



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Culture, Democracy and Post-Communism: The Course of Regime Change in Eastern Europe
Gill, G.

Citation

Gill, G. (2001). Culture, Democracy and Post-Communism: The Course of Regime Change in Eastern Europe. *Acta Politica*, 36: 2001(1), 47-70. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450777>

Version: Publisher's Version
License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)
Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450777>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Bibliography

- Cappella, James, and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1997), *Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good*. New York: Oxford University.
- Dalton, Russell J., Paul A. Beck and Robert Huckfeldt (1998), 'Partisan cues and the media: information flows in the 1992 presidential election,' *American Political Science Review* III, vol. 92.
- Falk, Erika, and S. Aday (2000), 'Are Voluntary Standards Working?' Candidate Discourse on Network Evening News Programs. Annenberg Public Policy Center. Online at www.appcpenn.org
- Graber, Doris A. (2001), *Processing Politics: Learning from Television in the Internet Age* (Studies in Communication, Media, and Public Opinion). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hart, Roderick P. (2000), *Campaign Talk*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kahn, Kim, Fridkin, and P. J. Kenney (1999), 'Do negative campaigns mobilize or suppress turnout? Clarifying the relationship between negativity and participation', *American Political Science Review* 877, vol. 93.
- Kaid, Lynda Lee, and Dianne Bystrom (eds.) (1998), *The Electronic Election: Perspectives on the 1996 Campaign Communication*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kraus, Sidney (2000), *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*. 2nd edition. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- McCombs, Maxwell, and Amy Reynolds (eds.) (1999), *The Poll with a Human Face: The National Issues Experiment in Political Communication*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Patterson, Thomas E. (1994), *Out of Order*. New York: Vintage.
- Patterson, Thomas E. (2000a), 'Public Involvement and the 2000 Nominating Campaign: Implications for Electoral Reform'. Presented at the National Press Club, Washington D.C., 27 April. On-line publication at www.vanishingvoter.org
- Patterson, Thomas E. (2000b), 'Lessons from the Last Convention: What the Public's Response to the 2000 Republican Convention Suggests about the 2000 Democratic Convention and Conventions Beyond'. Presented in Los Angeles, CA., 13 August. On-line publication at www.vanishingvoter.org
- Patterson, Thomas E. (2000c), 'Election 2000: How Citizens "See" a Presidential Debate'. 3 October. On-line publication at www.vanishingvoter.org
- Schudson, Michael. (1998), *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Semetko, Holli. A., Jay.G. Blumler, Michael Gurevitch and David Weaver (1991), *The Formation of Campaign Agendas: An Analysis of Party and Media Roles in American and British Elections*. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- White, Stephen, Richard Rose and Ian McAllister (1997), *How Russia Votes*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Culture, Democracy and Post-Communism: The Course of Regime Change in Eastern Europe

Graeme Gill

University of Sydney

Abstract

The collapse of communism ushered in widespread hopes that democracy would become the prevailing form of government throughout Eastern Europe. These hopes have not been realized: non-democratic regimes continue to rule in a number of countries in the region. How can this diversity in the outcome of regime transformation be explained? The key factor is the interaction between civil society forces and elites. In those countries where the process of regime transition was managed overwhelmingly by old regime elites, democracy did not ensue from the fall of communism. In those where the process was controlled by civil society forces, with their roots in society at large, democracy has been the outcome.

1 Introduction

The collapse of the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union marked a major turning point in the history of the century. But, as well as being a significant geopolitical event, it has also provided a fertile field for scholars interested in the transition from authoritarian rule to something else. It constituted a phenomenon unique in modern history: the transformation of a large number of political systems within the space of a few years during peacetime. The result was the emergence of 26 independent states with a range of different systems where formerly there had been nine states ruled by communist parties with systems constructed basically along the lines of the Soviet prototype.¹ The almost simultaneous occurrence of so many instances of regime change provides a perfect laboratory for the testing of theories about regime transformation. The proximity of these cases, both geographically and temporally, makes this region a much better site for comparative analysis than Latin America, which played a crucial structuring role in the development of studies of democratic transition. Important, too, is the fact that the political outcomes of these cases of regime change have been very different.

The collapse of these regimes was accompanied by the widespread

expectation that this would be the beginning of democratic hegemony. It was assumed that democratic regimes would replace the discredited communist political structures, ushering in a period when the democratic paradigm would dominate across the globe (Fukuyama 1992). While not all accepted Fukuyama's optimistic prognosis, many believed that democratic regimes would emerge out of the ashes of communism. However, this expectation has not been fully realized. To be classed as democratic, countries must meet two criteria: minimal procedural provisions, and broad observance of the principles of human rights.² The minimal procedural provisions include free and fair competitive elections as the main mechanism for changing governments, established parties as the means for both representing popular views and structuring debate in the legislative chamber, and the rule of law. Broad observance of human rights involves the standard rights outlined in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, including in particular an inclusive notion of citizenship and thereby of membership of the polity. Democracies will manifest both of these criteria. If countries manifest the forms of democracy but the substance is deficient (for example, elections may be competitive but neither free nor fair, or human rights may be ignored in important aspects), they are façade democracies. If the substance is absent and the forms are also either absent or distorted, they are non-democracies.³

Only a minority of the post-communist regimes would be categorized today as democratic; most are either façade democracies or non-democracies.⁴ The distribution of these different types of regime is not random. Within the former Soviet Union, only Lithuania is unambiguously a democracy.⁵ Among the countries of Eastern Europe,⁶ Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia are democracies.⁷ The other countries of the region have been deficient in their democratic credentials. In Slovakia and Croatia, for much of the post-communist period, a discriminatory populist nationalism has been used by the regime in an attempt to consolidate itself in power by marginalizing potential opposition forces. In Albania, the 1996 election was classed as being neither free nor fair, and subsequently armed conflict played a major part in structuring public life. In Macedonia and Romania the protection of rights has been deficient and some of the elections have been seriously compromised. In Yugoslavia (principally Serbia), nationalist rhetoric, intimidation and manipulation have been used to defeat opposition in the elections, and the protection of rights has been seriously deficient. This concentration of democracies in East Central Europe (ECE) and their scarcity in the Balkans is striking.⁸ Given that all countries emerged from a political system that was constructed along basically similar lines (although Yugoslavia was clearly much more decentralized than its more orthodox communist cousins), that those systems were highly transformative in their aims, and that all experienced regime change about the same time, one might expect that they

would manifest similar political features upon their exit from communism. This has not been the case.

