from power. In some ways, therefore, the future of political pluralism depended on the existence of these movements and even today those republics in which they did not exist remain unable to extract themselves from authoritarian rule. As Steven Eke and Taras Kuzio point out: 'In those areas where a nationalist revival did not receive popular and/or "official" support, totalitarian structures remained preserved well into the post-Soviet era.'<sup>23</sup> This view is shared by Kathleen Mihailisko in her study of Belarus. Commenting on the lack of democracy in Belarus, Mihailisko laments 'the want of a critical mass of pressure at the "grassroots" level to force the leadership into accepting reform, sovereignty and change'.<sup>24</sup> The key factor behind Belarus's non-transition, she argues, is 'weak national consciousness and the absence of conditions for mobilization around acutely felt national goals'.<sup>25</sup> As to the emergence of Belarus's authoritarian president, former collective farm manager Alyaksandr Lukashenka, she states bluntly: 'It is the absence of nationalism – in its primary definition of devotion to the interests of a nation – that makes Lukashenka possible.'<sup>26</sup> The same may be said of the Central Asian republics, where Presidents Nazarbayev, Karimov and

Niyazov (all former first secretaries of their respective republics) have retained power, thanks to a largely demobilized population.

So-called 'transitologists' criticize most of the arguments cited above as too deterministic and instead assign a central role in democratization to political actors who, during a period of transition, operate under conditions of high uncertainty and 'bounded rationality'.<sup>27</sup> Central to this approach is the notion of *contingency*, according to which the crucial variables are not the objective conditions in which transition occurs but are instead the subjective notions that determine the contingent choices made by key elite actors. These choices, made in the uncertainty of transition, not only affect the dynamics of the transition itself, but also cast a long shadow into the future, affecting both the type of new regime that is likely to emerge as well as its future stability. This is a path-dependent approach, but one whose starting point is set at the beginning of the transition period and not before.

One drawback of the transitology approach is its lack of predictive power. If we talk about *uncertainty* during transition, even if it is uncertainty within certain (generally ill-defined) limits, then presumably virtually any outcome is possible (even if not all are equally probable). The theory would therefore not be falsifiable. In an attempt to answer this charge, Terry Karl and Philippe Schmitter hold that it is possible to classify transitions into four broad types, or *modes of transition*, and from there draw tentative hypotheses as to the sort of regimes that are likely to result from each mode.<sup>28</sup> Their model design is based on two dimensions: first whether the regime change has been driven by masses or by elites, and second whether force (or the threat of it) has been used to impose it or whether instead compromise has prevailed. They go on to suggest that a pacted transition (elite-driven, negotiated) is most conducive to a democratic outcome, followed by imposition (elite-driven, by force), reform (mass-driven, by negotiation) and revolution (mass-driven, by force), in that order. They do, however, make the proviso that badly-crafted or unnecessarily protracted pacts may actually be detrimental to the future quality and sustainability of the emerging democratic regime, especially if these pacts guarantee the retention of certain privileges by already privileged groups (e.g. the military or landowners).

These models are hard to apply to the former Soviet Union. First, as we observed earlier in the chapter, due to the simultaneous demands of state-building, democratization and economic reform, there has been a tendency in the former Soviet Union for transition to be a highly complex process that is often marked by as many steps backwards as forwards. In some cases (especially in certain Central Asian republics) it is hardly meaningful even to talk of transition at all, as incumbent elites have clung on to power and have become ever more entrenched in their positions. Whatever the case, outside the Baltic republics, transition cannot be easily reduced to short time scale categories such as 'pacts' or 'revolutions'.

Second, even in the Baltic republics, where transition was a relatively short-term process and ended in the establishment of a democratic regime, it remains very difficult to classify in terms of Karl and Schmitter's four-fold classification.

As Karl herself admits ‘the attempt to assess possible consequences of modes of transition is most problematic where strong elements of imposition, compromise and reform are simultaneously present’.<sup>29</sup> This was precisely the case in the Baltic republics, where regime change was led by a ‘Popular Front’ whose leaders included ‘soft-liners’ from within the ruling elite, but which commanded a mass following and which was driven, in part at least, by pressure from below. Hence it would be hard to classify these cases as either ‘elite driven’ or ‘mass driven’.

