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RECONSIDERING REVOLUTIONS:

The Impact of Breakthrough Elections on Democratization in Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, and Georgia

by Chelsea Kendziorski

Student Summer Scholar 2014

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Abstract

Recent research highlights the democratizing impact of breakthrough elections in post-communist Eurasia, some of which have been accompanied by the so-called color revolutions. Because elections expand opportunities for civil society organization and contentious politics, scholars have noted improvements in democracy procedures and accountability in those countries where breakthrough elections produced government turnover. Drawing on evidence from Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, and Georgia, this paper investigates the extent to which individual breakthrough elections contributed to democratic development. While these countries have experienced overall democratic progress, improvements in some areas, such as civil society development, the autonomy of media outlets, and electoral processes, have been less robust than one would expect. Contrary to the conclusions of previous studies that the uneven democratization process in these countries is the result of longer-term structural conditions, this analysis shows how elite decisions can be critical in shaping structural conditions and governance trajectories.

Introduction

The “color revolutions” that swept across the post-communist world in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s excited scholars and western leaders, many of whom believed these movements would ignite positive democratic change. In addition, these uprisings spread geographically and inspired similar protests for change in 2011 in the Middle East. Since elections provide opportunities for civil society development and can promote political competition (Bunce and Wolchik 2011), assumptions that democratization would follow in the wake of electoral breakthroughs are reasonable, particularly since some countries made substantial inroads following similar events in 1989 and 1990.

In some countries, these “second transitions” did produce impressive democratic development (McFaul 2005). For instance, Vladimir Meciar was defeated in 1998 elections in Slovakia, and Freedom House (1999) reported that the country’s status was “free” just a year later. The successful opposition empowerment in Slovakia inspired activists in Croatia to adopt similar strategies in 2000, such as unifying the opposition, to remove the HDZ from power (Bunce and Wolchik 2011). These elections similarly fostered democratization, and Freedom House has consistently reported the country’s status as “free” since 2001 (Freedom House 2001-2014). However, not all countries that experienced electoral breakthroughs have seen robust democratic progress in their wake. Electoral defeats of authoritarian leaders occurred in Ukraine in 2004 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005. Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution” empowered opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko, who many hoped would bring an end to the severe corruption that characterized the former regime. However, ten years after the Orange Revolution, the Yanukovich regime used severe coercion tactics, including violent police brutality, to suppress protestors (Way 2014). Similarly in Kyrgyzstan, protests following the 2005 parliamentary

election led to the ousting of authoritarian ruler Askar Akayev in what was known as the “Tulip Revolution.” However, Akayev’s successor, Kurmanbek Bakiev, proved himself even less willing to curb corruption and defend civil liberties, which ultimately contributed to his ouster and ignited ethnically charged violence in 2010. Yet, the majority of countries that have undergone electoral breakthroughs tend to lie somewhere in between these two extremes. Democratic progress occurred following breakthrough elections in Georgia, Moldova, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, but each of these countries continues to face serious impediments to democracy including corruption and the presence of an uneven playing field.¹

Despite the uneven nature of democratic progress following these breakthrough elections, there are a number of scholars who insist that elections have a democratizing impact (Bunce and Wolchik 2011; Lindberg 2009). Building on previous research that suggests these elections to be a mode of transition, I argue that these events have produced not only uneven progress but also that democratization has been much less robust than anticipated. Additionally, this analysis addresses the scholarly debate about the roles of agency and structure in shaping democratic trajectories by incorporating elements of both approaches to explain uneven levels of democratic development. Furthermore, I attempt to bridge the domestic-international divide and show how both have worked to affect democratic trajectories. In short, my central argument is that the uneven democratic progress in Serbia, Croatia, Moldova, and Georgia following breakthrough elections can be best explained by examining the ways in which elite actors have taken advantage of weak civil society and media forces to limit opposition potential. The premise here is that elites can shape and benefit from domestic conditions, such as a financially and human resource poor opposition, to ensure their political power. However, the prospect of European

¹ Levitsky and Way (2010b) offer the insight that a skewed playing field, characterized by unequal access to state institutions and resources, can seriously undermine electoral competition and democratization.

² Levitsky and Way (2002) condemn analysts who treat hybrid regimes as diminished forms of democracy,

Union membership makes this sort of systematic manipulation more costly and more difficult for leaders to engage in. The more direct involvement of the EU that comes with prospective membership helps to discourage elites from making decisions that promote their personal advantage to the disadvantage of organized societal forces.

In the following pages, I offer an overview of the current literature on the democratizing impact of breakthrough elections and democratization in general for the purpose of exploring how the insights of previous research fall short and yet still offer valuable insights to explore the theoretical puzzle posed here. Then, I develop my argument concerning the nature of domestic and international incentive structures that elites can manipulate and outline how it contributes to our understanding of the democratization process. The following sections describe my method of case selection, emphasizing the structural similarities that these countries share, and present evidence of uneven democratic progress. Then I apply my argument to the evidence of democratic trajectories in Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, and Georgia. The final section of this analysis offers concluding remarks and implications for policy makers.

Democratization: Insights and Gaps

Given the tremendous positive press coverage of elections that unseat incumbent authoritarian leaders and are sometimes accompanied by mass mobilization, the assumption that such elections are conducive to democratization does not appear far-fetched. However, scholars are divided about the democratic impact of so-called breakthrough elections, sometimes referred to in the post-communist world as color revolutions. Lindberg (2009) suggests elections as a mode of democratic transition. Bunce and Wolchik (2011) agree with this assessment for the most part and argue that breakthrough elections change what social movement theorists refer to

as the “political opportunity structure” of authoritarian politics, expand the boundaries of popular mobilization and participation, and encourage a more competitive political environment. After reviewing the evidence of progress in the aftermath of these elections, Bunce and Wolchik conclude that democratic outcomes are enhanced in countries with a robust civil society and opposition whose efforts are aimed at constructive power sharing. With this in mind, it seems more appropriate to refer to the liberalizing potential of these elections rather than assert their democratic nature, so as to avoid the democratizing bias inherent in the term “democratizing elections.”²

The debate about the role of elections as a mode of transition to democracy has taken a more pessimistic turn as analysts review the evidence and conclude that the case made in support of their democratizing nature has been overstated. While democratic progress has been robust following electoral breakthroughs in Serbia, Slovakia, and Croatia, it has been much less notable in Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. This has encouraged Kalandadze and Orenstein (2009) to claim that analysts have overemphasized the role of elections. Additionally, they contend that improvements in elections ignore deeper structural impediments to real democratic change, and that newly empowered leaders do not always implement democratic reform programs unless pressured by international actors such as the European Union (Kalandadze and Orenstein 2009). Even scholars who recognize some democratic improvement in the wake of electoral breakthroughs have been hesitant to attribute successful democratization to this phenomenon. Pop-Eleches and Robertson (2013) insist that democratic change following breakthrough elections occurs only when a country is moving close to its “structural norms.” They claim that the significant democratic progress following the Bulldozer Revolution in Serbia, for example,

² Levitsky and Way (2002) condemn analysts who treat hybrid regimes as diminished forms of democracy, highlighting the democratizing bias inherent in labels such as “virtual” or “semi” democracy.

represents a convergence to where the country “should be” based on its geographic location and levels of economic development (Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2013).