2 Culture and democracy

For many people it is no surprise that the countries of East Central Europe have emerged from communist rule and adopted democratic garb while much of the Balkans has remained mired in authoritarian rule. The ECE countries were widely seen as having a history of involvement in the mainstream of European life, and their leaderships conceived of the project in which they were engaged as a 'return to Europe'. Communism was seen as a diversion from the 'natural' course of development, and its fall the catalyst for these countries to return to that mainstream. Similarly, much of the Balkans was seen as historically peripheral to the central European focus. They were seen as always being on the margins of the main course of European development, never sharing in the fruits of the cultural and economic growth that took place in central Europe in earlier centuries. In part this was seen as a distinction between the course of Western civilization based in Central and Western Europe and embracing Poland and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the extension of Eastern civilization represented by the Ottoman Empire. This approach was essentially cultural. It portrayed Western Europe (and through its contacts, by extension parts of East Central Europe) as being characterized by the sorts of values that were conducive to the development of democratic political forms, while those of Eastern Europe were more likely to promote authoritarian political arrangements (Huntington 1996).⁹ This was reflected in the long march towards representative government in Western Europe (e.g., Bendix 1978), a development seen as embodying the strength of the emergent democratic political culture of the region. In this context, the adoption of democratic garb by most of the countries of ECE and its relative absence in the Balkans was thus seen simply as a function of the cultural underpinnings of the different societies. Those areas embraced by the Western tradition were more likely to become democratic, while those where that tradition was countered by a long period of Turkish rule were less likely to turn to democratic political forms.

But, stated in this bald form the argument is unacceptable. While it is clear that culture affects politics (e.g., Almond & Verba [1965] shaped this debate), the precise relationship is a matter for debate. This has been a major issue in the study of democratization, but it remains essentially unresolved. However, at a minimum, if we are to posit that pre-existing cultural values operated to structure the choice of political forms at the time of the exit from communism, we must show the medium through which such values worked. We cannot

simply assume that values were there and that they played a part in structuring political choices. We need to show the mechanism through which those values helped to shape the political outcome, how the pre-existing values were able to have an impact upon contemporary events. One approach is through the notion of civil society.

Although civil society has become one of the most important conceptual tools in contemporary scholarly analysis (Keane 1988a; Weigle & Butterfield 1992; Ekiert 1991), it remains clouded in ambiguity and lacks consistency of use. Civil society is usually seen in terms of the existence of a sphere of public activity in which autonomous groups are able to act to defend and project the interests of their members. These groups are autonomous from the state, and the state recognizes their right to exist and function; unless this recognition is present, civil society cannot exist. Civil society is basically that network of structures and processes through which individuals and groups govern their lives. In this sense, civil society is the social embodiment of democracy and the societal underpinning upon which formal democratic political structures rest. Its development is therefore also intrinsic to the conception of a Western democratic culture noted above. But, even given general acceptance of this conception, judgements about when a civil society exists and its strengths and weaknesses remain elusive and problematic.¹⁰ One way of bringing some order to this, and making the concept useful in an analytical as opposed to a descriptive sense, is to distinguish between three levels of groups of which civil society consists.¹¹ First, there are the groups that structure individuals' immediate lives. These groups are particularistic, local and immediate, and rarely interact with political or state authorities. They are the basic sub-structure upon which collective, community life rests, and they exist in all societies; if they did not exist, collective life would be impossible. Second, there are groups that project their members' interests into the broader public sphere. These are not specifically political in orientation, but may at times have to act in a political fashion. They are the principal elements of a civil society, comprising the struts that structure public life. Third, there are specifically political groups, like political parties. These are organizations that are designed specifically to represent their members' interests in the political sphere. Collective life could not exist without the first order groups; second order groups constitute the bulk of civil society; but third order groups are essential for the existence of civil society. If civil society is about the projection and protection of peoples' interests, such activity in the political sphere cannot be excluded; if interests cannot be protected politically, they cannot be protected at all. So, civil society can only exist when all three orders of groups are able to function. However, regimes do not always allow all three orders of groups to function. In many cases third order groups are forbidden whereas first and second order groups exist and structure popular life. Under such

circumstances, these first and second order groups do not constitute civil society as such, but what we will call 'civil society forces'. Unless the state accepts the right of all three types of groups to exist and function, those that do exist are civil society forces, not a civil society. Civil society requires the freedom of political association.

This conception of civil society is useful when looking at the situation under authoritarian regimes. Most authoritarian regimes accept first order and some second order groups, but they reject the right of third order groups to function. Crucial for the fate of such regimes, and the question of whether they will be transformed in a democratic direction or not, is the capacity of the civil society forces (first and second order groups) to generate the third order groups and thereby consolidate a public sphere in opposition to the regime. It should not be assumed, however, that all groups that emerge will automatically strengthen the development of a democratic civil society (or that the development of civil society inevitably leads to democracy). Many groups are, in the values they hold and the tactics they employ, antithetical to the development of a democratic civil society. By pursuing exclusivist aims (whether the exclusivism is based on ethnicity, class or political belief), they conflict with the tolerance essential to a democratic civil society. Nevertheless, the emergence of such groups can be significant in the structuring of politics following the fall of an authoritarian regime, as some cases in Eastern Europe demonstrate, and in the development of civil society.¹²

Implicit in this notion of civil society is acknowledgement of the way in which civil society can be shaped by the state. The traditional conception of state-society relations that sees these two entities as opposed to each other is much less useful than one that sees them as interacting, each moulding the other in a continuing dynamic. But, within this dynamism, the coercive power of the state places within the hands of state elites enormous potential for restraining and suppressing the activities of the forces that go to make up civil society. When state elites decide to use coercion to suppress manifestations of civil society force development, they are usually able to do so, at least in the short term. Similarly civil society force development can be facilitated and promoted by a sympathetic state elite using the state's resources. In this way, the prospects for civil society and the contours civil society forces may adopt can be substantially shaped by state action. This is well illustrated by the different patterns of regime exit from communism in Eastern Europe explained below.

3 Elites and democratization

In looking at regime change, reference to civil society forces alone cannot explain how power passes from authoritarian rulers to democratic successors.

