Political Parties of Eastern Europe: A Guide to Politics in the Post-communist Era

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Janusz Bugajski

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Janusz Bugajski

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I dedicate this book to Margarita,
who finally saw me emerge from a stack of paper and
a pile of airline tickets and still recognized me.
For the life and love we share.

Gulf of Finland
Tallin
ESTONIA
RUSSIA
Volga
Riga
LATVIA
Skagerrak
Kattegat
Baltic Sea
Dnepr
DENMARK
LITHUANIA
Vilnius
KALININGRAD
Minsk
BELARUS
Warsaw
Oder
Kyiv
POLAND
Elbe
Dnipro
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Danube
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SERBIA
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Ligurian Sea
MONTENEGRO
KOSOVA
Sofia
Prishtina
ITALY
Adriatic Sea
Podgorica
Skopje
MACEDONIA
Tirana
ALBANIA
TURKEY
Tyrrhenian Sea
GREECE
Aegean Sea
Ionian Sea
Rhodes
Crete
Scale 1: 19,500,000
MALTA
Valletta
Lambert Conformal Conic Projection, standard parallels 40 N and 56 N
0
300 Kilometers
0
300 Miles
20
40
TUNISIA

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Author's Note

This guide provides detailed coverage of political developments in eighteen countries of Eastern Europe as well as two distinct political entities—Montenegro and Kosova—that were not internationally recognized states at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Both territories were still technically part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—Montenegro as the sole remaining federal partner of Serbia, and Kosova as a province of Serbia. However, developments in the two territories in the late 1990s had effectively severed their political systems from that of Serbia, and so they will be treated separately here.

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Acknowledgments

This encyclopedic volume took much longer to complete than was initially envisaged. The breadth and scope of the undertaking, spanning twenty countries and aspiring states, has involved extensive and intensive research, data gathering, fact sifting, and the condensing of pertinent material. Unlike in communist times, when a little information often went a long way, since the collapse of the single-party regimes, the sheer volume of information available has necessitated long hours of careful reading, analysis, and selection. Moreover, the rapidity and complexity of developments throughout Eastern Europe continue to perplex the layperson and specialist alike and invariably undermine conclusions and predictions. Work on this book also was slowed by my frequent trips to the region and by the various programs on behalf of the region conducted at the East European department at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in Washington, D.C.

The completion of this monumental endeavor would not have been possible without the encouragement and assistance that I have received at CSIS over the years. In particular, I am most indebted to Ilona Teleki, my research associate for her outstanding research skills and determination to bring this volume to fruition. Sudabeh Koochekzadeh also played a pivotal role in the various book-related projects. Among the legion of interns and research assistants who painstakingly gathered and processed the raw material, I must mention: Vesna Grujicic, Dominika Dabrowska, Lada Trifonova, Paul Nemes, Zlatica Sandels, Lana Skrtic, Ioana Copil-Popovici, Darko Pavlovic, Zuzana Jasenovkova, Marketa Houskova, Admirela Balic, Marusa Jamnik, Andrew Astapov, Karolina Ristova, Sonja Andonova, Thomas Hessel, Neven Crvenkovic, and Nevena Assenova. I would also like to thank all my interlocutors in the region, who are too many to mention, as well as the helpful staffs at several embassies in Washington, D.C., especially the Albanian, Macedonian, Czech, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Montenegrin, Slovak, Bulgarian, and Latvian missions.

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Introduction: Pluralism and Democratization

More than a decade has passed since the one-party communist regimes in Eastern Europe collapsed like a row of dominos. The "demonstration effect" and the prospects of "democratic diffusion" helped scholars account for the rapid unraveling of communism. However, the "demonstration" that communist rule was brittle throughout the region did not automatically ensure the expected "effect" of crystallization of liberal democracies. Some of the new political leaders sought to preserve certain autocratic elements and even to weaken many initial democratic gains. Early predictions of rapid democratization and economic liberalism proved too optimistic, and warnings about the imminent rise of ultranationalism and perpetual ethnic conflicts proved too pessimistic. Instead, the eastern half of Europe has witnessed enormous diversification in the pace and content of political and economic transformation, and numerous challenges to the "completion" or consolidation of the democratization process. Indeed, the region as a whole can be viewed as an ongoing experiment in pluralism and liberalism, the results of which continue to vary from state to state.

In the wake of the 1989 revolutions many observers assumed that democracy, civil society, and market economics were so closely interrelated that the demise of single-party rule would herald the birth of all three pillars of a liberal order.[1] They disregarded a number of essential variables, including the legacies of communism, the social and cultural contexts in which the new institutions were supposed to function, the effectiveness of these institutions, and the new threats and challenges to democratic reform. The transformation process in the eastern half of Europe has involved fundamental shifts in public expectations, aspirations, responsibilities, and relationships with the state and with the emerging market system.

This introductory chapter provides an overall assessment of political development in the region, viewing the emergence of political parties and sys-

tems in a broader social and national context. It considers in turn the complex transition process, the persistent legacies of communism, the relationships between democracy and pluralism, the importance of constitutionalism and the separation of powers, authoritarian challenges to liberalism, nationalist threats to democracy, and the gradual emergence of a broad political spectrum. This overview enables a more informed assessment of the developing political structures in each of these twenty existing and aspiring East European states.

Eastern Europe's Transitions

The political earthquake that shook Eastern Europe in the fall of 1989 was a revolutionary event. It marked both the end of the one-party communist states imposed and maintained by an outside power (the Soviet Union), and the beginning of a comprehensive transformation of the region's political, economic, and social structures. This was the third time in a century that Eastern Europe had been convulsed by rapid systemic change. But unlike the national liberations of 1918 and the communist takeovers of 1945–1948, the 1989 revolutions proved remarkably peaceful. They developed without the threat of outside military intervention; they were generated and propelled by widespread public involvement; and they were directed by political actors who sought a smooth transition from monism to pluralism. In many respects (outside of Romania), these were "negotiated revolutions" whose leaders capitalized on profound social discontent to press for a new political arrangement, while in most instances avoiding mass arrests or purges of the outgoing regimes.

Any examination of political transition from communist authoritarianism to varieties of democratic pluralism cannot emphasize "objective" social and economic conditions alone, neglecting or underestimating more immediate and highly pertinent political and psychological elements. Several theorists of past transitions from authoritarian to democratic rule have stressed the role of long-term factors such as economic development or class conflict in bringing about revolutionary or systemic change.[2] But although such components evidently provide both parameters and constraints in a volatile revolutionary situation, they do not preordain either the form or the outcome of any process of transition.[3]

It is misleading to focus on the economic crisis in "real socialist" societies as the prime or sole determinant of the collapse of Communist Party rule. It can be argued that the centralized economies of Eastern Europe had been in a perpetual "crisis" for several years, beset by low industrial productivity, high energy consumption, continuous consumer shortages, and noncompetitiveness on world markets. But it would be more worthwhile to measure the impact of economic stagnation and material decline on the perceptions of broad sectors of the population.

Communist rulers largely had managed to cushion the working public from the full effects of economic failure by borrowing heavily from the West, pre-

serving the Comecon trading network for poor-quality domestic products, increasing the money supply, or tolerating and encouraging the expansion of gray and black markets to meet public demands that the state sector could not fulfill. The ability of governments to protect the public from economic hardships was declining by the late 1980s. However, a full-blown crisis could still have been avoided for several years, especially in states not heavily indebted to Western creditors and where living standards remained relatively tolerable.

Thus, one cannot fully explain the revolutionary crisis by concentrating solely on economic conditions or on antagonisms between social classes, as Marxist and some post-Marxist writers have done.[4] Moreover, although Western sociologists and political scientists have fashioned exhaustive analyses of the causes and effects of "socialist" or "anti-colonial" revolutions, the literature on "anti-communist" or "post-socialist" revolutions is still in its formative stages. It is also riven by controversies between socioeconomic determinists in various guises and Kremlinologists primarily focusing on the Soviet role in the collapse of communist controls in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, among the array of contributory conditions identified in this literature, several essentially political and psychological "subjective" factors clearly played a critical role in the breakout from monism in most states in the region.

First, there was an evident loss of regime confidence either that the political *status quo* could be preserved for much longer or that the use of force and repression could effectively prolong communist rule and not backfire against the government. In estimating costs and benefits, most East European leaders were not convinced that a violent crackdown would be supported by Moscow or effectively implemented by local military and police commanders, or that it would ensure prolonged social tranquility. After all, the effectiveness of martial law imposed in Poland in the early 1980s had proved short-lived, and it had failed to stimulate any meaningful economic recovery or acceptable political reforms.