This emphasis on modernization as a significant explanatory variable for democratization is a reminder of the weighty influence of Lipset’s (1959) contribution to the democratization debate. Modernization theory continues to be discussed in more recent democratization literature (Przeworski and Limongi 1997; Boix and Stokes 2003). While levels of economic development may explain broader patterns across regions and time, serious exceptions remain. For example, Croatia and Serbia are similarly democratic, yet Croatia fares much better in terms of wealth and development.³ Economic equality is a potential way to measure development, and analysts have argued that democracy prevails in countries where equality is high (Boix 2003). However, economic equality is relatively high in the post-communist region, perhaps as a legacy of compressed incomes under communism, and as a result does not appear to be a good predictor of political differences. For example, in Serbia and Moldova, where political trajectories show Moldova lagging behind, levels of equality appear relatively similar.⁴ The question then remains: if levels of economic development and equality on their own do not appear to explain democratic trajectories in the aftermath of breakthrough elections, what are some other possible factors?

The suggestion that Leninist legacies have impacted democratization trajectories is an additional structural argument that gained much currency in the 1990s (Jowitt 1992; Comisso 1994). The different political trajectories that began to emerge in the mid-1990s were attributed

³ Freedom House (2012) scored Serbia and Croatia 3.64 and 3.61, respectively on the Nations in Transit indicator, with 1 being the highest level of development and 7 being the lowest. Yet, GDP per capita in 2012 in Serbia was \$9803.33, and \$16425.36 in Croatia (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2012). Additionally, Serbia scored .769 and Croatia .805 on the Human Development Index, with 1 being the best score a country can receive and 0 being the worst (United Nations Human Development Report 2012).

⁴ The 2010 GINI index for Serbia was 29.6, and 33.0 for Moldova (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2010). These scores do not show significant disparity, as the GINI index measures on a scale of 0 to 100, but Serbia has democratized more successfully than Moldova (Freedom House 2010; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2010; Marshall and Gurr 2010).

to varying levels of pluralism that Communist Party authorities tolerated. It was argued that higher levels of pluralism in terms of permitted pockets of dissent and market-like innovations in central planning and property forms, such as in Poland, Hungary, and the former Yugoslavia, would allow for a more robust party system and civil society immediately following the collapse of communism and would contribute to the development of political competition and societal accountability (Geddes 1995; Hanson 1995). Some scholars added international dimensions, such as the degree of imperial control exerted by Moscow, to clarify the interplay of both domestic and international forces inherent to communist legacies (Motyl 2004). However, an emphasis solely on the nature of communist legacies cannot explain the trajectories of the more liberalized former Yugoslavia, whose political leaders variably plunged their newly independent countries to war, whereas the leaders of the Baltic states, inheriting a more hardline communist legacy, navigated their countries toward decidedly more democratic forms of governance (Csargo 2011).

The recognition of how actors are at the forefront of major political change but are constrained and empowered by particular structural conditions is an insight familiar to those who study multiethnic countries. Rustow (1970) introduced the idea that while actors' decisions are the most important for understanding democratic change, some form of national unity is still required. Recent research builds on Rustow's claims by arguing that leaders of newly independent states, especially those with a history of ethnic tensions and nationalistic policies, must figure out how to deal with the issue of what Linz and Stepan (1996) call "stateness" before they are able to transition to and consolidate democracy. Although stateness problems pose a difficult challenge for democratizers, numerous countries, including India and Spain, have been able to overcome these problems and democratize successfully as a result of how political actors

decided to define citizenship and promote national as well as subnational cultural identities (Linz and Stepan 1996; Linz, Stepan, and Yadav 2010). When political elites build new states via exclusivist political projects that favor one group at the expense of another and adopt unilateral strategies over negotiation across ethnic lines, their actions are likely to undermine democratic possibilities by driving these states toward conflict and perhaps even war (Csörgő 2011).

In the face of difficult challenges that have been overcome by newer states, scholars have examined the role played by mobilized civil society actors in determining whether or not democratization will occur (Collier 1999; Tilly 2004). The role of social actors in promoting democratization encourages scholars to look at the strength and unity of the opposition as well, as these structural dimensions influence the extent to which social actors are able to influence real political change (McFaul 2005). Bunce and Wolchik (2011) also examine the importance of opposition unity, and additionally they investigate whether or not opposition actors choose to adopt certain strategies for action. Furthermore, the actors in their analysis are transnational and work with other international actors in order to diffuse the electoral model (Bunce and Wolchik 2011).

Thus far, this discussion has been limited to different types of domestic factors that could account for democratic trajectories following liberalizing elections. Since the end of the Cold War, however, international actors have been more interested and involved in promoting democracy abroad. Academic scholarship has followed suit to study the impact of these actors, and investigations of how international factors influence democratization have gone from being conceptualized in terms of waves (Huntington 1991) to more sophisticated analyses of geographic diffusion (Kopstein and Reilly 2000) and western linkages (Levitsky and Way 2010a). Levitsky and Way (2010 a) contend that, where Western linkages are low, competitive

authoritarian regimes are unlikely to democratize. However, this does not seem to account for the relatively modest democratic development in Serbia and Croatia following their breakthrough elections, despite their quite extensive western ties. Both countries signed European Union Stabilization and Association Agreements in the years following electoral breakthroughs, with Serbia signing in 2005 and Croatia in 2001. In addition, Croatia became an official EU member in 2013, and Serbia has had official candidate membership since 2012. Furthermore, while the theoretical framework presented by Levitsky and Way (2010 a) investigates whether competitive authoritarian regimes democratize or not, their analysis does not explain the robustness of democratization processes once they have crossed a democratic threshold. Kopstein and Reilly (2000) offer some assistance here and suggest that proximity to the EU opens up greater financial and political assistance to post-communist democratizers, and in doing so increases democratic incentives. However, Croatia is a member of the EU and Serbia is an official candidate member as of 2012, but the countries are very similar in terms of how successfully they have democratized.

The review of the democratization scholarship thus far reveals that, while certain factors structure the environment in which democratization occurs or is impeded, actors' decisions can matter for different outcomes in countries with similar structural environments. Yet abandoning attention to structure to focus exclusively on actors can lead to similar difficulties. For example, Michael McFaul (2002) builds on earlier agency arguments (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Linz and Stepan 1996; Przeworski 1991) by investigating how balance of power dynamics explain the democratic trajectories of post-communist countries. He rejects earlier arguments concerning pacts, noting that relatively even balance of power configurations between incumbent and opposition actors produced less than democratic outcomes in the post-communist world.

McFaul thus highlights the importance of the democratic opposition winning initial elections in determining democratic trajectories. However, if this were the case in terms of breakthrough elections as well, we would expect to see more substantial democratic progress in the wake of electoral breakthroughs. In addition, McFaul does not investigate the origins of the balance of power. Why are democrats able to develop a power advantage in some countries and not in others? It could be the case that structural conditions are at work here, and examining these variables may help us understand where the balance of power comes from.

