

# Democratic Breakthroughs and Revolutions in Five Postcommunist Countries: Comparative Perspectives on the Fourth Wave

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**Abstract:** Democratic revolutions and breakthroughs have occurred in six postcommunist states since 1998. Nine factors are discussed as common to these revolutions and breakthroughs: a competitive- (i.e. semi-) authoritarian state facilitating space for the democratic opposition; “return to Europe” civic nationalism that assists in mobilizing civil society; a preceding political crisis that weakened the regime’s legitimacy; a pro-democratic capital city; unpopular ruling elites; a charismatic candidate; a united opposition; mobilized youths; and regionalism and foreign intervention (Russia or the EU). All of the nine factors are applicable to Ukraine, but not all of them are necessarily applicable to the remaining five postcommunist states. Regionalism played a negative role in Ukraine in reducing support for the Orange Revolution while Ukraine was the only country where Russia intervened in support of the authorities. The EU’s intervention in support of the democratic breakthrough in Slovakia, where it offered the prospect of membership, was not repeated in Georgia or Ukraine.

**Keywords:** civic nationalism, civil society, democratic revolution, elections, Orange Revolution, youths, Viktor Yushchenko

**T**he democratic breakthroughs and revolutions of 1998–2004 for Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine constituted a second phase of their transformation as postcommunist states. All five countries experienced different national revolutions that prevented the simultaneous pursuit of nation-state building and democracy immediately after communism’s collapse. After the dissolution of the Czechoslovak state, Slovakia had to come to terms with being an independent state that would coexist with a large Hungarian minority. Croatia’s war of independence monopolized the first half of the 1990s and the Serbian threat only receded after the re-taking of Krajina in 1995. From 1988–99,

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Slobodan Milošević dominated Serbia. His plans for a greater Serbia, which ultimately led to NATO's bombing campaign in 1999, resulted in unprecedented war crimes, chaos, and havoc in the former Yugoslavia. Georgia entered the post-Soviet era dominated by ethnic nationalism that led to civil war and the loss of two separatist enclaves. Ukraine was a leading country seeking the dismantling of the USSR in 1991, and 91 percent of Ukrainians overwhelmingly endorsed a referendum on independence. But national independence came without democracy as the state was hijacked until 2004 by the former "sovereign communists," turned centrists, under Leonid Kravchuk and Leonid Kuchma. Throughout the 1990s, Ukraine's elites felt threatened by internal threats from the anti-state and antireform communists, who were the largest political force until the 2002 elections, and externally from Russia, which refused to recognize Ukraine's borders until 1997–99.

The democratic opposition perceived the Slovak '98 OK Campaign as Slovakia's opportunity to complete the Velvet Revolution that escaped the country in 1989–90 and remove Vladimir Mečiar's populist nationalism that had, until then, dominated postcommunist Slovakia. The Croatian opposition also sought to distance itself from the nationalist 1990s in favor of "returning to Europe" through domestic democratic reforms. Georgia's opposition sought to overcome a failed and dismembered state, amid deep levels of stagnation under Eduard Shevardnadze. Georgian analyst Nodia believes that "our revolution in 2003 reminded us of the Eastern European revolution of 1989" when a new generation of non-communist elites came to power.<sup>1</sup> A similar sense of unfinished revolution permeated Ukraine's Orange Revolution that, for its leaders and supporters, represented the democratic conclusion to the national revolution of 1991.

This article is divided into two sections. The first section analyzes ten causal factors that contribute to democratic breakthroughs and revolutions in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. These factors differ in their degree of intensity for all five states. The absence of all, or some, of these factors will prevent successful democratic revolutions in Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and other CIS states. The ten factors include the existence of a competitive authoritarian state facilitating space for the democratic opposition, "return to Europe" civic nationalism that assists in civil society's mobilization, a preceding political crisis, a pro-democratic capital city, unpopular ruling elites, a charismatic candidate, a united opposition, mobilized youth, regionalism, and foreign intervention. The second section discusses developments following democratic breakthroughs and revolutions in the five states. The section is divided into four themes: the new regimes' ability to deal with the legacies of the past, divisions in the democratic opposition, return of the ancien regime, and progress in democratization.

### **Democratic Breakthroughs and Revolutions**

Nine factors have been important to the success of democratic breakthroughs and revolutions in postcommunist states. These include a competitive- (i.e. semi-) authoritarian state facilitating space for the democratic opposition; "return to Europe" civic nationalism that assists in mobilizing civil society; a preceding political crisis that weakened the regime's legitimacy; a pro-democratic capital city; unpopular ruling elites; a charismatic candidate; a united opposition; mobilized youths; and regionalism and foreign intervention (Russia or the EU). The latter two can be both hindrances and supportive factors, depending on the country in question and the foreign actor. This discussion of nine factors builds on McFaul, who listed seven factors, including a semi-authoritarian regime; an unpopular leader and

regime; a united opposition; a perception of a falsified election; some degree of independent media; ability of the opposition to mobilize; and divisions in the security forces.<sup>2</sup>