Second, disputes and conflicts were evident within the leadership of the communist parties and governments regarding appropriate policy at a time of such unpredictable region-wide changes. Differences were evident between hard-line advocates of repression and reformists who calculated that some compromises with the opposition were essential to preserve social stability and improve their country's economic prospects. Government vacillation and compromises in turn encouraged opposition activists to press for more extensive concessions. Once a dialogue was initiated between the regime and local dissidents, prospects for a violent showdown receded. In addition, some sectors of the ruling elite—including government officials, local activists, satellite parties, and youth organizers—either declared their neutrality and withdrew support from the communist party leadership, or actively backed the democratic opposition, having concluded that revolutionary change was inevitable and retrenchment in orthodoxy unsustainable.

Third, as the communist authorities were seen to weaken and to waver, and

as the tide of public protest swept the region, there was a visible decline in social acquiescence. Widening sectors of the intelligentsia and urban residents increasingly scorned government policy and rejected the implicit communist-era "social contract" by which independent activism had been forsaken in return for material security. Large public demonstrations became particularly notable in states that resisted political reform until fall 1989, including Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic (GDR). These demonstrations were not only a method of expressing discontent but also an effective means of applying pressure on the incumbent governments. Their scale and intensity certainly aided the democratic activists during their "dialogue" with communist reformers.

Fourth, the strategies of opposition leaders proved highly effective in many states, in that violence was avoided and step-by-step compromises were arranged with the authorities.[5] The offer of negotiating a gradual transformation of the political system, and the discarding of violent or vengeful rhetoric, encouraged reformist officials to accede in order to salvage some of their positions, to gain a modicum of legitimacy, and to retain a measure of political influence for their liberalizing policies. Their abandonment of monopolistic communism in turn provoked rifts and splits within the ruling elite and helped accelerate the revolutionary process. The dissident counterelites were also able to organize a virtual alternative leadership and to mobilize credible and well-respected activists willing to fill vacant government positions. These stimuli for both stability and change helped promote a smooth and peaceful transition from totalitarian rule.

If a comparative approach to Eastern Europe's revolutionary transition from monism to pluralism is to be elaborated, an array of factors common to each state, and those peculiar to some of them, must be explored carefully. Oversimplified generalizations can be avoided if proper account is taken of economic conditions and popular perceptions of relative material circumstances; the extent and nature of political opposition and autonomous civic activity; and the factionalism within the governing circles in their approaches to political and economic reform. The interplay of various political forces must also be examined, from the inception of the regime–opposition dialogue, through the initial political compromises, to the remodeling of key governmental institutions. At each stage, the progress of democratization was contingent upon successfully negotiated bargains and workable compromises that could pacify public opinion and satisfy dissident demands without provoking a backlash by the retreating elite.

The breakout from communism was both a revolutionary event and part of a far-ranging transition. Indeed, it would be difficult to demarcate when the revolution or the transition was completed. Events were "revolutionary" because of the sweeping nature of the changes, entailing the wholesale transformation of key political and economic institutions, and because of the suddenness and speed of the communist collapse. They were "transitional" in

that revolutionary developments were part of a process of transformation between two distinct political and economic systems. However, the transition could not be easily delineated, because it involved two simultaneous processes: a breakdown of existing structures and the emergence of new ones. In some instances, institutions such as parliaments and governments were merely revived, and were given a democratic substance. In other cases, new institutions were established, such as autonomous political parties or trade unions, as the machinery of pluralism.

To assess the degree of completion of each political transformation, one must examine the critical ingredients of the transition process: the surrender of power by the old regime at various political and administrative levels; the restructuring or rebuilding of key institutions; the democratization of the participatory process; and the expansion and consolidation of political pluralism. The transition to pluralism could not be readily mapped out in advance; the process was improvised and marked by compromises, slowdowns, and renewed bursts of activity. It also affected different political institutions with variable intensity, as political contestants attempted to benefit from the reforms either by propelling them forward or slowing down the process. Disputes revolved around the speed of transformation, the preservation of the broad coalitions that dislodged communist rule, and the division of powers and responsibilities among different governmental bodies.

It would be difficult to determine when a former communist system has become a stable and durable democracy. Much depends on the regularization of the formal features of democratic rule, including the periodic holding of free and fair, general and local elections; open competition between rival political parties; and the democratization and depoliticization of governmental and public institutions. Attention must also be paid to the extent of social participation, the degree of accountability, and the successful passage of important legislation. There may be unforeseen obstacles to democratic progress due to bureaucratic obstruction, nationalist manipulation, or persistent social disquiet. Parliament may be tied up in debates delaying the passage of vital legislation and obstructing institutional reform. In addition, the abrupt marketization of the economy can lead to major social disruption, impeding the development of specific democratic interest groups and embroiling the government principally in pacifying public unrest.

The disintegration of communist rule consisted of a combination of elite concessions, oppositionist pressures, and broad public support for change.[6] In the early stages, the revolutionary process was propelled primarily by dissident groups outside the ruling parties. Through pressure and persuasion, the dissidents forged provisional compacts with reformist communist elements in the pursuit of free, multiparty elections.[7] These largely peaceful revolutions ushered in a number of democratizing and liberalizing reforms throughout most of Eastern Europe. The most fundamental of these reforms included the termination of a single-party political monopoly; a respect for

civil liberties and human rights; fundamental constitutional changes; increasing openness in the mass media; and the onset of judicial reform. Competitive elections were held on a regular basis. Parliaments and governments became genuine decision-making bodies, and political and organizational pluralism began to mushroom. Of course, the pace and scope of the democratic transformation varied among states.

Some analysts contend that a measure of "elite continuity" contributed to democratic development and national stability.[8] This effect has been evident in countries where a number of communist officials managed to or were allowed to adapt to democratic rule without major political losses, as was the case in Poland and Hungary. A degree of elite continuity prevented potentially disruptive conflicts, extraparliamentary opposition, and state repression. Accommodation, cooperation, and negotiated power-sharing among major elite groups, especially in the early stages of the post-communist transition, assisted in a smoother democratic transition. Elite division and fragmentation during the transition tended to undermine democratization and to perpetuate authoritarian habits.

During the past decade, new dividing lines have descended across the eastern part of the continent. Although not as impervious or stark as the defunct "Iron Curtain," they have nevertheless served to differentiate a number of subregions, including Central Europe, the Baltics, the post-Soviet region, and the Balkans, as areas of diversified progress toward democracy, pluralism, capitalism, stability, and security. The Central European and Baltic countries have moved faster than others in the enactment of political reforms, and all have held at least two multiparty national and local elections.

The first general elections were essentially plebiscites that resolved to legitimately break the communist stranglehold on power. They were won by broad-based national fronts or anti-communist coalitions of small parties or large movements. Their ideologies and programs were often blurred, and they invariably fissured soon after the assumption of power. These coalitions and their constituents were poorly organized and thus lacked durability, cohesion, and sustained programmatic competition. Their platforms consisted of a single overriding goal—to remove the communists from government. Subsequent ballots and the disintegration of the broad oppositionist movements in countries such as Lithuania, Poland, and the Czech Republic led to the emergence of more significant political formations. Nonetheless, most political parties and constituencies remain in flux.

The social base of political parties was shallow and shifting, which created additional problems for administrations seeking dependable public support and stable parties to mobilize and discipline voters and to implement reforms. State and party institutions generally possessed low levels of legitimacy in post-communist states precisely because of the communist legacy. Early elections became a mechanism for legitimizing the revamped institutions as well as for reducing the number of political parties formed during Leninism's

demise. Many groups dropped out, or merged into larger coalitions to overcome the handicaps of limited electoral support and a shortage of funding. The elections were also a learning process for new political leaders, with regard to organizing, campaigning, and networking with the electorate.[9]

The early pro-democracy formations splintered into a number of small parties based on individual personalities and friendship networks rather than political programs. The proliferation of such political parties in governance was controlled by the establishment of stipulations that a minimum percentage of the popular vote must be won in order for a party to gain seats in parliament. The organizational and programmatic consolidation of these small parties is still continuing in much of the region.

Sherman Garnett[10] makes a useful distinction among four categories of post-communist states: regimes with functioning democracies and robust civil societies; pluralist systems with weak democratic institutions and nascent civil societies; regimes that place order above democracy; and unstable regimes. The transition process between these categories is generally slow because of entrenched, conservative political interests, rudimentary civic cultures, and weak legislatures. Countries in the third and fourth categories are also characterized by bureaucratism, widespread corruption, a weak commercial sector, the absence of an effective judicial system, the manipulation of populist and nationalist themes, cliquish politics, and the persistence of patronage networks in which elements of the old *nomenklatura* continue to dominate.