The structure-agency debate has encouraged some reconsideration of the roles of both types of factors in investigations of democratization. Ekiert and Ziblatt (2013) view post-communist transitions through the scope of an ongoing historical democratization process, wherein political patterns, policy choices, and structural conditions are shaped by pre-communist patterns, choices, and conditions. The authors bridge the structure/agency divide by arguing that neither the contingent choices of elite actors nor the legacies of communist rule sufficiently explain the diversity in post-communist regime outcomes, and that, at critical junctures, elite actors are both constrained and empowered by the past (Ekiert and Ziblatt 2013). Fish (1999) also incorporates elements of both structure and agency in his analysis of post-communist regime change. He considers how elite interests at the time of transition were shaped by the organizational profile of the communist party in each country, and how decisions regarding the privatization process have influenced the extent to which post-communist economies are marketized (Fish 1999). However, his investigation does not consider international factors and their impact on democratic trajectories. Bunce and Wolchik (2011), who also consider the roles of both agency and structure, offer some assistance here. They refute the structure-centric arguments of Levitsky and Way and show how international and domestic actors can adopt what they call the electoral

model to help the opposition win elections (Bunce and Wolchik 2011). With the assistance of international actors, domestic actors make choices to adopt the electoral model, and these choices are conditioned by opposition unity and the unpopularity of regime incumbents (Bunce and Wolchik 2011). In essence, Bunce and Wolchik's research contributes significantly to understanding democratization and electoral breakthroughs. They take into account actors' decisions as well as the structural environment and show how the electoral model can be diffused across countries to impact election outcomes. However, when it comes to explaining divergent democratic trajectories following liberalizing elections, they draw on mostly structural factors.

Reconsidering Revolutions and Building Bridges

With an aim to pick up where Bunce and Wolchik left off, my argument attends to the structure-agency debate as well as the domestic-international divide in the literature. In doing so, this analysis investigates structural variables as well as agency factors in an effort to explain democratic trajectories following breakthrough elections. In addition, I build on existing research by considering the impact of both international and domestic influences. My working definition of democratization is taken from Larry Diamond (1999), who builds on Dahl's (1989) definition of polyarchy. Diamond defines liberal democratic regimes as those that ensure uncertain electoral outcomes, allow for civil liberties and citizens' access to multiple sources of information, respect and defend minority rights, and maintain horizontal accountability in ensuring the independence of the judiciary and legislature from the executive.

This analysis shows how democratic progress following breakthrough elections in Serbia, Croatia, Moldova, and Georgia has been uneven despite similar structural conditions, and investigates the reasons behind the diverging democratic trajectories of these countries. In

addition, I challenge the idea that these elections produce democratization by showing how progress has been less robust than one would expect. While the structural conditions in Serbia, Croatia, Moldova, and Georgia are similar, recognizing the presence of these variables is important for understanding the democratic trajectories of these countries. I argue that elite actors have been able to manipulate domestic structural conditions, such as civil society and independent media, in order to gain and maintain political power. Additionally, I address how the potential of EU membership and conditionality limits actors' ability to engage in anti-democratic behavior and influences domestic voter preferences.

Case Selection

The country cases selected to explore the aftermath of liberalizing elections are Serbia, Croatia, Moldova, and Georgia. I chose these countries because their democratic progress following breakthrough elections has been uneven. Therefore, there is some variation on the dependent variable, which is considered a hallmark of solid research design (Przeworski and Teune 1970; King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). In addition, these countries share communist pasts, are all newly independent states, have had experience with border conflicts and civil wars, are ethnically diverse, and are not rich in natural resources. By holding these conditions constant in a similar systems design, this analysis is able to look beyond just structure-centric explanations to investigate the complex reasons behind the different democratic trajectories that these countries have followed after their breakthrough elections.

Serbia, Croatia, Moldova, and Georgia all experienced communist rule, they share a structural legacy that many scholars have claimed can impede democratization. Perhaps even more importantly, all four countries became independent states only after the collapse of

communism in 1991. As a result, the four countries share the stateness challenges common to newly independent states (Linz and Stepan 1996). Such difficulties have been exacerbated in all four countries due to the presence of ethnically charged border conflicts and civil wars in the 1990's and 2000's. Additionally, leaders in each country have fueled ethnic tensions in order to rally popular support and secure votes. This instrumental manipulation has posed serious obstacles for successful democratization in all four countries.

Importantly, a final structural similarity among these countries is that none of them is rich in natural resources. Scholars have studied the effects of oil wealth on democratization and concluded that countries dependent on revenue from natural resources for a large portion of their GDP are less likely to democratize than countries with more diverse economies (Ross 2001). That not one of these four countries is resource rich means that the “resource curse” phenomenon cannot be blamed for the difficulties they have faced with democratization.

While looking to structural conditions alone cannot explain the differences in democratic development between these countries, considering the ways in which structure and agency interact can help. This analysis works to bridge the structure-agency gap in the literature by investigating how political actors are able to take advantage of domestic structural weaknesses in order to gain power and prolong their rule. While previous research has contended that domestic structures, such as weak parties, opposition, and civil society impede democratic progress, my analysis examines how elites can shape these conditions, inflame ethnic tensions, and form alliances with prominent economic actors to create a structural environment that is less conducive to democratization. Building on Bunce and Wolchik's investigation of transnational diffusion, my argument shows how domestic actors can be either limited or empowered by the international environment, depending largely on the potential for EU membership.

Evidence of Uneven Democratic Progress

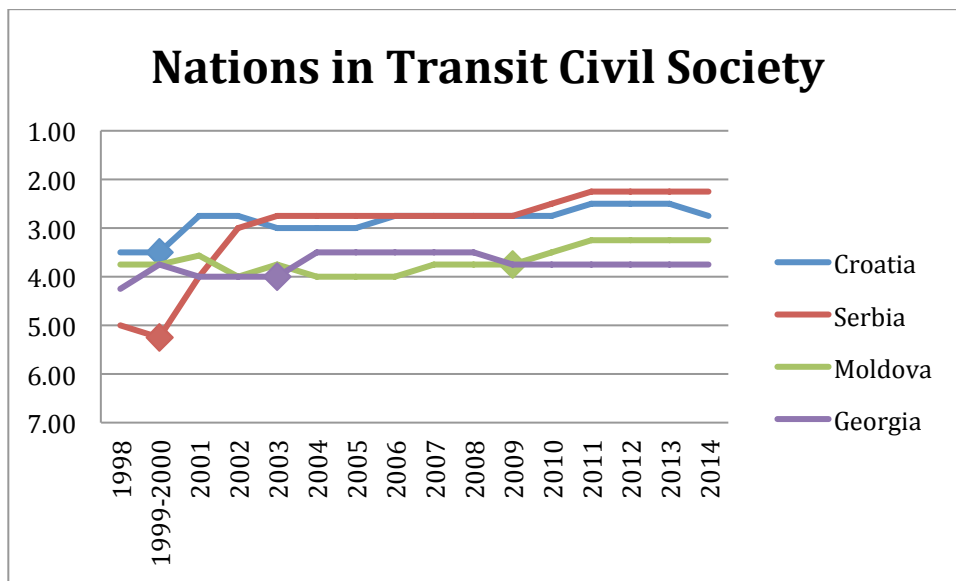


Figure 1

Source: Nations in Transit 1998-2014

Note: Vertical axis values in reverse order, with 1 being the most democratic score a country can receive and 7 being the least; ♦ indicates timing of breakthrough election