### **Competitive-Authoritarian Regime**

The replacement of authoritarian regimes in Slovakia (1998) and Croatia (1999–2000) and democratic revolutions in Serbia (2000), Georgia (2003), and Ukraine (2004) occurred in five countries that can be classified as “competitive-authoritarian,” in which hybrid regimes combined elements of both authoritarianism and democracy.<sup>3</sup> Slovakia and Croatia exhibited some similarities to Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, in which civil society mobilized to get out the vote and reduce election fraud in the face of a competitive-authoritarian regime.<sup>4</sup> However, there are three crucial differences. First, the Slovak and Croatian regimes neither committed mass fraud nor refused to recognize a victory by the democratic opposition. The absence of these two factors, in turn, meant there was no need for the opposition and civil society to organize street protests that culminated in a revolution. In Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine these two factors (election fraud and an unwillingness to accept an opposition victory) were present and instrumental in leading to democratic (or electoral) revolutions. Second, the Slovak and Croatian regimes were thought unlikely to use violence to suppress the opposition or crush street protests. In Slovakia, under Vladimir Mečiar, the security forces were involved in illegal activities against the opposition and in Croatia some elements of the internal security forces may have participated in the war of independence in 1991–95 or in war crimes. In Serbia, the bloated internal security forces committed war crimes in neighboring territories, and in Ukraine they assaulted journalists and opposition leaders. In Georgia, Serbia, and Ukraine the interior ministries also had strong links to organized crime. In Ukraine, hard-line elements in the security forces may have received encouragement from Russia. Third, external factors played a different role in all five cases. The EU encouraged a democratic victory in Slovakia and Croatia by holding out the “carrot” of membership, a factor that was absent in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. In Georgia and Ukraine the main external factor was Russia, which played a negative role in freezing two conflicts in the former and heavily intervening in the latter’s 2004 election. The EU’s only positive role was in the convening of a roundtable to defuse the political crisis arising during the Orange Revolution.

The presence of competitive-authoritarian regimes had profound implications for the likely success of the democratic opposition in elections in all five cases and of the success of democratic revolutions following fraudulent elections in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Competitive authoritarian regimes provide space for the opposition, civil society, a limited number of media outlets, democratic opposition, the opposition’s ability to participate in state institutions (i.e. parliament and local government), and the ability of international organizations to freely operate in the country. Competitive-authoritarian regimes are vulnerable during elections. During succession crises, regimes can either tip toward democratic breakthrough, as in these five countries, or toward authoritarian consolidation (if the democratic opposition fails). The democratic opposition will find it difficult to organize a democratic breakthrough in a consolidated-authoritarian regime, and when the regimes commit election fraud, the democratic opposition will be thwarted in its ability to mobilize protests. Aside from Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, which Freedom House classifies as “Transitional Governments” or “Hybrid Regimes,” the remaining nine CIS states are “Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian” or “Consolidated-Authoritarian” regimes. Attempts at launching democratic revolutions in response to election fraud in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Uzbekistan

have failed because of weak democratic oppositions and the use of violence to repress the opposition, the most notorious case being in Andijon, Uzbekistan, in May 2005.

### **“Return to Europe” Civic Nationalism**

“Return to Europe” civic nationalism mobilized the democratic opposition and civil society in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, particularly among young people. In Slovakia and, to a lesser extent, in Croatia, the EU directly intervened by dangling the “carrot” of future membership to encourage a democratic breakthrough. The civic nationalism of the democratic opposition in Slovakia and Croatia competed with the regimes’ own brand of extreme Right or populist nationalism. In Slovakia the Mečiar regime had built an authoritarian-populist regime whose nationalism was directed not at “returning to Europe” but against Czech rule and the country’s Hungarian minority. In Croatia, the Franjo Tuđman regime dominated the country throughout the 1990s through a political regime built on extreme Right nationalism that partially drew its inspiration from the World War II Ustaša Nazi puppet state. A central demand of the EU was for Croatia to cooperate with the International War Crimes Tribunal that the democratic opposition, once in power, to some degree fulfilled.

In Serbia, the democratic opposition associated a break with the Slobodan Milošević regime as returning Serbia to a European path, a path that Yugoslavia had strong connections to as a communist state that had been outside the Soviet empire. Yugoslavs had long been able to travel to, work in, and visit Europe and the outside world when this was impossible for those living in the Soviet empire. In Georgia and Ukraine, return to Europe civic nationalism was built on a dream of integrating their countries with transatlantic structures, of moving away from the vacuous, fluctuating, and unclear multivector foreign policies of the Eduard Shevardnadze and Leonid Kuchma eras. The EU did not, though, dangle any “carrot” of membership in either country. Opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko’s political platform supported a pro-European orientation for Ukraine that built on a national identity that placed Ukraine within Europe and outside Eurasia. But in Ukraine “return to Europe” civic nationalism is not uniformly strong—it is weaker in eastern Ukraine, where the Orange Revolution found little support. In Georgia, opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili’s civic nationalism replaced the ethnic Georgian nationalism of the early 1990s, when Zviad Gamsakhurdia briefly ruled the country. Saakashvili has worked to rebuild trust among Georgians in the state and its institutions, “to inject national pride without making it ethnic pride.”<sup>5</sup> He has emphasized state symbols, such as the hymn and state seal, and changed the national flag.