During the past decade, most of the Central European and Baltic countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) have displayed greater success in building stable pluralistic democracies than the majority of post-Soviet and Southeast European states. In countries of Central Europe and the Baltic region, organized and broad-based alternative elites were present, and a wide spectrum of political parties emerged in which the influence of extremist groupings was effectively marginalized. Nevertheless, in the early stages of transition, many of the new ex-dissident leaders lacked political experience. A professional and effective class of politicians clearly takes time to develop and mature. The reformist states of Central Europe and the Baltic area also proved more successful in developing an independent entrepreneurial middle class and establishing the institutional underpinnings of a private, non-state economy. This does not mean that democratization has been completed in Central and Baltic Europe. Further legal, political, and property reforms are necessary to bring these states into line with standards prevailing throughout Western Europe and to consolidate their development as viable contenders for European Union (EU) membership.

A decade after the unraveling of communist totalitarianism, several Balkan governments have either deliberately stalled the democratization process or unintentionally failed to capitalize on the opportunity to institutionalize liberal democracies. Furthermore, the anti-civilian wars in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosova have perpetuated the perception of ceaseless ethnic

conflicts and intolerant nationalism as the inescapable destiny of the Balkan peoples.[11] Such images have undermined efforts to help transform the region and lay the groundwork for European integration. Although the ongoing turmoil in the Balkans is symptomatic of a deeply rooted political, economic, and social malaise, it is important to examine its context as well as the commonalities and differences among these states as they progress through complex transformations.

The Balkan states share a common history of communist rule, with all of its attendant legacies: political centralization, party control over state institutions and public bodies, police repression, centralized command economies, the outlawing of private initiatives, and the persistent atomization of society. However, three diverse communist systems operated in the Balkans, with different implications for post-communist reform: an essentially Stalinist and isolationist regime in Albania; orthodox communist regimes in the Soviet-bloc states of Romania and Bulgaria; and a more reformed communist system in Yugoslavia, that shared certain features with the Central European countries. In the most repressive systems (Albania and Romania), the opposition movements were weak, divided, disorganized, and without any significant social influence. Pervasive police controls, public fear, and widespread apathy prevented any large-scale manifestations of dissent and independent social activism. There was an absence of an alternative elite that could sow the seeds of a pluralistic civil society, and a dearth of large independent churches or other institutions that could nourish political and civic activism. In addition, the private economic sector was virtually nonexistent in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, and as a result there were no embryonic entrepreneurial interest groups that could help give impetus to the reform program. Power struggles within the ruling communist parties were largely between hard-liners and reformers rather than between intrasystem reformers and liberalizers favoring a multiparty system. Although a sizeable dissident movement functioned in several of Yugoslavia's constituent republics, no far-reaching political and economic liberalization emerged. Instead, reformist programs increasingly focused on questions of nationality, ethnicity, independence, and statehood—questions that diverted popular attention from the prospect of systemic transformation and that strengthened the hand of nationalist and authoritarian politicians in several republics.

In much of Southeastern Europe, the reform process has been obstructed by an entrenched post-communist political stratum, sometimes in alliance with populist or nationalist streams in the ex-dissident movement. Sectors of the old elite have managed to benefit directly from the limited reforms undertaken, preserving many of their offices, privileges, and resources. The development of a participatory civic society and the rule of law have been delayed by an assortment of authoritarian forces, many of which have manipulated populist, nationalist, welfarist, and statist themes to uphold their political positions. These negative trends have been particularly evident in several

former Yugoslav republics, where the process of state building (or rebuilding) has taken precedence over political and economic reform, even though their points of departure in the late 1980s were comparable to those of the Central European states.

Democracy, Pluralism, and Capitalism

An enormous literature exists in political theory on the definition of democracy. Michael Saward considers "responsive rule" the prime determinant of democracy, measured in terms of the correspondence between acts of government and the wishes of citizens, and in the establishment and functioning of procedures designed to secure responsiveness.[12] In this context, the major indices of democratization include basic freedoms (speech, movement, assembly, and association); citizenship and participation to maximize responsive rule (the right to run for public office and to vote); appropriate administrative codes (governmental accountability and public notification); and adequate social rights (in health, security, and education). All such rights and freedoms must be guaranteed to each citizen regardless of the will of the majority or the minority, and they must be protected by the constitution and by a judicial system that is not part of the majoritarian decision-making process.

According to David Beetham, democracy is concerned with the making of collectively binding decisions about the rules and policies of a society.[13] It therefore consists of two main principles: popular control and political equality. Popular control involves the exertion of citizens' will over decisionmakers rather than over the entire decision-making process, and it requires a set of institutions and procedures designed to make that control effective. Political equality entails an equality of votes among electors and an equal right to stand for political office. In Beetham's analysis, popular control over the government rests on popular elections; the inclusiveness of parties, candidates, and voters; the fairness of elections and their independence from government control; the accountability of government to the parliament for the execution of policy; legal accountability of government to courts, ensuring that officials operate within the law; financial accountability of government to the legislature and the courts; guaranteed civil and political rights, including the open expression of dissent; and a vibrant civil society, involving a network of organizations through which people manage their own affairs and place checks on governmental powers.

Democracy is best measured as a series of values arranged in a continuum rather than as an absolute phenomenon that is either present or lacking. Among the criteria for measuring the degree of democracy in a particular state, one must include the following: presidential and legislative elections that are free, fair, and open; fair election laws; effective parliamentary power; multiple political parties; decentralized political power; the absence of political censorship; open public discussion; freedom of political organization, assembly,

and demonstration; the nondiscriminatory rule of law, including an independent judiciary; and freedom from police persecution.[14] Formal democratic institutions are insufficient for the existence of a liberal democracy. Without an independent society arranged through various crosscutting interest groups, democracy may degenerate into authoritarianism. Hence the strength of a civic society can be measured by both "negative" and "positive" liberties. The former include such factors as freedom from government interference, and checks and balances against the accumulation of nonaccountable power.[15]

During the past decade, Eastern Europe has witnessed the emergence of an embryonic civil society in which the linkages within society and between society and state have developed slowly. The long process of rebuilding a civil society fractured and atomized by communism has been accompanied by both an autonomous political rebirth and widespread political fragmentation. This has been reflected in social diversification and organizational pluralism, with little solid party identification. Most political parties have had a limited social base and restricted regional structures. According to several public opinion polls, only a minority of respondents in each state during the first four years of the post-communist era identified themselves with a specific political party. Furthermore, there was little public trust in political parties—a reaction against the earlier enforced communist "partyism." But this did not mean that citizens lacked values and interests; it merely indicated their deep-rooted suspicion of party politics and fear of renewed party interference in their social lives.[16]

The relation between the political and the economic transformations in East European states must also be carefully considered. An intense debate has raged during the past decade on whether simultaneous political and economic reforms will be successful or will jeopardize one another's success. Some analysts have argued that democratic rule is not a necessary condition for creating a market economy and indeed may generate widespread opposition to the painful economic reforms being introduced. In their view, the consolidation of liberal democracy should be undertaken only after successful economic reforms have spawned a strong middle class.[17] However, this sequencing of economic and political reform is difficult to apply or justify in Eastern Europe because of such factors as public pressure, counterelite expectations, the ideologies of reformist parties, and the requirements of foreign governments, multinational institutions, and international lenders. The debate in the region has focused instead on the sequencing of structural economic reforms, and whether these should be gradual or radical. Whereas radical economic reformers are invariably political liberals, gradualists may be statists, socialists, or authoritarians who use the slowness of reform to preserve their power bases and economic interests. Although not all anti-communist opposition groups and dissident activists were initially free-marketeers and liberals, many increasingly have come to understand that economic freedoms, market forces, and structural reforms are essential for ensuring broader political liberties.

Long delays in overhauling and marketizing the economy may initially cushion the population and the regime against the rigors of a market economy. But in the long term, this regressive policy will simply drive the government further into debt and make the unavoidable reforms that much more painful and destabilizing in the future. Furthermore, where governing parties have unfairly dispensed privileges to a politically loyal elite, and where the legal system is unreformed or tied to party-state interests, corruption and mismanagement become endemic. Serious economic decline in conditions of political favoritism, organized corruption, and social revolt can rapidly propel a country toward authoritarian rule and provide opportunities for political factions determined to engineer ethnic and international conflicts.

In general, the higher the level of economic development, the greater the chance for sustainable democracy without a relapse into autocracy.[18] Moreover, there is a close correlation between democracy and a market economy. The former is barely possible without the latter, although the latter is conceivable without the former. In transitions from authoritarian systems, the creation of new political regimes is the major objective; post-communist democratization aims to establish both a productive economic system and a responsive political structure. In some instances, these two projects clash, and the pursuit of necessary but unpopular economic reforms can obstruct or derail the political transition.

