

Transnational Networks, Diffusion Dynamics,
and Electoral Change in the Postcommunist World

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“Diffusion is the process whereby past events make future events more likely.”¹

“They (foreign agents) thought Iran is Georgia. The problem is that they do not know this great nation yet.”²

“It is a good thing that U.S. democracy assistance is so chaotic. Otherwise, people might see it as a plot.”³

Elections in Mixed Regimes⁴

The norm in regimes that combine competitive elections with authoritarian rule is for incumbents to win one election after another.⁵ This is not surprising. Just as authoritarian leaders in mixed regime contexts command the necessary economic and political resources to safeguard their powers, so oppositions in these regime contexts tend to be both ineffective and unpopular, largely because of their long record of internal divisions, lackluster campaigns, corruption and even collaboration with the regime, and, most obviously, failures to win office. As a result, electoral competition in what has been variously termed mixed, hybrid, or competitive authoritarian regimes has not usually provided genuine opportunities for turnover in governing officials.⁶ Rather, competitive elections serve other functions—for example, reassuring the international community that democratic practices are in place while helping authoritarians and their allies expose their enemies and calibrate their patronage networks. Rather than viewing electoral competition as imposing constraints on authoritarian leaders, therefore, most analysts have come to understand “...the establishment of elections as a means by which dictators hold on to power.”⁷

However, democratic oppositions do sometimes win elections in mixed regimes—even when authoritarian leaders have gone to considerable lengths to rig them. Perhaps the most striking example of this surprising development was the wave of electoral defeats of authoritarian incumbents or their anointed successors that took place in eight mixed regimes in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia from 1996 to 2005.⁸ While the impact of these electoral turnovers in Bulgaria (1997), Croatia (2000), Georgia (2003), Kyrgyzstan (2005), Romania (1996), Serbia (2000), Slovakia (1998) and Ukraine (2000) varied, as is to be expected, given differences in political contexts and therefore opportunities for change, they nonetheless shared one overarching commonality: by removing authoritarian leaders from office and replacing them with leaders of the democratic opposition, all of these elections were followed by improved democratic performance—for example, the consolidation of new and fragile democracies (Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia); the onset of a transition from dictatorship to democracy (Croatia and Serbia); and at the least a countering of recent authoritarian trends, the introduction of a more competitive politics, and improvements in both civil liberties and the quality of elections (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and especially Ukraine). In this sense, these pivotal elections conformed more generally to what many analysts have seen as the important role elections have often played in democratic development during the third wave. For example, just as improvements in democratic performance seem to demonstrate electoral

cycle effects,⁹ so in the postcommunist region in particular, the victory of the liberal opposition has emerged as the best predictor of democratic progress since transitions from communism began nearly two decades ago.¹⁰

International Diffusion

What explains this remarkable run of democratizing elections? The easy answer is that these electoral breakthroughs were driven by cross-national diffusion. This interpretation follows from four sets of arguments. First, it would very hard to explain these elections in terms of purely domestic processes; that is, as eight separate instances of similar responses to similar domestic situations. One problem with this argument is that so many electoral breakthroughs took place in a short period of time, and another is that these elections took place, as is typical of mixed regime contexts, in quite different political settings, ranging from Bulgaria, which was rated “fully free” by Freedom House on the eve of the 1997 election, to Serbia and Kyrgyzstan, which were both ranked “not free” when their electoral turnovers took place. Second, the pattern of electoral shifts is consistent with a diffusion model, given the clustered character of these events with respect to both time and space and the common focus on elections as *the* site for democratic change.

Third, this region has a rich history of political change moving like wildfire across state boundaries. Here, we refer, most obviously, to the wave of mass protests from 1988 to 1992 that had the remarkable and related effects of bringing down communism and communist states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and, as a result, the Cold War international order.¹¹ However, while unprecedented in their reach, these protests built in fact on earlier protests in the region that had also crossed state boundaries—for example, the protests in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary that took place following the death of Stalin in 1953 and, earlier, the revolutions of 1848.¹² Finally and also in support of an interpretation of diffusion is the mounting evidence that democratic transitions tend to cluster within regions, and that the global reach of democratization during the Third Wave, along with cross-national patterns of democratic change in earlier periods, followed a dynamic quite consistent with a significant role for cross-national diffusion.¹³

Debating Diffusion

These are suggestive, but not fully convincing arguments. In particular, there are two issues that need to be addressed before we can be certain that diffusion played a role in this string of electoral breakthroughs—issues that, we must note, are often left to conjecture in many studies of diffusion dynamics. One is that diffusion refers by definition to the spread of a specific and similar innovation, and an innovation, we must hasten to add, that must be separated from its local consequences. The parallel here in studies of the diffusion of democracy is the issue of what produced democratic transitions—the idea of democracy, a set of new political institutions, a weakening of authoritarian rule (because of domestic and/or international influences), actions taken by international actors to support democratic governance, or a set of new and similar strategies oppositions deploy that enhance their ability to win power?¹⁴ These distinctions are particularly important to draw, because democracy is itself a complex dynamic resisting easy packaging and because the great majority of cases where authoritarian rule ended led in fact to the rise of new authoritarian regimes.¹⁵ To return to the question of interest in this paper: there is little reason to assume a priori that there was

a formula common to these eight electoral efforts that produced turnover in governing officials and parties.

This leads to a second question; that is, *how* these electoral challenges to authoritarian rule moved—or were moved—from one country to others. Diffusion processes are always multidimensional, but that characterization hardly leaves analysts off the hook, particularly given competing perspectives in the literature on diffusion about the role of agency and structure (or the role of, say, transnational networks versus structural isomorphism); emulation, learning and coercion; and the role as well of relational, non-relational and mediated diffusion.¹⁶ At the same time, we must remember that there were in fact considerable obstacles to the diffusion of electoral challenges to dictatorial rule—obstacles that explain, for example, why the norm is for dictators, whether outside or within the postcommunist region, to win, not lose competitive elections. Indeed, in the postcommunist region when, as was also the case most recently in the Presidential elections in Iran, circumstances would seem to have been ideal for generating electoral turnover; that is, when the opposition is united and when citizens take to the streets in large numbers in order to contest stolen elections.¹⁷ Here, the more general point is that these elections were profoundly subversive political and, indeed, economic acts, with the two tied together because of the close relationship during communism between political power and economic resources and its easy translation after communism, especially in regimes governed by authoritarians, into patronage networks that leaders used to distribute money and jobs.¹⁸ Thus, it is one thing to argue that innovations that change the reach and organization of the welfare system or that take a specific approach to public sector downsizing are able to move from one established capitalist order to another¹⁹ and quite another to argue that electoral confrontations with incumbent dictators move from one country to others. If nothing else, dictators tend to be vigilant; they have considerable resources at their disposal to protect themselves and their allies; and they have a great deal to lose if they are removed from office.²⁰ Moreover, even if dictators are unpopular, oppositions, especially in mixed polities that bridge dictatorship and democracy, are often even more unpopular.²¹

Assessing Diffusion

The purpose of this paper is to take these issues into systematic account and assess the role of international diffusion in the spread of electoral turnovers in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia from 1996 to 2005. As we will argue below, this run of electoral breaks with authoritarian rule did in fact reflect the impact of diffusion dynamics. We base this conclusion on both analyses of these elections (and a series of other elections that failed to bring oppositions to power) and over 200 hundred interviews conducted from 2005–2009 with participants in these events in a variety of places in the United States, Western Europe, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine (see Appendix A). We build the case for diffusion in two stages. First, we review the wave itself, arguing that the pattern is consistent with diffusion, given not just the clustering of similar electoral outcomes over time and space, but also, more importantly, the presence in each case of a similar and distinctive approach to defeating dictators. It is precisely this approach—what we term the electoral model—that constitutes the innovation that moved from state to state in the postcommunist region. We then turn our attention to the why and how questions, concentrating on three factors in particular that supported the cross-national movement of the electoral model: the nature

of the model itself, similar conditions among the sites where the model was implemented, and the critical role of transnational democracy promotion networks composed of local oppositions, activists from other countries in the region, and American democracy promoters. This network was responsible for developing the model; carrying it from place to place; amending the model in keeping with local conditions; and, finally, carrying out electoral challenges to authoritarian rule.

Thus, rather than choosing among competing explanations for diffusion, we in effect combine them.²² Our decision to do so, however, was not a function of a resistance on our parts to “taking a stance.” Rather, in our view, all three factors were necessary for the simple reason that the spread of subversive innovations of the kind of interest in this paper has unusually stiff requirements. These exacting conditions, moreover, are also a major reason why the wave of electoral change missed some countries and why the wave appears to have come to an end—a set of issues we address in more detail in other work.²³

Defining Diffusion and its Mechanisms

Following the lead of Givan, Soule, and Roberts, we define diffusion as the “...spread of some innovation through direct or indirect channels across members of a social system.”²⁴ Diffusion, therefore, implies, on the one hand, a significant change in ideas, institutions, policies, models or repertoires of behavior, and, on the other, the subsequent movement of this change within a limited time span to new settings that in most cases are relatively close to the epicenter of change.²⁵ When applied to the case of interest here, diffusion refers to a new approach to defeating dictators through elections that was applied in one country and that then reappeared in a series of other countries in the postcommunist region—though elsewhere as well, as recent electoral confrontations between incumbent regimes and oppositions in Mexico, Kenya, Togo, Ghana, Iran, and the Ivory Coast remind us.