Different types of nationalism can be used either to establish a democratic regime and promote a country’s return to Europe or to institutionalize an authoritarian regime and turn a country’s back on Europe. Two other types nationalism—Soviet and Great Power—support establishing authoritarian regimes and are disinterested in returning their countries to Europe. In Belarus, the Soviet nationalism exhibited and institutionalized by Alyaksandr Lukashenka has a stronger support base than that of the return to Europe civic nationalism promoted by the democratic opposition led by Alyaksandr Milinkevich.<sup>6</sup> In Russia, Vladimir Putin has successfully marginalized the democratic opposition and promoted a Great Power nationalism that combines Soviet, tsarist, and Eurasian symbolism.<sup>7</sup> Belarus and Russia are ardent supporters of CIS integration, are members of the CIS Collective Security Organization (CIS CSO), and do not seek EU (or NATO) membership. Georgia

and Ukraine have reservations about CIS integration, have never been members of the CIS CSO, and seek NATO and EU membership.

### **Preceding Political Crisis**

The nature of competitive-authoritarian regimes inevitably produces an unstable political environment that can tip toward democratic breakthrough or authoritarian consolidation. Prior to the elections there were scandals and crises of varying types in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. The use of violence, kidnapping, and murder led to growing protests and a desire to thwart the further consolidation of an authoritarian regime by the incumbent in Slovakia, Serbia, and Ukraine. In Croatia, the Tudman regime had been involved in ethnic cleansing of Serbs and other war crimes during the war of independence. In Serbia, the Milošević regime had lost three nationalist wars in Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo after committing untold war crimes. Serbia's intervention in Kosovo in 1999 led to NATO's bombing campaign, a prelude to the democratic revolution a year later under the opposition slogan *Gotov Je* (He Is Finished).

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In Georgia, Shevardnadze's decade in office led to stagnation, with a large part of the economy pushed underground where it established ties with organized crime. Two frozen conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia had been ignored and Ajara had been granted de facto autonomy in exchange for political loyalty to Shevardnadze. In Ukraine it was the Kuchmagate crisis (a tape was released showing President Kuchma authorizing violence against opposition journalist Heorhiy Gongadze) that was the precursor to the Orange Revolution.<sup>8</sup> The 2000–1 Kuchmagate crisis did not lead to Kuchma's downfall, but mobilized a large opposition movement in the “Ukraine without Kuchma” and “Arise Ukraine!” protests in 2000–3. The opposition—Our Ukraine, Tymoshenko Bloc, Socialists—won the 2002 elections and became the Orange coalition that won the 2004 elections. The 2002 elections were symbolically important because they were the communists' last as Ukraine's main opposition party. The Kuchmagate crisis severely undermined the ruling elites' legitimacy, discredited Kuchma, created a hard-core group of activists, and awakened young people from their political apathy. Many of the activists from the Kuchmagate crisis went on to play key roles in the 2002 and 2004 election campaigns of the opposition and strategic roles in the Orange Revolution.

### **Democratic Capital City**

Competitive-authoritarian regimes do not completely marginalize the democratic opposition, unlike in authoritarian systems. In the pre-democratic breakthrough era, the democratic opposition will have the ability to be elected to local governments, become mayors, and be elected to parliament. These local institutional bases of support were important springboards for launching democratic challenges to competitive-authoritarian incumbents in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. The National Movement-Democratic

Front (EM-DP) won the Tbilisi City Council in June 2002 after Shevardnadze's For a New Georgia failed to win a single seat. EM-DP leader Saakashvili became mayor of Tbilisi. In the 2002 elections, the For a United Ukraine bloc and Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (SDPUo) failed to win large numbers of seats in the Kyiv City Council. Kyiv's mayor, Oleksandr Omelchenko, had long been sympathetic to Yushchenko and had blocked one of the three oligarchic clans, the SDPUo, from establishing Kyiv as its base, the only oligarch party unable to establish a home base. Kyivites have voted since 1994 for reformers and the opposition. In the 1994 elections, Kyiv voted for Leonid Kravchuk, not Kuchma, and in 2004 for Yushchenko, not Yanukovich. Kyiv is a bastion of support for opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko.

During the Orange Revolution this mayoral, political, and civic sympathy played an important role in providing infrastructure for the protestors. The city authorities did not order security forces to forcibly remove protestors who blocked Kyiv's main thoroughfare for three weeks in November–December 2004. Revolutions traditionally take place in capital cities and a supportive population and sympathetic politicians are therefore strategically important to their success. The antidemocratic environment in Minsk, Moscow, Tashkent, and Baku therefore creates insurmountable difficulties for the democratic opposition in launching sustained street protests, as seen in Minsk in March 2006 following Alyaksandr Lukashenka's reelection for a third term.