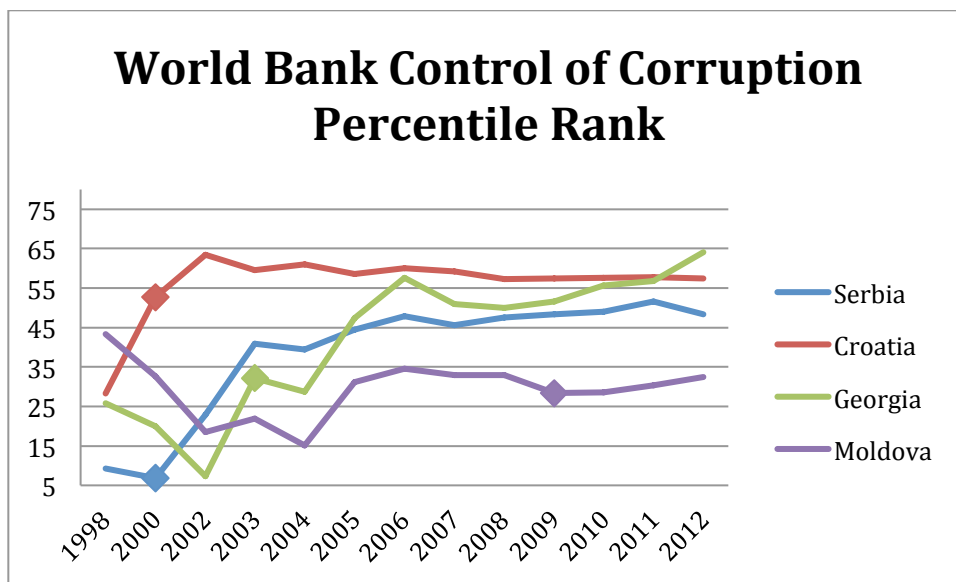


Figure 2

Source: World Bank 1998-2012

Note: ♦ indicates timing of breakthrough election

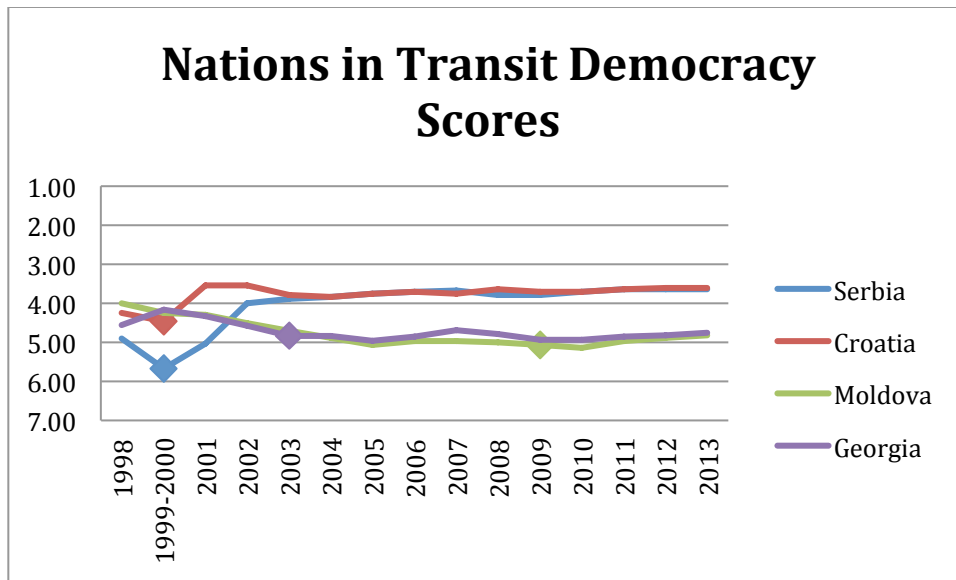


Figure 3

Source: Nations in Transit 1998-2013

Note: Vertical axis values in reverse order, with 1 being the most democratic score a country can receive and 7 being the least; ♦ indicates timing of breakthrough election

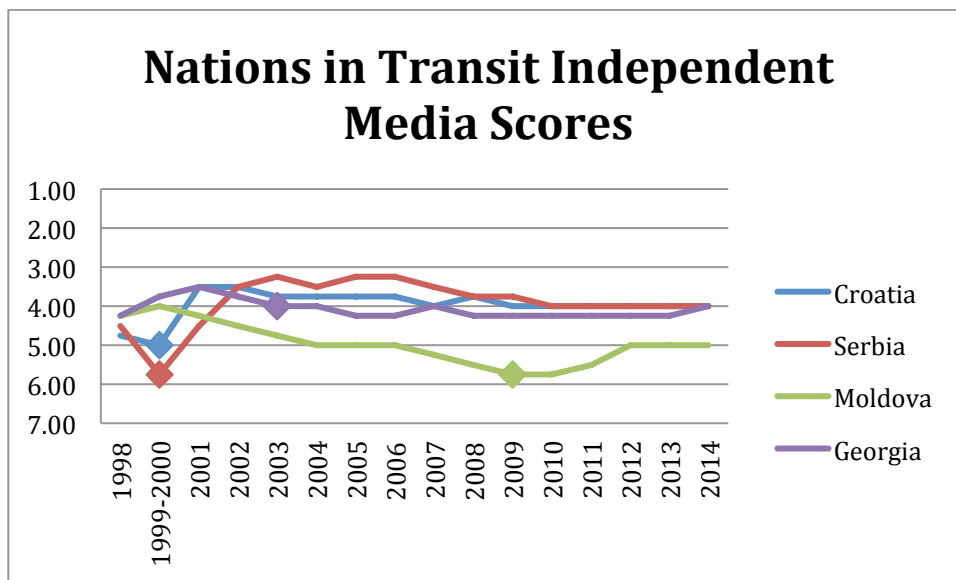


Figure 4

Source: Nations in Transit 1998-2014

Note: Vertical axis values in reverse order, with 1 being the most democratic score a country can receive and 7 being the least; ♦ indicates timing of breakthrough election

Before showing how my argument has played out in Croatia, Serbia, Moldova, and Georgia, a discussion of their democratic trajectories following electoral breakthroughs is

necessary. Croatia⁵ and Serbia experienced electoral breakthroughs in 2000, and made significant progress with democratization in subsequent years (Figure 3). They both saw impressive improvements in civil society development (Figure 1). In 2000, Nations in Transit rated Serbia at 5.25, and Croatia at 3.50 (Freedom House 1999-2000). By 2006, both countries' scores had improved to 2.75 (Freedom House 2006). Similarly, control of corruption in both countries increased following breakthrough elections (Figure 2). In 2000, the World Bank ranked Serbia's control of corruption in the 6th percentile, and Croatia in the 52nd percentile (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2000). Just four years later, Serbia had moved to the 39th percentile, and Croatia to the 60th percentile (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2004). On the other hand, democratic improvements in Moldova and Georgia since their respective electoral breakthroughs in 2009 and 2003 have been less robust (Figure 3). In 2003, civil society in Georgia was assessed as 4 by Nations in Transit (Freedom House 2003). Six years later, in 2009, the score had improved only slightly to 3.75 (Freedom House 2009). Similarly, Moldova's civil society development was assessed as 3.75 in 2009, and by 2014, the country's score improved only slightly to 3.25 (Freedom House 2009, Freedom House 2014). Figure 1 shows that civil society in both Georgia and Moldova saw less improvement after breakthrough elections than one would expect, and improvement that did occur was followed by stagnation. On the other hand, the countries followed starkly different trajectories after their electoral breakthroughs in terms of corruption control (Figure 2). Georgia experienced increased control of corruption after 2003. The World Bank (2003) ranked Georgia's control of corruption in the 32nd percentile (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2003). In 2007, the country was ranked in the 50th percentile (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2007). On the other hand, Moldova did not show

⁵ In Serbia, Moldova, and Georgia authoritarian leaders were ousted as a result of mass protests following fraudulent elections. Croatia is different here, as Tudjman's death in 1999 opened a window of opportunity through which the democratic opposition was able to gain power.

improvement in terms of corruption control. In 2007, Moldova was ranked in the 33rd percentile (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2007). In 2009, the country placed in the 28th percentile (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2009). Three years after Moldova's electoral breakthrough, the country fell in the 32nd percentile, which is a lower score than Moldova received before the breakthrough election took place (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2012).