Finally, actors cannot be separated entirely from the context in which they operate. Even the most convinced ‘transitologists’ concede that structural and institutional constraints may limit the choices available to the key actors during transition. Thus Karl refers to the notion of ‘structured contingency’, whereby ‘the decisions made by various social actors respond to and are conditioned by the types of socioeconomic structures and institutions already present. These can be decisive in that they may either restrict or enhance the options available to different political actors attempting to construct democracy’.<sup>30</sup> Other authors argue that the institutions that are inherent in the former regime type limit the freedom enjoyed by actors. Thus Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan argue that ‘the characteristics of the previous non-democratic regime have profound implications for the transition *paths* available and the *tasks* different countries face when they begin their struggles to develop consolidated democracies’.<sup>31</sup> According to Linz and Stepan, transitions from non-democratic regimes that at least partly observe the principles of constitutionalism and the rule of law and that already benefit from both a relatively autonomous civil society and a professionalized state bureaucracy (i.e. authoritarian and, in particular, *bureaucratic authoritarian regimes*<sup>32</sup>) will prove considerably less arduous than transitions from totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes in which these conditions are absent. In a similar vein, Baohui Zhang doubts that a transition to democracy from a totalitarian or post-totalitarian regime can come about through a negotiated settlement between regime and opposition elites. He characterizes the opposition in such regimes as social movements whose leaders ‘lack[s] internal control ... and are dependent on the movement for their power and influence’ and as a result ‘employ increasingly demagogic political positions’ rendering themselves incapable of implementing the decisions made during negotiations.<sup>33</sup> This is because there are no ‘strong societal institutions that provide the means of both social representation and control’.<sup>34</sup> Zhang’s observations back up our earlier hunch that establishing a truly democratic system is likely to be particularly problematic in ‘atomized’ societies. Thus transition must be understood as a highly complex process in which actors are free to act within the parameters of a set of historically determined rules of the game.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, we must not only consider the domestic context in which transition takes place, but also the international context, which in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries appeared to be increasingly influential in moulding the domestic agenda. The apparent wave of ‘revolutions’ that had, at the time of writing, swept Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan shows just how important ‘knock on effects’ from one country to the next can be. These knock-on effects are similar

to Samuel Huntington's 'waves of democratization', although it is still not clear whether or not the recent 'revolutions' in the former USSR represent a movement towards greater democracy.<sup>36</sup>

Laurence Whitehead and Philippe Schmitter identify four factors that facilitate the spread (or retreat) of democracy across the globe. These are *contagion* between neighbouring or closely associated countries, *control* by one or more dominant powers, *consent*, in which internal actors engage voluntarily with partners from outside, and *conditionality*, whereby outside actors (often multilateral organizations) impose conditions or incentives in return for democratic change.<sup>37</sup> These mechanisms are highly relevant to the former Soviet Union. Contagion refers to the extent to which the former Soviet republics were influenced by the 'democratic revolutions' that swept Eastern Europe in 1989, and by the subsequent overthrow of the Milosevic government in 2000. Control relates above all to the attempts by the Russian Federation to maintain hegemony in the region and to limit the autonomy of the new republics. It also refers to attempts by the United States to win influence in the region. Consent refers to the extent to which the republics of the former Soviet Union opened up to international and multilateral organizations and allowed foreign influence and foreign funding for domestic NGOs. Finally, conditionality means the extent to which organizations such as the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were able to use various carrots and sticks to build democratic institutions in the former Soviet republics. All these factors may be quite country specific and will depend on the strategic importance of each republic to foreign powers.

### The Need for Critical Phases

Even though Karl and Schmitter's model is hard to apply to the former Soviet space, this does not necessarily mean that the so-called 'transitology approach' should be abandoned altogether. It is quite possible that contingent factors and elite choices may still play a key role – if not *the* key role – in post-Soviet transition. Indeed, it is one aim of this book to incorporate both voluntarist (actor-centred) and structuralist approaches in order to conceptualize regime change in Georgia and in other republics of the former Soviet Union. From the voluntarist perspective, I posit that regime transition in Georgia (and, by implication, in many other former Soviet republics) can be conceptualized in terms of several 'critical phases' – moments of crisis at which strategic decisions or clusters of decisions by elite actors played a crucial determining role in the future evolution of the regime. Critical phases are themselves characterized by *under-determination* and *uncertainty*. However, between these critical phases, I argue, longer-term structural factors play the major role in establishing the parameters within which the legacy of the previous critical phase can mould the political arena, and determine whether or not the 'post-phase regime' can remain stable or even viable.