How do we know when diffusion has taken place? As we argued earlier, central to claiming diffusion is the ability, first, to demonstrate that similar innovations appear in staggered fashion in multiple locales, and, second, to explain how and why international transmission occurred.²⁶ The second issue is critical, because there are several alternative explanations for cross-national similarities in adoption patterns. One is that domestic actors can be simply responding to similar conditions in similar ways, albeit at different times, given variations in domestic conditions. At the same time, diffusion can also be an illusion²⁷ when similar cross-national developments reflects the work of powerful international actors orchestrating the introduction of innovations in a number of dependent countries. To provide two examples: can diffusion explain the rise of communism throughout Eastern Europe (minus Greece!) along with China following the end of the Second World War? It is true that the victory of communism was “innovative,” and that the march to communism was a process that was both lagged in time, yet clustered in terms of geography. However, transnational transmission—the foundation of diffusion—is largely absent from this dynamic, because the victory of communist parties reflected, first, Soviet imposition of communism in many of the countries in Eastern Europe, and, second, looking to both Yugoslavia and China, where communism was “home-grown,” a common response to very similar local conditions.²⁸

If common responses to common conditions or international orchestration of cross-national change are inconsistent with diffusion, then what kinds of dynamics can be

hypothesized to drive the cross-national transmission of innovation? The literature presents two extremes, with a number of explanations falling in between these poles. One extreme emphasizes the power of structural similarities among units—or what sociologists have termed structural isomorphism. It is fair to say that this process is usually understood as an accidental byproduct of similarities, with agents of change playing a limited role. The other extreme is actor-rich—for example, conscious decisions by local actors, given the appeal of positive precedents elsewhere, to import the innovation through the adoption of similar goals and strategies. Here, the emphasis is on purposive actions. In between are a variety of other arguments that contain elements of both structure and agency, planned as well as accidental cross-national adoptions of specific innovations—for instance, demonstration effects that change the calculus of outside observers by lowering the costs of emulation, while increasing the incentives to follow suit; the rise of transnational networks that support the spread of an innovation in both a purposive way and as a byproduct of their geographical spread; and the characteristics of specific innovations with respect to their ease of transfer among sites.²⁹

In our view, this thicket of competing explanations can be boiled down to three lines of argument that bridge structure and agency, purposive actions and accidental transmission. The first is that diffusion occurs because the model itself is amenable to cross-national applications. This can be because the model is a tidy package of transportable tasks; because conditions in a number of locales provide opportunities for application; and because the model resonates with important local constituencies by tapping into their values and interests and by capitalizing on earlier efforts at change. The second is the presence of similar local conditions in both the “sending” and the “receiving” sites. These conditions, however, are not just objective, as in structural accounts, but also subjective. Thus, potential local adopters must perceive similarities in contexts before they translate appealing precedents in the neighborhood into relevant and “doable” actions. Finally, diffusion can occur because of the existence of transnational networks supporting the spread of the model. These networks typically bring together both domestic and international actors who share the same goals and who have converged on similar approaches to achieving these goals.³⁰ If all three of these explanations speak to the “why” question, the third also speaks to the “how” issues; that is, how innovations are transported from one context to another.

With these arguments in mind, let us return to the puzzle at hand: why and how electoral challenges to authoritarian rule moved across the postcommunist region. We begin by providing an overview of the eight electoral challenges to dictatorial rule. The purpose of this discussion is to flesh out the pattern of electoral change and provide evidence that a specific and similar innovation appeared in each electoral contest. .

The Electoral Wave

The story of the electoral defeat of dictators begins with four inter-connected political struggles that took place in Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia from 1996–1998.³¹ The first was the massive three-month-long protests in Serbia from 1996–1997—protests that were motivated by Milosevic’s attempt to deny the opposition its significant victories in many of the local elections that took place in 1996.³² These protests (as in the cases that followed) built upon previous rounds of anti-regime mobilizations—in the Serbian case going back to the early 1980s and in Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia to 1989 (and even during the communist period, as in Slovakia from 1967–1968 and the miner’s

strikes in Romania during the 1980s). Although the Serbian protests failed in the short-term (while victorious mayors, for example, were finally allowed to take office, their powers were significantly curtailed, especially in Belgrade, the capital), they contributed in important ways to a subsequent round of election-based protests in the fall of 2000 that succeeded in bringing down Slobodan Milosevic.³³ Also helpful in producing a new generation of protesters and expanding the geography of anti-Milosevic sentiment were Milosevic's decisions following these protests to crack down on the autonomy of universities, local governments and the media.³⁴

The second set of struggles took place in Romania, where the liberal opposition finally came together and ran a sophisticated political campaign that succeeded in replacing the former communist incumbent president with a candidate with far stronger liberal credentials and commitments.³⁵ The third set of struggles took place in Bulgaria at roughly the same time. In Bulgaria, Serbian protests next door had been very influential in motivating the unions, eventually joined by intellectuals and leaders of the opposition, to carry out large-scale protests that brought down the communist-led government and that led to a new election where a united liberal opposition emerged victorious.³⁶ The process then moved to Slovakia. In a pivotal meeting taking place in the Vienna airport at the end of 1997, leaders of the Slovak opposition, the American ambassadors to Slovakia and the Czech Republic, political activists from Romania and Bulgaria, and representatives of the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, Freedom House, and the National Endowment for Democracy came together to devise a strategy for unseating Vladimir Meciar, the illiberal Slovak Prime Minister, in the upcoming parliamentary elections. This meeting led to the OK98 campaign, where all the components of the electoral model (as described below) came together—for example, the formation of a cohesive opposition (bringing together no less than eighteen parties); ambitious campaigns to register voters, advertise the costs of the Meciar regime, and get out the vote; and the deployment of both domestic and international election-monitoring, as well as exit polls. As a result of their efforts and especially the turnout of first-time voters, Meciar lost the election.

The next application of the electoral model was in Croatia in 2000, where the death of the long-serving dictator, Franjo Tudjman, in 1999 had weakened the governing party and provided an opportunity for the opposition to finally win power. The Croatian opposition then applied the “Slovak model” to their own situation, with Slovak activists and European and especially American democracy promoters providing money, strategic advice and even election playbooks.

Later in 2000, Serbia finally experienced its own electoral breakthrough.³⁷ Here, there were several key differences—as is typical of foreign innovations when they are domesticated. One was that the struggle against Milosevic was severely constrained by the heavy authoritarian hand of the regime. Thus, for example, there were no external election monitors in Serbia in the fall 2000 elections; the media were closely controlled by Milosevic; the opposition faced continual and often existential threats; and the assistance provided by the international community was important, but located necessarily outside the borders of the state, given the political impossibility of a domestic presence as a result of the NATO-led bombing of Serbia in 1999 (though the Canadian Embassy substituted in effective fashion for the closed American embassy). Moreover, a student group, Otpor (Resistance), played the central role in the struggle against Milosevic, and it was the size, dedication and geographical spread of this movement, along with the innovative electoral activities of CeSID (the Center for Free Elections and Democracy), which proved to be decisive in defeating Milosevic. Finally, the victory of the opposition (which was composed of eighteen parties that came together around the candidacy of

a moderate nationalist, Vojislav Kostunica—thanks in part to the willingness of the far more charismatic Zoran Djindjic to play a secondary role) was delayed by Milosevic’s refusal to cede power. In contrast to the previous cases discussed, where authoritarian leaders immediately left office, Milosevic stepped down only after the opposition helped mount massive Serbia-wide protests.³⁸

The Georgian opposition then followed suit in the 2003 parliamentary elections—though this produced, it is important to recognize, a coup d’etat by the opposition, since the long-serving President, Eduard Shevardnadze, resigned, but was not in fact up for reelection.³⁹ In Georgia, the political context was less constraining than in Serbia, especially given the lackluster campaign run by Shevardnadze’s allies, the defection of so many key players from the ruling group to the opposition (such as Mikheil Saakashvili, the current president), and the relative openness of the Georgian media. However, the playbook was nonetheless remarkably similar—for example, the formation of both a united opposition and a youth group in support of political change (Kmara); the generation of opposition versus regime vote totals that exposed regime fraud; close collaboration between the opposition and the third sector; and, finally, an extraordinarily ambitious campaign by Mikheil Saakashvili that brought him to virtually every village in Georgia..