The other part of the dynamic noted above, the state, and in particular the elites who run it, is also crucial. In understanding this, some of the assumptions of the transition to democracy literature are useful. The so-called third wave of democratization (Huntington 1991), which saw the shift from authoritarian to democratic rule in a large number of countries in Latin America and Southern Europe, gave rise to a substantial literature on democratic transition. The principal focus of this literature was the role of political elites in structuring the shift from authoritarian to democratic rule (see, for example, O'Donnell et al. 1986; Linz & Stepan 1996). Elites were seen to be central, and important for a successful transition was that those elites were able to moderate any excessive demands, either from regime hard-liners or from radicals within the opposition. This meant that the elites had to be relatively insulated, able to persuade their followers to accept the deal negotiated between old regime and opposition elites without having to surrender to demands emanating either from within society or from hard-line elements within the regime. Democracy was therefore portrayed as the result of elite negotiation, while mass involvement was generally seen as being antithetical to the successful achievement of a democratic outcome (Huntington 1984). This sort of approach focused purely upon the elites and was limited to the period of regime crisis and transition. But, while such an approach may be able to explain the specific elite interactions that result in a democratic outcome, it cannot explain some crucial aspects of this process. Two of these are important. First, it cannot explain why democracy as a mode of governance is preferred to a rearrangement of non-democratic forms that might satisfy elite interests. In other words, why would elites prefer democracy, which implies uncertainty and the possibility of the loss of power, to a structure that, by excluding the mass of the population, could ensure their continued enjoyment of power and privilege? Second, it cannot explain why opposition elites are sufficiently powerful that old regime elites see it to be in their interests to undertake negotiations with them. In other words, how is it that opposition elites are able to enter the negotiating process that brings about the transition to democratic rule? The answer to both of these questions lies in the relationship between opposition elite and the mass of society. Elite negotiations are likely to end up with a democratic outcome only if at least one of the parties to those negotiations is committed to such a result or perhaps becomes committed to moving in this direction during the negotiations. Such a commitment is more likely with elites who have their roots in the society at large, who are representing a broader public constituency than their own narrow interests. Furthermore, it is the potential threat embodied in the popular support that such elites are believed to be able to command that persuades old regime elites to engage them in negotiation. This linkage between elites and popular forces, which is largely ignored in the transition to

democracy literature, has been the crucial underpinning of the process of democratic change everywhere, including that part of the world with which this paper is concerned, Eastern Europe.

This elite-mass linkage is itself fundamentally influenced by the capacity of the old regime elite to maintain its unity in the face of external challenge. In virtually all of the cases of democratic transition, an important component of this process has been the splitting of the ruling elite (O'Donnell et al. 1986; Haggard & Kaufmann 1995, Part One; Gill 2000, ch.2). The pressures provoked by performance failures usually create strains within the ruling elite. If those strains can be resolved within the elite, it will usually be able to weather the storm and retain control. However, if the elite splits, especially if one side goes over to the opposition, the history of democratic transitions shows that the chances of regime change are increased enormously. Despite their reputation for elite unity and solidity, the communist regimes suffered in this way at the end of the 1980s.

4 The exit from communism

There are clear differences in the paths out of communism followed by the countries of Eastern Europe. These differences have been formulated in a number of different ways (e.g., Bunce 1999: ch. 4; Henderson & Robinson 1997; Holmes 1997; Stokes 1993), but what is crucial for this analysis is the respective state and strength of the old regime and its elite (including the unity of its ranks) on the one hand and civil society forces on the other. The dynamic relationship between these two is the most important factor structuring regime transition (Gill 2000). There is a fundamental difference in this relationship between those regimes that have emerged as democracies and those that have not. A number of patterns of regime change are evident. All begin with the general systemic crisis that was enveloping communist regimes in the latter part of the 1970s and 1980s (For an argument which attributes this largely to structural aspects of the communist regime, plus changes at the international level, see Bunce 1999, ch.2 & 3). The nature of this crisis has been much debated, but it clearly involved a combination of economic performance failure, ideological decline and loss of popular legitimacy (e.g., Cox 1998).¹³ Crucial for the East European region was the failing attempt at reform in the USSR and the undertaking by the Gorbachev leadership not to interfere in events in the region when local regimes sought to reform their own politico-economic structures. This meant that as domestic crisis engulfed the East European regimes, their primary support base in Moscow was pulled from under them.¹⁴ The course of events was to be shaped by the relationship between domestic civil society forces and regime elites.

In Poland and Hungary, under the impact of the growing crisis, the old regime elite split between those who were willing to seek some compromise with society in an attempt to ease the pressure and those who were not. In both countries, civil society forces were seen by some of the elite as strong enough to be an appropriate negotiating partner. In Poland (Arato 1981; 1981-2), this was principally a revived Solidarity, which, through its role in earlier crises, had established a position of leadership over Polish social forces outside the regime. It clearly had the moral authority the party lacked. In Hungary, there was no single peak organization, but the process of liberalization, which had followed the introduction of the economic reforms of the early 1960s, had produced a large range of autonomous organizations that constituted a dense web of civil society (Heinrich 1986). From these emerged in 1988-89 the political parties that were to be the principal interlocutors with the regime. Negotiations in both countries took the form of roundtable discussions (Welch 1994; Elster 1996), which resulted in agreements to hold elections. In Poland these were to be structured elections, which were to result in a sharing of power; in Hungary they were to be free, multi-party elections with the incumbent communist party enjoying no structural advantages. When the elections were held, they led to the effective removal of the old regime, although in Poland some further negotiation between party leaders and Solidarity was necessary. Having suffered significant defeats at the polls and allowing power to be passed to their civil society-based opponents, both communist parties transformed themselves into social democratic parties, and both were soon able to win back office temporarily through the ballot box. A multi-party system developed, and despite some tension between president and legislature, especially in Poland while Walesa was president, democratic structures and processes were substantively realized.

In response to the growing crises in Bulgaria and Albania, the old regime elites split, however, the civil society forces were not strong or organized enough to be able to push themselves forward as viable negotiating partners; there were no counterparts of Solidarity or the Hungarian political parties. In the face of mounting popular mobilization, the old elite transformed itself and reformists (or at least those who saw no alternative to change) took over. They then turned to the weak civil society forces and engaged them in negotiation, but, unlike in Poland and Hungary, from a position of strength. They were largely able to shape the contours of the emergent system, and when the first election was held, they were able to emerge victorious. In Bulgaria, the opposition, which had been unable to organize itself sufficiently in order to contest the elections effectively, accepted the structure and processes put in place largely under the old regime's auspices. The old regime elite played by the new electoral rules and a democratic system became embedded in Bulgarian society. In Albania, the opposition was also unable to organize itself

effectively for the first election, but in contrast to Bulgaria, sections of it rejected elements of the new structure and processes created by the old regime successor party. The result was a period of political conflict, brinkmanship, fraudulent manipulation of elections, and low intensity armed conflict in 1997.

In Czechoslovakia the old regime collapsed in the face of popular demonstrations, but because of the weight of repression in the preceding years, civil society forces were not well organized. The regime had neither clear interlocutors within the opposition nor reform communists within its own ranks (reflecting post-1968 'normalization'), so negotiations of the type evident in Poland and Hungary could not be conducted. In the face of mounting popular protest and the collapse of communist power in neighbouring Poland, Hungary and Germany, it simply abdicated its power. Subsequently, negotiations were held among those civil society forces that quickly emerged, and it was these forces that shaped the new competitive, democratic system. It was also representatives of these forces, which organized the division of the country into two republics, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, at the beginning of 1993. The trajectory of each country has seen regular competitive elections, with a democratic system becoming consolidated in the Czech Republic. However, in Slovakia, where the highlighting of ethnic identity was an important element in the drive for independence, in an attempt to consolidate its hold on power, the movement party-based Meciar regime sought to mobilize populist sentiment against the Hungarian minority, discriminating against this group and setting in place a regime with democratic forms but based on the acquisition of office and advantage through personal links with the leader (Carpenter 1997). Nevertheless, when the electoral verdict turned against them, the regime accepted it and went into opposition. So, despite the very real human rights concerns in Slovakia, major actors have abided by the formal rules of democratic electoral conduct.