Critical phases are periods of time during which one or more non-predetermined events occur and have a critical impact on the political arena. As such they are rather similar to Ruth and David Collier's conception of 'critical junctures', used to explain the evolution of the national political arena in various Latin American countries.<sup>38</sup> Collier and Collier define one particular event – the 'initial incorporation of the labour movement' – as *the* determining critical juncture. The way in which this incorporation occurred, they argue, was to shape the national political arena in subsequent decades; from this critical juncture a particular institutional legacy crystallized which was to structure the subsequent evolution of each regime.

Despite certain similarities, my own notion of a 'critical phase' differs somewhat from Collier and Collier's 'critical junctures'. First, Collier and Collier focus on only one critical juncture (the incorporation of the labour movement), while I will focus on several successive critical phases that together define the transition process in certain former Soviet republics. Second, whilst Collier and Collier's critical juncture may itself endure for as much as a decade, my critical phases will be short-lived; of the critical phases I identify in the Georgian case, none has a duration of more than two months. Finally, the legacies of individual critical phases may not be so much the enduring institutions that Collier and Collier have in mind. While they may include constitutional changes and power-sharing deals, in the post-Soviet context agreements and even constitutions sometimes (although not always) prove temporary. These legacies may also include rather shorter-term phenomena, such as medium-term fluctuations in public opinion, the rise and fall of a particular leader, or the emergence or collapse of a particular social movement or political party.<sup>39</sup> This does not mean that the path dependent legacies of each phase are extinguished within a short period of time; I merely wish to say that these legacies are not always stable and may set the scene for a new crisis following hard on the heels of the first. It is quite possible, indeed likely, that one critical phase will fashion the set of opportunities that are open at subsequent phases.

In my schema, a critical phase instigates a path-dependent sequence of events that changes the political regime. Crucial to a critical phase is the idea of a counterfactual; every critical phase, once identified, must be supported by a counterfactual argument: *if the relevant decision(s) had not been taken or if the event(s) had not occurred, the political regime would have evolved differently.*

Collier and Collier's approach to critical junctures has been criticized as over-deterministic on the grounds that, because of its emphasis on the persistence of long-term institutional legacies, it privileges structure over agency.<sup>40</sup> My own approach, by positing *multiple* (i.e. a succession of) critical phases, re-emphasizes the role of agents as it gives plenty of opportunities for agents to influence the course of events.

Of course, the idea that during short periods of 'thickened history',<sup>41</sup> the causal impact of structural factors is insignificant in comparison with contingent factors, while during quieter periods of time the reverse is true with contingent factors

playing no role at all, is over-idealized. In particular, it tends to neglect the role of long-term strategies of wily political leaders, who often take several years to manoeuvre themselves gradually into a position of advantage. In a study of regime change, however, there is some empirical justification for this omission, as transition is a period of uncertainty in which long-term strategic planning may yield few concrete results. Although, like all theoretical models, the critical phase model is an *approximation* to reality, it is one that I believe will be highly useful for this study.

Karl and Schmitter's notion of pacted transitions – if one were to conceptualize them in terms of critical phases – would seem to be based on the premise that there is one critical phase, characterized by the pact itself. While certain less problematic transitions may be conceptualized as a single critical phase, my argument is that transitions in the former USSR are necessarily protracted, given the treble or even quadruple transformation that is required (democratization, economic reform, state-building and, in some cases, nation-building), and that they therefore necessarily require multiple phases.

### The Challenge Ahead

Having laid down the theoretical framework, it is now time to look ahead by listing the key questions this study will endeavour to tackle, and how the book will be structured in order to tackle them. The key issues are the following: First, how did *actors* (both individual and collective) in Georgia and other former Soviet republics influence regime change and to what extent was their behaviour constrained or even determined by socio-economic, institutional and cultural *pre-conditions*? Second, what was the role played by *nationalism* in the Georgian transition and how does this compare with other post-Soviet transitions? Third, what made Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' of 2003 possible and could it be repeated in other non-democratic republics of the former Soviet Union? Finally, to what extent do the so-called 'revolutions' in the former Soviet Union – *both* the 'democratic' transformations of the early 1990s *and* Georgia's 'Rose Revolution' – mark real changes in the fundamental parameters of the regime? Or do they merely represent a formal 'repackaging', effectively designed to conceal the true (informal) nature of governance, which remains unchanged?