The next successful use of elections to oust an authoritarian leader occurred in Ukraine a year later.⁴⁰ As in the Georgian case, a single charismatic politician—in this case, Viktor Yushchenko—played a critical role. As in both the Georgian and Serbian cases, the successful political breakthrough exploited a record of a leadership that had grown increasingly corrupt, careless and violent; benefited from defections from the ruling circles; built upon earlier rounds of protests and recent successes in local elections; and reached out to diverse groups, with young people playing nearly as important a role as the one saw in Serbia with Otpor. Moreover, as in Serbia and Georgia, political protests after the election (which were as large as those in Serbia and lasted longer) were again necessary to force the authoritarian challenger to admit defeat.

The electoral model then moved to Kyrgyzstan, where it succeeded, as in Georgia, in deposing the long-serving president, despite the fact that these elections were also parliamentary, not presidential.⁴¹ It is here where we see less evidence than in the previous seven cases of a well-orchestrated electoral challenge being mounted—though the United States mounted a major effort to improve the quality of the elections in Kyrgyzstan.⁴² Instead, dissatisfaction with electoral outcomes in the south of the country produced protests that then spread to the north, where the capital, Bishkek, is located. The result in very short order was that the President of Kyrgyzstan, Askar Akayev, abdicated and fled to Moscow.⁴³ However, even here we find a variant on contagion effects. President Akayev, who had been in power since the early 1990s and who had become increasingly authoritarian over time, was so taken by his own fears of a “colored revolution” (as they have been commonly called) taking place in his own country that he wrote a book a month before his forced abdication about why such electoral challenges would never succeed in his country! It appears that a major reason why he left office so quickly was his own doubt about the accuracy of the very prediction he had made only a few months before the crisis.

Patterns of Diffusion

This brief narrative highlights all the familiar components of a diffusion dynamic. The breakthrough elections took place in lagged fashion across a large group of countries located within the postcommunist region. Moreover, the contexts within which these elections took place were roughly similar. While varying in their extent of both levels of repression and democratic

“decorations,” all of these regimes nonetheless fell into that large space between full-scale democracies and full-scale dictatorships. Thus, as mixed regimes, they combined, more specifically, democratic institutions, such as parliaments, courts, a sprinkling of civil liberties, and at the least semi-competitive elections, with authoritarian incumbents and political practices. Perhaps the most important indicator of diffusion, however, is that these elections marked a sharp departure from the past in two ways. They all used elections to end the rule of dictators, and oppositions used both new and yet similar strategies to win power—what we have termed in other work the electoral model.

While familiar to most citizens, political activists and political scientists in established democracies, the tasks associated with the electoral model were new to this region and very difficult—and often dangerous—to carry out. These tasks involved, for example, exerting considerable pressures on the regime (in alliance with their international allies) to reform electoral procedures; organizing large-scale voter registration and turnout drives; forming a united opposition; carrying out unusually ambitious political campaigns that forced opposition candidates for the first time to go outside the major cities; and conducting (where politically tolerated) sophisticated public opinion polls, parallel tabulation of votes, and exit polls.⁴⁴ All these features were critical, because they made it harder for authoritarians to win elections and to stay in power. Moreover, they often made all the difference. Electoral turnout had declined over time in most of these countries, because citizens had become divided and demobilized, as well as skeptical about the ability of the opposition to win and even about the advisability of such a victory.⁴⁵ Winning citizens over, in short, was difficult, because it involved a three-part proposition: registering them to vote, getting them to vote, and finding ways to encourage them to support the opposition. It is telling, for example, that electoral turnout was unusually high in many of these elections (especially in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine), and that most of these elections were in fact very close (especially in Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine). Also revealing is what happened in the 2000 Serbian election. With two hours left before the polls closed, CeSID, a non-governmental organization involved in voter turnout, registration and parallel vote tabulation, realized that turnout in key areas was too low to guarantee a victory for the opposition. As a result, they mobilized an ambitious and targeted get-out-the-vote campaign at the last minute that delivered a narrow victory to Vojislav Kostunica, the opposition presidential candidate.

In addition to these core features of the electoral model outlined above, there were other similarities across these electoral episodes in strategies deployed and the distinctiveness of those strategies in comparison with previous elections. For example, in many of these elections extensive use was made of rock concerts, street theatre, marches, and unusually widespread distribution of posters, stickers and t-shirts in order to expand interest in the election and voter registration. In addition, a large number of new organizations formed to monitor elections, get out the vote, tabulate the vote, and engage young people, close ties were forged for the first time between civil society groups and the opposition; and in more repressive polities, protests were organized to force recalcitrant dictators to admit defeat and leave office. Central to the success of these protests, moreover, were conversations during the campaign between opposition leaders and members of the security apparatus.

Once we step back from this wave of electoral change, moreover, we see some other patterns that are typical of diffusion dynamics. One is that, while maintaining a core set of tasks, the model was nonetheless amended as it made its cross-national journey—for instance, the use of parliamentary elections to oust presidents, the elaborate coordination of food and shelter for

protesters in Kyiv and other major cities in Ukraine, and the addition of massive public protests in more authoritarian political contexts. At the same time, we see a familiar cycle, wherein the “early risers”⁴⁶ tended to combine unusually supportive contexts for change, more planning and a more faithful application of the model than “late risers,” where domestic conditions were less supportive and where the role and appeal of attractive precedents outran careful local preparations.

Also important in this regard was the learning that took place not just among groups sharing the goal of subverting the status quo, but also on the part of the defenders of politics “as usual.” This is why, for example, even in other cases in the region where oppositions broke with past practices and managed to unite when running for office, as in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus from 2003 to 2008, they failed nonetheless in their quest to win power.⁴⁷ Just as they did not deploy other strategies included in the electoral toolkit, so they were blocked in many cases from doing so because of the preemptive actions of their authoritarian opponents—a dynamic that reminds us of the important roles in diffusion processes of both learning and repeated interactions between regimes and anti-regime social movements.⁴⁸ At the same time, the electoral showdowns in these three states demonstrate the central importance for the evolution and form of contentious politics of the competition over framing. Thus, authoritarian leaders in these contexts succeeded, unlike their counterparts in Serbia, Ukraine and the like, in painting oppositions as inexperienced leaders and electoral turnover as destabilizing events, and they buttressed their cases by pointing, for example, to the political and economic disarray (albeit quite exaggerated) in Georgia, Ukraine, and Serbia after their electoral breakthroughs. For all of these reasons, not surprisingly, the wave of electoral change in the postcommunist region finally came to an end.

The Benefits of the Electoral Model

Elections are in many respects ideal sites for contesting the power of authoritarian leaders. Authoritarians feel compelled to hold regular and at least semi-competitive elections because of international pressures to do so and because of calculations on the part of authoritarian incumbents that they can control the results while using the elections to “smoke out” the opposition, recalibrate patronage networks, and legitimate their rule to both citizens and the international community.⁴⁹ Moreover, democracy has become a global norm; elections are central to public understandings of democracy; and voting is associated in the public mind with evaluating the regime and making choices (choice, for instance, is the root word in many Slavic languages for election).⁵⁰ Elections are also ideal activities for challenging authoritarian rule, because they occur at regular intervals, thereby facilitating planning while asking citizens to become re-engaged in politics, but only for a circumscribed period to time. Because of their ties to political participation and regime assessment, moreover, elections are also associated with popular protest cycles.⁵¹

Beyond these general points about elections are some specific characteristics of the electoral model that make it a good candidate for cross-national application. One is the core argument underlying the model. Thus, its very purpose is to exploit electoral opportunities for turnover in regimes and governing officials by limiting the ability of the regime to control elections while selling the opposition to the citizenry and thereby enhancing their capacity to win power. It is a model that is designed to solve, therefore, three related constraints on democratic change in mixed regimes: the collective actions problems that limit the ability and the willingness of citizens to reject authoritarian politics, the collective actions problems that limit as well the ability of oppositions to mount effective challenges to the power of authoritarian leaders, and,

finally and rarely recognized, the collective action problems built into a sprawling and poorly-coordinated international democracy promotion community.⁵² In addition, the electoral model has a record of success that dates back to the 1986 election in the Philippines that led to the ouster of Ferdinand Marcos and the Chilean Referendum in 1988 that had the surprising outcome of rejecting the “shoo-in” proposal put forward by the Pinochet dictatorship. Such successes are widely-recognized for the simple reason that elections, especially if they feature surprising outcomes, make the news—largely because they are discrete events that are widely covered by the media and that are easily used by the media to summarize a country’s politics and even its likely future directions. Thus, electoral challenges to authoritarian rule have received a lot of international attention, and they have influenced politics in some surprising places. For example, just as protesters in Lebanon in 2005 made repeated references to the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the opposition in Kenya in 2007 named itself after that very revolution, so student leaders of a movement opposing the constitutional amendments proposed by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 2007 indicated that they had been influenced by what the student movement in Serbia had accomplished in 2000.⁵³

A final asset of the electoral model, as Mark Beissinger⁵⁴ has observed, is that it is an unusually modular innovation.⁵⁵ Most innovations associated with struggles for political power are unwieldy bundles of activities. By contrast, the electoral model combines clear premises, clear goals, and a tidy bundle of tasks and strategies. Indeed, during its travels through the Balkans, the electoral approach produced a playbook of activities that was easy to share across national boundaries—though not always easy, we must remember, to implement, especially in more authoritarian settings where democratizing elections were attempted later in the wave.

