

The Diffusion of Revolutions: Comparing Recent Regime Turnovers in Five Post-Communist Countries

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Abstract: The recent revolutions or near-revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine share the following characteristics: stolen elections triggered them, there were massive, nonviolent demonstrations, and the opposition united behind a single, often charismatic, leader. This article combines two theoretical perspectives on the recent revolutions in southeast Europe and Central Asia: a state failure perspective that focuses on the domestic characteristics that helps explain these events, and a diffusion perspective that focuses on the interrelatedness between these events by means of the interchange of financial resources, activists, and knowledge. It concludes that foreign interventions aimed at the democratization of unstable states might facilitate regime change by democratic or undemocratic means, but it is never a sufficient condition for regime change.

Keywords: democratization, policy diffusion, revolutions, state failure

Introduction

The latest wave of revolutions in southeast Europe and Central Asia illustrates the vulnerability of oppressive, authoritarian, and nondemocratic regimes. This wave started in Serbia in 2000, and ended in Kyrgyzstan in early 2005.¹ Almost all of these revolutions share the following characteristics: stolen elections triggered them, there were massive, nonviolent demonstrations, and the opposition united behind a single, often charismatic, leader. Revolutions are often linked to the concept of failing states. However, various sources cite the role of foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that help build and sustain a coalition of opposition parties, train volunteers in campaigning and monitoring election results, and even formulate and implement strategies to overthrow the regime.² Singh even speaks of franchised revolutions.³

This article combines two theoretical perspectives on the recent revolutions in southeast Europe and Central Asia: a state failure perspective that focuses on the domestic characteristics that helps explain these events and a diffusion perspective that focuses on the

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interrelatedness between these events by means of the interchange of financial resources, activists, and knowledge. This article contributes to the explanatory and—perhaps more important—predictive power of the state failure approach by taking into account the deliberate strategies of foreign actors to overthrow regimes. This analysis is based on a review of existing literature and databases, except for the Moldovan case, which is based on a series of interviews from March 2005.

The literature on revolutions is elaborate and does not provide a consensus on how to define a revolution. I follow Goodwin,⁴ who defines a revolution as any and all instances in which a state or government is overthrown and thereby transformed by a popular movement in an irregular, extraconstitutional, or violent manner. However, whether an event is labeled a revolution is not a matter of a simple dichotomy. Following Yinger and Katz,⁵ one could argue that there is a potential variety in the amount of “revolutioness” in a revolution. So while using Goodwin’s broad definition, I emphasize the variety within individual revolutions.

The next section gives a brief overview of the state of the art of both state failure and policy diffusion literature and integrates them in an analytical framework. The following section has a description and analyses of Serbia’s October Revolution, Georgia’s Rose Revolution, Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, Moldova’s Silent Revolution, and Kyrgyzstan’s Tulip Revolution.⁶ Conclusions are then drawn from a comparative analysis of these five revolutions. The final section discusses the lessons that might be drawn regarding nonviolent action against nondemocratic regimes beyond the cases that are analyzed in this article.

Theoretical Approaches: State Failure and Policy Diffusion

The analytical framework that is used for analyzing the revolutions (and their interrelatedness) in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan is described here. This framework consists of the integration of two theoretical perspectives: studies of state failure and theories on the diffusion of policies. The “state failure” perspective is a useful perspective for analyzing revolutions, but it starts with the domestic situation within a country. Adding a diffusion perspective enables a more dynamic perspective that also incorporates the role of foreign interventions. Table 1 gives an overview of the analytical framework that is used in this article. The remainder of this section explains the framework. First, the state failure perspective is described and complemented with the issue of state performance. Second, an overview of the diffusion perspective is given. Finally, the role of “trigger events” is discussed. Trigger events are actions that set events in motion once favorable conditions for a revolution emerge.

State Failure

State failure refers to the complete or partial collapse of state authority.⁷ According to Goldstone et al., there are four different consequences of state failure: revolutionary wars, ethnic wars, adverse regime changes, and genocides and politicides.⁸ In this perception, the nonviolent regime changes in the five countries that are the subject of this article could also be regarded as state failure events.

The State Failure Task Force, established in 1994 by the U.S. government, provides one of the most comprehensive overviews of factors affecting the likelihood of state failure. This Task Force analyzed the impact of more than one thousand variables on the likelihood of state failure.⁹ The following overview of factors contributing to state failure relies heavily on the Task Force’s final report and its findings can be summarized as follows.¹⁰ The strongest influence on the risk of state failure is regime type. The odds of failure for partially democratic

TABLE 1. Analytical Framework

Theoretical perspective	Factors	Indicators
State failure	Regime type	Authoritarian, semidemocratic, or full democratic ^a
	Material well-being	Infant mortality ^b
	Trade openness	Import plus export as a percentage of GDP (PPP) ^c
	Population size and density ^d	
State capacity	Corruption	Level of transparency ^e
	Tax revenues	Tax revenues as a percentage of GDP ^f
	Implementation	Composite state capacity score ^g
Policy diffusion	Transnational NGO networks	Development of NGO sector ^h
	Involvement of Otpor activists	Qualitative descriptions
	Openness for ideas	Composite openness score ⁱ
	Press freedom	Freedom of the press rating ^j
Trigger events	Elections	Qualitative descriptions
	Opposition strategy	Qualitative descriptions

Note. GDP=gross domestic product; PPP=purchasing power parity.

^aPolity IV; ^bUnicef Transmonnee; ^cWorld Development Indicators; ^dWorld Development Indicators; ^eTransparency International; ^fWorld Development Indicators; ^gWorld Bank Governance Indicators; ^hUSAID; ⁱWorld Development Indicators; ^jFreedom House

regimes are seven times as high as they are for full democracies and full autocracies. A low level of material well-being, trade barriers, and the presence of major civil conflicts in bordering states roughly doubles the odds of state failure. Finally, countries with larger populations and higher population density have 30 percent and 40 percent greater odds of state failure, respectively. The Task Force did not find a direct correlation to state failure due to environmental factors, ethnic or religious discrimination, price inflation, government debt, or military spending. The next section discusses each of these explanatory factors in more detail.

Regime Type

The Task Force roughly distinguishes three regime types: full democracies, partial democracies, and autocracies. Surprisingly, the odds of state failure are almost equivalent for fully autocratic and fully democratic regimes. The odds of failure are seven times as high for partial democracies.¹¹ Whereas Goldstone et al. use a rather rude distinction between full democracies, partial democracies, and full autocracies, this article uses the polity score based on the information in the Polity IV reports.¹² This polity variable is an index based on several aspects of a country's political system. The polity variable ranges between -10 (fully autocratic) and + 10 (fully democratic).¹³

Material Well-Being

Indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, life expectancy, and calories consumed per capita are used to measure a country's quality of life. The Task Force con-

cludes that all of these indicators are highly correlated, but infant mortality is most consistently associated with state failure. According to the Task Force, a country's infant mortality rate as such does not cause a change in the risk of state failure, but it provides a sensitive indicator of broader changes in economic development and material well-being. In this article, I relate the infant mortality rate to the average in the region. A high infant mortality rate is when the rate is at least one standard deviation above the average in the region.¹⁴

Trade Openness

According to the Task Force, the odds of state failure are nearly twice as high in countries with relatively low trade openness than in countries with higher trade openness. Whereas other economic variables such as the inflation rate, investment, levels of government taxation, debt and spending, flows of foreign aid, and GDP growth are not significant factors associated with state failure, trade openness is. The Task Force believes that trade leads to faster growth and more democracy, which encourage political stability.¹⁵

Population Size and Density

Although the relation between both population size and density are rather weak compared with other factors, population characteristics affect the risk of state failure. Some political scientists argue that larger populations are more difficult to control, and that mobilization of the population is easier in densely populated countries.