### **Unpopular Ruling Elites**

The Kuchmagate crisis undermined the commonly held view in post-Soviet states that the leader is not at fault, but those around him—commonly referred to as the “good Tsar, bad Boyars” syndrome. Kuchma successfully deflected blame from himself in the 1999 elections, but following the Kuchmagate crisis the authorities could no longer use this syndrome. In countries where the “good Tsar, bad Boyars” syndrome still operates, such as in Russia, the chances for a democratic breakthrough are slim. An unpopular incumbent, unable to deflect blame onto his “Boyars,” provides the incentive for a democratic opposition to unite, and a target for them to defeat. The Kuchmagate crisis exposed Kuchma, but Putin and Lukashenka remain popular because the population does not blame them directly for their country's problems and no major scandals have besmirched their reputations. Democratic breakthroughs and revolutions in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine took place in configurations with an unpopular incumbent and a popular opposition.

The Mečiar regime in Slovakia exhibited similar characteristics to those found in hybrid regimes, such as Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine: an executive seeking to concentrate power, statist economic policies, no separation of the ruling party of power from the state, clientelism during the privatization process, interference in the media, and attempts to marginalize the opposition. The urgency of halting this entrenchment of an authoritarian regime came from two fears. First, fear that if Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) won the 1998 elections that Slovakia would move toward a consolidated authoritarianism. Second, fear that such a trend would irrevocably harm Slovakia's opportunity to integrate into the EU and NATO.

The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and Tuđman dominated Croatia during the 1990s. The HDZ claimed credit for Croatia's successful war of independence, maintaining the country's territorial integrity and removing the Serbian foreign and perceived domestic

threat. This nationalist success made it difficult for the democratic opposition to challenge the Tuđman-HDZ regime, which regularly resorted to calling it “treasonous” and in the pay of the United States. Such accusations of being an “American puppet” were also made in a massive campaign directed against Yushchenko in the 2004 Ukrainian elections. The retaking of the Serb enclave of Krajina in 1995 removed the Serbian minority as a threat that could rally Croats around the HDZ, in the same way Mečiar successfully used the Hungarian minority to bolster support for the HZDS. Tuđman’s death in 1999, on the eve of the January 2000 elections, proved fortuitous for the democratic opposition. Tuđman’s removal from Croatian politics opened up divisions in the HDZ between hard-liners and soft-liners over the need to continue with a nationalist regime or accept democratization as a precondition for EU membership. The democratic opposition remained divided over whether to cooperate with or oppose the HDZ.

Such divisions in tactics plagued the democratic oppositions in all five countries. In Ukraine, Yushchenko was loyal to Kuchma until April 2001, when his government was removed. After that he created Our Ukraine as a “constructive (i.e. loyal) opposition” force that vacillated between cooperating with the anti-Kuchma opposition (grouped in the Ukraine without Kuchma and Arise Ukraine! movements) and cooperating with pro-Kuchma centrist political forces.<sup>9</sup> In states undergoing state and nation building, calls to rally around the head of state attract support from those on the right of the democratic opposition, who are willing to temporarily sacrifice democratization in exchange for state and nation building. “Constructive oppositions” can have strange bedfellows—Rukh and former Communist Party Ideological Secretary Leonid Kravchuk, the Union of Right Forces and Putin when he rose to power, for example.

Shevardnadze’s For a New Georgia bloc, which had been hastily created after his Union of Citizens of Georgia disintegrated in the summer of 2001, began to fall apart after the November 2002 elections, thereby creating a crisis within the Georgian ruling elites on the eve of the 2003 Rose Revolution. Kuchma’s For a United Ukraine bloc, which finished second to Our Ukraine in the 2002 elections, disintegrated a month into the newly elected parliament. Georgia and Ukraine are examples of the failure of competitive-authoritarian regimes to establish ruling parties of power. In Slovakia and Croatia the HZDS and HDZ, respectively, failed in their bids to monopolize power. In authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Azerbaijan, ruling parties have assisted in the regime’s consolidation of power. Two attempts in Russia to create parties of power, Russia’s Choice and Our Home is Russia, failed in Boris Yeltsin’s Russia, which was a competitive-authoritarian regime. In Belarus, Lukashenka has consolidated authoritarianism without a ruling party.<sup>10</sup>

The pro-Kuchma ruling elites divided during Kuchma’s second term with some oligarchs, such as the Industrial Union of the Donbass, favoring Yushchenko, while its Donbass competitor, Systems Capitol Management, supported Yanukovich.

Ukraine’s ruling elites entered the 2004 elections disunited and unsure about the post-Kuchma era, with many in the pro-Kuchma camp unsympathetic to Yanukovich as the regime’s candidate. They therefore either sat on the fence or unofficially backed the Yushchenko campaign. Parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn, head of the Agrarian Party, was the atypical fence sitter who assured parliament operated throughout the 2004 elections. During the Orange Revolution, parliament issued a resolution refusing to recognize the official Central Election Commission results that declared Yanukovich the winner. Parliament also issued a vote of no confidence in the Yanukovich government.