Qualitative assessments also highlight the disparities in democratic development following electoral breakthroughs in these countries. Levitsky and Way (2010 a) contend that Serbia and Croatia achieved democratization, despite significant domestic obstacles. On the other hand, they describe Georgia and Moldova as unstable competitive authoritarian regimes, characterized by ineffective state and party structures. Likewise, Dzihic and Seigert (2012) consider Serbia and Croatia to be formally consolidated democracies that still struggle with inefficient welfare institutions and ethno-national divisions among civil society organizations. They assert that the current problems facing Serbia and Croatia are less a function of consolidating democracy and have more to do with deepening democracy and promoting democratic values in society (Dzihic and Siegert 2012). However, in Georgia and Moldova, problems with corruption and lack of media independence are severe enough to seriously threaten democratic governance. For example, in 2010, nearly 1/7 of the annual budget in Georgia was allocated for unknown purposes (De Waal, Alasania, and Welt 2010). Similarly in Moldova, judges and law enforcement officials continue to be subject to political influence and bribery (Freedom House 2013).

Croatia

The death of Franjo Tudjman in 1999 left the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) without its autocratic leader and presented the democratic opposition with an opportunity to gain power. Democratic progress followed the 2000 electoral breakthrough in Croatia. The newly empowered Social Democratic Party (SDP) immediately began pursuing democratic social and economic reforms (Freedom House 2001). Croatia's relative success with democratization can be explained by examining how domestic and international conditions constrained the decisions of elite actors and encouraged democratic behavior.

Contrary to the less than ideal conditions in Serbia after the Bulldozer Revolution, Croatia enjoyed structures that were highly conducive to democratization in 2000. The prompt development of a moderate pluralist party system and the fact that nationalist sentiments were largely surface-level discouraged elite manipulation of civil society and ethnic tensions. While independent media suffered from disadvantages that made outlets vulnerable to political manipulation similar to what occurred in Serbia, immediate international pressure discouraged elites from engaging in anti-democratic behavior.

In contrast to the polarized party system in Serbia, right-wing extremism was weak in Croatia outside of the HDZ, and leftist populism did not exist (Zakosek 2008). After the HDZ transformed itself into a center-right party and dropped its nationalist legacy in 2002, a moderate pluralist party system developed (Zakosek 2008). This party structure was much more conducive to democratization than Serbia's because elites in Croatia knew that appealing to extremism would not generate popular support. Importantly, when the HDZ was reelected in 2003, this victory did not suggest a resurgence of nationalism similar to the SRS's return to power in Serbia. Before returning to power, the HDZ had abandoned nationalistic ideals and become pro-

European. HDZ leaders not only had greater incentives to reform the party platform than their SRS counterparts, the “nationalist” ideology of the HDZ had a much shakier foundation than that of the SRS.

Throughout the 1990’s Milosevic ruthlessly appealed to deeply rooted feelings of fear and victimization among ethnic Serbs, claiming that he was the “savior” of the mistreated population (Gagnon 1994-1995). A vast majority of the Serbian population really identified with this sentiment, and such entrenched xenophobic attitudes predictably remained present even after Milosevic was ousted (Zakosek 2008). Milosevic’s counterpart in Croatia, Franjo Tudjman, also appealed to a nationalist ideology, but the extent to which this sentiment infiltrated the beliefs of the Croatian population was limited. While Milosevic ruthlessly inflamed ethnic tensions by elevating powerful feelings of fear and trauma, Tudjman took a much more clientelistic approach. Tudjman manipulated the ideology of the HDZ, which was not initially a radical party, to include anti-Serb sentiment (Solem 2007). Leaders within the party chose to adopt the nationalist dogma and promote anti-democratic rhetoric in order to pursue political ends, but many of Tudjman’s “loyal followers” did not really identify with the nationalistic component of the HDZ ideology (Solem 2007). Therefore, it was not difficult for the party to abandon its nationalist ideology following Tudjman’s death when leaders saw political incentives to do so. Elites were conscious of the shifting beliefs of the Croatian public, which had been altered by the pro-European Racan government (Boduszynski 2011). The Racan government pursued EU accession at all costs, and the issue of Europeanization had become a major focus for voters in Croatia by 2003 (Boduszynski 2011). HDZ leaders deduced that they could rally political support by appealing to Europeanization, and were quick to strategically drop the nationalist component of the party’s ideology. Ivo Sanader was elected HDZ president in 2002, and

promptly worked to vocalize the party's reform agenda. He promoted the HDZ as a pro-European party that had come to terms with its nationalist past and left radical ideologies behind (Boduszynski 2011). Additionally, Sanader promised cooperation with the ITCY and supported Croatia's bid for EU membership by 2007 (Boduszynski 2011).

After Croatia's electoral breakthrough, media outlets suffered from a severe lack of funding, which made them vulnerable to political manipulation, proxy ownership, and bribery. The HDZ's pressure on media outlets as well as the media's dependence on party politics increased in 2005-2006, likely due to the financial insecurity that journalists face, as this increases their willingness to abandon professional standards and practice self-censorship (Perusko 2013; OSCE 2007). This presents the HDZ with a much greater opportunity to promote the party and its interests than potential opposition enjoys. Levitsky and Way (2010 b) explain that this sort of unequal access to media characterizes an uneven playing field between regime incumbents and opposition actors, which undermines political competition and democracy. While the state continues to have shares in local media, Croatia has made notable strides in reducing political bribery and increasing the transparency of media ownership (Perusko 2013). For instance, in 2012, Ivo Sanader was found guilty of having paid private marketing agency Fimi Media over ten million euros in state funds (Regional Anti-corruption Initiative 2013). Nevenka Jurisic, owner of the agency, had agreed to serve HDZ needs, including election campaign financing, in exchange for Sanader and HDZ treasurer Mladen Barisic's promises that Fimi Media would get compensation and business from state institutions (Croatian Times 2010).

In some ways, the Fimi Media scandal should not be viewed as a democratic setback, but rather as a progressive step. Since Sanader is now serving time in prison, the trial verdict sets the precedent that even political elites are subject to the rule of law in Croatia. Additionally, the

HDZ became the first political party to be sentenced for corruption, which will likely increase the transparency of political financing in Croatia (Radosavljevic 2014). The trial has been referred to as being part of Croatia's "anti-graft" agenda, which was implemented in pursuit of EU membership (Radosavljevic 2014).

The prospect of EU membership was on the table more immediately for Croatia than for Serbia, as Croatia signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2001. Furthermore, the Racan government (2000-2003) promoted EU accession from the start, and during this time the EU consistently promised Croatia eventual membership (Boduszynski 2011). Due to this international incentive structure, elites in Croatia were discouraged from engaging in the obviously anti-democratic behavior characteristic of leaders in Serbia. Croatian elites not want to jeopardize international relations due to the economic and social incentives that came with EU membership. Additionally, EU accession quickly became a prominent issue in political discourse, and supporting Europeanization soon seemed like the only rational choice for elites hoping to enjoy broad public support (Boduszynski 2011).