Conflicts in Neighboring States

In its conceptualization of the impact of neighboring states, the Task Force relies heavily on the idea of armed conflicts. "The presence of major conflicts in neighboring states might mean that guns and other weapons are more readily available throughout the region. Concern for the plight of ethnic kin, or even the mere example of conflict, might also encourage groups to act violently."¹⁶ However, in the policy diffusion literature, a much more elaborate concept has been developed on the impact of activities in neighboring or nearby systems. The following section deals with this issue in more detail.

State Capacity

The Task Force has a set of six variables that are helpful in predicting the likelihood of a revolution. Additionally, over the last decade an extensive set of literature has developed on the weakness of postcommunist states. Some authors regard the weakness of states as the main reason for disappointment in a state, which of course is an important potential cause for revolution.¹⁷ Therefore, I complement the Task Force's list of variables with indicators that refer to the strength or weakness of a state. Partially following Fukuyama,¹⁸ three indicators are used to measure a state's strength: the level of corruption, the level of tax revenue, and an index variable based on government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and the rule of law, as identified in the World Bank Governance Indicators dataset.¹⁹ These issues are expected to enhance the country's vulnerability to state failure events.

Policy Diffusion

Most diffusion studies have been conducted among American states and discuss the processes by which innovations spread from one unit, individual, or entity to another. Diffusion is described as "any pattern of successive adoption of a policy innovation."²⁰ This

section focuses on transnational nongovernmental organization (NGO) networks as an important means of the spread of the nonviolent revolutions in southeastern Europe and Eurasia, and second, on the geographical dimension of the diffusion of the revolutions.

Transnational Networks and the Diffusion of Revolutions

Transnational NGO networks have become increasingly important over the last decade.²¹ According to Levitsky and Way, the emergence of organizations and networks committed to the promotion of democracy and human rights has significantly weakened authoritarian regimes. Transnational networks, which are strengthened by the proliferation of international human rights organizations and other international NGOs, cheaper air travel, and new information technologies, draw international attention to human rights abuses, lobby Western governments to take action against abusive governments, and help protect and empower domestic opposition groups.

From a civil society perspective, there has been a lot of attention on the role of the Serbian-based student group Otpor (Resistance) in the recent diffusion of nonviolent transitions.²² The ties between Otpor, George Soros'

Open Society Institute, and the U.S. government led to accusations of the neo-imperialist character of the revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan.

The combination of both state failure and policy diffusion explanations for the revolutions discussed in this article enables Otpor's strategies and tactics, as well as the role of other transnational networks, without mythologizing their impact, to be taken into account. In the comparative analysis, both the general characteristics of transnational NGO networks in these countries and the available evidence for Otpor's role are taken into account.

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Geography and the Diffusion of Revolutions

Kopstein and Reilly argue that in the governance of postcommunist countries, there are powerful geographical effects that cannot be reduced to other factors that account for varieties in the reform path in postcommunist societies.²³ Of course, it is not only a country's geographical location that causes diffusion. A wide variety of mechanisms, including learning, competitive and cooperative interdependence, coercion, common norms, and symbolic imitation, cause diffusion.²⁴ Therefore, I focus on the concept of openness. This concept reflects the amount to which ideas and information can freely flow into a country and be distributed within it. In this article, the measure of openness is a composite score based on indicators that are conceptually linked to the exchange of ideas and associated in prior research of the diffusion processes.²⁵

Finally, several authors stress the importance of independent media before and during revolutions.²⁶ Reports on the events in other countries, within the countries, and the fact that election results are disputed, all heavily rely on an independent media. Therefore, press freedom is used as a final indicator for the diffusion thesis.

Combining the state failure and policy diffusion literature creates an integrative framework that accounts for a country's revolutionary potential. However, a high potential does not automatically lead to a revolution. Although the political situation might be highly flammable, there cannot be an explosion without a spark. What is needed is a concrete event that serves as this spark and sets a chain of events in motion.

Thomson and Kuntz argue that within mixed regimes, stolen elections often create conditions that propagate democratic revolutions. "Elections are considered stolen when a regime hinders an opposition victory through blatant manipulation of the vote count or through the annulment of the electoral results."²⁷

The integrated framework of analysis for the study of the recent revolutions in post-communist countries begins with a traditional state failure perspective, but it incorporates both state performance and openness. This enables a more dynamic perspective of the events. In the remainder of this article, I assess what this integrative framework contributes to the explanation of the events in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan.

Nonviolent Revolutions in Five Postcommunist Countries: An Overview

This section presents a brief overview of the recent revolutions in five postcommunist countries. Each country description starts with a short overview of the events, followed by a discussion of the elements in the analytical framework. The order is based on the moment the revolutions occurred. A comparative analysis is the subject of the next section. Appendix 1 provides the quantitative data that are used in these descriptions.

Serbia's October Revolution

When it occurred, Serbia's October 2000 revolution was considered to be Europe's final revolution.²⁸ However, it also might have caused a chain reaction in Eurasia. Unlike other transitional countries, Slobodan Milošević's Socialist Party won the first free elections in Serbia. During fourteen parliamentary and presidential elections between 1990 and 2000, the opposition did not attain any political power before the fall of 2000, with the exception of a number of cities and communes in the November 1996 local elections.

Milošević called for early elections on September 24, 2000, on his own initiative. Like many other autocratic rulers involved in electoral politics, Milošević was overconfident in his support and underestimated the skills and passion of his opponents. They formed the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS), a broad alliance of eighteen parties. The DOS united behind the candidacy of Vojislav Koštunica, who did not have any past associations with Milošević, communism, or the West. He had a reputation for being humble, honest, principled, and moderately nationalistic. Koštunica won by a landslide in the first round of the elections. According to exit polls carried out by voluntary monitors, he received 50.2 percent of the votes, compared with 37.1 percent for Milošević. In a desperate attempt to stop Milošević's defeat, the Federal Elections Commission stated that Koštunica had won a plurality but not a majority, and thus called for a second round on October 8, but Koštunica refused to participate. Instead, the DOS called for a countrywide strike to culminate in a massive demonstration in the center of Belgrade on October 5 if the regime did not recognize Koštunica's victory. Massive protests followed, and about 13,000 miners from the country's major coal mine, Kolubara, halted production and joined the protesters.