In authoritarian regimes, such as Russia, Belarus, and Azerbaijan, the incumbent remains popular while the democratic opposition has been marginalized through what Vitali Silitski terms “preemptive strikes” or “preemptive authoritarianism.”<sup>11</sup> Democratic breakthroughs and revolutions are impossible in countries with popular incumbents and marginalized oppositions. In Russia, Soviet political culture, which sees democratic revolutions as an “American conspiracy” directed against Russia, makes this more difficult. Young Russians, therefore, are more likely to join anti-revolutionary, pro-Putin nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as Nashi (Ours), rather than back an Orange Revolution inside their country. In Azerbaijan the authorities regularly defeat the democratic opposition in

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semi-free presidential and parliamentary elections. In Russia and Belarus, popular incumbents would probably win free elections.

### **Charismatic Candidate**

In Slovakia, Croatia, and Georgia the need for charisma proved less important as their democratic breakthroughs occurred during parliamentary elections. In Georgia, presidential elections followed the Rose Revolution and led to Saakashvili gaining 96 percent of the vote. Undoubtedly, his charisma

played an important role in the Rose Revolution’s success, his election, and his continued popularity. In Serbia, Vojislav Koštunica appealed to the opposition because of his noncorrupt past and lack of association with the Milošević regime. He also appealed to soft-liners in the Milošević regime because of his nationalist credentials. In this manner, Koštunica played a similar role to Yushchenko, whose candidacy assured soft-liners in the Kuchma regime, a role that the more radical Tymoshenko could never have played.

A charismatic candidate who has no visible corrupt past is vital both for the opposition around which to unite and to give voters hope that not all politicians are corrupt, a view that is widely held in postcommunist states. Opinion polls in postcommunist states regularly show that voters believe that politicians are interested in enriching themselves, not in voters’ rights or the country’s national interests. In Ukraine, public opinion polls in 2003–4 pointed to only two politicians with high moral standing, Yushchenko and Socialist leader Oleksandr Moroz. As a moderate and positively received candidate, Yushchenko was assisted by his main opponent, Yanukovich, representing a negative alternative. Yanukovich’s two criminal convictions, the widespread perception of Donetsk as a “Wild West” where everything goes, low educational level, and rough personality haunted him throughout the 2004 elections. Ukrainian youth NGOs learned from their Slovak, Croatian, and Serbian counterparts that using humor and political theater would help dispel fear. Yanukovich proved to be a perfect candidate to implement this humor strategy.

### **United Opposition**

A united opposition showed voters that politicians could transcend narrow personal interests and unite around an election platform. The opposition had remained disunited and

fractured throughout the 1990s in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Only during the political crises on the eve of the democratic breakthroughs did the opposition unite, often following pressure from youth NGOs, civil society, and, in the case of Slovakia and Croatia, EU assistance. In authoritarian regimes the democratic opposition is marginalized, imprisoned, or in exile and therefore unable to seriously challenge the regime.

The Slovakia Democratic Coalition united in 1997 around four main democratic parties and aligned with the OK'98 civic campaign that brought together thirty-five NGOs. The Slovaks focused on voter education, getting out the vote, candidate forums, and election monitoring. The democratic opposition created ten strategies that were later diffused to other postcommunist states. These included steps to overcoming passivity and fear, being creative, using all possibilities afforded to them by independent media, and influencing the public discourse. In Croatia, six opposition parties met in September 1998, and they created two opposition coalitions to stand against the HDZ. The large civic NGO coalition Glas 99 backed these two coalitions. Their strategy drew on the success of the Slovak OK'98 campaign.

The Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) united nineteen parties and NGOs that had hitherto been severely fractured. DOS included a major fault line running between Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić, assassinated in March 2003, and President Koštunica. This division in the democratic opposition between radicals (Đinđić) and moderates (Koštunica) is common to democratic coalitions in postcommunist states that are united more by what they oppose than what they support.

In Georgia the opposition united around the EM-DP during the Rose Revolution and is the only example of their merging into one party, the United National Movement. There was little opposition to the EM-DP from pro-Shevardnadze political forces, unlike in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, and Ukraine from political forces led by Mečiar, Tuđman, Milošević, and Kuchma, respectively. Georgia also fundamentally differed from Ukraine in not having a powerful domestic pro-Russian political force such as the Communist Party. Igor Giorgadze heads a small pro-Russian force, but he is in exile in Russia following accusations of his involvement in assassination attempts on Shevardnadze. Giorgadze's pro-Russian Party of Justice has minimal support in Georgia. In Ukraine a triangular opposition consisting of Yushchenko (Our Ukraine), the Tymoshenko bloc, and Socialists has existed since 2001. This triangular alliance reemerged in round two of the 2004 elections and played a vital role in creating a broad-based Orange Revolution coalition. The only opposition group marginalized from the Orange Revolution coalition was the Communist Party, which declared its neutrality in round two, but its voters probably backed Yanukovich.