Political Systems and the Separation of Powers

Eastern Europe has undergone a decade of transition from systems in which governments were unconstrained by their own laws, to constitutionalism and the rule of law.[19] Constitutionalism is a system in which a body of fundamental laws establishes the powers of government, institutionalizes the limits to its operations, and defines the prerogatives and responsibilities of officials. Throughout the region, parliaments in effect took on the task of constitutional assemblies, calling into question the impartiality and effectiveness of the constitution-making process. Andrew Arato argues that it is unwise to allow a legislature the authority to alter its own powers through constitutional changes and that a special constitutional convention instead should be called for the purpose of creating a new constitution.[20] In the eastern half of Europe no constitutional conventions were established, and transitional constitution making largely was subject to the vicissitudes of various domestic political struggles, including that between competing agendas of victorious parties after the first elections; to conflicts between old and emerging constitutions; and to imprecision of language. Moreover, there were delays in creating constitutions, as a result of intensive political struggle to control this process. Some analysts argue that a slower process of constitution making is preferable for conferring legitimacy, avoiding partisan pitfalls, and gradually establishing mechanisms for limiting government and countering potential abuses of power.

A more gradual approach also enables a clearer focus on creating provisions for establishing the structure of government.[21] In the new East European constitutions it has been particularly necessary to protect party and organizational pluralism, civil society, and marketization; to create legitimate governmental structures; to safeguard private property and reduce dependence on the state; and to guarantee the personal security necessary for democratic citizenship. A constitutional court or some other independent tribunal has also proved important to protect these rights.

The emerging democracies differ enormously in their form and structure. They include distinctions between presidential, prime ministerial, and parliamentary systems; federal and unitary structures; and majoritarian and consensualist procedures. According to Raymond Taras, there has tended to be a drift toward, rather than a decision in favor of, a particular type of political system. Whether a parliamentary or presidential system becomes dominant in any state depends on "relations between the first democratically elected president and the legislature, on the political ambitions of members of the new elite ensconced in different branches of government, and on the prevailing consensus about the desirability of strong leadership and the extent of checks and balances."[22]

Taras has argued that high degrees of elite continuity have been accompanied by centralized authoritarianism hiding behind a thin veneer of democratic form. Hence, both in order to eliminate the Leninist fusion of political power and to preclude new forms of political dominance, the separation of powers or the "division of governmental responsibilities" appears necessary for democratization to succeed. However, such a division in an embryonic democracy can also lead to fragmentation, paralysis, and permanent inter-institutional conflict (for example, between president and parliament). Fragmented parliaments and weak governments were characteristic of most East European states during their period of independence prior to World War II. This factor, together with a major economic downturn, provided an impetus for the emergence of authoritarian presidential systems during the 1930s.

In some cases, parliaments have become arenas for legitimate contests between opposing political parties. In other instances, the legislature has become a power center in its own right, challenging the executive for ultimate control over policymaking and often leading to political gridlock.[23] Disputes have also materialized on whether single-party or coalition cabinets are more effective. The former may exclude the views and inputs of important political forces with significant public support. The latter may lead to legislative gridlock, political paralysis, or ineffective policies as each party seeks to protect its special interest.

The rivalry between president and parliament has proved most destabilizing in the region. Institutional conflicts have been commonplace, particularly where a president elected in a direct popular ballot has represented one political formation and the majority of parliament (and the government) belongs to

an alternative political tendency. But even in cases where the president is from the same party as the parliamentary majority, disputes over prerogatives and powers may occur. Where the president is both head of state and the chief executive, power may become monopolized and lead to the neglect or outright dismissal of constitutional limitations on the presidential office. Jakub Karpinski asserts that strong presidencies have proliferated in post-communist countries, as a legacy of the Leninist system; presidents replaced communist party secretaries-general as ultimate decisionmakers.[24] However, countries with longer or deeper traditions of parliamentary democracy, such as the Czech Republic and Estonia, have managed to restrict the role of their presidents.

An intensive debate has raged over the past decade as to which system is more appropriate in transitional political systems: a strong executive presidency like that in the United States or France, or a parliamentary system similar to that of Britain or Italy. The major difference between parliamentary and presidential systems is that in the former the head of government (premier) is dependent on the confidence of the parliament and its majority and can be dismissed together with his/her cabinet by a vote of no confidence, whereas in the latter the head of state (president) is elected for a fixed, constitutionally determined term and cannot be forced to resign under normal conditions.[25] In addition, in a dominant presidential system, the cabinet is accountable to a popularly elected president, who can dismiss the government.

Whereas presidents are popularly elected in presidential systems, premiers are selected by legislatures in parliamentary systems. In the former type of system there is a separation of executive and legislative powers, and in the latter there is a fusion of these powers. Presidential systems have a single executive; parliamentary systems have collegial executives based in the cabinet. Both systems have advantages and disadvantages. Presidentialism has executive stability but may foster executive-legislative stalemate or a "winner-take-all" government; parliamentarism has greater consensus building potential but may foster a frequent turnover of unstable governments. Parliamentary systems may remain particularly weak if political parties are fragile and the legislative process becomes fractured and disorderly.

Some observers in Eastern Europe have favored a powerful president who can issue decrees, appoint and dismiss the government, or even suspend parliament in order to push through an agenda of far-reaching economic reform. However, this allows for few guarantees against a presidential dictatorship and the possible reversal of both democratic and market reforms. Ambitious heads of state may try to undercut restrictions on their powers by creating presidential parties, playing various coalition parties or ministries against each other, balancing the government against the parliament, and exploiting legislative gridlock. In some cases, such as that of Belarus, the incumbent president has acted arbitrarily and undemocratically to dissolve parliament and impose personal rule.

Most states in Eastern Europe have established parliamentary forms of government in which the executive (prime minister and cabinet) is responsible to parliament, and governments are formed by coalitions of the majority parliamentary parties. The powers of the president have varied but are generally limited. Most countries have opted for direct presidential elections combined with cabinet governments headed by a prime minister: in other words, they have adopted neither the British nor the American system. Nevertheless, disputes have continued between proponents of a strong presidency and those favoring an accountable government with a parliamentary base.

Matthew Shugart argues that not all the systems of government that emerged in the region can be neatly identified as either purely presidential or parliamentary.[26] Many are mixed in complex ways, and one must look at the precise powers and prerogatives of each president, including their degree of veto power over legislation and government formation. Shugart concludes that the more poorly institutionalized and fragmented the party system, the greater the opportunities for the president to exploit any political divisions and increase his or her influence even where presidential powers have been restricted by constitutional stipulations.

The question of unitarianism versus federalism has also preoccupied several countries in the region, especially during the disintegration of Yugoslavia into its component federal and autonomous units. A unitary government is generally considered to be more effective in holding a country together. For this reason, suspicions have been voiced in states such as Romania, Slovakia, and Macedonia that support for federalism among the major ethnic minorities could lead to eventual calls for separatism. Nevertheless, even in unitary states, pressures for decentralization, regionalism, and local autonomy have continued throughout the 1990s and have been viewed as important for democratic development and local empowerment based largely on territory and residency rather than nationality or ethnic allegiance. Indeed, with the undermining of centralized communist controls, local politicians and parties have assumed more prominence, whether as reformist pro-democratic forces, as post-communist restorationists, or as populist nationalists with a separatist or anti-minority agenda.

The Communist Inheritance

Culturally, organizationally, ideologically, institutionally, economically, and socially, Marxism-Leninism has had a negative long-term impact on the evolution of liberal democracies in Eastern Europe. A political culture of dialogue, tolerance, liberalism, and compromise has shallow roots in much of the region. Communism fostered an anti-democratic political culture and public disassociation from politics. Atrophy, alienation, and public detachment from politics meant that people cased to believe in the efficacy of common actions and immersed themselves in their private lives. This undercut the pursuit of a participatory and politically influential civil society.

