

# The Variety of Postcommunist States

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Comparative Political Systems

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# Lecture Objectives

- The comparative study of communism and its collapse
- Studying postcommunism
  - democratic consolidation
- Explaining differential postcommunist outcomes
  - Three mini-cases
  - The South and the East
  - Transition and consolidation
- The future of postcommunist studies

# Bullet Point History of Communism

- Marxism and Leninism
- 1917 Russian Revolution
- 1944-45 Russian troops in Eastern and Central Europe/Creation of Soviet satellite system
- 1949 Chinese Revolution
- Additional communist regimes (North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, etc.)

# Politics and Economics under Communism

- Communist party and the notion of a “party-state”
  - Absence of rivals
  - Use of Marxist-Leninist ideology
- State ownership and the centralization of economic decision-making
  - Land collectivization and nationalization of industrial property
  - State-directed industrialization

# Communist Countries, 1980



# The Domino Effect in Reverse: 1989-91

- June, 1989 Solidarity wins parliamentary elections in Poland
- Oct., 1989 Hungarian Parliament adopted legislation providing for multiparty parliamentary elections and a direct presidential election.
- Nov., 1989 East Germany opens West German border; fall of the Berlin Wall
- Dec., 1989 Non-communist government seizes power in Czechoslovakia
- Dec., 1989 Ceausescu government overthrown in Romania
- March, 1990 Free elections in East Germany
- Oct., 1990 German Reunification
- August, 1991 Hard-line communists try to overthrow the government in USSR
- Dec., 1991 USSR dismissed, Commonwealth of Independent States created; Gorbachev resigns his post of President of Soviet Union, formal dismissal of USSR

# Comparative Politics and the Fall of Communism

## Two Broad Categories

- The “How” Question (shorter-term causes)
  - Elite splits or pacts
  - “push from below”
- The “Why” Question (longer-term causes)
  - Shifting international/strategic conditions
  - Gorbachev and the effects of glasnost and perestroika
  - Soviet institutional rigidity
  - Notion of Soviet “constraints” in E. Europe

# Przeworski: Ideology and the Military

- Key features of communism's collapse: speed and non-violence. Why?
  - Ideology: appeals to socialist ideals no longer effective.
  - Military: national armies fail to suppress anti-regime movements.

# Hair Band Power Ballads

- I follow the Moskva  
Down to Gorky Park  
Listening to the wind of change  
An August summer night  
Soldiers passing by  
Listening to the wind of change
- The world is closing in  
Did you ever think  
That we could be so close, like brothers  
The future's in the air  
I can feel it everywhere  
Blowing with the wind of change
- Take me to the magic of the moment  
On a glory night  
Where the children of tomorrow dream away  
in the wind of change
- Walking down the street  
Distant memories  
Are buried in the past forever  
I follow the Moskva  
Down to Gorky Park  
Listening to the wind of change
- Take me to the magic of the moment  
On a glory night  
Where the children of tomorrow share their dreams  
With you and me  
Take me to the magic of the moment  
On a glory night  
Where the children of tomorrow dream away  
in the wind of change



# Hungarian Ambassador Andras Simonyi's five favorite rock records

1. *Last Exit*, by Traffic, 1969.
2. *Johnny Winter*, by Johnny Winter, 1969.
3. *Disraeli Gears*, by Cream, 1967.
4. *Family Entertainment*, by Family (a British folk/rock group), 1969.
5. *Ginger Baker's Air Force*, by Ginger Baker's Air Force, 1970.

# Studying Democratic Consolidation in the Postcommunist Region

## Three Broad Themes

- Development of democratic political institutions.
- The strategic choices of elites.
- The threats to the democracy.

# Approaches to Explaining Democratic Consolidation

- **Stateness**
  - Focus on nationalism and ethnic violence.
- **Democracy and the Market**
  - Parallel processes of marketization and democratization
  - Still “no bourgeoisie, no democracy”?
  - Economic disparity and consolidation.
- **The Role of the State and its Leaders**
  - Strategic/rational choice
  - Political institutions
  - Path dependency

# The Postcommunist Region as a Natural Comparative “Laboratory”

- Opportunity to test and refine existing theories of democratization.
- Similarities in institutional legacies in postcommunist region, but variation in the dependent variables (i.e. the political outcomes).