The demonstrations reached a climax on October 5, when more than 700,000 citizens from all over Serbia poured onto the streets of Belgrade and other Serbian cities. At a little

past 3 p.m., as the ultimatum to Milošević expired, the demonstrators seized the federal parliament and national television buildings. Milošević's elite police units refused fire on the crowd, joining the demonstrators instead. By early evening, the opposition was in control of all strategic sites in Belgrade.²⁹

Analysis

Appendix 1 gives an overview of scores on all selected indicators. From a state failure perspective, Serbia, before 2000, was vulnerable to state failure. The low level of trade openness, the high level of corruption, and the weak implementation of policies account for that. Milošević's authoritarian characteristics kept him in power.

Of the five countries discussed in this article, Serbia is the country in which foreign intervention was the strongest. However, the low level of openness to ideas in society and the low level of press freedom prevented the diffusion of the ideas of Western supporters for democratization in Serbia. In the months before the election, Otpor's activists network served as a substitute for other means of communication. This explains its relatively large role in Serbia's revolution. "Otpor's founding principles were straightforward, refined by failure of earlier agitation: remove Milošević because otherwise nothing will change; spread resistance to the provinces; galvanize a cowed population by providing examples of individual bravery; be hip and funny, where possible, to create a contemporary message; avoid hierarchy because the regime will co-opt any leader." Based on interviews with Washington, DC-based officials, Cohen concludes that "from August 1999 the dollars started to flow to Otpor pretty significantly."³⁰

However, various sources claim that we should not overestimate the effect of Western support. Slobodan Homen put it to the *Washington Post* as follows: "Without American support, it would have been much more difficult. There would have been a revolution anyway, but the assistance helped us avoid bloodshed. Otpor activists coordinated many of their activities with the opposition's well-run campaign, ensuring that the crowds turned out in the provinces and that the people went out to vote on election day."³¹

Whereas the Otpor activists were instrumental in mobilizing the population, especially Serbia's youth, much more important was that the traditionally heavily divided opposition united behind a single candidate that the population considered trustworthy. According to various sources, Milošević never anticipated the possibility that he might lose the elections. In fact, he was so confident that he even scheduled early elections.³²

The main ingredients of Serbia's revolution were Milošević's unpopularity, the opposition's unity behind a good candidate, and Otpor's help in mobilizing the Serbian people. In other words, domestic characteristics played a dominant role. Help from abroad might have catalyzed the events by strengthening and refining Otpor's tactics, but it did not play the crucial role that some authors claim.

Georgia's Rose Revolution

Georgia is considered to be one of the most volatile countries in Eurasia because of the desire for independence of two of its regions: Abkhazia and South-Ossetia. Moreover, the country is considered to be a key player in the quest for influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia by many other countries, including Russia, Turkey, the United States, Iran, and Afghanistan.³³

The November 2003 parliamentary elections that led to the ousting of President Eduard Shevardnadze were the subject of intense competition between the pro-governmental bloc

“For a New Georgia” and several opposition parties. NGOs, including the youth organization Kmara! (Enough!), supported the united opposition. The Open Society Institute helped establish Kmara! with a start-up grant in April 2003. It attacked government corruption through a poster and graffiti campaign, copying Otpor’s tactics.³⁴ Kmara! and the independent TV station Rustavi-2 are considered to be important forces behind the Rose Revolution.³⁵

On November 2, 2003, the evening of the election, reports began to surface about discrepancies between the results reported by the Central Electoral Commission of Georgia and those reported by the NGO Fair Elections, which the Open Society Institute partly financed.³⁶ In contrast to the preelection period, the leading figures and blocs in the opposition united on the second day after the elections. Their first joint action called on the people of Tbilisi to demonstrate on November 4. Three weeks of intense protests similar to the peaceful protests in Serbia followed. Various sources claim that Otpor activists trained 1,500 National Movement and 2,000 Kmara! members in nonviolent resistance.³⁷ Several of the key players of the Rose Revolution claimed that it was Rustavi-2, much more than Kmara! or other NGOs, that mobilized the people and influenced general opinion.³⁸ During the protests, roses were given to the army and the police to stress the nonviolent character of the protest. Although the flower is not in any way related to Georgia, the rose became the symbol of the revolution.

The events came to a height on November 22. During the formal opening session of the newly elected Parliament, which the opposition boycotted, demonstrators managed to enter the parliament building. The opposition’s leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, holding a rose, interrupted Shevardnadze during his opening remarks and asked him to resign. The president fled to his residence, where he declared a state of emergency. However, since none of the law-enforcement bodies carried out the order, it failed. On November 23, news of Shevardnadze’s resignation spread.³⁹

The Supreme Court annulled the November 2 elections. New parliamentary elections were scheduled, and the now united opposition nominated Saakashvili as a presidential candidate. He won the January 2004 presidential elections with 96.7 percent of the vote, the united opposition won 67 percent of the seats in the new Parliament in the March 2004 parliamentary elections.

Analysis

As in Serbia, the main reasons for the Rose Revolution were domestic. The regime was moderately democratic, but extremely weak. A popular joke in Georgia was that, in the period before the elections, Shevardnadze was the president of Tbilisi, but it was unclear who governed the rest of the country. Regional leaders controlled the regions of Abkhazia in the northwest, South Ossetia in the north, and Ajaria in the southwest.⁴⁰ Moreover, material well-being and trade openness were low, as were other important state characteristics such as tax revenues and the implementation of policies. With corruption increasing to the highest level in the region, Georgia, at the end of Shevardnadze’s reign, desperately needed regime change.

The involvement of NGOs in Georgia’s revolution was considerably less than in Serbia. According to Baker, “U.S. government-funded programs provided instruction in building independent democratic institutions to any parties in Georgia that wanted it, though nowhere near as actively as in Yugoslavia, where it was targeted at overthrowing Milošević. . . . It’s safe to say it was a more generic and traditional support of the democratic process in general.”⁴¹ Moreover, to prevent further destabilization, both the United States and Rus-

sia did not intervene. Both countries anticipated a gradual transition, mainly because Shevardnadze was nearing the end of his constitutionally mandated last term as president and was not expected to try to run again.

Openness and press freedoms were relatively high in Georgia, which meant that Western pro-democratization groups had easier access to Georgia. However, foreign intervention was rather limited and unfocused in Georgia. The role of Georgian-based NGOs was rather limited as well. "In sum, NGOs in Georgia did not *cause* the Rose Revolution in any simple sense, and they also were not day-to-day managers of events."⁴² This also holds true for the Otpor-styled student movement Kmara! According to Saakashvili, the independent TV-station Rustavi-2 played an important role in mobilizing the people. "The NGOs were not that important, but Rustavi-2 was extremely important. . . . The NGOs did have some role in organizing student protests, but I think this was mostly Rustavi work really. Most of the students who came out on the streets were brought by Rustavi, not by the NGOs. They had some younger students in the Kmara! movement, but these were relatively small numbers."⁴³

The Georgian case must be considered much more of a domestic revolution than a revolution triggered by Western intervention. A highly unpopular president, an extremely weak state, and a high level of corruption were the main ingredients. Georgia's relative openness to ideas and knowledge might have facilitated the events, but there is no evidence of a specific, targeted Western-sponsored campaign against Shevardnadze.