The situation in Croatia was very different. Here, elections were held which sidelined the ruling communists and brought an umbrella organization of oppositionists to power in spring 1990. The populist nationalists under Franjo Tudjman gained the ascendancy in this umbrella organization and, in the face of the weakening of the position of the federal Yugoslav government, led Croatia out of the Yugoslav federation. The populist nationalists consolidated their hold on power, in part as a result of the armed conflict initially with Serbia and then in Bosnia, using this and the associated appeal to an illiberal populist nationalism to marginalize other civil society forces. But, such forces were not destroyed, and when Tudjman died at the end of 1999, his party was defeated at the polls and a peaceful change of government was brought about through the ballot box.

Some elements of the Croat pattern were also evident in neighbouring Slovenia and in Macedonia. Elections in both republics brought to power a

mixed political elite. Reflecting the strength of civil society forces in Slovene society, the legislature was dominated by representatives of these non-regime forces. The president, Milan Kucan, was the former republican communist party leader, and therefore formally a representative of the old regime, but he had been the head of the reformist faction within the party and was therefore compatible with the new legislature. A similar situation applied in Macedonia, except that civil society forces were not as strong as in Slovenia, with the result that old regime elements were stronger in the legislature. In Slovenia, this mixed (old regime-civil society forces) elite took the country out of the Yugoslav federation, fended off initial Serbian pressure, and set in place democratic structures and processes. The Macedonian elite also left the federation but, perhaps reflecting a more difficult political situation (problems of international recognition and the presence of a large and important Albanian minority nationality within its borders), democracy did not become as clearly entrenched.

In Romania and Serbia (which became the most important part of the new Yugoslav Federation), the growing regime crisis led to power falling into the hands of second echelon old regime elites. In Romania this comprised elements principally from the security services and the party in the National Salvation Front (NSF), while in Serbia it was the Republican Party led by Slobodan Milosevic. Both groups refused to engage in serious negotiations with opposition forces, and the latter were not sufficiently strong to be able to force the new regime to grant them serious concessions. Although the NSF periodically used strong-arm tactics and manipulation of the political structure and processes to defeat emergent opposition forces, by allowing free and generally fair elections in 1996, its successors were expelled from office and a change of government occurred through the electoral process. In Serbia, despite the effect of successive military defeats in Bosnia and Kosovo, the regime was able to stabilize itself, using populist nationalist manipulation and coercion to consolidate its position in power. Only in 2000 did this control slip when opposition forces united behind a single candidate in the presidential election to defeat Milosevic and popular mobilization then forced him from office.

The patterns of regime change experienced in the democracies and non-democracies are therefore clearly different in important ways. In four of the democracies – Poland, Hungary, Slovenia and the Czech Republic – civil society, i.e., non-nationalist forces played a substantial role at the time of the collapse of the old regime and in the formulation of the contours of the new. They were instrumental in setting in place democratic structures and processes which then became embedded in national political life. Where old regime central authorities retained the upper hand in the initial stages (Bulgaria and Albania), they were able to structure the terms of the establishment of the new system, but their dominance was soon shaken by the growing strength of an

emergent political opposition. In these cases, the old regime was either unwilling (Bulgaria) or unable (Albania) to use the power of the state to stem this process and was superseded by a more competitive structure. Where old regime second echelon elites came to power, in Romania and Serbia, politics has been more violent, and where that elite has sought to use the state and populist nationalism to consolidate its position (Serbia) and to weaken civil society forces, it was able to do so for a long time. In Romania, the regime chose, after an initial period, not to act in this way, and it was swept from power by an increasingly strong political opposition that was able to mobilize popular support. Where nationalists came to power, in Croatia with the fall of communism and in Slovakia with independence from the Czech Republic, they used the rhetoric of populist nationalism and their control over state agencies to sideline opposition and attempt to define citizenship in an ethnically exclusivist way, although in neither case did this save the regime from ultimate electoral defeat. In those instances where a mixed elite emerged (old regime plus new elements – Slovenia and Macedonia), democracy became more securely entrenched where civil society forces were more strongly represented. It is thus clear that there is a systematic relationship between civil society forces and a democratic outcome: while civil society forces were active in bringing about regime change, democracy was the result only when such forces became dominant. The issue is, why were civil society forces stronger in some countries than in others?¹⁵

5 Civil society forces, culture and history

There is no accurate way to measure the strength of civil society. While it may be possible in contemporary times to establish how many autonomous organizations exist in a particular society (even this is debatable, although some international bodies such as Freedom House do calculate the numbers of non-governmental organizations in different societies), a simple calculation of numbers tells us nothing about the dynamics of the relationships that exist between such organizations, and between them and the government. Therefore, it does not tell us anything about the quality or substance of civil society. This problem is even exacerbated when we turn to non-contemporary times; when it is not even possible to count the number of autonomous organizations in existence in any particular period. However, it is possible to say something about the conditions under which civil society forces develop. In particular when the first type of group can develop into the second type, thereby structuring individuals' interests outside their immediate circles. This can, in turn, inform our understanding of different societies and their capacities to develop and sustain civil society forces.¹⁶

Two major historical developments seem to have been instrumental in the growth and strengthening of civil society forces.¹⁷ The first is urbanization. The process of urbanization has been significant because it has involved the concentration of increasing numbers of people in delimited geographical areas, thereby maximizing the opportunities for the development and realization of common interests and concerns, and with this the potential for organization. Furthermore, the concentration of people in urban settings expanded the capacity for the creation of communication networks. Without the growth of communication links between people and the groups of which they became part, the sorts of interactions crucial to the emergence of civil society would not have occurred. Urban development usually also created the conditions in which these emergent civil society forces found themselves in close proximity to the government or ruler, at least in the capital, and thereby opened up the possibilities for interaction with and restraint upon official action. The second development was industrialization. This was instrumental in the growth of civil society forces because it helped to shape many of the interests that became central to the growth of civil society. This was partly a reflection of the way in which industrialization reshaped the class structure, but it was also linked to the increasing education levels that accompanied much industrial development. However, industrialization was also important because, historically, it was associated with both the private ownership of economic resources and the massive increase in private wealth. This created power bases independent of the government and, therefore, the material resources upon which civil society forces could create an independent existence. The combination of urbanization and industrialization also created the sort of environment that can probably best be characterized as 'bourgeois society' with its underpinning of an increasingly literate culture and a propensity for public, collective association. In this way, industrialization and urbanization were crucial in moulding the class structures, the cultural environments and the physical locations within which civil society forces emerged. Furthermore, they shaped the urban middle class, which was the core of democratic civil society in the Western tradition.