In authoritarian states the democratic opposition is often fractured, divided, and marginalized from public life and state institutions. In Russia, the Union of Right Forces and Yabloko failed to enter the 2003 State Duma. Both political forces have failed to unite in the face of the threat from an authoritarian regime. In Belarus the regime places heavy restrictions on the democratic opposition's activities and blocks them from obtaining large numbers of deputies in parliament. In Azerbaijan, bitter infighting and an inability to put forward convincing alternatives to the ruling Yeni Azerbaijan party have hobbled the opposition's attempts at creating united coalitions (New Politics [YeS], Azadliq).

### **Youth Politics<sup>12</sup>**

Youths played strategic roles in democratic breakthroughs and revolutions in Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. They provided the numbers for the civic NGO

campaigns in all five cases and encouraged established politicians to overcome their differences and unite into democratic opposition coalitions. Youths represent the non-communist generation that grew up in the 1980s and 1990s and whose political culture is minimally influenced by communist and Soviet political culture. The 1998 (Slovak), 2000 (Croatia, Serbia), 2003 (Georgia), 2002, and 2004 (Ukraine) elections were the first occasions when this younger generation emerged as a serious actor in these countries' domestic politics.

Youths had already developed their political skills during the preceding political crises when they learned from tactical mistakes and honed their organizational skills. The mass civic mobilizations in the 1998 Slovak and 2000 Croatian and Serbian campaigns were diffused to Georgia and then Ukraine through shared training, publications, and Internet discussions, often with the assistance of Western foundations and think tanks.<sup>13</sup> Young people were most adept at using modern communications tools, such as the Internet (e-mail, news sources, discussion forums) and mobile phones (communications, SMS, camera telephones). Besides the Internet as a news source, domestic and international television played an important role in breaking the state's monopoly on information and in mobilizing voters.

In these five states, youths created a large number of NGOs that took the initiative in mobilizing civil society. The most well-known are Otpor, Kmara, and Pora in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine, respectively. In addition to these well-known NGOs, others focused on election monitoring, mobilizing students for civil society activities and strikes, and those that monitored the media. Polls and surveys in these countries showed that youths tended to be pro-Western and hold democratic values. The exception is Russia, where young people have largely bought into the Putin nationalist project of rebuilding Russia as a great power, and only a minority of young Russians support a democratic revolution in their country.<sup>14</sup>

### **Regionalism**

Regionalism can simultaneously help and inhibit democratic breakthroughs and revolutions. The misplaced use of ethnic nationalism by Mečiar, Tuđman, and Milošević was one factor that the democratic opposition, who espoused a civic inclusive nationalism, opposed. Saakashvili's civic nationalism followed Gamsakhurdia's disastrous ethnic nationalism, which led to defeat in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and transformed these regions into frozen conflicts. Regionalism in Ukraine is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it inhibited a sweeping landslide for democratic forces in the Orange Revolution, while, on the other, it inhibits the monopolization of power by potential autocrats either in power (as in the Kuchma era) or after they return to power (Yanukovich in 2006). The anti-Kuchma opposition dominated western and central Ukraine during most of Kuchma's second term.

The HZDS and its nationalist allies used hostility against Slovakia's Hungarian minority to mobilize nationalist-populist support. In contrast, the democratic opposition promoted an alternative inclusive civic nationalism that included the Hungarians. Similar alliances between democratic oppositions and national minorities have taken place in Bulgaria and Romania. Croatia became a mono-ethnic state following the outflow of its Serbian minority, removing a domestic Serbian threat after 1995. Excluding Kosovo, ethnic Serbs in Serbia compose 83 percent of the population, with minorities only concentrated in Vojvodina. Some democratic parties, such as Vuk Drasković's Serbian Renewal Movement and Koštunica's DSS, supported a greater Serbia in the 1990s.

The democratic opposition in Georgia inherited a fractured and failed state. Two regions have remained frozen conflicts since the early 1990s, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Georgian Muslim enclave of Adjara, on Georgia's border with Turkey, acted as a de facto independent state. Shevardnadze struck a deal with Adjara leader Aslan Abashidze whereby he would provide political backing for Shevardnadze in return for Tbilisi not interfering in Ajara, long known as a highly corrupt and autocratic region. Abashidze's supporters were bussed to Tbilisi to back Shevardnadze during the 2003 elections and Shevardnadze sought to rule with the assistance of mass election fraud conducted in Ajara, where the Democratic Revival Union won 95 percent of the vote in the 2003 elections. In Ukraine an unofficial agreement also existed between Kuchma and Donetsk leaders, such as Renat Akhmetov, Ukraine's wealthiest oligarch. Kyiv would turn a blind eye to how local elites ran their fiefdom in exchange for political loyalty to Kuchma and the non-infringement of Ukraine's territorial integrity. This loyalty was seen in the 2002 elections when the pro-Kuchma For a United Ukraine bloc finished first only in Donetsk Oblast (in all other Ukrainian oblasts, Our Ukraine or the Communists finished in first).