Communist rule significantly distorted political relations also by prescribing seemingly easy solutions to intricate problems. This legacy has infused governmental policy and permeated public debate in much of the region and resulted in turns toward simplistic populist, nationalist, and xenophobic solutions to complex structural and systemic problems. Political tolerance and compromise have too often been perceived as weakness and indecision, and strong and determined leaders are extolled even if their policy prescriptions lack substance and positive impact. The Leninist legacy has fostered various sources of radicalism, including ideological zeal, self-righteousness, intolerance, egalitarian populism, contempt for cultural elites, and a pervasive suspicion of foreign influences.[27]

Given the extreme repressiveness of the communist system in states such as Albania and Romania, the opposition movements there were weak, divided, and disorganized. Pervasive police controls, public fear, and widespread apathy thwarted any large-scale manifestations of dissent and independent social activism. There were no alternative elites to sow the seeds of a pluralistic civil society, and few large, independent churches to nourish civic activism. Moreover, a private economic sector and entrepreneurial class were virtually nonexistent in countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. These facts seriously hampered the emergence of a strong reformist and internationalist lobby. The power struggles within the ruling communist parties in several Balkan and post-Soviet states were largely between dogmatists and reformers rather than between intrasystem reformers and liberalizers favoring a multiparty system.

To divert and control public attention, the region's new authoritarians have invariably identified ethnic, religious, cultural, or other minority groups as national traitors or alien enemies seeking to subvert both society and the state. With public attention riveted on scapegoats, several post-communist leaders have slowed down progress in civic acculturation, political participation, and the promulgation of liberal values. In such conditions, political life has frequently veered toward polarization, intolerance, and purposively engineered nationality conflicts. The decades of communist rule did not "freeze" ethnic relations or bury nationalist ideologies, as is commonly assumed. Political leaders often have exploited ethnic nationalism to replace the failing notions of class struggle and socialist internationalism. It was relatively easy for many communist functionaries schooled in collectivism and centralism to adopt overtly nationalist positions once the old system was defunct. Ethnic nationalism and state protection provided a political context for new alliances between former communists and ultranationalist anticommunists. Such concords helped deflect public attention from the burdens and necessities of political and economic reconstruction. Serbia and Croatia are the most pertinent examples of this process.

Leninism disfigured the Balkan societies by stifling the emergence of civil societies. It tended to buttress collectivist models of individual and group

obligations to the state, rather than the principles of individual liberty and human rights protected by the government. When communist rule disintegrated, democratic institutions only slowly emerged in many of these societies, and public input into decisionmaking remained limited. Moreover, communist regimes poorly developed the principles of mediating and resolving intergroup disputes, including disputes based on distinctive ethnic and religious interests. Instead, cultural, ethnic, and political diversity was depicted as a threat to both nation and state.

Institutionally, under the old system, parliaments and other public bodies were formalistic structures, merely rubber-stamping the decisions of the communist leadership or acting as transmission belts for party policy. They provided a veneer of democratic legitimacy without having any real decisionmaking substance. Although the reinvigorated national institutions in the post-communist era gained genuine and popular democratic legitimacy, they also created some confusion and conflict between the different branches of government. This resulted in constitutional battles stemming from incessant competition for post-electoral authority.

Parliamentary development was obstructed also by the lack of a tradition of genuine constituency representation and of a competent and qualified network of parliamentary advisors enabling an efficient decision-making process. A similar situation prevailed in the administration, which lacked a publicly accountable bureaucracy and rational operating procedures. As a result, governments and parliaments, particularly in the early stages of democratization, were often reliant on the old communist apparatus and an array of official timeservers.[28]

In the economic arena, communist rule not only stifled development and modernization but it prohibited the emergence of an entrepreneurial middle class that could generate political liberalism and internationalization. It institutionalized the populace's dependence on the state for subsistence. Social groups and individuals were discouraged from taking any initiative, barred from organizing independently, and prevented from undertaking autonomous economic activities, which were condemned as "speculation" or "bourgeois deviations." The public viewed the state as protector and expected full employment and job security, cheap consumer prices for staples and basic commodities, and a comprehensive welfare system. When the statist system began to crumble and market relations were introduced and government spending was reduced, sizeable sectors of society were unprepared and failed to understand the necessity of such measures in order to rescue the ailing economies. As a result, public support increased, in the second round of national elections, for some of the communist successor parties that promised less severe economic policies and greater social welfare provisions.[29]

Socially, communist party rule had a negative impact on public perceptions of politics in general and political parties in particular. This popular disdain and suspicion limited public participation in the political process and

hampered the development of party structures. Many citizens continued to view politics as an activity of the privileged elite on which public opinion had little impact. Much of the public had little familiarity with party competition, deal making, and political compromise in a democratic and pluralistic setting. To foster public trust in the reform program, some political leaders favored a far-reaching "lustration" process to eliminate and prohibit ex-communist functionaries from acquiring public office or purchasing privatized state companies. Pragmatists countered that a sweeping purge of this kind would upset the progress of reforms by provoking a political backlash and would prevent the emergence of a tolerant democratic state.

According to Jacques Rupnik, there are substantial differences between the Central European states on the one hand and many of the Balkan and post-Soviet countries on the other hand, in terms of their communist and oppositionist legacies.[30] The former moved swiftly toward institutional stability, the rule of law, a market economy, a stable party structure, and the development of civil society. Many of the latter have languished in "illiberal democracies" or "semi-authoritarian" systems and have engaged in gradual reforms and postponed far-reaching privatization.

The surprising success of neocommunist parties in Poland, Hungary, and Lithuania in the second series of national elections rekindled fears of counterrevolution throughout the region. These fears were exaggerated, due to ignorance of the complexities of transitional politics, and to a failure to anticipate the adaptability of former party members to post-communist realities. After losing its grip on power, the communist apparatus splintered into several interest groups. At least five fractions continued to operate throughout the 1990s either to protect their positions or to benefit from the reform process. In the economic realm, market reforms simulated the rapid metamorphosis of many well-connected communists into new capitalists. Access to assets and information gave many members of this "red bourgeoisie" a head start over entrepreneurs who had not been party members. Top-level managers began to focus on profit making, and benefited from the "insider" privatization process.

Beyond these new entrepreneurs, a larger category of the former *nomenklatura* remained ensconced as part of the bureaucratic strata. Thousands of mid-level party bureaucrats continued to occupy numerous government offices and in some cases resisted and slowed down the reform process, not out of ideological conviction but primarily to maintain their jobs in rapidly shifting economies. In some states, they backed socialist or social democratic parties, viewing them as guarantors of an expansive state bureaucracy. In other countries, as in parts of the former Yugoslavia, they supported pro-independence or nationalist forces that would provide them with employment in the new republican administrations.

Communists remained active also in the political arena. Some former officials displayed resilience, pragmatism, and adaptability to the new conditions and transformed themselves into an assortment of political actors.

Ex-communist activists can be divided into three main groups: orthodox dogmatists, social democrats, and populist nationalists. Orthodox Marxist-Leninists constitute only marginal elements in each state and have failed to mount any serious political challenges even among workers dismayed by rising unemployment. The more astute ex-communists switched to socialist and social democratic positions, seeking to fill the political vacuum to the left of the new liberal democrats. They calculated that a remodeled democratic left would gain credibility as a viable opposition and could maneuver itself into place to form future governments.

Most of these new center-left formations scored well in the second series of general elections, having inherited substantial financial assets and organizational networks. They proved skillful in presenting themselves as the protectors of vulnerable social categories, such as pensioners, manual workers, and farmers, exposed unfairly to the rigors of capitalism. However, once in power, most of these reborn democratic socialists did not attempt to reverse the course of economic reform. Some tried to maintain existing welfare programs, but others actually favored an acceleration of marketization and further cuts in state subsidies to unprofitable industries and welfare beneficiaries.

The most dangerous ex-communists have promoted nationalist and populist agendas. They have sought not only to stifle democratic and market reforms but also to replace class with ethnicity as a popular mobilizing device. Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina have been the prime examples of this process, although similar developments have been registered elsewhere. Nationalist demagogues represent the authoritarian tendency in post-communist politics, diverting the public agenda away from political and economic reforms and toward ethnic exclusivity and national protectionism.

Authoritarian Challenges

Several varieties of authoritarianism have emerged in the Balkans since the demise of the communist party-states.[31] As the former Marxist-Leninist parties discarded their traditional ideological positions, factions within them sought to retain or regain the most important levers of power and to benefit from the gradual dismantling of the centralized command economies. The ex-communists, the ex–anti-communists, and their various allies have adopted a flexible assortment of ideologies and programs so as to garner a sufficient measure of popular support to gain electoral office. They have attempted to manipulate public opinion to their advantage, rallying their constituents around two major clusters of issues: statist populism and ethnic nationalism.[32] (In some cases, even anti-communist politicians have veered toward authoritarian politics in order to impose a "new national order.")

In contrast to their communist predecessors, the statist populists have not presented a clear ideological message, and they lack a credible, long-term socioeconomic program. Instead, they have appealed to broad sectors of the

population by offering simplistic remedies to complex economic and social problems. They have underscored the importance of the state in providing political continuity, strong leadership, public security, and a broad if leaky welfare umbrella.