Ukraine's Orange Revolution

Of the revolutions that are discussed in this article, Ukraine's Orange Revolution has received the most prominent media coverage in the West. Due to its size and geopolitical position, it is the event that has most deeply affected relations between Russia and the West, specifically the United States.⁴⁴

Since Leonid Kuchma's election in 1994, Ukraine followed a path that is comparable to that of other countries in the region. Increasing corruption, diminishing freedom of the press, and a slow pace of economic reforms, combined with an extensive use of surveillance by state surveillance organizations created a pseudo-democracy. Darden even speaks of Ukraine as a "black-mail state."⁴⁵

In December 1999, pressure from Western donor countries seeking deeper economic reforms resulted in Viktor Yushchenko's appointment as prime minister. In 2000, his first year as prime minister, the economy grew by nearly 6 percent, after years of negative growth. However, to reach his goals, Yushchenko needed to interfere with the privileges of Kuchma's cronies by imposing fiscal discipline and rigorously collecting tax revenues and privatization receipts.⁴⁶

However, increasing political uncertainty between 2000 and 2001 undermined Yushchenko's economic successes. In April 2001, Parliament passed a vote of no-confidence in Yushchenko's government, which promptly resigned. The move led some analysts to conclude that oligarchic interest groups linked with the Communist Party were determined to sabotage or derail the Yushchenko program.⁴⁷

With the constitution limiting Kuchma to two terms as president, the ruling class needed to find a successor to Kuchma who would be capable of beating Yushchenko, who had become the candidate for the united opposition parties. Various sources claim that the selection of the highly unpopular Viktor Yanukovich was an important factor in Yushchenko's victory.⁴⁸

In the first round on October 31, 2004, twenty-four candidates ran for president. On November 21, 2004, the election was supposed to reach a final conclusion in the run-off between Yanukovich and Yushchenko. Immediately after the second round, there were widespread accusations by Ukrainian and foreign election monitors of massive electoral fraud.⁴⁹

However, the Electoral Commission stated that the election had been free and fair. After this statement Yushchenko's supporters—all dressed in his campaign color orange—took hold of Kyiv's Independence Square. Chaotic days followed. Yushchenko urged the people not to leave Independence Square until the Electoral Commission's ruling was overturned. "On November 27, after days of mass protests and the siege of the cabinet of min-

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isters, the presidential administration, and Kuchma's residence, parliament met and by a clear majority voted to declare the poll invalid. Six days later, Ukraine's supreme court annulled the results of the runoff, accepting Yushchenko's legal team's evidence of massive fraud and official high-level conspiracy. The court called for fresh elections.”⁵⁰

On December 26, Ukrainians went to the polls for the third time in 2004.

Amid 12,000 European, American,

Russian, and Asian elections monitors, Yushchenko received 52 percent of the votes and Viktor Yanukovich 44 percent.

Analysis

Ukraine's strategic importance, size, and the extensive media coverage of the Orange Revolution have provoked an extensive body of analyses of the events in the last weeks of 2004. Even more than in the other countries, accusations of “imperialism,” “conspiracy,” “a franchised revolution,” or even a “carefully planned coup d'état” could be found in (leftist) media around the world.⁵¹ To quote Singh—a former Indian ambassador to Turkey and Azerbaijan: “. . . experience gained in Serbia, Georgia and Belarus has been invaluable to the U.S. in planning the operation in Kiev. . . . The operation . . . is now so smooth that methods have matured into a template for winning other people's elections. Located in the center of Belgrade, the Center for Non-violent Resistance, staffed by computer-literate youngsters, is ready for hire and will carry out operations to beat even a regime that controls the mass media, the judges, the courts, the security apparatus and the voting stations.”⁵²

If we go beyond this rhetoric, the following elements were important in the development of the Ukrainian case.

With a relatively democratic regime, decreasing corruption, and better performances in trade and material well-being than the average in the region, Ukraine was not susceptible to revolution from a state failure perspective. As the Orange Revolution does not have a clear cause in domestic characteristics, the diffusion perspective helps explain the events. Over the years, Ukraine had been considered a seamy state led by a criminal elite ruling over a passive populace. However, international donors, who had relatively easy access to Ukraine, had been assisting civil-society development for over a decade. These

nonpartisan contributions encompassed an array of organizations, including—according to one source—the seemingly innocent Ukrainian scouting program.⁵³ Although “the West” contributed to the viability of Ukrainian civil society, it is highly unlikely that the efforts were aimed exclusively or primarily at overthrowing the Kuchma regime or discrediting Yanukovich.

It is hard to identify Pora’s (It’s Time) precise role in the Orange Revolution. It is clear that Otpor helped train Pora activists. The Dutch Alfred Mozer Foundation claims that more than 600 young people attended training seminars. “The main characteristic of those seminars has been the involvement of Serbian resistance movement Otpor activists as trainers, who did their best to transfer the hands-on knowledge of leading a non-violent resistance struggle against the corrupt regime.”⁵⁴ Consequently, Pora’s activities had clear similarities to Otpor and Kmara!’s campaigns. Important Pora tactics were Web sites, stickers, and pranks and slogans comparable to those used in other countries. “Channel Five, sympathetic to Yushchenko, played an important role in the elections in breaking the state’s monopoly on information.”⁵⁵

Moldova’s Silent Revolution

It may seem odd to include Moldova in this comparative analysis, as no revolution has occurred there. However, in this description of the events in Moldova in 2004, it is clear that the Communist Party’s change in strategy in anticipation to the elections might have prevented a revolution resembling those discussed in this article.

Moldova, the poorest country in Europe, has the distinction of being the first country in which an unreformed Communist Party regained control over the government through democratic elections in 2001.⁵⁶ The Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) won 71 of the 101 seats in Parliament. Thus, the PCRM leader, Vladimir Voronin, was elected Moldova’s new president on April 4, 2001. In its campaign, the PCRM presented itself as an old-fashioned Communist Party, based on Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Important themes in the campaign were clamping down on corruption, setting price controls, linguistic re-Russification, and reliance on the Kremlin to resolve the conflict in Transnistria.⁵⁷ Transnistria is the region that is separated from Moldova, ruled by the Moscow-supported dictator Igor Smirnov, and controlled by Russian peacekeepers.

However, on some issues, the Voronin government proved to be more pragmatic than might have been expected. This especially holds true in the economic sphere and its foreign policy.⁵⁸ In contrast, the fragile state of democracy in Moldova suffered greatly from the PCRM. In the judiciary, the PCRM replaced numerous judges with their own loyal supporters and effectively placed the media under state control.