In order to understand regime change in Georgia and other republics of the former Soviet Union, it is first necessary to define our starting point. Chapter 2 will therefore define the contours of the Soviet regime immediately prior to the collapse of the USSR on the basis of the definition of regime provided in this chapter. It will first focus on the Soviet political elites and will describe the organizational culture of the Soviet state and Party bureaucracies. Its focus will then shift to social structure in the Soviet Union in general and in Georgia in particular in order to assess the degree of social organization that existed independently of the state, and



whether such social organization as may have existed was capable of providing the social capital to support a subsequent change in regime.

Chapters 3 and 4 will examine the evolution of the Georgian regime from 1989 to 1995. This period is chosen because this was the time in which regime change (to the extent that it occurred) was most rapid; after 1995, the political regime, although dysfunctional and not fully democratic, was at least relatively stable, at least until 2001. Chapter 3 will cover the period 1989–1991 (i.e. prior to the overthrow of Georgia's first President, Zviad Gamsakhurdia), while Chapter 4 will focus on the period 1992–95 (from Gamsakhurdia's overthrow to the election of Eduard Shevardnadze as President). The approach is chronological; events will be analysed in the order in which they occurred and four 'critical phases' will be identified, which, I shall argue, had a crucial impact on the future evolution of the regime. Questions that compare Georgia with other former Soviet republics shall be posed and addressed at several key points in these two chapters. In particular, I shall look at the impact of Georgia's national liberation movement on the configuration of political forces, and compare its effects on political pluralism with the Baltic republics, where the national liberation movement was also strong.

Chapters 5 and 6 will explore the nature of the Georgian regime between 1996 and 2001. The two chapters are divided in conformity with the definition of a regime provided earlier in this chapter. Chapter 5 will consider two of the three 'dimensions' of the regime: the structure and coherence of the political elite, on the one hand, and governance, on the other. In Chapter 5, I will analyse both the inner logic of state power, in other words the norms, interrelationships and motivations that governed the behaviour of the political elite in Georgia, and the state's capacity to penetrate society both in terms of repression and in terms of providing both public goods and conflict-processing institutions. In Chapter 6, the focus will shift to the third 'dimension' of the political regime and the defining feature of democracy, that of *representation* – the extent to which ordinary individuals and social forces independent of the state were able to influence political decision-making at local and national level. Here I will include political parties, civil society organizations and media, as well as state-sponsored mechanisms such as institutions of local self-government and elections.

Chapter 7 will address the theoretical and empirical problems that are posed by Georgia's so-called 'Rose Revolution' that occurred in late November 2003. I will first examine the background to the 'Revolution' and identify the chain of events that led up to it. I will argue that its success was facilitated by seven key factors that had, in turn, been conditioned by earlier processes and events. I will then look at the (admittedly incomplete) evidence from Georgia and assess the extent to which the 'Rose Revolution' marks a real break from the past in terms of regime type or whether, beneath the surface, old Soviet-era forms of governance still prevail.

Finally, Chapter 8 is the conclusion. It will draw together the findings from the previous chapters by returning to the concept of a regime defined earlier in this chapter. Using this definition, it will examine the common characteristics that the