Croatia became the newest member of the European Union in July 2013. The ability to meet EU conditionality requirements further emphasizes the country's success with democratization. Contrary to domestic conditions in Serbia, Croatia enjoyed the advantages of a moderate pluralist party structure and a population that was able to abandon nationalist ideals. Elite actors made decisions that were conducive to democratic progress, due in part to the constrictions these domestic structures provided. In addition, the "carrot" of EU membership was within reach for Croatia long before Serbia. Immediate international pressure encouraged elites to behave democratically, despite the fact that some domestic conditions, including the financially insecure media environment, were vulnerable to manipulation.

Serbia

The ousting of Slobodan Milosevic 2000 opened up a window of opportunity through which democratization could occur. While significant democratic progress did follow the Bulldozer Revolution, the country continued to struggle with improvements in corruption control as well as ethnically charged border conflicts throughout the 2000's. Serbia's political trajectory can be explained by examining how elite actors shaped structural domestic conditions and worked within international ones.

Domestic conditions in Serbia after the country's electoral breakthrough presented elite actors with a political atmosphere in which they were able to manipulate ethnic tensions, take advantage of weak party structures and civil society, and control independent media. In the wake of the Bulldozer Revolution, elites from the Milosevic regime made political alliances with the newly empowered democrats (Stambolieva 2013). Thus, the state remained responsive to the personal interests of these actors, whose democratic credentials were questionable. While the regime had been ousted formally, Milosevic's cronies continued to enjoy substantial political influence (Zakosek 2008). Illegal and semi-legal ties to the former regime threatened the consolidation of democracy after the Bulldozer Revolution, and the persistent political influence of anti-democratic actors created de facto continuation of the Milosevic regime (Zakosek 2008; Matic 2011). While institutional reforms were implemented, the assassination of Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in 2003 showed that elite level political corruption was very problematic and democratic norms had not fully taken root. In addition, strong radical nationalism continued to characterize the ideological platforms of the most popular Serbian parties throughout the early

2000's, showing that the anti-democratic legacy of the Milosevic regime did not disappear after the Bulldozer Revolution (Zakosek 2008).

The persistent influence of radical nationalism was evident in 2003, when the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) (an "ideological surrogate" of Milosevic and the SPS) gained a parliamentary majority (Boduszynski 2011). Since the party retained political support after the ouster, SRS elites had little incentive to reform its anti-democratic, nationalist platform. The SRS was nominally led by indicted war criminal Vojislav Sesej, but Tomislav Nikolic carried out general operations (Boduszynski 2011). Nikolic openly challenged existing Serbian borders, encouraged feelings of victimization among ethnic Serbs, and advocated an anti-western position (Boduszynski 2011). Despite nationalist overtones, the SRS remained the strongest Serbian party throughout the 2000's (Zakosek 2008). The SRS's continued popularity can be partly attributed to the structure of the Serbian party system. Due to the polarized party system in the country, centrist parties continued to be unheard and had little political influence, even after 2000. This unfortunate party structure presented political elites with the opportunity to promote anti-democratic rhetoric and policies without serious concerns about losing support or being surpassed in popularity by another party (Zakosek 2008). The SRS's electoral victory further reinforced the sentiment among elite actors in Serbia that they did not need to abandon anti-democratic tendencies to enjoy popular support.

The media landscape in Serbia in the wake of the Bulldozer Revolution was equally vulnerable to elite manipulation and political pressure. Under the Milosevic regime, party officials were in charge of almost all news media outlets (Basom 1995). Milosevic was able to manipulate Serbian public opinion through the regime's hold on virtually all news media, and this structural legacy did not dissipate immediately after breakthrough elections. He used the

media to inflame ethnic tensions and promote victimization sentiment, and elites continued to appeal to these deeply rooted sentiments even after breakthrough elections took place (Cohen 2011; Matic 2011). While the new regime lifted restrictions on independent media, the common practice of exerting informal government pressure on editors lingered (Kalandadze and Orenstein 2009, Nations in Transit 2005). Additionally, media ownership was unknown in 18 out of 30 media analyzed by the Anti-corruption Agency in 2011 (Ljubojevic 2012).

Milosevic's hardline policies left the Serbian media landscape virtually barren, as few independent outlets were able to continue reporting under the oppressive regime. Autonomous media outlets, many having to start from scratch, could not gain influence overnight. Thus the Milosevic legacy was not overcome immediately. After the Bulldozer Revolution, political elites continued to maintain substantial influence over independent media. Elites used this influence and new tactics to promote feelings of Serb victimization and nationalistic ends, much like actors under the Milosevic regime had before them. For instance, Prime Minister Kostunica used Serbian media to frame the Kosovo question as a central issue in political discourse (Matic 2011). Ljubojevic (2012) explains that through agenda-setting, media coverage influences what audiences think about and what the public considers to be important. Kostunica not only assured that Kosovo remain a common news subject, he frequently referred to the "defense of Kosovo," imposing his hardline position on public through the media (Matic 2011). The uncompromising standpoint that Kostunica promoted with regards to the Kosovo question threatened state stability, fueled ethnic tensions, and compromised Serbia's international relations.

Victimization sentiment was further encouraged through the Serbian media coverage of war crimes. Due to the practice of self-censorship among journalists, domestic war crime trials in particular enjoyed very little media coverage (Ljubojevic 2012). Serbian public opinion mirrored

the media's lack of attention to war crime trials, and the public largely refused to believe that Serbs had played any part other than victims in the war (Ljubojevic 2012). Additionally, when trials were covered, Serbian media carefully avoided mentioning defendant's nationalities so that ethnic Serbs were not openly blamed for committing war crimes (Ljubojevic 2012). This encouraged the expansion of already prevalent feelings of trauma, Serb victimization, and nationalist views. Elites then used mass media to appeal to these feelings of victimization, emphasizing the importance of protecting Serbia's integrity and sovereignty with respect to the Kosovo issue to gain support for an anti-western stance (Matic 2011). For example, Kostunica publically advocated putting the prospect of EU membership on hold until the EU recognized the sovereignty of Serbia over Kosovo's (Matic 2011).

Domestic conditions were vulnerable to elite manipulation, and international incentives were initially too weak to discourage this anti-democratic behavior. In 2004, Serbia-Montenegro was the only country in the post-Yugoslav region not to have signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU. Because the possibility of EU membership seemed far-fetched, actors in Serbia were not initially encouraged by the international community to abandon anti-democratic tendencies. For the same reason, Europeanization was not a main concern of voters (Boduszynski 2011). This meant that other issues, such as nationalism and border sovereignty, were able to remain prominent in political discourse and politicians were able to appeal to these issues to gain support (Boduszynski 2011).

However, after 2005, when Serbia signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement, international pressure for elites to behave in a democratic manner increased. With the prospect of EU membership on the table, political leaders began to endorse Europeanization, and parties slowly stopped promoting anti-western sentiment (Boduszynski 2011). Serbia became an official

EU candidate country on January 3, 2012, and international incentives for democratization have clearly influenced elite behavior. For instance, former nationalist Tomislav Nikolic became president in 2012 and has since made choices to promote democratization, likely due to the transforming international incentive structure. There is a possibility that Serbia will be the next EU member, and the benefits that come with membership have incentivized political elites to behave democratically. Nikolic publically apologized for Serbia's role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre and signed an EU association agreement on June 28, 2013 (Freedom House 2014; Ramet 2013). In addition, the positive role that EU membership conditionality has played in helping Serbia to democratize has been manifested in the country's improved relations with Kosovo. The EU led open dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in 2012, and worked to enact agreements on freedom of movement and security between the two (Asia News Monitor 2012). Moreover, Belgrade agreed to recognize Pristina's authority in Kosovo's ethnic Serb regions in April 2013 (Freedom House 2014).