Following the Rose Revolution, Ajara was peacefully reintegrated into Georgia, and the corrupt and autocratic Abashidze clan was removed from power. In Nodia's view, this was Saakashvili's greatest accomplishment in his first year in power.<sup>15</sup> In Ukraine, the Donetsk clan lost the 2004 elections, but, unlike in Georgia, Yushchenko never attempted to take on the Donetsk clan and remove its political, economic, and administrative grip on the region. Leading Donetsk oligarchs, such as Akhmetov, entered the 2006 parliament in the Party of Regions. The Donetsk clan, operating through the Party of Regions, has the largest parliamentary faction (186 deputies). Party of Regions leader and defeated candidate Yanukovich heads the Anti-Crisis coalition government. Yushchenko's handling of Donetsk has therefore been very different compared with Saakashvili's policies toward Ajara.

Of the five countries where democratic breakthroughs and revolutions took place, Slovakia is ethnically divided and Ukraine is the most regionally divided. Ethnic and regional divisions should not be conflated. Regional divisions, as in Ukraine, can lead to tension in the design of constitutions and power-sharing arrangements between the center and periphery but are unlikely to lead to violence. Ethnic divisions are more likely to result in ethnic conflict. The one similarity that ethnic and regional divisions have is voting preferences. Only Hungarians in Slovakia vote for Hungarian parties. In Ukraine, voting patterns in the 2004 and 2006 elections closely followed linguistic cleavages that are similar to regional divisions (i.e. western-central Ukrainophone regions voted Orange, eastern-southern Rusophone regions voted Blue).

During the 2004 elections, Yushchenko won by only an 8 percent margin. In the 2004 and 2006 elections, Yanukovich and the Party of Regions garnered 44 and 32 percent of the vote, respectively, and Orange forces have largely been unable to break into eastern Ukraine. Ukraine differed from Serbia and Georgia in that the Communist Party remained more antagonistic to the democratic candidate, Yushchenko, than to Yanukovich and the oligarchs. The Communists are members of the Anti-Crisis coalition and government led by Prime Minister Yanukovich. In Serbia the Left were in control of the country and as much nationalist as they were Socialists. The democratic opposition was therefore hostile to the extreme Left and Right. In Georgia the pro-Russian Justice and Communist Parties did not participate in the 2003 elections and both are marginal forces.

### Foreign Intervention

Foreign intervention can be benign or negative. The former can take the form of the EU intervening in support of the democratic opposition in these five democratic breakthroughs and revolutions. The EU's intervention was particularly noticeable in Slovakia and Croatia, where it held out the prospect of membership. In Serbia, NATO played a positive role in "softening up" the regime in its 1999 bombing campaign. This was followed a year later by widespread U.S. support for the Serbian democratic opposition. The intention of NATO and the United States was clear: to remove Milošević from power. In Georgia and Ukraine, Russia and a minority of Western reports alleged that their democratic revolutions were "U.S. conspiracies," but these allegations have never been substantiated. The West has played a positive role in isolating the Lukashenka regime after he manipulated constitutional changes that permitted him to stand for a third term. The West's weak responses to democratic failings in Azerbaijan and Russia suggests to some democracy activists in the region that great power politics and oil may trump democracy.

Of the five countries, the Russia factor has only played a role in Georgia and Ukraine. Russia did not intervene in Slovakia, Croatia, or Serbia, although it backed the Mečiar and Milošević regimes. Russia also condemned NATO's bombing campaign in Kosovo and Serbia. In Georgia, Russia has chosen to freeze two conflicts, rather than attempt to undertake peacekeeping operations and hold negotiations on reunifying Georgia. The inhabitants of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have been illegally granted Russian citizenship and the Russian State Duma called in December 2006 for the unification of both enclaves with Russia. Russia intervened in a massive manner in the 2004 Ukrainian elections by providing political technologists and a reported \$300 million for the Yanukovich election campaign. Russia was also allegedly behind two of the three known assassination attempts on Yushchenko—the September 2004 poisoning and an attempted bombing of Yushchenko's election headquarters in November 2004.

### Conclusion

Slovakia re-joined "Europe" relatively quickly following the 1998 democratic breakthrough. This showed that Mečiar's populist nationalism was more of an aberration than a factor that could permanently derail Slovakia's democratization. Croatia has also quickly moved forward in capitalizing on its 1999–2000 democratic breakthrough, which will lead to NATO and EU membership later in the decade. The record is mixed in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine. Only in the former is there a distant possibility of future EU membership that could encourage democratic political forces in the face of a still large domestic support base for ancien régime parties. Serbia will not overcome its Milošević legacy quickly, as the extreme Left and nationalist Right continue to have a strong base of support. In Georgia and Ukraine, the grim prospect of EU membership and, in Ukraine's case, the return of the Party of Regions to power will complicate the democratization process. Democratic freedoms (free elections, independent media, political competition) have progressed in Georgia and Ukraine since their democratic revolutions, but both countries still face major hurdles in tackling deep-seated problems, such as the rule of law and battling corruption. Ukraine's regionalism is a two-edged sword—while it prevents the Party of Regions from monopolizing the country, it also prevented Yushchenko from achieving a landslide victory in 2004, when 44 percent of Ukrainians voted for Yanukovich.