They have not tried to revive classic Leninist parties with the intention of recommunizing their societies and reestablishing an absolute monopoly over political life but instead have exploited the transformation process to their advantage and have adopted strategies to undercut democratic, liberal, and reformist groupings. Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s exemplified this political strategy, regardless of whether their ruling regimes can be characterized as ethnic nationalist.

The new authoritarian leaders closely intertwined the ruling party with all government organs. This approach has been defined as "partitocracy" even though it falls short of a totalitarian one-party system. In some cases they used the strong presidential system specified in national constitutions to promote their powers, and disregarded parliamentary prerogatives, the division of powers, and constitutionalism. In other instances they benefited from political flux and constitutional and legal ambiguities to strengthen personal and party decisionmaking. One-party domination has been buttressed by the form of public administration prevalent in much of the region. In some states, instead of a merit system in the civil service, a "spoils system" developed, in which the election winners replaced virtually all government workers and administrators with party loyalists.

New authoritarian governments have ensured unequal political competition through their control of the most important public institutions and media outlets, especially state television and radio. They have retained most of the former communist party assets, communications networks, and organizational structures. They have deliberately slowed judicial reform and prevented the emergence of an independent judiciary. At the local level, especially in rural areas, the post-communist networks have remained particularly pervasive. Hence, the democratic forces have generally proved more successful in the larger and more cosmopolitan urban zones than in smaller towns and villages.

Statist populists in many cases established personal networks and broad patronage systems. Through them political loyalists benefited from the distribution of state assets and from quasi-privatization. The ruling parties maintained a system of intelligence gathering and police surveillance vis-à-vis the political opposition. Although not as pervasive or repressive as under communist rule, these practices nonetheless have hampered the development of a liberal democracy. In sum, the new autocrats calculated that formal democracy could coexist with informal authoritarianism. Instead of seeking to destroy all vestiges of political pluralism, the leader estimated that selective controls over the most important state and public institutions could preserve their positions of power within a quasi-democratic framework while diminishing the risks of their being publicly labeled as communists and dictators.

A further set of factors has assisted the nondemocratic elites: the political, ideological, and organizational fragmentation of the diverse democratic and liberal oppositionist movements. The broad anti-communist fronts formed during the collapse of Leninism in Romania, Bulgaria, and elsewhere, splintered as a result of personality clashes and policy differences. These movements found it difficult to gain sizeable constituencies, to construct stable political parties, and to build durable coalitions. This left open the political space to authoritarian, populist, and nationalist parties. The rebuilding of democratic coalitions broad enough to dislodge the state populists from power has proved difficult. Nevertheless, Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia have succeeded in forming viable and electable alternatives in recent years. But, the danger remains that political power may continue to oscillate between liberal and anti-liberal alternatives in several unstable states.

Statist populists, often with a communist heritage, have been accused by the political opposition of dictatorial tendencies. Instructively, similar charges have been leveled against the anti-communist Democratic Party in Albania, which during its spell in government in the mid-1990s also upheld tight controls over the mass media, the judiciary, the security forces, and other public institutions, and built its own network of patronage, clientelism, and cronyism. The pervasiveness and persistence of such phenomena indicates that the political culture of centralism, political exclusivity, and authoritarianism have remained deeply embedded in the region among a broad spectrum of parties, including some ex-dissident circles. Moreover, populism, nationalism, statism, and authoritarianism have been reinforced by a generally poor economic performance.

Nationalist Threats

Ethnic-nationalist parties share several commonalities, including a focus on the ethnic community as the subject of unity, sovereignty, and statehood.[33] However, they display important ideological and programmatic differences. Whereas some organizations emerged as radical anti-communists, others were formed, financed, or supported by the failing communist parties to preserve their powers and privileges and to undercut the position of liberal and democratic competitors. In some cases, nationalist platforms have been adopted as temporary tactics to gain electoral support. In other instances, they became more enduring features of an organization's identity and program.

Important differences exist between civic nationalism and ethnicity-based nationalism. The former displays tolerance toward minorities and focuses on loyalty to the state; the latter views the ethnic group or nation as the supreme object of allegiance and remains suspicious of democratic institutions and unrestricted political pluralism. Among ethnic nationalists, the majority, or the "core nation," is considered the only permissible "state-forming" entity. It must predominate demographically, and its control of the state must be

enshrined in the constitution. A great deal of debate has taken place over the past decade with regard to the relationship between individual and collective rights. Whereas in a consolidated democracy the legal protection of individual liberties can coexist with that of minorities, in transitional or quasi-authoritarian systems individual rights can camouflage majority rule that effectively deprives minorities of protection.[34]

In their approach toward ethnic minorities, nationalist movements may be assimilationist or segregationist. Assimilationism, in turn, maybe of two varieties—civic assimilationism, in which ethnic identity is subordinate to individual citizenship, or ethnic assimilationism, in which minorities are denied any collective rights and are pressured to integrate into the allegedly homogeneous, dominant *ethnos.* The former position is supported by moderate nationalist democrats and liberals, and the latter by ethnic nationalists and militant nationalists. "Ethnocratic" regimes may espouse democracy for one dominant nation; in effect, however, the denial of full citizenship rights to minorities dissipates any genuine democratic currents.

Ethnic segregationism is either egalitarian or hierarchical. In the former, different ethnic groups are hypothetically afforded the opportunity of "equal but separate" development. In practice, however, unless the state is organized along genuinely federalist lines, such theoretical equivalence does not translate into equality in access to political office or economic resources. This type of ethnic segregation may actually foster the benign neglect of minorities, and in its most extreme form, promote apartheid. In a hierarchically segregated system, minority disadvantages are consolidated, and subordinate minorities have to rely on their own resources without state assistance. They are also prevented from gaining autonomy or sovereignty, which would evidently undermine the integrity of the state. In some cases, the new constitutions adopted in post-communist states have singled out the majority ethnic group as the state-forming nation, with attendant privileges, whereas all other ethnicities are considered minorities and invariably confront discrimination.

Five major varieties of nationalism have emerged in Eastern Europe since the unraveling of communist rule. Aside from their stress on national unity and sovereignty, they have demonstrated significant ideological and programmatic differences. Each has had differing implications and a varied impact on domestic developments. The forms of nationalism are not exclusive or permanent in any specific state: some movements may become radicalized, but others may moderate their positions over time or disappear altogether.

The first variety of nationalism is evident in the independence-focused formations. The disintegration of the Yugoslav, Soviet, and Czechoslovak federations spawned the birth of various nationalist movements whose primary focus was on attaining state independence. The most successful parties were broad umbrella movements, such as DEMOS in Slovenia and *Rukh* in Ukraine, that mobilized the public along a wide political spectrum in the pursuit of sovereignty. With the achievement of statehood, many of these movements

splintered into moderate and extremist elements. Most commonly, nationalist groups have attained importance in conditions of rapid change, competition over resources, and threats to national boundaries. Moreover, elites in newly independent states have tended to increase their controls over the state to secure or safeguard independence.[35] In some instances, this has led to restrictions on democratic development and citizens' participation. In such situations, large ethnic minorities are often perceived as a threat to independence, and repressive measures may be adopted against such minorities.

Newly independent states often develop a broad spectrum of nationalist movements that employ nationalist rhetoric during the state-building process. Moderates may reach for national slogans, rituals, and symbols to maintain public support in the face of competition from more radical nationalist formations. Conversely, moderates may tolerate militant elements within their movement, to prevent the emergence of a popular and viable nationalist competitor that might derail the democratization process. In the post-Soviet context, various pro-independence parties recognized a need to display their national-patriotic credentials in contradistinction to the remaining communist parties, which were widely perceived to be under Moscow's tutelage. At the same time, some communist officials sought to ride the wave of nationalist sentiment to new sources of power in an independent state.

Separatist movements need not be xenophobic or racist; indeed, their definition of citizenship and nationality may be inclusive beyond the majority ethnic group. However, the ethnic question may become an important element of conflict in a multiethnic republic seeking independence, as was the case in Croatia and the three Baltic states, where the loyalty and status of the Serbian and Russian populations, respectively, came into question and figured prominently in the domestic political debates. Nationalism can grow rapidly during wars of independence when certain minorities are considered hostile to state independence and territorial integrity. Even after independence is won and armed hostilities cease, the governing party may purposively manipulate ethnic and religious divisions and resentments to maintain its popularity and electoral success; the ruling Croatian Democratic Union is a case in point.