Similar Conditions

Despite its region-wide reach, the fall of communism and communist states from 1987 to 1992 produced a far less “regional” region; that is, a far more diverse and less connected set of regimes than had been the case during the communist era. While correct, this observation ignores several critical points. One is the rise in this region after communism of an extremely attractive model of simultaneous and rapid transitions to democracy and capitalism provided by the experiences of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia in particular.⁵⁶ This model, we must remember, featured rates of economic growth considerably above the regional norm; stable politics; and membership in the EU and NATO. Just as important is the one commonality among these trend-setting states: their sharp break with authoritarian rule through the defeat of the communists and the introduction of significant economic reforms.⁵⁷ In addition, to downplay the potential of the postcommunist region for diffusion is to ignore the fact that by far the most common successor to communism in the region was mixed regimes that straddled democracy and dictatorship.⁵⁸ These regimes shared a number of other characteristics as well. These commonalities included not just a communist past, but also: 1) recent statehood or recently regained sovereignty; 2) earlier rounds of political protests; 3) culturally heterogeneous populations which illiberal leaders often used to divide and demobilize the liberal opposition, and 4) generally poor economic performance and/or rapidly growing socioeconomic inequalities that contrasted sharply with communist-era patterns. With some variation, this profile describes every country in the region where successful electoral breakthroughs took place, along with some other countries where significant attempts at challenging authoritarian rule also occurred—for example, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus.

Subjective Similarities

These similarities, however, are objective in nature. While they enhance the willingness and the ability of citizens and oppositions to model themselves after neighboring countries that had experienced electoral breakthroughs, they hardly guarantee that this will happen, especially given the considerable threats to the status quo posed by electoral turnover in regimes governed by authoritarian leaders. Here, what seems to be critical is an assumption of fundamental similarities on the part of both those who carried out such challenges and those who wanted to follow in their footsteps. In our interviews, we found considerable support for this assumption—which is surprising, given the tendency in this region of the world, as in others, for many citizens to make a sharp distinction between, the distinctive politics, history and culture of their own countries and those of other countries. Moreover, there is a very strong sub-regional mindset in this part of the world that draws a thick boundary between Eastern and Central Europe, on the one hand, and the Soviet successor states, on the other. What is critical to recognize in this regard is that the electoral model did not just move across countries, but also “jumped” three key divides within this region—between the Balkans and states located in the northern tier of Eastern and Central Europe (Bulgaria, Romania, and Croatia versus Slovakia) and then between these countries and three Soviet successor states (Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan). This surprising pattern, in combination with the movement of the model from relatively democratic to relatively authoritarian contexts, suggests a more complex story of the assumptions underlying cross-national transmission than one based upon a list of objective similarities.

What we discovered in our interviews is that in the minds of many opposition leaders, political activists, and intellectuals, just as communism produced similar contexts, so leaving communism successfully had a common set of preconditions. While recognizing that certain legacies and situations made the break with communism easier or more difficult, this “to do” list was understood nonetheless to be applicable across the region. Thus, it was widely assumed, for example, that a successful break with communism required broad anti-regime movements that brought together disparate oppositions and citizens; exploitation of opportunities for change as a result of both divisions among the elites and changes in the international system that weakened authoritarians; progress in reaching out to authoritarian reformers and political “fence-sitters;” and mass mobilization against the regime. It was also assumed that failed challenges preceded successful ones; that is, that valuable lessons could be culled from earlier confrontations with the regime. This understanding of how authoritarianism could be challenged was not just well-known to political activists throughout the region and had the additional selling point of having succeeded in bringing down communism; it was also amenable to recycling, with some tinkering, to the new conditions posed by mixed regimes that featured authoritarian leaders, but, to varying degrees, competitive elections.⁵⁹

As a result, just as both older activists and newer ones learned from one another, so the dissident past—which was, we must remember, a dissident, but not a distant past—carried another powerful lesson: the value of sharing strategies across national boundaries when the common motivation was one of defeating dictators in the streets, at the bargaining table, or at the polls.⁶⁰ What further facilitated this perception of similarities across both time and space was continuity in dissident communities. Some of the very people who had been, for example, in Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia during the

communist period later participated in the struggle against Meciar in Slovakia and, indeed, against dictators in Croatia and Serbia. Similarly, many of the most important dissidents in Serbia, dating from the 1970s and 1980s and the anti-war movement of the 1990s played key roles in the defeat of Milosevic.

Self-Interest

We would be remiss in our discussion of perceived similarities, however, if we did not recognize the power of self-interest in nudging oppositions to construct an interpretation of their political situation that was remarkably similar to situations in the neighborhood where dictators were defeated. After all, for the opposition the electoral model held the promise of winning power, rather than continuing to sit on the sidelines alienating publics and bickering with one another about whether to cooperate with the regime, win some seats in parliament and support modest reforms, or boycott elections entirely. Put in stark terms: what opposition would not like to win power; what opposition would not like a playbook that shows how to accomplish that; and, therefore, what opposition would not appreciate precedents showing that these feats could be accomplished? In this sense, self-interest constructed a self-serving perception of common contexts and transferable strategies—even if these perceptions amounted in some cases to wish fulfillment. For example, there is a significant difference, it can be argued, between the situation in Slovakia in 1998 and in Kyrgyzstan in 2005, let alone Armenia and Azerbaijan in the same year.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that self-interest also motivated exporters. They were eager to guarantee the success of their electoral breakthroughs by encouraging similar developments in neighboring countries. This was a particularly powerful argument in the cases of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Serbia, where shared borders placed a premium on a collective democratic effort. However, these assumptions, at the same time, were sometimes misplaced. Dissident cultures, as in Russia, were not always receptive to the ideas and strategies put forward by successful practitioners of electoral change.⁶¹

Regional outreach, moreover, was facilitated by the changing nature of democracy assistance in the region. Membership in the EU in 2004 carried with it a transition for Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians in particular from being the recipients of democracy aid to becoming donors—and donors with not just money and projects, but also considerable expertise in struggling against authoritarianism in the communist, as well as postcommunist world. The recent decision by the European Union to focus assistance on the countries that neighbor the expanded EU—that is, the European Neighborhood Policy—facilitated this process.⁶² As a result, over the past few years casual ties have become more institutionalized, though with the proviso that external assistance was for building democratic capacity, not challenging dictatorial rule.

Thus, postcommunist structural similarities, the self-interest of both senders and receivers, common political goals, similar political opportunities as a result of the tensions between authoritarian politics, yet regular and semi-competitive elections, and political habits and networks that dated back in many cases to the communist era, all worked together to facilitate the geographical spread of electoral challenges to authoritarian rule. While these factors hardly guaranteed that the model would remain the same or necessarily produce the same results, they nonetheless rendered this region, as during the communist era, a supportive site for the diffusion of political change. Like the

electoral model itself, so similarities among these countries—in structure and in the perceptions of similar conditions among political actors—created opportunities, incentives and capacity for the successful cross-national diffusion of the electoral model. In this sense, the phrase, “similar conditions,” over-simplifies what is really a more complex story of an environment unusually conducive to the diffusion of both the electoral model and electoral change. It is not surprising, therefore, that this region stands out, in comparison with others, with respect to both more attempts to defeat dictators at the polls and more success in accomplishing this objective.⁶³

American Orchestration?

The discussion above hinted at the importance of not just local actors in democratizing elections, but also transnational collaborative networks which were involved in all the phases of the innovation process; that is, developing, implementing and transferring the electoral model. It is precisely this question—that is, the “who” and the “how” of transmission, rather than conditions facilitating transmission—where we are forced to confront an earlier argument that casts a shadow on the interpretation of diffusion; that is, the role of powerful international actors orchestrating changes across a group of weaker countries. Vladimir Putin, Hugo Chavez, and the Chinese leadership have argued in concert that these electoral “revolutions” (as they prefer to characterize them) are the work of the United States, which, in their view, is bent on both exporting its political model to other countries and, as a result, drawing those countries into its political, economic, and security orbit.⁶⁴ Thus, while the electoral model is portable and cross-national conditions similar enough to support transfer, the transmission process can nonetheless be reduced to the United States, in collaboration with, say, the EU and American-based foundations, such as the Open Society, orchestrating the defeat of dictators throughout the postcommunist region. From this perspective, for example, while common strategies for defeating dictators speak to the power of a single player, the lags in adoption merely reflect variations in the electoral calendar.