# Three Postcommunist Cases: Poland, Russia, and Turkmenistan

	Poland	Russia	Turkmenistan
Political Rights	1	6	7
Civil Liberties	1	5	7
GNI/capita	\$4,570	\$2,130	\$1,200
Status	Free	Not Free	Not Free

Source: Freedom House

# Poland

NIT Ratings	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Electoral Process	1.50	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.50	1.50	1.75
Civil Society	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
Independent Media	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.75	1.75	1.50
Governance	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	2.00	2.00	2.00	n/a
National Democratic Governance	n/a	2.50						
Local Democratic Governance	n/a	2.00						
Judicial Framework and Independence <i>(formerly Constitutional, Legislative, &amp; Judicial Framework)</i>	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	1.50	2.00
Corruption	n/a	n/a	2.25	2.25	2.25	2.50	2.50	3.00

Source: Nations in Transition 2005  
(Freedom House)

# Russia

NIT Ratings	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Electoral Process	3.50	3.50	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.75	5.50	6.00
Civil Society	3.75	4.00	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.75
Independent Media	3.75	4.25	4.75	5.25	5.50	5.50	5.75	6.00
Governance	4.00	4.50	4.50	5.00	5.25	5.00	5.25	n/a
National Democratic Governance	n/a	5.75						
Local Democratic Governance	n/a	5.75						
Judicial Framework and Independence <i>(formerly Constitutional, Legislative, &amp; Judicial Framework)</i>	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.75	4.50	4.75	5.25
Corruption	n/a	n/a	6.25	6.25	6.00	5.75	5.75	5.75

Source: Nations in Transition 2005  
(Freedom House)

# Turkmenistan

NIT Ratings	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Electoral Process	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Civil Society	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Independent Media	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Governance	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.75	7.00	n/a
National Democratic Governance	n/a	7.00						
Local Democratic Governance	n/a	7.00						
Judicial Framework and Independence <i>(formerly Constitutional, Legislative, &amp; Judicial Framework)</i>	6.75	6.75	6.75	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00
Corruption	n/a	n/a	6.00	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.25	6.50

Source: Nations in Transition 2005  
(Freedom House)

# Bunce: Comparing Postcommunist Outcomes

- Lessons from the comparative study of Southern and Eastern transitions.
- What is the relationship between how a country transitions to democracy and the extent to which its democracy consolidates over time?
  - Postcommunist region

# Assumptions from the South

- 1) History not as important as immediate concerns.
- 2) Uncertainty of transitions
- 3) Transition process revolves around bargaining between authoritarian leaders and democratic opposition.
- 4) Focus of transition period is building democracy with the support of the authoritarian leaders.

# Challenging the Assumptions: Mass Mobilization in Postcommunist Transitions

- Effects on transition:
  - Represent perception of alternatives to existing order.
  - Compel leaders to enter into transition negotiations.
  - Help to create and/or unify opposition and provides them with bargaining resources.

# Mass Mobilization in Postcommunist Transitions (cont.)

- Effects on consolidation
  - Empirical observation: countries with mass protests during transition were most likely to consolidate successfully. Why?
  - Reduces uncertainty of the transition and generates a mandate for change, resulting in pro-democratic governments after the first competitive elections.

# The Military and Postcommunist Transitions

- Military's political influence limited during transition period.
- History of civil-military relations in postcommunist countries.
- Effect on democratic consolidation: there is less threat from military to democratic regimes in the East than in the South.

# Nationalist Mobilization

- Is nationalist mobilization always bad for democracy? Not necessarily. Key issue is timing.
- Result of later nationalist mobilization (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia): rapid transition/successful consolidation.
- Result of earlier nationalist mobilization (Armenia, Croatia, Georgia): more problematic transition/consolidation.

# Refining Theories of Democratic Transition and Consolidation

- 1) History does matter (military role and nationalist mobilization).
- 2) Transitions not solely function of “high” politics (mass mobilization)
- 3) Variation in uncertainty relates to variation in outcomes.
- 4) The faster the break with the old guard, the better the chances for democracy.

# Another Factor in Consolidation: The European Union



# Copenhagen Criteria for EU Membership (1993)

- Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities.
- Existence of functioning market economy.
- Ability to assume obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic, and monetary union and conformity with *acquis communautaire*.

# The Domestic Effects of EU Accession

- Political moderation
- Acceleration of institutional modernization, the introduction of the rule of law, and the building of a transparent market economy.
- Expansion and internalization of democratic norms and values.

# Rethinking the Comparative Study of Postcommunism

- A second round of democratic breakthroughs: Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine
- “Mercurial” dependent variables of postcommunism.
- The variety of postcommunist states: just how useful is it to talk about a postcommunist region?

# Beyond Europe/Eurasia: Questions for Communist Holdouts

- Sources of post-Cold War communist legitimacy.
- Managing a communist state
- Rethinking the relationship between the market and the state.