Several commentators argue that a reversal in Voronin’s foreign policy toward the end of his first term prevented a revolution. A revolution that had already been named the “Grapes Revolution” (Moldova produces a lot of wine) or the “Sunflower Revolution” by some.⁵⁹ With this regard, March spoke of a “orange evolution” in Moldova and Page stated that “Moldova has pro-Western revolution even before poll is held,”⁶⁰ whereas Ciobanu spoke of the “‘Paradoxical Revolution’ in Moldova.”⁶¹

The cause for Voronin’s remarkable change in policy lies in the last-minute rejection in 2003 of the Kozak memorandum, a Russian attempt to resolve the Transnistria conflict. This memorandum granted disproportionate powers to the separatist region relative to its size and allowed the continued deployment of Russian troops.⁶² Both pressures from the

West and the opposition in Moldova—including a massive rally in Chişinău—forced Voronin to back-off from the memorandum.

In the months before the election, Voronin developed an anti-Russian attitude. He refused to invite Russian election observers, expelled Russians while accusing them of espionage, and arranged meetings with Viktor Yushchenko and Mikheil Saakashvili in the weeks before the elections. Although the Communists' electoral victory was not as overwhelming as in 2001, in the 2005 elections they gained fifty-six seats. Perhaps even more striking than Voronin's U-turn, is the collaboration that evolved in the aftermath of the elections between the conservative Christian-Democrat People's Party, the moderate right Social-Liberal Party, and the PCRM.

Analysis

To some extent, the Moldovan case is similar to the other cases. However, the absence of a proper revolution also makes it the odd one out. With regard to the central question in this article, the most interesting aspect of this case is an assessment of to what extent domestic motives or foreign—especially Western—forces inspired Voronin's dramatic shift in political strategy.

Although there are some sources that indicate that Western preparations for a Serbian-style revolution in Moldova had begun, these are not widespread. For instance, Stratfor claims that "Sources on Capitol Hill said Feb. 18 that the U.S. government has 'dispatched' \$1.7 million 'to support Moldovan democracy.' Sources indicate that the National Endowment for Democracy and non-governmental organization such as George Soros' Open Society Institute have been holding seminars for the Moldovan opposition that explain how to govern and how 'root democracy' works to achieve democracy through protests."⁶³ While observing Voronin's remarkable change in strategy, another source claimed "Washington abandoned the idea of sending political technologists to Kishinev to train local oppositionists in the art of revolution making. The figures of Georgian 'Kmara' revolutionary organization were recommended to leave Moldova immediately. The leader of 'Kmara' Tea Tutberidze hurried to state that her people had nothing to do in Kishinev and went home immediately."⁶⁴

But these stories are rare and are based more on incidental rather than structural ties. There is no evidence of the development of a youth organization comparable with Otpor or Kmara! With approximately 600,000 mainly young people having left the country to work abroad, the base for the development of such an organization was limited.

Moreover, as Voronin said, "There is no point for power to falsify the elections, as according to many polls, the ruling party is ahead of the opposition with a big margin."⁶⁵ Several sources claim that the opposition's limited access to state-owned television partly accounts for this. More important, there was no point in a revolution as the PCRM and the largest part of the opposition agreed on the country's pro-European and anti-Russian strategy.

It is impossible to pinpoint a single cause for Voronin's and the PCRM's remarkable change in attitude toward Russia and the West. From a comparative perspective, it will always remain unclear how events would have developed without this change in direction. What is clear, however, is that a variety of causes, including Voronin's tactical considerations, the colored revolutions in other countries, and the massive protest in Chişinău had an impact on this change in perspective. This illustrates the value of the diffusion perspective that is embraced in this article.

Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution

Kyrgyzstan, a tiny mountainous republic, was seen in the early 1990s as an “island of democracy,” within which flourished a vibrant realm of social organization.⁶⁶ Under the communist leadership of Absamat Masaliyev, the glasnost and perestroika that were characteristic of the late Soviet empire had left the country unaffected. However, his mishandling of interethnic conflicts in the southern city of Osh led to a discrediting of Masaliyev's leadership. In October 1990, the Parliament chose Askar Akayev, a politically inexperienced physics professor, to become president.

As dissatisfaction with Akayev's leadership mounted in the late 1990s, increased authoritarianism was aimed at blocking criticism and retaining power. The 2000 parliamentary elections were reported to be heavily falsified, provoking considerable tension throughout the country, particularly in the south. Akayev easily won the the presidential elections that year as his most prominent challenger, Feliks Kulov, who had been convicted of vague charges of abuse of power, was serving a ten-year prison sentence.

In 2005, Akayev's unpopularity had grown considerably. The long-term problems of corruption, socioeconomic decline, and ineffective governance had caused much of the population, especially in the poorer, more conservative south, to oppose Akayev. The events that would eventually lead to the Tulip Revolution started with the second round of the parliamentary elections on March 13, 2005. Whereas the first round had been rather fair,⁶⁷ the run-off on March 13 involved more irregularities than the first. This runoff caused the initial protests. The supporters of individual candidates who had been the victims of deregistration or some clear campaign irregularity, staged these protests, which were also about local issues. But, gradually, the wider opposition joined, and as the agenda broadened to national issues, people began to call for President Akayev's resignation.⁶⁸

The final stage of the revolution started on March 20, when 10,000 people in Jalalabad retook control of the regional administration building that they had been forced to leave by security forces earlier. Similar events took place in Osh, so that most of the south was effectively in opposition hands. After these events, the opposition politicians agreed to hold a major rally in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital, on March 24. What happened that day surprised almost everybody, including opposition leaders, who claimed that they were prepared for several days of protest. “If there was a prearranged plan, they seemed unaware of it.”⁶⁹ After a peaceful start, the atmosphere grew slightly tenser, resulting in a fight between a group of young people and the riot police outside Akayev's headquarters, the White House. The police managed to force the protestors back twice, but having been given orders not to use arms, they realized they could not keep control and fled. Within minutes, protesters occupied the White House. After these events, Bishkek was in complete disorder for a few days, until Feliks Kulov, who was released from prison, managed to bring the situation under control and stop the looting.⁷⁰

In the aftermath, the newly elected Parliament was recognized as legitimate, and Kurmanbek Bakiyev, the former prime minister and one of the opposition's central figures, became the prime minister and acting president. In the 2005 presidential elections, he received almost 90 percent of the vote.

Analysis

From a state failure perspective, Kyrgyzstan is a state that is vulnerable to collapse, with its mixed authoritarian regime, low level of material well-being, low trade openness, high level of corruption, and weak implementation of policies.