There is little doubt that the United States has been very supportive of democratization through free and fair elections, that the United States has favored the postcommunist region over other parts of the world in its efforts to support democratic development in general; and that the United States was a strong and consistent supporter of democratic change in *all* of the countries that experienced electoral breakthroughs.⁶⁵ Moreover, a recent statistical study of USAID democracy and governance outlays from 1990–2003 has suggested that, of all the forms that American democracy assistance takes, investments in elections have the strongest relationship to improvements in democratic performance.⁶⁶ At the very least, therefore, it is fair to conclude that the United States played a role in the electoral breakthroughs that took place in the postcommunist region from 1996 to 2005.

However, it would be mistaken to conclude, at the same time, that these electoral episodes can be reduced to the machinations of the American government and democracy promotion community. The first problem with this interpretation is that the electoral model itself was not invented by the United States. Rather, it developed through trial and error in the Philippines, with the eventual success in defeating Marcos in turn providing important lessons to the Chilean opposition. What is striking about this story is that both of these events played a pivotal role in weakening American commitment to support of dictators during the Reagan and then the Bush I administrations. Moreover, the United

States has actively promoted free and fair elections throughout the postcommunist region. However, elections are still regularly stolen—as we saw most recently in the 2008 Armenian elections (which did not stop the U.S. from continuing development assistance through the Millennium Challenge Account, despite the tie of that assistance to democratic performance).

Third, the relationship between American pressures for genuinely competitive elections, on the one hand, and electoral breakthroughs, on the other, is uneven. Just as the United States (along with its European allies) has pressed hard for free and fair elections in Belarus, but to no avail, as the 2001 and 2006 presidential elections in that country demonstrate, for example, so it provided limited electoral assistance in the case of Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Moreover, there is little evidence that the United States supported either the coup d'états, albeit with some basis in elections, in both Georgia in 2003 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005.⁶⁷ Indeed, in the Georgian case, pressures on Shevardnadze in the summer of 2003 to clean up the Georgian elections that were to take place later in that year were not followed up in any consistent way. Thus, while the United States was very supportive of the defeat of Meciar in 1998, the victory of the opposition in Croatia in 2000, and the defeat of Milosevic in 2000, and all three cases slide easily from campaigns for free and fair elections to campaigns mounted by the United States, in collaboration with other actors, in support of regime change, American involvement in the other countries where electoral breakthroughs took place was either limited or inconsistent—though the United States was quick to side with those challenging the official results of the Ukrainian election in late 2004.

However, there is a more general point here that requires emphasis. While democracy promotion has risen on the American foreign policy agenda, especially since the Carter administration (and, thus, before the end of the Cold War), American commitment to the defeat of dictators, to put it mildly, has never been a consistent goal of American foreign policy. This is especially the case when this priority collides with concerns about political stability, oil, and national security, not to mention the practical politics of base placement,⁶⁸ and when the United States learned—for instance, from what happened in Palestine—that electoral competition can produce the “wrong” winners.⁶⁹ Thus, while the United States may have targeted the defeat of dictators in three of our cases, in the remainder and in most countries it has been far less willing to do so. Instead, the focus has been on supporting civil society and free and fair elections.

Transnational Networks

Another and more fundamental problem with reducing these electoral breakthroughs to the machinations of the United States is that this assertion misrepresents both how American democracy promotion in general and efforts to challenge dictatorial rule actually work on the ground. For example, U.S. democracy assistance has focused much less on opposition development than on the growth of civil society organizations (though the U.S. did play a role in helping fragmented oppositions become more cohesive in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania). Second, outside groups also played a role, as in the substantial support Russia provided to Yanukovich in the Ukrainian elections in 2004—support that by Russian accounts (though hardly endorsed by the Kremlin!) far outstripped direct campaign contributions by the United States. Third, American support lacks the consistency and the coordination that is in keeping with the idea of an American “plot”—though this was less true, it is fair to say, for the cases of

both Meciar and Milosevic. Finally, both the participants in these elections and members of the American democracy promotion community who were on the ground during these elections all agree that, while American support was helpful, it was beneficial only at the margins.⁷⁰ Moreover, and again, by all accounts, it was most helpful with respect to identifying strategies for campaigning and getting out the vote; long-term support for civil society; withdrawal of support for illiberal incumbents (though this was relatively slow in coming in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan); and rapid, as well as quite vocal critiques of unfair elections (as in Ukraine and Serbia in particular).⁷¹

However, perhaps the most important qualification is that all of the successful electoral breakthroughs were a product of complex transnational collaborations that brought together not just American democracy promoters and even in some cases U.S. ambassadors as well, but also two other key groups: regional democracy promoters who had carried out their own electoral breakthroughs, and experienced, dedicated local activists willing to work hard, think in new ways and take personal risks. With the exception of Kyrgyzstan, moreover, these collaborations involved significant planning. Such planning is necessary, given, for example, the details and the difficulties involved in forming effective oppositions that participate in elections, rather than boycott them, and that succeed in mounting effective campaigns; convincing voters to register, vote, support the opposition, and demand that their votes count; winning the election while gathering the data necessary to demonstrate that victory while convincing citizens that the opposition tally is more accurate than the “official” version; and, finally, preparing themselves and citizens for the possibility that victory will not lead to taking office. As argued earlier, moreover, there were a number of factors in place that laid the groundwork for such planning—for example, the many similarities, perceived and objective, between the countries where electoral breakthroughs took place and other mixed regimes in the region.

Also important was the existence of practice runs with earlier elections, particularly at the local level (which was critical in Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine); prior rounds of political protest; invigoration of divided and dispirited dissident networks; and even earlier experiences with both public opinion polling, election monitoring and exit polls (all of which, for example, were already in place in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, and Georgia). But when all is said and done, there were international coalitions that were particularly vibrant, flexible, persistent, and, it must be said, geographically expansive, if not restless, in the postcommunist region.

Thus, Bulgarian and Romanian activists, emerging from their successful defeat of dictators, then shared their strategies for success with Slovak activists, who then involved themselves, along with the Bulgarians and the Romanians, in both the Croatian and the Serbian elections. Serbian activists, in turn, building upon a longer-term relationship between the older Serbian opposition and the Georgian opposition, shared the “secrets of their success” with their Georgian counterparts before the breakthrough election in 2003. The story continues with Ukraine in 2004, though to a lesser extent in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. By contrast, we discovered in the interviews we conducted in both Armenia and Azerbaijan in March, 2007 that these “regional graduates” of electoral breakthroughs were far less present when key elections were held from in 2003 through 2005.⁷²

The importance of these ties was emphasized repeatedly in the interviews we conducted with American and European democracy promoters and with members of the

opposition, political parties, youth organizations, and NGO leaders in Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and Washington, D.C.⁷³ Perhaps the most common theme, however, was the deeply-held belief among local activists throughout the region that the struggle for democracy in countries that fell short of democratic standards in the postcommunist region was in large measure the *same* struggle. Illiberal leaders and their allies, it is widely assumed, use similar strategies, in part because of their experiences under communism (where there were also, we must remember, regular elections) and in part because they committed similar transgressions and provided, as a result, similar opportunities for political change.

Thus, for “graduates” of successful electoral revolutions, the assumption is that their experiences are relevant to oppositions in neighboring countries where such revolutions are needed, but have not yet occurred. Just as interesting is a strong belief that they have a responsibility to share their insights about effective strategies for political change through elections and later through other mechanisms, such as assistance in the development of more robust local governments and civil society. The activities of the Pontis Foundation in Bratislava in training democratic activists in Belarus, Ukraine, and even Uzbekistan are cases in point. In part, these activities stem from the belief that their democracy is not safe until it is embedded in a larger democratic community; in part it reflects a local version of the EU model of spreading democracy (helped by the European Neighborhood Policy); and in part it is simply a tradition carried on from the communist era, wherein dissidents felt compelled, since they were struggling against the same enemy, to share their ideas and strategies with others in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.⁷⁴

Importers of these strategies, moreover, also assumed that they could and should model themselves after the successful local cases—albeit recognizing the importance of modifications based upon local conditions. Again, in the interviews we have conducted, it was frequently observed that, while local conditions and local struggles were important, knowing that it had been done elsewhere successfully and learning from participants in these cases about how it was done—in short, both precedent and emulation—were critical to both the decision to try to defeat dictators and in the quality of the implementation of the electoral model. From the vantage point of local activists, therefore, electoral breakthroughs elsewhere contributed to optimism and energy, and, because of shared information, strategies as well.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper has been to accomplish two inter-related objectives. Most obviously, we were interested in building a systematic case in support of the role of international diffusion in the spread of electoral defeats of authoritarian leaders in the postcommunist region from 1996 to 2005. However, we were also interested in using this comparative case study in order to enhance our understanding of what diffusion means and what the establishment of diffusion dynamics requires; that is, nailing down such important questions as the nature of the innovation itself and why and how it spreads from one locale to others.