To summarize, immediately following the 2000 Bulldozer Revolution, domestic and international structures in Serbia allowed for elite actors to engage in behavior that directly impeded democratization. Elites worked to manipulate domestic conditions, including weak civil society and party structures, deeply rooted nationalist sentiment, and a vulnerable media landscape. Due to the lack of immediate international pressure, elites could easily engage in anti-democratic behavior and manipulation without fear of international retribution. However, dodging international democratization pressure became increasingly more difficult for elites as the prospect of EU membership became more feasible. Serbia's political trajectory following the country's electoral breakthrough has been a result of elite actors impeding democratic progress by shaping domestic structural conditions to their personal advantage. However, this

manipulation has become more costly to elites as international pressure to behave democratically has increased. While domestic and international conditions immediately following the Bulldozer Revolution were not conducive to democratization, prospective EU membership and increasing international pressure have helped to constrain elite actors and discourage the manipulation of domestic structures. Successful democratization in Serbia seems to be right around the corner, albeit almost fifteen years after breakthrough elections occurred.

Moldova

The mass protests that proceeded the ousting of Vladimir Voronin's Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) in 2009 became known as the "Twitter Revolution." Following the party's surprising defeat in the wake of popular protests, observers emphasized the role of the Internet, particularly social media, in mobilizing protestors and increasing support for the opposition movement (Hale 2013). While the role of social media in Moldova's breakthrough election is debatable, the ousting's title has stuck, and as a result has become a reference point for arguments about the democratizing effects of the Internet (Hale 2013). However, these arguments seem premature, as Moldova has not made impressive strides in terms of overall democratization since 2009 (Note figure 3). The country's political trajectory following the Twitter Revolution can be understood by examining how elite actors were empowered by and able to manipulate domestic and international structural conditions.

When the opposition Alliance for European Integration (AIE) coalition ousted the long ruling PCRM, newly empowered elite actors inherited domestic structural conditions that were vulnerable to manipulation. Civil society in Moldova in 2009 was well developed in some ways, as a number of NGO's and social activists effectively promoted civil rights and government

transparency (Venturi 2011). However, the country's third sector was weakened by multiple structural disadvantages that limited organization's ability to hold political actors accountable and encourage democratic progress. Strong ethnic divisions, lack of funding, and a vague legal framework characterized a civil society structure that was easily manipulated.

Extreme poverty further weakened civil society in Moldova. The country's discouragingly high unemployment throughout the late 2000's pushed many citizens to seek employment abroad (Venturi 2011). Staff turnover for NGO's is high due to the fact that many young leaders leave their organizations to work abroad, and this contributes to the unfortunate lack of sustainability of most long-term programs (Venturi 2011). Furthermore, civil society organizations in the country are heavily dependent on donations, yet these are often difficult to come by, as tax incentives promoting donation are absent.⁶ For this reason, civil society leaders have tended to adopt a broad focus or concentrate on several sectors at once in order to attract as many donors as possible (Venturi 2011). However, this is problematic as it limits the ability of organizations to effectively promote efforts that could further democratic progress, such as conflict resolution, because they are not encouraged to develop strong expertise and social networks (Venturi 2011).

Elites have also taken advantage of the country's legal structure in order to suppress civil society. The legal framework with regards to NGO's is vague, and this has presented elites with the opportunity to apply the law arbitrarily (Venturi 2011). Additionally, the system makes NGO registration difficult and subject to politicization. Elite actors worked with this structure to ensure that organizations seen as potential regime challengers are unable to get off the ground (Venturi 2011).

⁶ In December 2013, legislation was passed that enabled citizens to redirect 2% of income tax payments to donations for NGO's of their choosing; the law is anticipated to take effect this year (Nations in Transit 2014).

Media outlets in Moldova remained vulnerable to manipulation by domestic and international actors after 2009. Elites have been able to restrict access to alternative information and effectively ensure that the population is exposed to anti-democratic rhetoric. For example, in Transnistrian schools elites removed private antennas from roofs and restricted roof access, appealing to safety concerns (Dembinska and Danero Iglesias 2013). This effectively prevented the installation of antennas that would enable connection to Moldovan and Romanian TV stations (Dembinska and Danero Iglesias 2013). As a result of these systematic tactics, Russian and Ukrainian outlets are able to dominate the media landscape in Transnistria (Rojansky et al. 2010). This means that anti-western and anti-democratic sentiments continue to reach citizens, further dividing the population and inflaming ethnic tensions. Russian elites strategically use their dominance of the Transnistrian media landscape to manipulate ethnic tensions in pursuit of Russia's geo-political agenda (Rojansky et al. 2010). This influence is evident in the Transnistrian official newspaper, *Adevarul Nistrean* ("The Dniestrian Truth"), which frames Russians as the Transnistrian population's only allies, while Moldovan authorities are portrayed as terrorists and murderers (Dembinska and Danero Iglesias 2013).

The disadvantaged civil society and vulnerable media landscape in Moldova were subject to elite manipulation because international conditions did not incentivize elites to behave democratically in the wake of the Twitter Revolution. Much like Georgia, Moldova lacked direct western pressure to democratize following the country's electoral breakthrough. Moldova's prospects for EU membership were similarly low, as an Association Agreement was just recently signed in November 2013. In addition to lacking western pressure, Moldova is also subject to anti-democratic Russian influence. Moldova remains dependent on Russian gas, which provides Russia with substantial economic leverage over the country (Dempsey 2014).

Moldova has been a participant in the European Neighborhood Policy since 2005, but this partnership did not offer sufficient external incentives for elites to engage in democratic behavior. Instead of fostering democratic progress, the financial assistance that accompanied the Neighborhood Policy actually strengthened the status quo in Moldova (Techau 2014). Critics have noted that the European Neighborhood Policy does not have an impressive track record in terms of fostering political progress because “conditionality” is applied inconsistently and selectively (Lehne 2014). In Moldova, elites pretended to implement the reform agenda but rarely promoted genuine improvement since they profited from the status quo, and EU financial assistance was used to stabilize existing structures (Techau 2014).

Elites in Moldova have used international conditions to their advantage, often in ways that impede democratization. Due to the geopolitical contestation between Russia and the EU, the latter cannot withdraw from Moldova, since this would mean bowing to Russia’s aggressive policies (Techau 2014). In addition, as $\frac{1}{4}$ of the country’s annual budget comes from EU funds, Moldova’s stability would be critically challenged in the event of withdrawal (Techau 2014). Political elites in Moldova recognize the sticky situation that the EU faces and use it to their personal advantage (Techau 2014). As a result of the EU’s dilemma regarding involvement in the country, elite actors have not been constrained by conditionality, and are able to engage in anti-democratic behavior while continuing to enjoy western assistance as well as Russian resources.

The signing of an Association Agreement in 2013 could promote democratic progress in Moldova. This changing international incentive structure has the potential to encourage elites to abandon their anti-democratic behavior and manipulative tendencies. However, Moldova continues to face pressure from Russia, which maintains significant economic leverage over the

country. An international environment that is conducive to democratization could be developing. However, in the wake of 2009 breakthrough elections, there were few external incentives for empowered elites to engage in democratic behavior.