From a diffusion perspective, it seems highly unlikely that Western interventions aimed at improving democracy have had a high impact in Kyrgyzstan. The level of openness and press freedoms in Kyrgyzstan are low. Moreover, the situation of the NGO sector has worsened significantly recently. For this reason, Kyrgyzstan's revolution was a domestic event. Several sources confirm the limited impact of foreign efforts aimed at democracy-building. The International Crisis Group stated that "Akayev began openly criticising U.S. policy and putting more pressure on Western-funded NGOs. But he attacked the wrong target: such NGOs and civil society had only a limited impact on the March 2005 events." Burke argues that "change in Kyrgyzstan is being led by a far less disciplined force, with no widely recognized leader and no clearly defined program. It should thus not be viewed as another in a string of 'velvet' revolutions."⁷¹

TABLE 2. Comparative Results

Theoretical perspective	Factors	Serbia	Georgia
State failure	Regime type	Authoritarian	Moderately democratic, but very weak
	Material well-being	High	Low
	Trade openness	Low, as a consequence of sanctions	Low
	Population size and density	No impact	No impact
State capacity	Corruption	High, increasing to highest in the region in 2000	Very high, increasing to highest in the region in 2003
	Tax revenues Implementation	No data Very low	Very low Low
Policy diffusion	Nongovernmental organization sector	Improvement in years preceding revolutions, especially in advocacy and infrastructure	Georgia used to be example of rather healthy civil society but worsening since 2000
	Involvement of Otpor activists	High	Moderate
	Openness for ideas Press freedom	Low Partly free	Average Partly free
Trigger events	Elections	Stolen elections lead to massive protests	Stolen elections lead to considerable protests
	Opposition strategy	Significant change in strategy: united and new, undisputed leader	Fragmented before elections, united after elections

Given the highly local character of the parliamentary elections, it is highly unclear which forces were behind the first stage of the revolution. It started as separate revolts in the country's southern oblasts, where clans of politicians disqualified from the recent parliamentary elections occupied government buildings.⁷² The main organizers were aides of local candidates, who also arranged food and other support. The Otpor-style student group Kel Kel played a very limited role in the Kyrgyz events.⁷³

The opposition movement in Kyrgyzstan has traditionally been highly divided. In the months before the elections, opposition personalities promoted different agendas, with only a limited attempt to promote a united slate of candidates, despite formal agreements. Unity only evolved when the various opposition leaders agreed to stage a rally in Bishkek.

The local accents on the March 2005 parliamentary elections differentiate the effect of stolen elections from the other cases. It is obvious that there was election fraud on a mas-

Ukraine	Moldova	Kyrgyzstan
Democratic	Democratic, although decreasing freedom of the press	Mixed authoritarian
High	Average	Very low
Slightly above average	Above average and increasing	Low
Size might explain differences between east and west, no other impacts	No impact	No impact
High	High, but decreasing	Very high
Slightly above average	Moderate and increasing	No data
Low	Low	Low
Improving since 2001, slightly below average in 2003	Relatively weak	Relatively weak
Moderate	Almost none	Almost none
Low	Slightly above average	Low
Not free	Partly free to not free	Not free
Stolen elections led to massive protests	Elections were free and rather fair	Disputed and chaotic elections led to local protests
Significant change in strategy: united and with an undisputed leader	More or less united but weak vis-à-vis ruling party	Fragmented before elections, united after elections

sive scale, but it is not clear which parties propagated this fraud. Not only did the interests of Akayev and his family play a role, a wide variety of other local and regional interests were also at stake. Therefore, although the elections were chaotic and fraud occurred, there was no orchestrated attempt to favor one specific party or candidate.

Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution was primarily a domestic event, which a well-organized and well-prepared opposition did not orchestrate. It evolved from local protests, and clearly was not triggered or even facilitated by the interventions of foreign NGOs.

A Comparative Analysis

Table 2 provides a comparative overview of the characteristics of each of the countries that are discussed in this article. This analysis is based on two theoretical perspectives: domestic state failure and policy diffusion. The central claim in this article is that the combination of both the characteristics of the governance system and the openness for ideas, knowledge, and other resources improve our understanding of the occurrence of state failure events.

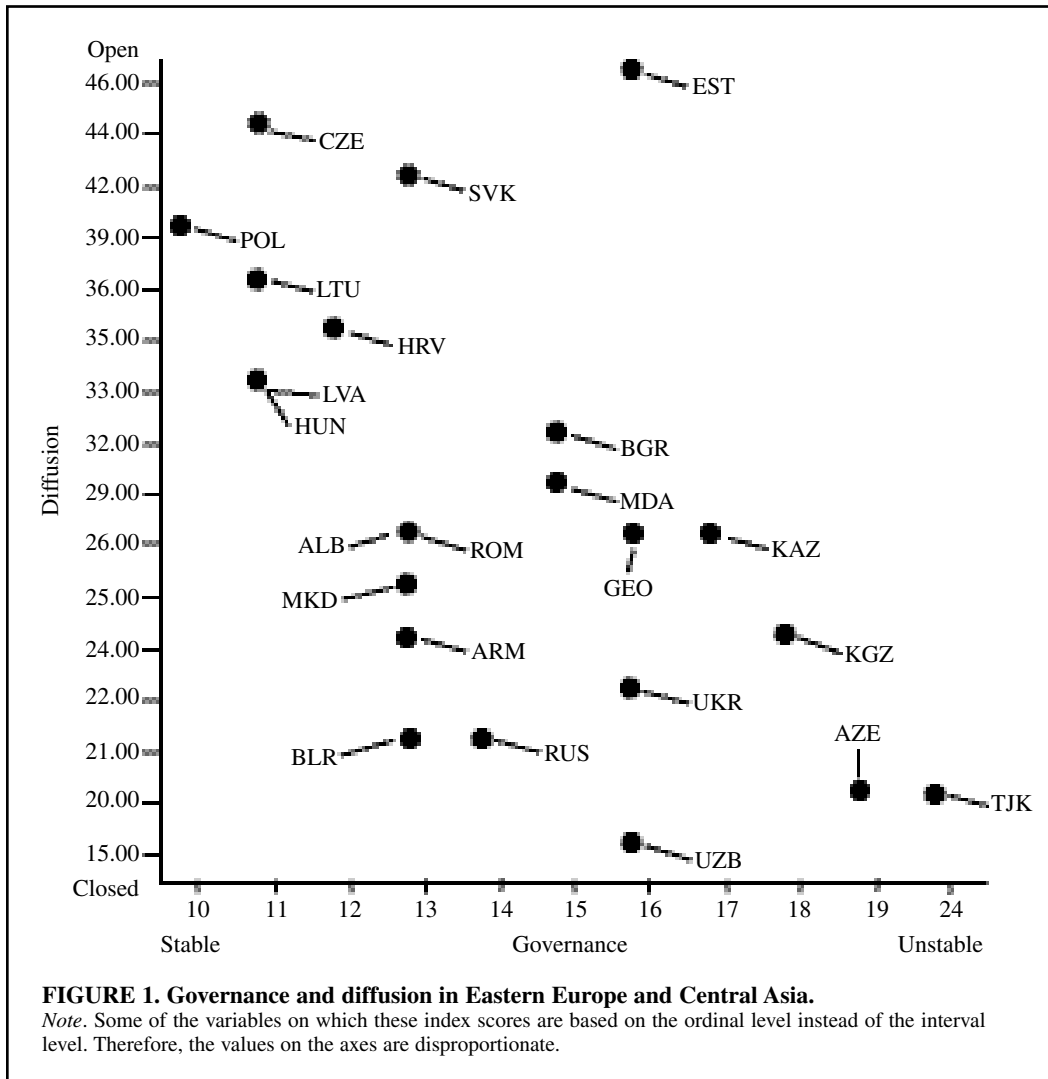
Based on these theoretical perspectives, two different types of revolutions can be distinguished. In countries that have unstable governance structures and a low level of openness to diffusion, a revolution is caused primarily by domestic factors. The impact of aid and training from foreign organizations is not high. Kyrgyzstan exemplifies this type of revolution. In contrast, countries with a relatively high level of openness to the diffusion of knowledge and ideas and an unstable governance structure, might be more vulnerable to "imported revolutions." These are triggered by the deliberate attempts of foreign organizations to increase the level of democratization in a country, if needed by overthrowing the ruling regime.