The development of civil society depended upon the movement from the first type of organizational form to the third. The extension of the first, private and immediate, form of organization into the second, public, form and, in turn, its extension into the third, political, form, was a logical course of development. As common interests grow, as long as a social infrastructure favouring their development exists, this progression is likely to occur with the growth of a culture which has embedded within it the value of widespread organized participation. Associational life becomes part of the broader culture of the community. What can hinder this, even if social circumstances favour it, is intervention by the state. If the rulers seek to consolidate their control by

hindering the growth of autonomous organization, their control over the state will facilitate this process. However, it is unlikely that such efforts can extirpate this process from the society as a whole. As long as individuals are able to come together, the generation of first and second order groups is a possibility. Even when the political system has been highly penetrative of society, and the communist systems were the most penetrative we have seen, the essential impetus for civil society force development cannot be eradicated. So, the capacity of civil society force development to survive is rooted in the ubiquity of a personal basis of interests and the consequent formation of bodies designed to pursue them. This means that the strength of civil society forces when the communist regime fell is a function of the history of civil society force development prior to that time. Two phases may be distinguished: the period prior to communist rule, and the post-war era of communist rule.

Historically, the Eastern European region was generally characterized by economic backwardness and late development. Consequently, the state played a large role in economic development. Autonomous organization within society was generally weak (e.g., see Schopflin 1990). The power of the state and the early domination of commerce by foreigners resulted in a widespread anti-entrepreneurial ethos among the local populations in much of this region (Schopflin 1990: 65). Industrialization had hardly penetrated this part of the continent, with only pockets of development evident by the time of the First World War. In the inter-war period, Romania, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Croatia) and Bulgaria experienced some industrial development, but much of this was in foreign or state hands because of the shortage of investment capital among the native bourgeoisie. By the outbreak of the Second World War, only the Czech lands had a diversified industrial base with a class structure to match. In all countries except Czechoslovakia, the middle class was small and weak, and closely aligned with the state through employment in government bureaucracies. Although there was some development of an indigenous bourgeoisie in the inter-war period, it found itself in competition with a domestic 'foreign' bourgeoisie, and this fact prevented the development of a sense of a single bourgeois society or identity. However, within this broad pattern, a number of different class structures were evident.

In Poland the traditional gentry, despite its impoverishment during the nineteenth century (see the discussion in Janos 1989: 331-335), retained great prestige and was a major source of the intelligentsia who had been an important symbol of Polish nationhood when the state ceased to exist. This means that the intelligentsia was strongly imbued with norms of the gentry (Rothschild 1974: 28), and such norms tended to be hostile to commerce and trade. As a result this group looked overwhelmingly to the state and government administration as a means of earning a living, and when Poland gained its independence in 1918, this group was the most important in the

running of the new state. As this group expanded with the increased provision of education and the demand for more administrators, the linkage between this middle class and the state was strengthened. As a result, the principal component of the Polish middle class lacked real autonomy from the state, especially given that the commercial bourgeoisie was overwhelmingly Jewish and German in origin and heavily dependent on the state for its economic well-being. The basis for the development of Polish civil society forces was thereby bifurcated, and therefore weakened: the bulk of the middle class was Polish but closely linked with the state and possessed as its principal resource the conception of part of it (the intelligentsia) as the repository of Polish values and statehood, while the economically more powerful part of the middle class was ethnically alien and also beholden to the state. One important aspect of society was the Church, which occupied a place of influence unrivalled anywhere else in the region.

In Hungary too the principal basis for middle class development was state service. As in Poland, many of the gentry in the nineteenth century sold their lands and entered state service and the liberal professions, while the small emergent bourgeoisie was mainly Jewish in origin, although these people were becoming more Magyarized during the inter-war period. The collapse of the Hapsburg Empire actually led to very little change in Hungarian social structure, with the result that at the time of the Second World War, the country's class structure was still very traditional in nature. Society remained dominated by officials, many emanating from gentry backgrounds, with an independent middle class weak because of its reliance on the state and its ethnic division.

In Czechoslovakia there was a clear distinction between the Czech lands and Slovakia. The latter was overwhelmingly agricultural and historically more linked in to the historical patterns of the Hungarian plain than to Bohemia and Moravia. These two regions were much more economically dynamic and, given the historical weakness of the large landowners, when an independent state emerged in 1918, it was dominated by a native bourgeoisie and intelligentsia. Industrial development had a long history in this region, and it had produced a strong commercial bourgeoisie that was linked with other commercial, intellectual, professional and bureaucratic components of the middle class. The autonomy of this group was also buttressed by its involvement in local administration, an activity rare in the region (Stokes 1989: 217-218). Thus, unique for the region, the Czech middle class possessed the autonomy and resources needed to generate a vigorous range of civil society forces. This strength of the middle class may be reflected in the fact that this was the only country in the region in which liberal democracy became firmly based in the interwar period.

In Yugoslavia regional differences were more marked than in most other

countries (Rothschild 1974), in part because of the historical division between the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires that ran through this country. Most of the country was characterized by weak traditional landowner and middle class forces and by a massive peasantry embedded in traditional agricultural techniques. In Croatia there was a small but developing middle class and a gentry-dominated state administration, while in Slovenia an indigenous bourgeois middle class had been emerging and was the impetus behind growing pressures for Slovene independence before the war ended. In Serbia the dominant social group was state employees, while the middle class consisted mainly of military officers, small town shopkeepers, artisans and rich peasants. The rural basis of society meant that this was not a middle class that was likely to be able to generate vigorous autonomous group activity.

In Romania a weak commercial middle class was developing towards the end of the nineteenth century, but the presence of a substantial Jewish component hindered the development of any sense of middle class unity. In the words of one observer, the Jews were seen as an " 'alien' middle class...economically essential but politically resented and socially unassimilated..." (Rothschild 1974: 321). With the elimination of large landowners at the end of the First World War, most moved into bureaucratic, political or commercial positions. However, the state and state service remained the principal basis of the ethnic Romanian section of the middle class.

Bulgarian society was the most egalitarian in the region, with no nobility and an education system that facilitated social mobility. The elites in each sector of life were indigenous, while the middle class comprised the same groups as those that were central in Serbia, military men, small shopkeepers, artisans and rich peasants. Here too its dispersed nature rendered it quite weak.

Albania was the least developed country in the region. There was little urban development, almost no industry, and society was dominated by traditional clan-based structures of power and authority. There was no bourgeois middle class nor was there the sort of economic development that could have sustained such a class. The clan-based social and political life was completely antithetical to the development of the sort of class structure evident in the more developed parts of the region.