With respect to the first issue, we provided several types of evidence. One was the fact that these electoral episodes clustered over time and space, and another was the existence of striking similarities in the strategic toolkit oppositions and their domestic and international allies used to defeat dictators. Yet another consideration supporting the

interpretation of diffusion was the role of three factors that facilitated the cross-national transmission of the model; that is, the portability of the model and its inherent appeals, objective and perceived similarities among “sending” and “receiving” sites, and the hard work of a transnational network, co-organized by the United States, private foundations based in the West, the European Union (albeit to a lesser extent), regional democracy promoters, and local oppositions and non-governmental organizations. It was this community that fashioned, applied and exported the model. Finally, we were able to reject two competing explanations for this wave of electoral change; that is, that similar domestic circumstances, on the one hand, and, on the other, actions taken by the United States, along with other actors based in the West, were responsible for producing multiple challenges to authoritarian rule in mixed political systems located in postcommunist Europe and Eurasia.

We can now turn to the second question; that is, the implications of this case study for our understanding of international diffusion. Here, we would highlight two points in particular. First and most obviously, we have argued that it is extremely difficult to make a compelling case for international diffusion. Making such a claim depends upon demonstrating the existence of similarly new ways of doing things in multiple locales; patterns of adoption across sites and over time that are consistent with the idea of diffusion; and the existence of players and processes that account for how and why innovations move from one setting to others and, for that matter, to these settings in particular. While the middle factor is relatively easy to nail down, the first and the third are not. This is because these types of questions are best approached by analyzing political dynamics from the ground up, rather than from the “high altitude” that is characteristic of so many diffusion studies as a result of their reliance on quite aggregate data.⁷⁵ Such detailed information, we would also add, cannot be treated as matters for future studies that will devote themselves to the task of fleshing out the drivers of diffusion. Instead, such data are integral to the very claim that international diffusion took place.

Second, it can be argued that, for subversive innovations, the commitment to choosing among different diffusion models may be misplaced. It may be the case that there are stiff requirements for an innovation that challenges the status quo in a fundamental way to embark on a successful cross-national journey. Thus, where conditions are not so similar or not perceived as being similar by key actors, where the model in question lacks easy transportability, where goals converge, but interests are untapped, and/or where local actors lack both a game plan and international and regional allies, subversive innovations may be easily blocked from leaving their home site. Indeed, this is one explanation of why some attempts to defeat dictators failed in this region and why the electoral wave came to an end, as well as why, earlier, the revolutions of 1989 that brought down communism were limited in their regional reach. Just as important is a related implication that should be addressed in future studies of diffusion; that is, the requirement, we would hypothesize, that the development and the transfer of subversive innovations may always require purposive action, rather than a more structural or accidental dynamic. As Giorgi Meladze, a member of the Liberty Institute in Georgia and an important participant in the Rose Revolution in 2003 succinctly put it in the interview we conducted with him in Tbilisi on October 13, 2005: “There are two keys to making challenges to dictators work: belief and planning.”

Appendix A: List of Interviews

(Please note that this list is incomplete. A full list will be available in October, 2009).

Armenia:

1. Armineh Arakelian, Head of Programme for Europe and the CIS for International IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). Yerevan, March 13, 2007.
2. Andrew Bennett, Country Director, National Democratic Institute. Yerevan, March 12, 2007.
3. Tressa Rae Finnerty, Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy. Yerevan, March 9, 2007.
4. Chedomir Flego, IFES, Chief of Party. Yerevan, March 14, 2007.
5. Gevorg Hakobyan, National Academy of Sciences, Youth NGO. March 14, 2007.
6. Aghasi Harutyunyan, Student, Yerevan State University. Yerevan, March 10, 2007.
7. Gavin Helf, USAID, Civil Society Advisor. Yerevan, March 9 and 10, 2007.
8. Aleksandr Iskandaryan, Director, Caucasus Media Institute. Yerevan, March 13, 2007.
9. Gregory Koldys, Senior Democracy Advisor, Anti-Corruption team Leader, USAID. March 9, 2007.
10. Heghine Manasyan, Director, Caucasus Research Resource Center-Armenia, Eurasia Foundation. March 12, 2007.
11. Hasmik Mikayelyan, Cultural Affairs Assistant, U.S. Embassy. Yerevan, March 10m 12-13m 2007.
12. Arsen Mkrtchyan (Sharon's former student who works for UN and EU). Yerevan, March 11, 2007.
13. Valeri V. Poghossyan, Member of Constitutional Court and Yerevan State Linguistic University. Yerevan, March 14, 2007.
14. Daniel Renna, Political Officer, U.S. Embassy in Armenia. March 9, 2007.
15. Alex Sadar, Chief of Party, USAID Implementing Partner, Civic Advocacy Support Program. Yerevan, March 14, 2007.
16. Keneshbek Sainazarov, EMB training Consultant and IFES. Yerevan, March 14, 2007.
17. Taline Sanassarian, Country Director, National Democratic Institute. Yerevan, March 13, 2007.
18. Nver Sargsyan, Programme Associate, UNDP, Gender and Politics Program in Southern Caucasus. Yerevan, March 13, 2007.

Azerbaijan (Incomplete List)

1. Leila Alieva, President, Center for National and International Studies. Baku, March 5, 2007 and Washington, D.C..
2. Aida Badalova, President, Youth Without Frontiers, March 6, 2007.
3. Daniel Blessington, Country Director, IFES. Baku, March 5, 2007.
4. Dallas Frohrib, International Republican Institute, Country Director. Baku, March 6, 2007.
5. Isa Gambar, Chairman, Musavat Party. Baku, March 7, 2007.
6. Fuad Mustafayev, Deputy Chairman, Azerbaijan Popular Front Party. Baku, March 5, 2007.
7. Rebecca Naslund, Political Officer, Embassy of the U.S. Baku, March 7, 2007.
8. Joan Polaschik, First Secretary, Political and Economic Affairs, U.S. Embassy. Baku, March 7, 2007.
9. Amy Schultz, Country Director, National Democratic Institute. Baku, March 6, 2007.
10. Lala Shovkat, Professor and Chairperson of the National Unity Movement and the Liberal Party, March 5, 2007.
11. Fuad Suyleymanov, Director of Civil Society Programs, Open Society. Baku, March 5, 2007.
12. Samir Taghiyev, Program Manager, Eurasia Foundation. Baku, March 6, 2007.

Belarus (to be filled in later)

Bulgaria

1. Avis Bohlen, former U.S. Ambassador. Washington, D.C., November 15, 2006.
2. Scott Carpenter, Keston Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Director of Project Fikra, former Director of IRI, Bulgaria. Washington, D.C., April 9, 2009.
3. Ivan Krastev (Director of the Center for Liberal Strategies), Berlin, Germany, July 27, 2005.
4. Patrick Merloe, Senior Associate and Director of Electoral Programs, National Democratic Institute. Washington, D.C., April 30, 2009.

Croatia. (to be updated later)

Georgia

1. Armineh Arakelian, Head of Programme for Europe and the CIS for International IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance). Tbilisi, October 21, 2005.
2. Ketik Bakradze, USAID, Office of Democracy and Governance. Tbilisi, March 8, 2007.
3. Anna Dolidze, Georgian Young Lawyers Association. Interviewed in Ithaca, NY, June 9, 2009.
4. Guram Chikovani, Rector, Tbilisi Institute of Asia and Africa. Tbilisi, October 17, 2005.
5. David Darchiashvili, Executive Director, Open Society Georgia Foundation. Tbilisi, October 15, 2005.
6. Archil Gegeshidze, International Relations, Senior fellow at the Georgia Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. Tbilisi, October 17, 2005.
7. Andro Gigauri, Office of Democracy and Governance, USAID. Tbilisi, March 8, 2007. Tbilisi, March, 2007.
8. Mike Kelleher, Country Director, National Democratic Institute. Tbilisi, October 19, 2005.
9. Tina Khidasheli, former President of the Georgian Young Lawyer's Association and Member of the Republican Party. Tbilisi, October 17, 2005.
10. Nino Kobakhidze, Director's Assistant, National Democratic Institute. Tbilisi, October 19, 2005.
11. Alexandre (Sasha) Kukhianidze, Director of the Georgian Office of the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (based at American University). Tbilisi, October 14, 2009.
12. Gvantsa Liparteliani, Liberty Institute. Tbilisi, October 13, 2005.
13. Giorgi Meladze, Liberty Institute. Tbilisi, October 13, 2005.
14. Valeri Melikadze, Economist. Tbilisi, October 18, 2005.
15. Mark Mullen, Transparency International (and formerly National Democratic Institute). Tbilisi, October 14, 2005.
16. Marina Muskhelishvili, Center for Social Studies. Tbilisi, October 15, 2005.
17. Giorgi Nizharadze, Social Research Director, International Center on Conflict and Negotiation. Tbilisi, October 16, 2005.
18. Ghia Nodia, Political Analyst and Political Scientist. Tbilisi, October 18, 2005.
19. Ketik Nozadze, Student and member of Kmara. Tbilisi, October 14-18, 2005.
20. Vladimir Papava, Economist. Philadelphia, February 24, 2007.
21. Levan Ramishvili, Liberty Institute. Tbilisi, October 13, 2005.
22. Alex Rondeli, President, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies. Tbilisi, October 14, 2005.
23. Tea Tutberidze, Liberty Institute. Tbilisi, October 13, 2005.
24. David Usupashvili, Chairman of the Republican Party. Tbilisi, October 19, 2005.
25. John Wright, European Center for Minority Issues. Tbilisi, October 18, 2005.
26. Tamara Zhvania, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy. Tbilisi, October 18, 2005.