Although there are no good examples of imported revolutions in this analysis, the Serbian case is the clearest example of this type. In countries with more stable governance structures, the level of openness for diffusion is irrelevant, as a revolution would not occur in such countries. If a regime change occurs, it is likely to follow the path of legitimate, democratic procedures. The Moldovan case is a clear example of this. The Georgian and Ukrainian cases both have characteristics of a domestic revolution, although there are some elements that might be attributed to the democratization attempts of foreign organizations. However, it is highly unlikely that all the revolutions discussed in this article are the result of deliberate interventions of foreign governments and NGOs. In some cases foreign aid might have facilitated the events, but given the low level of openness for ideas and knowledge in the countries that are discussed here, there is no fertile ground for these interventions.

Who Is Next?

By using the data that are gathered for the quantitative descriptions in this article, the analysis of the interplay between the governance characteristics and level of diffusion in Eastern Europe and Central Asia can be extended. Figure 1 provides a scatter plot of the stability of governance structures and level of openness for ideas, knowledge, and other resources in twenty-six countries.⁷⁴ This diagram is obtained by recoding all variables on a one to five scale, and from that creating an index for governance stability and for the level of openness.⁷⁵

Figure 1 illustrates the value of this approach. It shows that nondemocratic regime change might take different paths, and provides an overview of the vulnerability of each country to both a "domestic" and an "imported" revolution. Although this approach still fails ultimately to predict a revolution's occurrence, it provides a useful tool to analyze the



vulnerability of a country. For Western NGOs and governments providing aid and assistance aimed at democratization, it shows in which countries this assistance might be most successful. It shows that primarily Kazakhstan, and to a lesser extent Tajikistan and Azerbaijan might provide fertile soil for the seeds of democratization, although the lack of openness might hinder the effectiveness of these efforts. In fact, some of the recent reforms in Azerbaijan, and president İlham Aliyev's prompt response to accusations of election fraud, can only be regarded in the shadow of the recent events in the area.⁷⁶ However, foreign attempts to assist regime change in Belarus, Uzbekistan, and Russia are bound to fail because these regimes are more stable and less open to the diffusion of knowledge, ideas, and other resources.

Conclusion

This article integrates theories on state failure and policy diffusion in an analytical framework for the study of revolutions. The detailed case descriptions and comparative analy-

sis of several Eastern European and Central Asian countries prove that the combination of these two perspectives provides a richer explanation of the effects of foreign attempts to trigger a revolution, and to the occurrence of revolutions in general.

However, this approach falls short in predicting the next revolution. The incorporation of trigger events provides some extra favorable conditions. The mix of an unstable state, a relatively high openness for the diffusion of ideas, knowledge, and other resources, and fraudulent elections proved to be a set of necessary and sufficient conditions in Georgia, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine. The fact that the governments in these countries tried to block the regime change that to some extent was inevitable with undemocratic means, served as the spark that set in motion the revolution. However, this approach demonstrates that there is no such thing as an imported revolution in its purest form. Foreign interventions aimed at the democratization of unstable states might facilitate regime change by democratic or undemocratic means, but it never is a sufficient condition for regime change.

APPENDIX
Key Data on Five Postcommunist Countries

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Regime type									
Georgia	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	
Kyrgyzstan	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	-3	
Moldova	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8	
Serbia	-7	-6	-6	-6	7	7	7	6	
Ukraine	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	
Region median	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	7	7	7	7	
Infant mortality²									
Georgia					41			41	
Kyrgyzstan					60 ^b			59 ^b	
Moldova					27			26	
Serbia					13			12	
Ukraine					17			15	
Region mean					27			26	
Trade openness									
Georgia	45.70 ^a	57.75 ^a	53.57 ^a	57.15 ^a	62.95 ^a	63.58 ^a	69.80 ^a	78.16	
Kyrgyzstan	87.30	84.48	94.51	99.20	89.43	73.75	82.92	80.97	
Moldova	129.18 ^b	129.09 ^b	118.98	121.92	125.36	124.39	129.78	141.28 ^b	
Serbia		44.12 ^a	53.98 ^a	55.66 ^a	76.15	68.27	64.4 ^a	67.51 ^a	
Ukraine	93.86	84.24	86.05	101.95	120.40	109.29	105.78	101.22	
Region mean	93.3	94.4	90.4	90.8	103.2	99.6	99.6	100.1	
Population									
Georgia	5.334	5.320	5.307	5.289	5.262	5.224	5.177	5.126	
Kyrgyzstan	4.657	4.725	4.797	4.865	4.915	4.955	5.004	5.052	
Moldova	4.325	4.312	4.299	4.288	4.278	4.270	4.255	4.238	
Serbia	10.581	10.604	10.621	10.633	10.637	10.651	8.160	8.104	
Ukraine	51.114	50.697	50.303	49.906	49.501	49.093	48.717	48.3556	

(appendix continues)