Georgia has made democratic progress since the Rose Revolution, but its Achilles' heel is geography. It is possible to see Georgia inside NATO but not necessarily inside the EU, and it continues to have two frozen conflicts. Serbia is located in a neighborhood where most states are consolidated democracies, a factor that could lead to democratic diffusion. Ukraine borders four NATO and EU members, semi-democratic Moldova, and authoritarian Belarus and Russia. "Europe" moved to Ukraine's western borders in 2004. Georgia borders only one democracy, Turkey, and three authoritarian states, including Russia, which controls Georgia's two separatist enclaves and opposes its integration into transatlantic structures. The democratic revolutions that took place in Georgia and Ukraine are nevertheless testament to their countries' desire to pursue democratization to facilitate their integration with Euro-Atlantic institutions.

### Acknowledgment

This is an updated and expanded draft of an earlier published work: "Comparative Perspectives on the Fourth Wave of Democracy," in *Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Joerg Forbrig and Pavol Demeš, 217–34 (Bratislava: German Marshall Fund and Erste Foundation, 2007).

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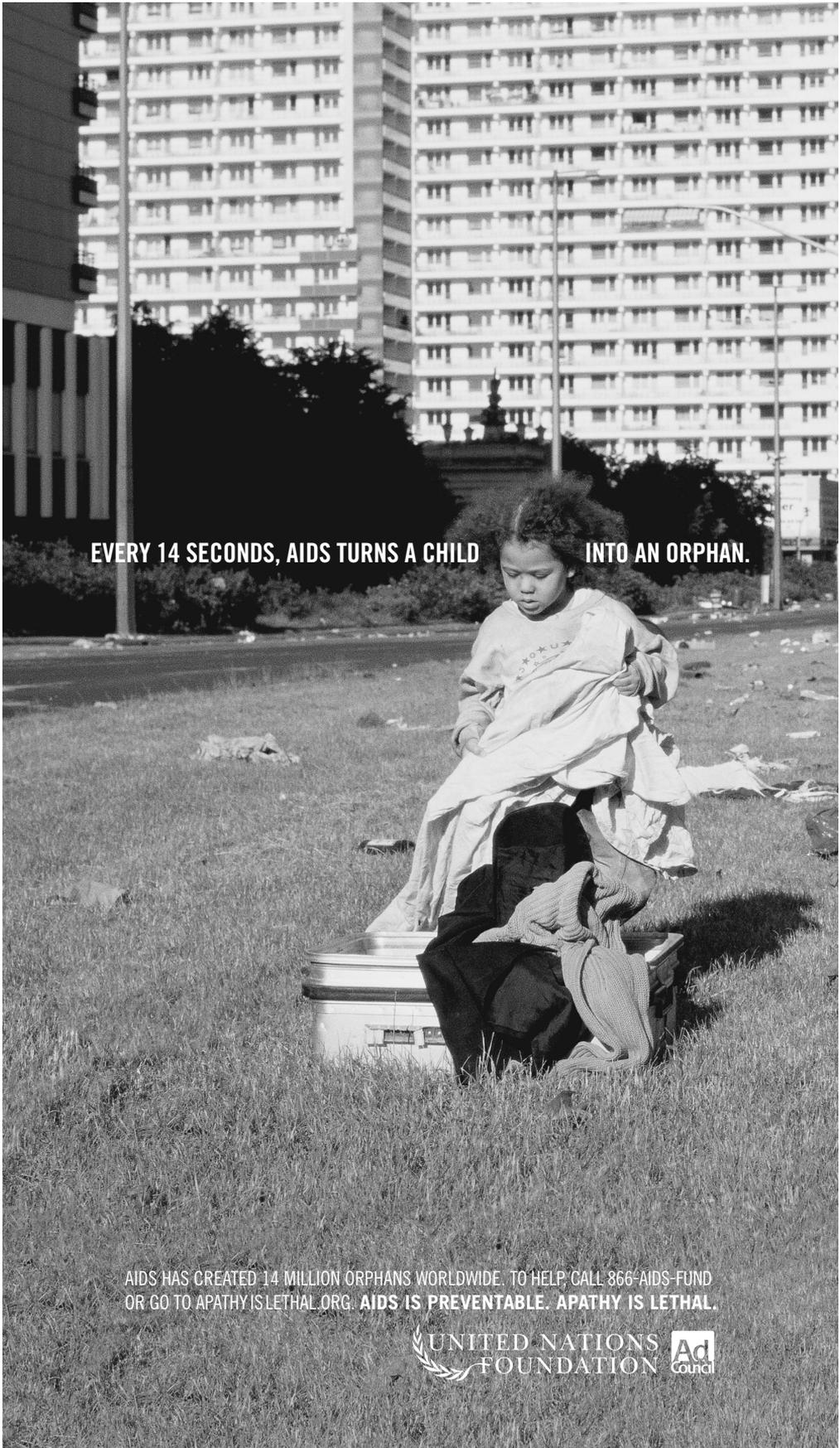


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