Kyrgyzstan. (conducted by Igor Logvinenko—with the exceptions of Li Lifan, Amy Schultz, and Noor Borbieva)

1. Kumar Bekbolotov, Central Asia Program Director for IWPR. Interviewed in Bishkek by Igor Logvinenko, January, 2008.
2. Noor Borbieva, Notre Dame, IN, April 23, 2008.

3. Shairbek Juraev, Assistant Professor, American University—Central Asia. Interviewed by Igor Logvinenko, January, 2008.
4. Joldon Kutmanaliev, former Soros Fellow at Cornell University and Assistant Professor, Bishkek Humanities University. Interviewed by Igor Logvinenko, Bishkek, January, 2008.
5. Li Lifan, Associate Professor and Deputy Secretary-General of Center for Shanghai Cooperation Organization Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, council member of Shanghai Society for Russia and Central Asia, China. Ithaca, NY, April 28, 2009.
6. Keneshbek Sainazarov, Country Director for USAID Quality Learning Project; former Director of Civic Education; and Consultant in Training for IFES, Armenia. Yerevan, Armenia, March 13, 2007. Also interviewed by Igor Logvinenko on January, 2008 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
7. Amy Schultz, Former Country Director, National Democratic Institute, Kyrgyzstan. Baku, March 6, 2007.,
8. Azamat Temirkulov, Assistant Professor, American University—Central Asia. Interviewed by Igor Logvinenko, January, 2008.
9. Bermet Tursunkulova, Chair, International and Comparative Politics Department, American University—Central Asia. Interviewed by Igor Logvinenko, January, 2008.

Roundtables:

1. Baku, March 7, 2007, Roundtable with Leaders of NGOs in Azerbaijan. Included Anar Ahmadov, Director, Caucasus Research Resource Center, Eurasia Foundation; Aida Badalova, President, Youth without Frontiers, Tabriz Jabbarov, Free Minds Association, Emin Milli, Alumni Network, and Parviz Bagirov, Youth/Education Programs Director/Open Society Institute-Assistance Foundation.
2. Belgrade, April 13, 2005 (organized by the Jefferson Institute): Ivana Spasic (Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade); Milan St. Protic (Mayor of Belgrade in 2000); Dusan Pavlovic (Faculty of Sociology at the University of Belgrade); Milan Podunavac?
3. Charlottesville, Va, November 9, 2007. Organized by the Jefferson Institute. Gregory Simpson; Sonja Licht; Milan Nikolic; Aaron Presnall; Paul Shoup.
4. Yerevan, Armenia: Roundtable with USAID Democracy and Governance Team, American Embassy, March 9, 2007.
5. Yerevan, Armenia: Roundtable discussions with the Armenian Center for National and International Studies (a think tank), March 9, 2007. Raffi Hovhannisyian, Director
6. Yerevan, Armenia: Roundtable with Political Party Leaders (organized by the National Democratic Institute), March 12, 2007.
7. Yerevan, Armenia: Roundtable at the Institute for Political Research (Advisors to the President of Armenia), March 12, 2007. Hovhannes Asryan (Director, Institute for Political Research), Ashot yeghiazaryan, Hayk Demoyan, Igor Muradyan, Ruzanna Issaghulyan, Garnik Issagulyan (President's Advisor on National Security Issues), and Levon Andreasyan (Vice Director, Institute of Political Research)

Serbia (Incomplete list)

1. Svetlana Adamovic, Associate Professor, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade. Belgrade, April 14, 2005.
2. Boris Begovic*, Professor and Vice President, Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies. Belgrade, April 15, 2005.
3. Florian Bieber, Lecturer, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Kent. Belgrade, April 10, 2005.
4. Marko Blagojevic, Director, Center for Elections and Democracy, April 11, 2005.
5. Srdjan Bogosavljevic, Director, Strategic Marketing Research. Belgrade, April 13, 2005.

6. Daniel Calingaert, Freedom House (formerly International Republican Institute), Washington, D.C., July 19, 2005.
7. Suzana Grubjesic, Member of Parliament and member of the G17Plus Party (was Executive Director of G17Plus). Belgrade, April 11, 2005.
8. Stephen B. Heintz, President, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Belgrade, April 16, 2005.
9. Dusan Janjic*, Forum for Ethnic Relations. Belgrade, April 11, 2005.
10. Nenad Konstantinovic, Subotic-Homen Law Office and Member of the Executive Committee of the Democratic Movement/Committee for Legal Issues. Belgrade, April 15, 2005.
11. Adriana Lazinica*, Senior Program Manager, USAID. Belgrade, April 15, 2005.
12. Sonja Licht, President of the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence. Belgrade, April 12, 2005; Charlottesville, VA, November 9, 2007; and Philadelphia, February 23, 2007.
13. Ivan Marovic, former leader of Otpor. Washington, D.C. October 14, 2004 and Belgrade, April 14, 2005.
14. Andrej Milivojevic, former member of Otpor and graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley. Berkeley, February 14, 2007.
15. Tony Monaghan, Small Arms Control for UNDP. Belgrade, April 12, 2005.
16. Milan Nic, Pontis Foundation, Belgrade, April 13, 2005.
17. Milan Nikolic*, Director, Center for Policy Studies. Belgrade, April 12, 2005 and Charlottesville, VA, November 9, 2007.
18. Jim O'Brien, Albright Associates and former Presidential Envoy for the Balkans and Advisor to Madeline Albright (Clinton Administration). Washington, D.C., November 16, 2006.
19. Dusan Pavlovic, Senior Lecturer at the University of Belgrade. Belgrade, April 13 and 14, 2005.
20. Vesna Pesic, former Ambassador to Mexico for Serbia and Montenegro and longtime political activist. Belgrade, April 14, 2005.
21. Srdje Popovic, Sharon interviewed him in March, 2007 at Oxford conference. Don't have contact info., but he was bigshot in Otpor.
22. Aaron Presnall*, Director, Jefferson Institute (wife is Biljana): apresnall@jeffersoninst.org. April 9, 2005, Belgrade.
23. Daniel Serwer, Vice President, Peace and Stability Operations, U.S. Institute of Peace. Washington, D.C., November 17, 2006.
24. Steven Simic, Consultant. April 13, 2005.
25. Gregory Simpson, Country Director, International Republican Institute, Serbia. Belgrade, April 13, 2005 and Charlottesville, November 9, 2007.
26. Voja Stanovic, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade. April 14, 2005.
27. Mike Staresinic*, Freedom House-Belgrade. Belgrade, April 15, 2005.
28. J. Walter Veirs, Program Officer, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Belgrade, April 16, 2005.
29. Ivan Vejvoda, Director, Balkan Trust, German Marshall Fund, Belgrade. Belgrade, April 11, 2005.
30. Aleksandra Vesic*, BCIF (Belgrade Program for Political Distinctiveness). Head of local NGO. Wonderful woman funded by Rockefeller and Mott.

Slovakia (needs to be added)

Ukraine (needs to be added)

Multiple Cases:

1. Harry Barnes, former United States Ambassador to Chile. Philadelphia, February 24, 2007.
2. Scott Carpenter, Keston Fellow at the Washington Institute and former Director of IRI, Bulgaria, and former Deputy Secretary of State. Washington, D.C., April 9, 2009.
3. Robert Gelbard, Former Ambassador to Indonesia and former member of the National Security Council (under Ronald Reagan), Washington Global Partners, LLC. Ithaca, NY, March 1, 2007.
4. David Kostelancik, Deputy Director, Office of North Central Europe Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. Washington, D.C., November 16, 2006.
5. Roland Kovats, Freedom House. Interviewed in Budapest, May 24, 2006 (check date on this).

6. Lindsey Lloyd, Regional Director of Europe, International Republican Institute. November 16, 2006.
7. Patrick Merloe, Senior Associate and Director of Electoral Programs, National Democratic Institute, interviewed in Washington, D.C., April 30, 2009.
8. Daniel Serwer, Vice President, Peace and Stability Operations, U.S. Institute of Peace. Washington, D.C., November 17, 2006.