APPENDIX (cont.)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Population density									
Georgia	76.8	76.6	76.4	76.1	75.7	75.2	74.5	73.8	
Kyrgyzstan	24.3 ^a	24.6 ^a	25.0 ^a	25.4 ^a	25.6 ^a	25.8 ^a	26.1 ^a	26.3 ^a	
Moldova	131.3 ^b	131.0 ^b	130.6 ^b	130.3 ^b	130.1 ^b	129.9 ^b	129.4 ^b	128.9 ^b	
Serbia	103.7	104.0	104.1	104.3	104.3	104.4	80.0	79.5	
Ukraine	88.2	87.5	86.8	86.1	85.4	84.7	84.1	83.5	
Region mean	75.2	75.3	75.2	75.2	75.1	75.1	74.1	74.1	
Corruption									
Georgia				2.3			2.4	1.8 ^c	
Kyrgyzstan				2.2 ^c				2.1 ^c	
Moldova				2.6	2.6	3	2.1 ^c	2.4	
Serbia			3	2 ^c	1.3 ^c			2.3	
Ukraine			2.8 ^c	2.6	1.5 ^c	2.1 ^c	2.4	2.3	
Region mean			3.7	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.2	
Tax revenues									
Georgia		8.33 ^a	7.24 ^a	7.90 ^a	7.69 ^a	7.38 ^a	7.62 ^a	7.02 ^a	
Kyrgyzstan	12.59	12.51	14.23	12.21	11.74	12.44			
Moldova	12.09	18.28	18.08	15.06	14.73	12.19	12.88	14.85	
Serbia							22.76 ^d		
Ukraine				12.99	14.10	12.06	14.01		
Region mean	16.71	16.29	16.11	15.24	15.56	14.80	15.73	15.86	
Implementation									
Georgia	-2.03		-1.93		-1.85		-2.77		-2.31
Kyrgyzstan	-1.28		-1.67		-1.89		-1.91		-1.93
Moldova					4.8	4.5	4.4	4.4	
Serbia			5.7 ^b	5.5	4.6	4.1	4.0	3.9	
Ukraine			4.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	3.9	3.9	
Region mean			4.2	4.4	4.2	3.9	3.8	3.8	
Openness									
Georgia	6	10	10	8	10	9	10		
Kyrgyzstan	9	10	11	9	8	7	7		
Moldova	10	11	11	10	13	12	12	12	
Serbia		8	7	7	8	9	10	12	
Ukraine	7	8	7	7	8		7		
Region median	10	10	10	10	10	10	12	15	
Press freedom									
Georgia	68	55	56	57	47	53	53	54	54
Kyrgyzstan	60	61	64	64	61 ^e	61	68 ^e	71 ^e	71 ^e
Moldova	62	57	58	56	58	59	59	59	63
Serbia	77 ^e	75 ^e	75 ^e	81 ^e	81 ^e	56	45	40	40
Ukraine	39	49	49	50	60	60	60	67	68
Region median	56	53	53	56	56	53	46	49	48

^aIndicates a score lower than one *SD* below mean. ^bIndicates a score higher than one *SD* above mean. ^cIndicates a score in the first quartile, which means that the corruption in these countries is among the highest 25 percent in the region. ^dScore higher than one *SD* above mean, however, as this is the only available year we must doubt on the reliability of this figure. ^eIndicates a score in the last quartile, which means that the press freedom in these countries is among the lowest 25 percent in the region.

Note. *SD* = standard deviation

NOTES

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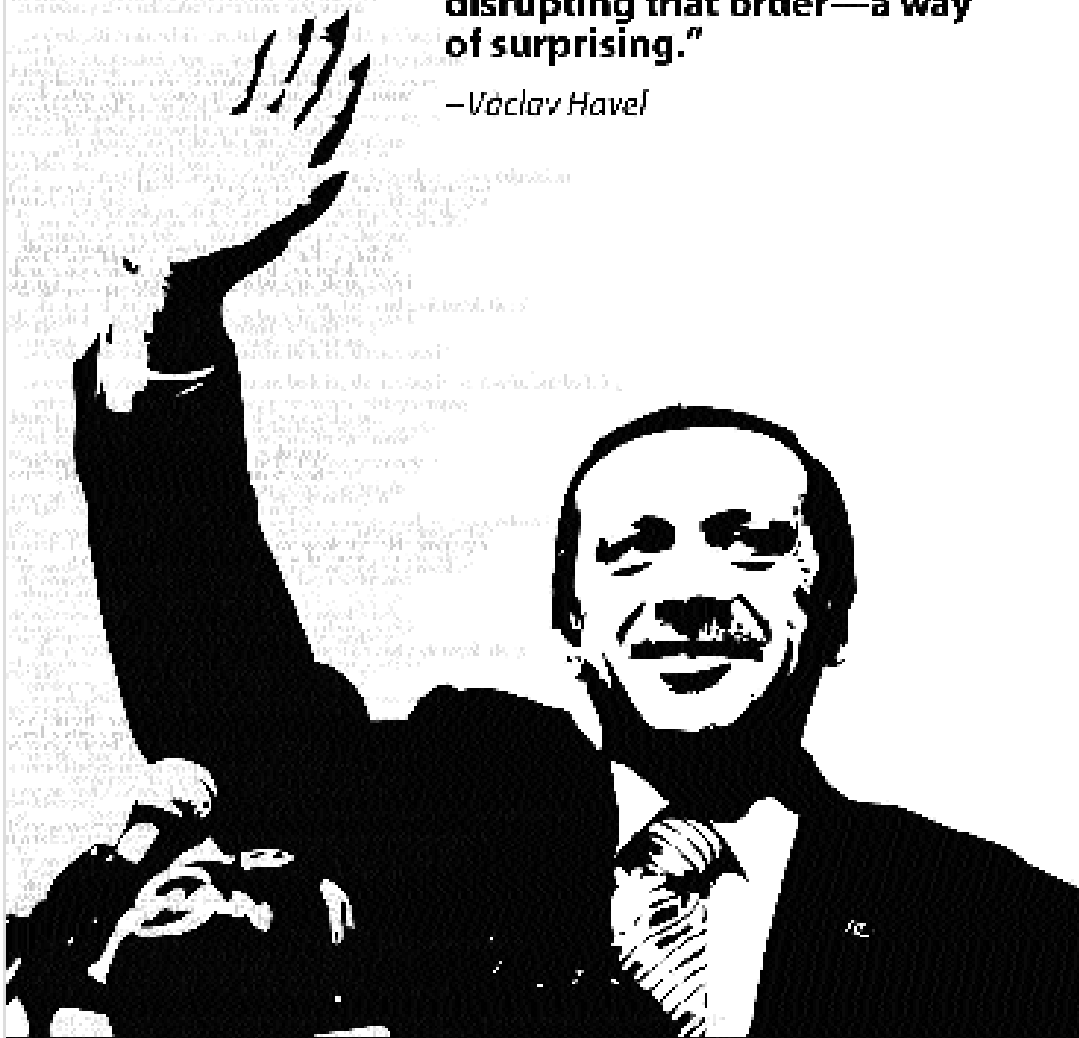
74. These are all countries that have been mentioned in note 14, except Bosnia-Herzegovina, for which no complete dataset could be created.

75. The governance index is an unweighted index consisting of regime type, material well-being, trade openness, corruption, and level of implementation. Recoding of each variable is based on the theoretical assumptions on the relation between the variable and state failure, thereby maximizing the difference between groups. The diffusion index is an index consisting of the state of the NGO-sector, Internet connections, inbound tourists, trade openness, direct foreign investments, outbound international phone calls, and freedom of the press. The state of the NGO-sector is a composite index based on four indicators (organizational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, and infrastructure). To balance the higher number of variables in the diffusion index score, the state of the NGO-sector has a double weight in the overall index. As these indexes are both on the ordinal level, the scales do not represent real distances between cases, but only illustrate different scores. Following Kopstein and Reilly (2003), for the diffusion a time lag of three years is assumed, so wherever possible 2002 data have been used to create the index. Some data, however, are only available for 2003. For the governance index, the most complete dataset available was for 2003, so the governance index is based on the 2003 scores.

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"Drama assumes an order. If only so that it might have—by disrupting that order—a way of surprising."

—Václav Havel



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