The second category of nationalists are the moderates. Key distinctions between moderate and militant nationalists are found in the degree of emphasis placed on ethnicity for full citizenship rights, and in the policies pursued toward minority groups. Moderate or democratic nationalists are tolerant of ethnic diversity, and they are often assimilationist rather than segregationist or discriminatory toward minorities. However, some democratic nationalist organizations may contain more radical wings, such as the anti-Semitic Csurka faction in the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum. Moderate nationalists support parliamentarism and constitutionalism, but like civic liberals, they generally oppose the expansion of collective rights to ethnic, religious, and regional minorities, as this would evidently undermine the democratization of the state.

Moderate nationalists support parliamentarism, constitutionalism, elections, and the separation of government powers. However, they may oppose the institutionalization of collective minority rights, either on the grounds of civicism (in which citizenship is not defined by ethnicity and where individual rights prevail) or those of nationalism (the pursuit of national integrity and ethnic exclusivity). Many have voiced opposition to granting "special privileges" to minorities, together with the belief that group rights undermine the civic polity and the democratization process. Moderate nationalists may adopt more repressive policies where minority leaders persist in seeking political or territorial autonomy. In contrast, moderate nationalist organizations with a good deal of popular support have emerged in Hungary, Albania, and Slovenia—countries that contain small and largely dispersed ethnic minorities that have not campaigned for political autonomy. However, in both Hungary and Albania the moderate nationalists in positions of government also have been active in behalf of sizable groups of their majority coethnics (i.e., Hungarians and Albanians) resident in neighboring states, where they are minorities.

Third are the conservative nationalist parties. Such groupings, espousing a more pronounced degree of ethnic chauvinism, have emerged throughout the region.Their origins and programs differ. Some consist of former communists who have adopted nationalist positions; others, of former anti-communist dissidents who have become xenophobes. Both kinds of parties are active in some states. The ideological underpinnings of conservative nationalism may include elements of clerical radicalism, folk traditionalism, and ethnic populism.

Conservative nationalism often combines Christian (or Islamic) radicalism with ethnic populism. The bond between the majority ethnic nation and the majority Church (whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Muslim) is emphasized, denigrating the status of the nonreligious and of other denominations. Christian (or Islamic) values are stressed in formulating government programs, and anti-Semitism is often visible in attacks against secularism, liberalism, intellectualism, and allegedly destructive "alien influences." Xenophobic ethnic populists underscore the development of the "national community" above all other political and economic considerations, and oppose foreign involvement in the national culture and economy. Minority communities are invariably scapegoated for supporting outside interests and unfairly benefiting from the economic transformation. Anti-minority measures are therefore prescribed to protect the "national community." Proponents of clerical radicalism seek to influence state policy by stressing religious values in the formulation of governmental programs. This has been evident in their stance against family planning, which they view as a largely self-imposed form of "national genocide," and in their support of compulsory religious education in public schools. Additionally, such parties tend to advocate or tolerate the involvement of the clergy in all political institutions. Religious radicals may be described as anti-

consumerist and anti-materialist in the sense that they view economic competition, capitalism, profit making, and material acquisition as essentially corrupt and inspired by foreigners.

Folk traditionalism idealistically depicts the values of the peasantry, the village, and the countryside, glorifying a mythical pristine ethnic-national community untainted by foreign, alien, and modernizing influences. Conservative proponents of such an ideology display elements of anti-urbanism, anti-intellectualism, anti-capitalism, anti-cosmopolitanism, and anti-Semitism in their strivings for "national purity." The major planks of folk traditionalists include state protection for the agricultural population; a return to the idealized "traditional" values of nation, family, and religion; and the resuscitation of a purportedly endangered national culture. In some instances, nationalist traditionalists call for the restoration of a constitutional monarchy and complain about the democratic chaos associated with republican or democratic constitutions.

Another major component of conservative nationalist ideology has been anti-communism. Spokesmen for this ideology have exacerbated public perceptions that ex-communists have benefited most from the political and economic reforms, and they have typically called for the expulsion of all officials of the former regime from positions of authority. They have adopted a strong "law-and-order" platform, allegedly to eliminate corruption and crime and to provide full security for the "national community." Conservative nationalists commonly exaggerate threats to "national survival," whether from internal or external sources.

Conservative nationalist formations have been the majority ruling parties in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and have constituted important components of the opposition movement in Serbia and Montenegro. In Romania and Slovakia they have formed governing coalitions with the ex-communists. In Hungary and Macedonia they have gained a respectable percentage of parliamentary seats. In Poland, Ukraine, Albania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic they have proved marginal players in national politics, although their influence could increase in states experiencing internal turmoil and perceiving an outside threat.

The fourth major category is socialist nationalists. In some countries, splinter groups from the ruling communist parties adopted nationalist elements. In others, the ruling *nomenklatura* transformed itself into a socialist-nationalist formation. The ideology and program of such groupings have remained flexible, with their objective being to preserve as much as possible the powers and privileges of the ruling elite through the exploitation of nationalist themes. They may pose as protectors of "national interests" against internal and external subversion, and when in government, they may urge repressive campaigns against minority populations. They support the preservation of a large, state-centered economy and are protectionist vis-à-vis foreign investment and ownership of "national resources," a platform they may share with the conservative

nationalists. Economic nationalism may span all five categories of nationalism, with state protection being sought from "foreign takeovers" and the traumatic effects of unregulated international markets and multinational corporate takeovers.

Socialist nationalists are usually open to alliances with a broad range of political parties, including communist dogmatists and radical nationalists. They can flexibly alter their platforms and appeal to different constituencies in order to compete for power. By taking aboard explicitly nationalist issues, including the protection of "national integrity," the combating of autonomist trends among ethnic minorities and regionalists, and defense against "foreign penetration," socialist nationalists can broaden their constituency and entice some former anti-communist dissidents to join their ranks. The ruling post-communist parties in Serbia, Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria have constituted regimes that were socialist nationalist to varying degrees, with broadly developed patronage networks controlling a substantial sector of the national economy.

The fifth formation is the neofascists.[36] The most radical ultranationalist groupings share many features of conservative and socialist nationalism but also display additional ingredients. There is a strong emphasis on the leadership principle, a strict party hierarchy, intolerance of any political opposition, and open hostility toward ethnic and religious minorities. Neofascism is militantly ethnic-nationalist, stressing the nation's supremacy over all minorities, foreigners, and neighboring states. Claims are often made on other nations' territories that are inhabited by coethnics or that at one time were part of the state issuing the claim.

Neofascists deliberately exacerbate anti-minority sentiments by scapegoating specific groups as agents of foreign subversion. They openly advocate violence against minorities and propound strict conformism on behalf of "national interests" or "racial purity." In some cases, they have created clandestine paramilitary detachments or have recruited existing urban gangs, including skinheads, to their cause. Neofascists exhibit a propensity for ritualistic mysticism glorifying their ethnic culture and history, and often maintain contacts with fascist émigrés, who may provide funds and literature for their organizations. They seek to build a mass national movement alongside a vanguardist militant party leadership and are disdainful of parliamentary democracy and political pluralism. In particular, they appeal to alienated young people, the unemployed, pensioners, and frustrated nationalist intellectuals.

Neofascist activists exhibit admiration for militarism and tend to promote uniforms and uniformity among their membership. Neofascist groups have been established throughout the region, but they have had a limited impact on political developments. Nevertheless, their existence remains a cause for concern among minorities and resident foreigners at risk of racist attacks. The potential radicalization of the youth at a time of profound social change and

economic dislocation needs to be carefully monitored. Neofascists have been most active and visible in Serbia, Croatia, Romania, and Hungary, where they have tried to resuscitate the wartime pro-Nazi regimes; but their influence thus far has been limited.

Ethnic politics has been manipulated by a range of political groups. Leaders looking for popular support have capitalized on nationalist sentiments and exploited minorities and foreigners as scapegoats. In some cases, astute politicians have tapped into millenarian strains in traditional folk culture and into powerful national mythologies. Intense political competition has tended to engender conflicts framed in nationalist terms in which ethnic tensions are deliberately heightened. Political extremists and criminal opportunists, especially in parts of the former Yugoslavia, have taken advantage of widespread public disorientation and have deflected mass fears and blame onto vulnerable minorities or ethnic neighbors. Radical nationalists have launched offensives on various "enemy" ethnic groups and their leaders. And in some instances, the post-communist authorities have relied on smaller ultranationalist parties to maintain workable governing coalitions. Although Serbia has been the most obvious example of this process, similar coalitions have been attempted by ex-communists in Romania and Bulgaria. The danger remains that even in opposition, authoritarian populists will continue to forge alliances with radical nationalists to disrupt the liberal project and to promote radical anti-minority programs. Such an approach may have resonance among sectors of the population experiencing serious economic decline and benefiting little from economic reforms.