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Notes

¹ Oliver and Myers, 2003, p. 174. Pamela E. Oliver and Daniel J. Myers, "Networks, Diffusion, and Cycles of Collective Action," in Mario Diani and Doug McAdam, eds., *Social Movement Analysis: The Network Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003): p. 174.

² Ayatollah Khamenei's reaction to the post-election protests in Iran, June, 2009 (quoted in Fathi, 2009, p. A7).

³ Nino Kobakhidze, staff member of the National Democratic Institute in Georgia, interview in Tbilisi, October 19, 2005.

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comments on an earlier draft. The arguments presented in this paper are based upon over 200 interviews conducted from 2005–2007 with American and European democracy promoters and ambassadors, along with leaders of opposition parties, democratic activists, and civil society organizations. These interviews took place in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Ithaca, NY, along with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Georgia, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

⁵ Howard and Roessler, 2006; Schedler, 2002, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Brownlee, 2009.

⁶ Diamond, 2002; Levitsky and Way, 2002, 2008; Bunce and Wolchik, 2009, Ch. 2.

⁷ Gandhi and Lust-Okar, 2009, p. 404

⁸ See, for example, McFaul, 2005; Beissinger, 2007, 2006; Tucker, 2007; Demes and Forbrig, 2007; Kuzio, 2005; Way, 2005a, 2005b; Bunce and Wolchik, 2010a, 2010b, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2006a, 2006b; Borbieva, 2007; Radnitz, 2006 and 2009; Petrova, 2009; Ganev, 2007.

⁹ See Teorell and Hadenius 2009; Lindberg 2006 and 2009; Brownlee, 2009. The argument here is not that elections necessarily contribute to democratic change, but, rather, that, if democratic improvements take place, they tend to do so following elections.

¹⁰ Bunce 1994, 1999a, 2003; Fish 1998 and 2005.

¹¹ See, especially, Beissinger, 2002.

¹² See Bunce 1999b; Bunce and Wolchik 2006a and 2009a, 2009d.

¹³ Starr and Lindborg 2003; Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett, 2008; Gleditsch and Ward, 2006; Mainwaring and Perez Linan, 2005; and for longer-term perspectives on the same question, Wejnert 2004; and Markoff 1996.

¹⁴ This issue is ignored, for example, in the studies cited in the previous footnote.

¹⁵ Hadenius and Teorell, 2006.

¹⁶ Bockman and Eyal, 2007; Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett, 2008; Givan, Roberts and Soule, 2010; Simmons and Elkins; Weyland, 2005, 2007; Elkins and Simmons; Tarrow 2005.

¹⁷ See, especially, Bunce and Wolchik, 2010a, 2010b; but see Thompson and Kuntz, 2004; Tucker, 2007; and Kuntz and Thompson, 2009 for a different argument.

¹⁸ See Bunce 1994; Fish 1998 and 2005.

¹⁹ See Lee and Strang 2006 and Weyland 2005.

²⁰ See, especially, Kapuczinski 2006; and Silitski 2009, 2005a, and 2005b.

²¹ See Bunce and Wolchik, 2010a and 2010b for evidence on this question.

²² For competing perspectives on diffusion, see Jacoby 2004 and 2006; Strang and Soule 1998; Kim and Strang 2006; Tarrow 2005; Bockman and Eyal 2002; Glenn 2000; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2007; Elkins and Simmons 2005; Simmons and Elkins 2004; Beissinger 2002, 2006, and 2007; Osa 2001; Muiznieks 1995; and Diani 2003.

²³ See Bunce and Wolchik 2009b, Chapter Seven, Eight and Ten; Bunce and Wolchik, 2009a, 2010a, 2010b.

²⁴ Given, Soule and Roberts, 2010, p. 1. Also see Rogers 1995.

²⁵ Ackerman and Duvall 2000; Aksartova 2005; Lee and Strang 2006; Beissinger 2002; Brinks and Coppedge 2006; Markoff 1996; Tarrow 2005 and Tarrow and della Porta, 2005.

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- ²⁶ For purposes of simplifying our discussion, we refer to the cross-national spread of innovation, rather than the more accurate characterization of the process as one that simply involves multiple sites—which can, of course, occur within, as well as across states.
- ²⁷ To borrow from Brinks and Coppedge 2006.
- ²⁸ And see Bockman and Eyal 2002, on misrepresenting the spread of neoliberal orthodoxy in Eastern Europe.
- ²⁹ See, for instance, Tarrow 2005; Beissinger 2006 and 2007; Glenn 2000; Bockman and Eyal 2002; Soule and Strang 1998; Simmons and Elkins 2004; and Elkins and Simmons 2005; Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett, 2008.
- ³⁰ See Tarrow 2005 and Keck and Sikkink 1998.
- ³¹ For a more detailed discussion of the wave, see Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapters Three through Six.
- ³² Lazic 1999 and Pavlovic 2005.
- ³³ See St. Protic 2005; Bieber 2003; Jennings 2009; and Pribecevic 2004.
- ³⁴ Pavlovic 2005; Goati, 2000; Spasic and Subotic 2000.
- ³⁵ See, for example, Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapter Three.
- ³⁶ See, especially, Petrova 2009 and Ganev 2007.
- ³⁷ See Bunce and Wolchik 2006a and 2009.
- ³⁸ St. Protich 2005 and Pavlovic 2005.
- ³⁹ Papava 2005 and Wheatley 2005.
- ⁴⁰ See, in particular, Kuzio 2005; Kubicek 2005; Way 2005a and 2005b; McFaul 2007; Youngs and McFaul 2009; and Bunce and Wolchik 2009 book, Chapter Five.
- ⁴¹ See, especially, Radnitz 2009 and Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapter Six.
- ⁴² Borbieva 2007.
- ⁴³ On the Kyrgyz case, see, especially, Weyerman 2005; Radnitz 2006 and 2009; and Fuhrmann 2006.
- ⁴⁴ See, especially, Gel'man 2005; van de Walle 2005 and 2006; Howard and Roessler 2006; and Garber and Cowan 1993.
- ⁴⁵ See, for instance, Djordjevic 2005 on Serbia.
- ⁴⁶ As Mark Beissinger 2002 has termed them.
- ⁴⁷ See Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapter Eight and Bunce and Wolchi, 2010a, 2010b.
- ⁴⁸ See Chapter One and the concluding chapter by Sidney Tarrow and Doug McAdam 1983.
- ⁴⁹ Schedler 2006 and Lust-Okar 2004 and 2005.
- ⁵⁰ See, especially, Bratton, Mattes and Boadi 2004 and Dalton, Shin, and Chou 2007.
- ⁵¹ Trejo 2004 and McAdam and Tarrow 2009.
- ⁵² Tucker 2007 and Bunce and Wolchik, 2009, Chapters Two and Nine.
- ⁵³ Choucair 2005; Rodenbeck 2005; MacFarquer 2005; Romero 2007; and McKinley 2006.
- ⁵⁴ Beissinger 2007.
- ⁵⁵ And see Tarrow 1998 and 2005 on this argument.

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- ⁵⁶ Bunce 2006.
- ⁵⁷ Bunce 2003.
- ⁵⁸ And see Levitsky and Way 2002 and 2008 and Diamond 2002.
- ⁵⁹ Bunce and Wolchik, 2009e.
- ⁶⁰ And see Kenney, 2002 on Solidarity and regional outreach during the 1980s)
- ⁶¹ See, especially, Mendelson and Garber 2005.
- ⁶² See Fischer 2005.
- ⁶³ See Bunce and Wolchik, 2006b.
- ⁶⁴ See, for example, Herd 2005; Nyrgren 2005; Silitsky 2007; And, see, especially, the interpretations of the 2005 election in Kyrgyzstan in Kniazov 2005 and the interview with Vladimir Meciar in Fukic and Capin 1999.
- ⁶⁵ See Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapters Two and Seven.
- ⁶⁶ Finkel, et.al. 2006.
- ⁶⁷ See, especially, Mitchell 2009 and Radnitz 2009.
- ⁶⁸ See, for example, Cooley 2008.
- ⁶⁹ See Cooley 2008; Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapter Seven and 2009; and Kaush and Youngs 2009.
- ⁷⁰ See, especially, Carothers, 1999, 2004, 2007a, 2007b; Demes and Forbrig 2007. Also refer to the interviews in Appendix A.
- ⁷¹ See Bunce and Wolchik 2009, Chapters Three through Seven.
- ⁷² However, it is interesting to note that one leader of the opposition in Azerbaijan—that is, Isa Gambar of the Musavat Party-- had in fact witnessed firsthand the Orange Revolution in Ukraine. And he has maintained contact with Viktor Yushchenko since 2004.
- ⁷³ Also see Meladze 2005; Kandelaki 2005; and Devdariani, 2003)
- ⁷⁴ Kenney 2002.
- ⁷⁵ The phrase is taken from Jacoby, 2006.