When the Second World War broke out, only the Czech lands had a class structure that seemed favourable for the development of vigorous civil society forces. In Poland, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia, middle classes were emerging but their reliance on the state posed a barrier to their development as autonomous forces. Nevertheless, there was at least a social formation in place, which, under different circumstances, may have been able to act as a basis for autonomous civil society development. Throughout most of the rest of the region, where the middle class was weak either because of its rural basis

or its ethnic division, there was little prospect of the early growth of substantial civil society forces. The arrival of communism changed this equation. In terms of the development of civil society forces, communism was a paradox. Insofar as communism was a development model emphasizing industrialization and fostering urbanization, it was a system that promoted the development of conditions facilitating the growth of civil society forces. And yet, at the same time, it was a system in which the state was used aggressively to frustrate the growth of such forces. This tension was a continuing feature of communist societies, and the way it was handled helped to determine the identity of the main actors at the time of regime collapse.

Despite the adoption of the Soviet model throughout most of the region, the impact of the different communist regimes on their respective societies and the capacity of those regimes to maintain domestic unity were very different. Consequently, the scope for the development of civil society forces under communism also varied considerably across the region. Such forces were most evident in Poland, late in the communist period, principally in the form of Solidarity. Khrushchev's de-Stalinism speech, reinforced by the history of anti-Russian feeling, created the crisis in 1956 which broke the regime's attempts to maintain Stalinist controls on Polish society. The regime reacted to the events of 1956 by seeking a path of accommodation with society. Although it did not officially sanction autonomous organization, it nevertheless tolerated some types of it. Of initial importance were the discussion clubs of intellectuals, which constituted the basis for what Vaclav Benda in Czechoslovakia was to refer to as a 'parallel polis' (Bernhard : 313): the generation and circulation of values autonomous from and critical of those espoused by the regime. An important prop for this was the Church, which sought to carve out for itself (though not always consistently or vigorously) an independent sphere of activity. Also important was the growth of a working class-based movement, which became publicly important at the times of regime crises in 1970, 1976 and especially in 1980-81 when Solidarity emerged. Although pushed underground with the declaration of martial law in 1981, Solidarity retained its position as the moral leader of Polish civil society forces. When the regime entered what proved to be its terminal crisis at the end of the 1980s, Solidarity had the standing to make it appear to be a viable negotiating partner to more reformist elements within the regime. Important too was the fact that, on a series of occasions when the regime had been confronted by civil society forces (1956, 1970, 1976, 1980-81), it had granted concessions. This reflects the fact that the party elite was never sufficiently confident and united to seek to hold on to power regardless of the costs.

Whereas some civil society forces had been tolerated in Poland, in Hungary their emergence was facilitated by the regime. In response to the Hungarian revolution of 1956, once the regime had stabilized itself in power it sought to

follow a strategy of accommodation with society. Principally driven by economic reforms but accompanied by a genuine policy of liberalization in the cultural, social and political spheres, the regime's approach was to encourage the growth of a wide range of civil society forces. There were of course limits to the regime's tolerance, but these limits were broad; almost uniquely in Eastern Europe the regime recognized the legitimacy of conflicting group interests. By the mid-1980s, a vast array of autonomous organizations and groups structured much of Hungarian public life, and although they tended to be weak and fragmented, together they constituted a significant network of civil society forces. Their development was a direct reflection of the fact that within the ruling party there was a strong tendency sympathetic to reform (Tokes 1996). Both of these were crucial for the opening in 1989.

In Czechoslovakia, tight controls were maintained on society until the early 1960s when a series of economic reforms began to moderate the Stalinist system. But, it was the 1968 Prague Spring that saw the blossoming of civil society forces, as the relaxation of regime control added to the encouragement given by the reformist Dubcek leadership led to a virtual explosion of autonomous activity (Skilling 1976). When this was suppressed, the regime's policy of 'normalization' forced autonomous group activity underground (intelligentsia-based human rights groups were the most important to be able to retain some semblance of organizational existence) while also tightening control within the regime (Simecka 1984). Reformist elements in society and regime were suppressed, and were therefore in no condition to play a major initiatory role in the early stages of the ultimate regime crisis at the end of the 1980s. However, emergent civil society forces were able to dominate the political landscape once the regime withdrew.

Yugoslavia explicitly recognized the legitimacy of the representation of diverse interests. Both the official ideology of self-managed socialism and the Yugoslav form of federalism implied the organized representation of interests. This means that there was a more relaxed attitude towards the expression of critical opinion and the expression of heterodox views, although there were limits, as dissidents like Milovan Djilas discovered. Furthermore, the situation varied from republic to republic. By the late 1980s, Slovenia had developed a form of civil society with representation of a wide diversity of different types of groups (Mastnak 1990: 305-317; Silber & Little 1995). Similar developments occurred in Croatia and Serbia, although in a less developed form, while the other republics lagged. Within the ruling party, there was a tradition of some flexibility and policy innovation, and in some republics (especially Slovenia and to a lesser extent Croatia) this expanded during the 1980s.

These sorts of manifestations of civil society forces were not allowed to develop in any other countries of the region. There were certainly instances of opposition and dissent at different times and a degree of organization of

personal interests at the lower levels of society, but these did not take the organized forms or reach the scale of activity achieved by civil society forces in the countries discussed above. In Albania, Bulgaria and Romania, tight control was maintained over society, leaving little scope for autonomous development. Similar tight control existed within the respective regimes, especially while the long-serving Hoxha in Albania (1946-75), Zhivkov in Bulgaria (1954-89) and Ceausescu in Romania (1965-89) remained in control. This meant that when the crisis came, reformist wings were very much weaker than the one that existed, for example, in the Hungarian party.

6 Conclusion

It is clear from the above that there is a systematic relationship between political outcomes, the identity of leading political actors at the time of regime crisis, and the strength of the legacy of civil society force development emanating from the pre-communist and communist periods. Political outcomes, as reflected in the course of development during the 1990s, were shaped by the preferences of those elites who were in dominant positions at the time of regime change. Where civil society forces were strongest – the future Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia – democratic political systems ensued. Where civil society forces were strong, but, because of the way in which nationalism appeared as a legitimate means of defining the political community, nationalist groups were dominant (Croatia and Slovakia), the resort to populist nationalism and the exclusionary notion of citizenship it involved imposed significant qualifications upon the countries' democratic credentials despite the operation of a competitive political system.¹⁸ In those countries where the immediate outcome of the communist regime crisis was a mixture of the reformist wing of the old regime and newer civil society forces, the political outcome depended upon domestic dynamics and the political circumstances as well as the strength of the respective partners: democracy in Slovenia, façade democracy in Macedonia. Where civil society forces were not sufficiently powerful to play a major part in defining the immediate political outcome of the regime crisis, the longer-term outcome depended overwhelmingly upon how the old regime elite had chosen to use its power and the response of emergent civil society forces. In Bulgaria, a competitive system in which the opposition was largely unhindered was set in place, ending in the consolidation of democracy. In Romania and Albania, a competitive system was established in which the regime engaged in a significant level of manipulation in order to undercut opposition, but ultimately the regime accepted the verdict of the voters and was removed from office. In Serbia, the effect of a competitive system was effectively nullified for a long time by continuing regime pressure on the opposition, until that regime too succumbed

in 2000 to a combination of electoral defeat and popular mobilization.