Georgian regime shared with other former Soviet republics as well as the peculiarities that were specific to the Georgian case. This will make it possible to gauge the relative 'weights' of some of the different potential explanatory factors described in this chapter, such as the legacy of Soviet-era social and institutional structure, nationalism, global influences and actor driven-events, in terms of their effect on post-Soviet regime change.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Francis Fukayama, 'The End of History', *National Interest* 16 (1989): 3-18.
- <sup>2</sup> See the Freedom House website <[www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org)>.
- <sup>3</sup> See, for example, Amnesty International at <[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)> and the US State Department, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* at <[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)>.
- <sup>4</sup> See TI Corruption Perceptions Index 2004 at <<http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2004/cpi2004.en.html#cpi2004>>.
- <sup>5</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 73.
- <sup>6</sup> Specifically Munck defines two dimensions of a regime: the procedural and the behavioural. The procedural aspect, in his definition, is regulated by three factors '1) the number and type of actors that are allowed to gain access to the principal governmental positions; 2) the methods of access to such positions; and 3) the rules that are followed in the making of publicly binding decisions'. The behavioural dimension, on the other hand, 'draws attention to the importance of actors and to a simple but extremely consequential point: that procedural rules structure and shape the conduct of politics only inasmuch as actors accept or comply with these rules'. See Gerardo L. Munck, 'Disaggregating Political Regime: Conceptual Issues in the Study of Democratization', *Typescript*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Department of Political Science (1996), p. 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Harald Waldrauch, 'Incommensurability? On the comparison of Eastern and Southern regime changes', in Stein Ugelvik Larsen (ed), *The Challenges of Theories on Democracy: Elaborations over new Trends in Transitology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 135.
- <sup>8</sup> This corresponds to Aristotle's distinction between three types of regime: kingship (rule by the one), aristocracy (rule by a select few) and polity (rule by the citizens). See Aristotle (translation by T.A. Sinclair), *The Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962), Book III, p. 116.
- <sup>9</sup> Procedural legitimization is, according to Max Weber, based on '[r]ational grounds – resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands'. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 215.
- <sup>10</sup> A classic definition of totalitarianism is that of Friedrich and Brzezinski, according to which a totalitarian state must possess the following characteristics: an official ideology, a single mass party, terroristic police control, state control of the mass communications network, state control of the means of armed conflict and state control of all branches of

- the economy. See Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (New York: Praeger, 1956), pp. 9–10. See also Linz and Stepan's definition of totalitarianism in Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 40 and pp. 44–45.
- <sup>11</sup> Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 43.
- <sup>12</sup> Juan J. Linz, 'An Authoritarian Regime: The Case of Spain', in Erik Allardt and Yrjö Littunen, eds., *Cleavages, Ideologies and Party Systems* (Helsinki: Transactions of the Westernmarck Society, 1964), pp. 291–342.
- <sup>13</sup> Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2005: Civic Power and Electoral Politics* at <<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/freeworld/2005/essay2005.pdf>>.
- <sup>14</sup> Thomas Carothers, 'The End of the Transition Paradigm', *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (2002): 5–21.
- <sup>15</sup> The notion of 'bureaucratic pluralism' was used by Donald Emmerson to describe the state bureaucracy in Indonesia. It was also used by some Soviet historians to describe the USSR during the Brezhnev period. See Donald K. Emmerson, 'Understanding the New Order: Bureaucratic Pluralism in Indonesia', *Asian Survey*, 23/11 (November 1983): 1220–1241. See also John Keep, *Last of the Empires: A History of the Soviet Union 1945–1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), p. 210.
- <sup>16</sup> For a discussion on the 'atomization of society' in (post-)communist regimes, see Aleksander Smolar, 'From Opposition to Atomization', in Diamond, Larry, Marc F. Plattner, Yun-han Chu, and Hung-mao Tien (eds) *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 263–277, and Theodor Hanf and Ghia Nodia, *Georgia Lurching to Democracy. From agnostic tolerance to pious Jacobinism: Societal change and peoples' reactions* (Baden Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000), p. 45.
- <sup>17</sup> Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 8.
- <sup>18</sup> Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ed. C.P. Dutt (New York, International Publishers, 1940), 109.
- <sup>19</sup> Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics*, expanded edition (New York: Doubleday, 1960).
- <sup>20</sup> Larry Diamond, 'Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered', *American Behavioural Scientist*, Vol. 35, No. 4/5 (1992): 450–99.
- <sup>21</sup> See J.R. Kurth, 'Industrial Change and Political Change: A European Perspective', in David Collier (ed.), *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 319–362, and Seymour Martin Lipset, Kyoung-Ryung Seong and John Charles Torres, 'A Comparative Analysis of the Social Requisites of Democracy', *International Social Science*, 45 (1993): 155–175.
- <sup>22</sup> For example, Diamond, 'Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered'.
- <sup>23</sup> Steven M. Eke and Taras Kuzio, 'Sultanism in Eastern Europe: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarian Populism in Belarus', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 52/3 (2000), 523–47.
- <sup>24</sup> Kathleen J. Mihailisko, 'Belarus: Retreat to Authoritarianism', in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 223–281, in particular p. 240.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 243.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 224.