Georgia

Overall democratic progress after the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia has not been as robust as scholars and western observers had hoped. The country has advanced notably in terms of control of corruption, but has experienced little if any improvement in other areas, including civil society development and autonomy of media outlets (note Figures 1, 2, and 4). Georgia's post-2003 political trajectory can be explained by considering how elite actors have taken advantage of domestic structures because there were few international incentives for them to behave democratically.

The domestic conditions that Mikheil Saakashvili inherited when he gained power after the Rose Revolution were not conducive to democratization, and the new leader made critical decisions that further impeded democratic prospects. In 2003, civil society in Georgia was weak and unorganized. The success of the protests that ousted Eduard Shevardnadze can be attributed to regime weakness more so than opposition strength, as demonstrations were relatively small (Levitsky and Way 2010 a). After breakthrough elections, civil society became even weaker. US-backed support for independent media and electoral monitoring programs in Georgia just about disappeared after 2003 (Levitsky and Way 2010 a). Additionally, many former leaders of NGO's and other civil society organizations were brought into Saakashvili's cabinet or given various political positions (Mitchell 2006). The most capable and passionate opposition leaders joined the state apparatus, leaving civil society organizations disadvantaged and unorganized. Not

unexpectedly, replacement civil society leaders were reluctant to scrutinize the regime (Mitchell 2006). In fact, in the wake of the Rose Revolution, no legitimate opposition to contest Saakashvili existed. Political competition remained underdeveloped, and the opposition was active but critically disorganized (Klandadze and Orenstein 2009). The lack of political competition was evident from the start, when Saakashvili won 2004 presidential elections with 96% of the vote, and his National Movement captured almost two-thirds of parliamentary seats (Levitsky and Way 2010 a). Saakashvili, therefore, was able to engage in semi-authoritarian behavior while remaining unchallenged.

Unencumbered by opposition forces, Saakashvili chose not to rule in a democratic manner, and implemented constitutional reforms in 2004 to ensure that the domestic political structure continued to be favorable to his personal advantage as president. These reforms concentrated increased power in the presidency, and the result was Saakashvili enjoyed greater a presidential power than Shevardnadze ever had (Mitchell 2006). Since the executive branch was packed with handpicked regime supporters, Saakashvili was able to effectively dominate the weak legislature and exert critical political pressure on the judiciary. This was detrimental to democracy, as it allowed for laws to be enforced selectively. Those who went against the regime were often arrested on corruption charges while supporters went under the radar (Levitsky and Way 2010 a). For example, former defense minister Irakli Okrushvili, who was seen as a potential opponent to Saakashvili, was charged with corruption and arrested in 2007 (Levitsky and Way 2010 a). The political overtones surrounding Okrushvili's arrest were so obvious that it sparked opposition protests the same year.

Georgian media was vulnerable to political pressure and elite manipulation for many of the same reasons that civil society was. Saakashvili justified "taming" the media landscape by

claiming that the government was aiming to improve the rule of law and control corruption (Anjaparidze 2004). Saakashvili took advantage of the fact that no viable opposition existed in the country by appealing to clearly unjustified explanations for his anti-democratic behavior. He knew that his actions would not be challenged, regardless of whether or not he could realistically rationalize them. Furthermore, due to Saakashvili's monopoly on political power, he was able to systematically apply the law in order to favor media outlets that were supportive of the administration. For instance, in 2004, the government seized property from independent TV company Kavkasia, claiming that the company owed money for using a state-owned transmission tower (Anjaparidze 2004). Kavkasia had been known to criticize the Saakashvili regime, and a few months prior to the seizure, the station had been prohibited from covering the president's news conferences (Anjaparidze 2004). Furthermore, the company's executive director, Nino Jangirashvili, claimed that the seizure was illegal because the law allows Kavkasia to pay its access fees in increments throughout the year (Anjaparidze 2004). Whether or not it was illegal, the seizure was clearly politically motivated and the law selectively applied. When examining relations between the government and more accommodating media outlets, it is evident that the law is being enforced unequally. TV station Rustavi-2, which vocally supported the Saakashvili regime, had a greater sum of debt than Kavkasia had acquired and had this debt forgiven in June 2004 (Anjaparidze 2004). This selective law enforcement allowed Saakashvili to shape the media landscape in his favor.

Domestic structures empowered Saakashvili and enabled him to engage in manipulative behavior that undermined democratic progress. International conditions further permitted anti-democratic actions. Following the Rose Revolution, international democratizing pressure was virtually non-existent. Georgia's prospects for joining the EU have remained low throughout the

decade; the country just recently signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2013. EU conditionality therefore has only recently began to play the influential role in Georgia that it did in the Balkans. Saakashvili lacked the external incentive structure that accompanies prospective EU membership, and was therefore able to rule in a semi-authoritarian fashion without fear of international retribution. Additionally, Saakashvili continuously enjoyed US military and economic support despite his anti-democratic behavior (Levitsky and Way 2010 a). The fact that US support seemingly lacked conditionality, which allowed Saakashvili to enjoy the perks of western assistance while continuing to engage in anti-democratic acts.

When Mikheil Saakashvili came to power in the wake of the Rose Revolution, he enjoyed domestic and international structures that enabled him to engage in behavior that undermined democratic progress in Georgia. Saakashvili faced no viable political competition and a weak civil society, which allowed him to rule in a semi-authoritarian manner while remaining unchallenged. In addition, thanks to constitutional reforms in 2004, the president enjoyed highly concentrated political power, which he used to exert pressure on the legislature and judiciary. This enabled Saakashvili to engage in selective law enforcement, which he effectively exercised to sculpt the media landscape in his favor. Furthermore, the Georgian president lacked external incentives to engage in democratic behavior, as the country's prospects for EU accession were low and US support did not come with conditionality. Domestic and international structures enabled Saakashvili to make critical decisions that impeded democratic progress in Georgia after the Rose Revolution.

Conclusion

The popular notion that democratization would follow in the wake of electoral breakthroughs was not unreasonable, given that the ousting of authoritarian rulers opens up opportunities for liberalization. However, democratic progress has been uneven in the wake of breakthrough elections. Scholars have examined potential causal factors to explain the differences in countries' political trajectories after these elections. Debates regarding the roles of structural and agency factors as well as discussions attributing political development to either domestic or international conditions dominate democratization literature. My argument has explored the influence of both structural and agency variables, and built on existing research by considering the impact of international as well as domestic conditions.

This analysis has investigated the reasons behind diverging political trajectories following electoral breakthroughs in Serbia, Croatia, Moldova, and Georgia. My argument has shown how domestic conditions can influence the decisions of elite actors by either constraining or empowering these agents. When elites are not restricted by domestic structures, such as strong political competition and civil society, they are able to further manipulate structural conditions in order to ensure that they maintain power. However, international incentive structures, such as EU conditionality, have the potential to discourage elites from engaging in this anti-democratic behavior.

This research has important implications for policy makers and democracy promotion. Policy makers tend to assume that empowering "democratic" individuals is the key to democratization. However, as this analysis has shown, if elites are unencumbered by domestic and international incentive structures, they are likely to abuse power and engage in anti-

democratic behavior. Policy makers must remain conscious of this phenomenon, and should not pin hopes of democratization on individual actors, even in the wake of electoral breakthroughs.

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