These patterns are clearly related to the history of the development of civil society forces in these countries. Such forces were strongest at the time of communist regime crisis in those countries where a pre-communist tradition was reinforced by civil society force development under communism. In these countries, the communist regime was able to suppress civil society forces, not destroy them. Those forces were sufficiently robust to be able to survive the regimes and, when regime pressure relaxed, to re-emerge into the open and play a major part in structuring the shift to a new form of political system. In Poland, Hungary and Slovenia, such forces had emerged during the communist period due to a degree of permissiveness on the part of the regime and were thereby able to play a part in the early stages of the crisis. In Croatia, such forces were also able to play a role at this stage, but, perhaps reflecting the legacy of the crushing of the 'Croat Spring' in 1971 and the traditional worries about Serb domination, it was nationalist forces (which had received some sustenance from within the regime) that were able to dominate the process of regime change. Only in Czechoslovakia, where regime pressure remained strong and continuing and control was tight, were civil society forces not in evidence until just before the regime fell. Here mass mobilization was more important than the activity of autonomous groups in persuading the regime that its time had come.

Civil society forces were correspondingly weaker where the pre-communist tradition was least developed and where the communist regime had been most assiduous in seeking to root it out. In Bulgaria, where pre-communist civil society forces were weak and kept on a tight rein by the communist regime, the late emergence of such forces enabled the regime to transform itself, largely set the rules of the new system, and re-establish itself in power. However, because those rules accepted political competition based on democratic principles and the regime agreed to abide by them, and because the opposition accepted the rules as established, the system emerged as a democratic one in which power was swapped between communist successor party and former opposition. The change came later in Albania, where pre-communist civil society forces were weakest and communist control tightest, than in the rest of Eastern Europe. Civil society forces were too weak to structure the early course of events, with the result that the regime laid down the rules of the new political game. However, in contrast to Bulgaria, the opposition did not accept the rules as initially instituted, leading to a politics of brinkmanship, conflict and instability. In Macedonia, where a weak pre-communist tradition was partly offset by the conditions of Yugoslav communism, civil society forces were able to gain a share of power with the reformist wing of old regime elites and thereby to structure the political outcome in a way that produced a competitive political system. In Serbia, where the pattern was like Macedonia

only with stronger civil society forces, second echelon regime elites seized power and used populist nationalism and the state against emergent civil society forces to consolidate itself in power. In Romania, where a weak pre-communist tradition was vigorously suppressed by the regime, an outcome similar to Serbia was initially the prospect. Second echelon elites seized power and used force to suppress the opposition. However, the system the new rulers set in place made provision for free and relatively fair elections and, given that the communist successors allowed such elections to be held, oppositionist civil society forces were able ultimately to overthrow their rule at the ballot box. But this was done within the system established at the time of the fall of the communist regime.

This connection between the circumstances of the transition from communism and the political outcomes, and in particular the central role played by the presence of powerful civil society forces, emphasizes the importance of this tradition of civil society development in each country. Where such a tradition was strongly rooted, reflected in strong civil society force development in both the pre-communist and communist periods, such organizations emerged in a more powerful fashion at the time of regime crisis (indeed, they were usually part of the cause of that crisis) and were able to structure a democratic political outcome from the outset. Where such a tradition was weak, civil society forces emerged later and became of central importance only after the fall of the regime and once the subsequent system's outline had been set by regime elites. The crucial variable was therefore the strength of civil society forces at the time of regime crisis relative to the old regime elite. Such forces did not emerge from nothing. They were the institutional representation of a set of more deeply embedded cultural values, which, in their playing out, was conducive to democratic development. In this sense students are correct to argue that the prior existence of a democratic culture can be important in structuring the course of regime change, but this may be understood only when that notion of culture is rooted in an organizational network of civil society forces.

Notes

1. This number excludes the former German Democratic Republic, which is no longer an independent state.
2. There is a massive and rich literature on what constitutes a democracy. This conception follows that of Robert A. Dahl (1971), which is simple and can be operationalized relatively easily. It therefore lends itself to the sort of comparison being offered here.
3. In practice, the boundaries between these types are indistinct.

4. The basis for and details supporting this categorization are discussed further in Gill (2000). It is based principally upon analysis of the individual countries, checked against Freedom House publications and the work by Karatnycky et al. (1997). It is important to recognize that the categorization rests on a perspective covering the entire post-communist period, not just a snapshot of the last year or so. Consequently, movement either in a democratic or anti-democratic direction is not accounted for in this broad typology. On the notion of qualified democracies, see Collier & Levitsky (1997).

5. Its two Baltic neighbours, Estonia and Latvia, are excluded principally on the basis of an exclusionist citizenship policy and thereby a mechanism for excluding a substantial proportion of the population from membership of the polity.

6. This term is being used in the sense in which it was used during the cold war, in other words to refer to that geographical region west of the USSR ruled by communist parties. In today's parlance, it is East Central Europe and the Balkans.

7. Bosnia-Herzegovina has been excluded because of the way in which its development has been shaped by the war and the terms under which it was ended. This makes any attempt to explain its development in terms of the same processes as applied to the other 25 countries impossible.

8. The relative absence of democracies in the former Soviet Union is also striking, but is not the focus of this paper.

9. It is not possible in this article to explain fully or interrogate the argument about the nature of value and belief systems in different parts of the continent or the sorts of political arrangements to which they might be conducive.

10. While in part this may be because different writers have different conceptions of what civil society is and what is important in it, it is also because such judgements can be notoriously difficult to make. For example, how is the situation to be evaluated when a regime permits some autonomous organizations to function while suppressing others? In practice, this is the situation in all societies, but the boundary between what is acceptable for a civil society and what is not is not clear.

11. While analytically these groups are distinct, in practice the boundaries are blurred.

12. It is by no means clear that, historically, the emergence of civil society requires that all groups adopt a tolerant approach or that they need to have clear democratic sentiments. It may be that all that is needed is for a diversity of groups to exist and to pursue their aims. Such a situation could lead to wider acceptance among those groups of the need to live and let live in the realization that what is needed is to ensure that one group does not gain a permanent position of dominance. In other words, self interest rather than principled commitment may be the basis of a democratic civil society.

13. The literature on this is very extensive and growing exponentially. One stimulating collection of essays, which examines the methodology of our attempts to understand this process, has been edited by Cox (1998).

14. This point does not apply to Yugoslavia and Albania, both of which had broken with Moscow decades before. For an excellent short survey of developments in the region at this time, see Glenny (1990).

15. The following surveys of the situation both prior to and under communism can in each case only characterize in simple terms the complex situation that applied in each country. The discussion is based on numerous sources relating to the individual countries as well as those referred to in the bibliography.

16. The judgement about such capacity, and the characterizations of the societies of Eastern Europe that follow, cannot be substantiated in quantifiable terms but must, necessarily, reflect a degree of subjectivity. But the same is true for many of the judgements made in the course of the study of past times.

17. As this implies, civil society forces emerge from the basic structures of collective life and may exist, therefore, in societies characterized by neither urbanization nor industrialization. However, the development of such forces is stimulated, strengthened and shaped by these two factors.

18. Although in both cases the nationalists were defeated at the ballot box in both cases: Slovakia's Meciar in 1998/99, and the Croatian Democratic Community in January 2000 following Tudjman's death the month before.

Bibliography

- Almond, Gabriel A., and Sidney Verba (1965), *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. Boston: Little Brown & Co.
- Arato, Andrew (1981), 'Civil society against the state: Poland 1980-81', *Telos* 47, pp.23-47.
- Arato, Andrew (1981-2), 'Empire versus civil society: Poland 1981-82', *Telos* 50, pp. 19-48.
- Bendix, Reinhard (1978), *Kings or People. Power and the Mandate to Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bunce, Valerie (1999), *Subversive Institutions. The Design and the Destruction of Socialism and the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carpenter, Michael (1997), 'Slovakia and the triumph of national populism', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, 2 June.
- Collier, David, and Steven Levitsky (1997), 'Democracy with adjectives: conceptual innovation in comparative research', *World Politics* 49(3), pp. 430-451.
- Cox, Michael (ed.) (1998), *Rethinking the Soviet Collapse. Sovietology, the Death of Communism and the New Russia*. London: Pinter.
- Dahl, Robert A. (1971), *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ekiert, Grzegorz (1991), 'Democratization processes in East Central Europe: a theoretical reconsideration', *British Journal of Political Science* 21(3), pp. 285-313.
- Elster, Jon (ed.) (1996), *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fukuyama, Francis (1992), *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- Gill, Graeme (2000), *The Dynamics of Democratization. Elites, Civil Society, and the Transition Process*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Gill, Graeme (forthcoming), *Democracy and Post-Communism*.

- Glenny, Misha (1990), *The Rebirth of History. Eastern Europe in the Age of Democracy*. London: Penguin.
- Haggard, Stephan, and Robert R. Kaufman (1995), *The Political Economy of Democratic Transitions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Heinrich, Hans-Georg (1986), *Hungary. Politics, Economics, Society*. London: Pinter.
- Henderson, Karen, and Neil Robinson (1997), *Post-Communism Politics. An Introduction*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Holmes, Leslie (1997), *Post-Communism. An Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1984), 'Will more countries become democratic?', *Political Science Quarterly* 99(2) .
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1991), *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Huntington, Samuel P. (1996), *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Janos, Andrew C. (1989), 'The politics of backwardness in continental Europe, 1780-1945', *World Politics* xli(3), April, pp. 258-325.
- Karatnycky, Adrian, Alexander Motyl and Boris Shor (1997), *Nations in Transit 1997. Civil Society, Democracy and Markets in East Central Europe and the Newly Independent States*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Keane, John (1988a), *Democracy and Civil Society*. London: Verso.
- Keane, John (ed.) (1988b), *Civil Society and the State*. London: Verso.
- Linz, Juan J., and Alfred Stepan (1996), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Mastnak, Tomaz (1990), 'Civil society in Slovenia: from opposition to power', *Studies in Comparative Communism* XXIII(3/4), pp. 305-317.
- O'Donnell, Guillermo, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.) (1986), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Prospects for Democracy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Rothschild, Joseph (1974), *East Central Europe Between the Two World Wars*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Schopflin, George (1990), 'The political traditions of Eastern Europe', *Daedalus* 119, winter, pp. 55-90.
- Silber, Laura, and Allan Little (1995), *The Death of Yugoslavia*. London: Penguin.
- Simecka, Milan (1984), *The Restoration of Order. The Normalization of Czechoslovakia 1969-1976*. London: Verso.
- Skilling, H. Gordon (1976), *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stokes, Gale (1989), 'The social origins of East European politics', in: Daniel Chirot (ed.), *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe. Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages Until the Early Twentieth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stokes, Gale (1993), *The Walls Came Tumbling Down. The Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Tokes, Rudolf L. (1996), *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution. Economic Reform, Social Change and Political Succession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weigle, Marcia A., and Jim Butterfield (1992), 'Civil society in reforming communist regimes. The logic of emergence', *Comparative Politics* 25(1), October, pp. 1-23.
- Welch, Helga A. (1994), 'Political transition processes in Central and Eastern Europe', *Comparative Politics* 26(4), pp. 379-214.

Urban Debates and Deliberative Democracy

Tjitske Akkerman

University of Amsterdam

Abstract

Interactive policy-making became trendy in the 1990s. It is a diffuse phenomenon, covering a wide variety of practices, goals and settings. Rather than trying to capture the phenomenon in all its aspects, the focus here will be on examples of interactive policy-making that primarily and explicitly set out to foster public debate in a face-to-face setting, the so-called urban debates. The aim of this article is to evaluate the democratic potential of these public debates. Drawing from theories of deliberative democracy I will focus on three criteria: inclusiveness, trust and decision-making authority.

1 Interactive policy-making in the 1990s

Interactive policy-making became trendy in the 1990s. The trend involves an enormous variety of projects in small and large municipalities all over the country (Edelenbos & Munnikhof 1998; Hendriks & Tops 1997; Tops et al. 1999; Teisman 1998). There is more than one reason why interactive policies have become popular, however, the increase has to be seen above all against the background of a declining legitimacy of local and national politics. There have been intermittent pessimistic accounts of a growing gap between voters and politicians on all political levels, but empirical indications that political relations were changing date from the end of the 1980s. Since then voter turnout and party membership have shown a steady decline. Interest in politics has been more or less steady among the majority of citizens, but among the youngest generation a significant decrease in interest has been observed (Thomassen et al. 2000).

In local politics at least three developments have contributed to the awareness of vested parties that declining legitimacy was something to worry about. First, the voter turnout of the local elections of 1990 alarmed local political elites. The turnout at these elections reached a historical low – an all-time low since the abolition of compulsory attendance in 1970. Various local committees were established to analyze the problem of an apparently widening