The collapse of Tito's Yugoslavia and the emergence of five new states at the beginning of the 1990s sparked a variety of nationalist responses, which continued to be manifest throughout the decade. They ranged from the relatively benign pro-independence nationalism of the Slovenian government and the defensive nationalism of the Macedonian administration, to the radical and xenophobic racism exhibited by militant Serb and Croat militias in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the latter's nationalist patrons in Serbia and Croatia. Their policies led to forced expulsions and the mass murder of "rival" ethnic groups in order to create ethnically exclusive territories controlled by authoritarian and corrupt politicians posing as national saviors.

Radical nationalists strictly define the parameters of the community in such a way that ethnic boundaries correspond with political units. They exhibit a pronounced anti-liberal and ethnocentric bias, asserting the primacy and dominance of one ethnic group's culture, history, language, and religion, and denigrating others' as inferior. By focusing on "ethnic protection," nationalist leaders may exclude various categories of nonmembers as untrustworthy aliens. Xenophobic nationalists operate on the valid assumption that a perceived domestic or foreign threat helps unite a "people." This approach toward national unification, however, leads to discrimination against minorities and other nationalities and provokes hostility toward neighboring states.

Where wrenching economic reforms disadvantage sizable sectors of the population, radical forces prey on popular frustrations in order to unbalance vulnerable governments. Nationalists also employ virulent anti-communist and anti-liberalist rhetoric to attack their political opponents. The "communist," "liberal," or "internationalist" labels are commonly employed to imply that traitors, aliens, and hostile outside powers have gained control of the state and the nation's resources.

The activities of nationalist parties, amid popular perceptions of internal or external threat, can act as a catalyst for the emergence of authoritarian regimes espousing "national unity" and intolerance for political pluralism and democratic competition. Such a process can severely inhibit progress toward liberal democracy, the rule of law, free media, and the development of a participatory civic society. Xenophobic nationalism promotes authoritarianism as it fosters an intolerant political climate and justifies governmental controls over various public institutions on the pretext of defending endangered national interests. The proponents of a civic society based on a balance between individual and minority group rights, unrestricted political competition, open mass media, and legality may then face an uphill struggle.

The emergence of a pluralistic political spectrum has been obstructed in several East European countries by nationalist, ethnic, and regionalist politics. A nationalist-civicist spectrum often intersects with the traditional left-right continuum, confusing the programs of specific political parties. This phenomenon focuses political life around collective national questions rather than civic issues and has often sidetracked economic and political liberalization. Even where nationalists do not hold political office, they can play a destabilizing role within society by provoking conflicts with minorities and attacking the government for its alleged neglect of the country's "national interests." The long-term impact of nationalist movements is contingent upon a number of factors, including the extent of democratic consolidation, institution building, political competition, cross-party consensus building, economic stabilization, administrative decentralization, trans-ethnic citizenship, and legalized minority rights.

Parts of Eastern Europe, particularly the Balkans, have witnessed a recrudescence of authoritarian politics and ethnic-national conflicts promoted by nationalist politicians. Yugoslavia has proved a fertile case study of how the growth of nationalism can trigger an escalation of competition between two or more ethnic groups for political office and economic privilege. Nationalist politics in this context is interpreted as self-defense against discrimination, repression, expulsion, or even physical annihilation. Such fears and sentiments encourage nationalist leaders to seek a single, ethnically homogeneous state in which the presence of other ethnic groups is considered anomalous. The dominant ethnicity is defined as the sole "state-creating" nation on a particular territory, and this definition is codified in a new national constitution that is based on the right of national self-

determination rather than on that of individual self-determination or the people's self-determination.

In analyzing nationalist parties in Eastern Europe, it is worthwhile to distinguish among power holders, power brokers, and power aspirants with limited public influence. In many states, nationalists have remained confined to the political fringes and in competition for the radical vote and the most "authentic" national program. A more significant danger in parts of the region has been the deliberate aggravation of ethnic relations by quasi-authoritarian parties and nonreformist governments. In some instances, even a democratically elected administration fearful of losing control over decisionmaking to challengers from the liberal or the authoritarian camp may rally around nationalist and xenophobic causes. An initially moderate regime can become radicalized or adopt certain anti-minority measures in what may be widely perceived as a form of "national defense" against pressures from neighboring states and against the militant stance of some minority leaders. This can precipitate a spiral of conflict that radicalizes both the majority and the minority populations. Additionally, the impact of small, ultranationalist parties in divided national parliaments may be disproportionate to their actual electoral representation and can inject radicalism into state policy.

Weak States, Crime, and Corruption

With the termination of monopolistic and centralized one-party rule, much of Eastern Europe experienced political fragmentation, institutional weakness, legal confusion, and official corruption. In some Balkan countries, such conditions persist, and the weak state structures and feeble leaders are incapable of implementing political reforms, economic restructuring, or modernization. In the late 1990s, Albania presented the most poignant example of these problems, during and after the collapse of the myriad "pyramid" schemes in the spring of 1997. The country's state structure was weakened, and the central and local governments only slowly regained control and restored public order. Equally worrisome was an evident symbiosis between politics and crime, with evidence of corruption surfacing among politicians and policemen, and with criminal gangs controlling substantial sectors of the economy. Criminal gangs possess no political affiliation or ideological loyalty. They are commonly opportunistic and gravitate toward those in power so as to bribe and bypass officialdom. This type of criminality is both a symptom and a cause of political paralysis.

Although strictly centralized command economies no longer exist in the region, the progress of systemic transformation, privatization, and marketization has been obstructed by special interest groups, many of which emerged from the communist apparatus. Sectors of the old elite have benefited directly from limited economic reform programs by conducting what has been labeled "*nomenklatura* privatization." In this process, state property was sold

cheaply to newly formed companies controlled by well-connected members of the former communist parties. Although Central Europe and the Baltics did not escape this corrupt practice, in the Balkans and in many former Soviet republics it assumed more significant proportions. It has restricted market competition and the development of a genuine entrepreneurial stratum that could strengthen the democratization process and accelerate economic progress.

Fearful of a market reform program that could dislodge the old *nomenklatura* from its privileged positions, and seeking to benefit from the legal and regulatory confusion, statist populists have hampered market reform in virtually all of the Balkan states. Through their control over major media outlets, they have played on fears of far-reaching market reform, especially among vulnerable sectors of society, including unskilled manual workers, pensioners, and state employees. Substantial sectors of the population have exhibited fear of economic decline, confusion about their future material prospects, resentment toward the new rich, concerns about safety and security, and susceptibility to populist, socialist, and nationalist rhetoric. Hence, demands for economic security, personal safety, and political predictability, encouraged by the state media, have promoted electoral support for paternalism, welfarism, statism, and authoritarianism. Large sectors of the population still expect the state to look after their interests and provide them with lifelong job security and a reasonable standard of living. In this context, civic consciousness has remained poorly developed and the concepts of self-help and self-organization continue to be lacking.

The ill effects of socialist mismanagement, inefficiency in production, and industrial uncompetitiveness have been compounded by nepotism, patronage, and outright corruption. Indeed, a growing wave of officially tolerated or politically sponsored criminality has swept across the region. Not only has crime seriously undermined legality and terrorized a nervous public, but it has also destabilized the region's fragile economies and quasi-democratic political institutions. Eastern Europe has proved a bountiful land of opportunity for assorted criminal elements, organized gangsters, and corrupt officials. The varieties of organized criminal activity can be divided into three broad categories: domestic gangsterism, international criminal syndicates, and politically connected networks capitalizing on the disintegration of state-controlled economies. All three forms of criminality have prospered not only because the forces of law and order were unprepared to deal with them but also because well-connected politicians and security officials themselves have benefitted from "robber capitalism" and illicitly acquired funds.

In the domestic context, local gangs, which can easily bribe poorly paid or corrupt police officials, thrive on the new availability of weapons and other illicit goods and the fear or gullibility of large sectors of the population. Robbery, murder, drug smuggling, prostitution, and money laundering have been

on the rise in recent years, and the police have appeared to be overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. Mobsters have filled the legal limbo between communism and an embryonic market economy. Domestic East European gangs are either linked with or remain in competition with well-organized international syndicates. These new "multinationals" focus primarily on smuggling weapons, drugs, stolen goods, and people. In many instances, the syndicates are better armed than the local police forces. Racketeers also smuggle East Europeans nationals and refugees from the developing world into the prosperous European Union for substantial profits.

Drug traffickers have endeavored to revive the traditional "Balkan route" between Asia and Western Europe since the lifting of United Nations sanctions against Yugoslavia. The route runs through Turkey, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia into Central Europe. Heroin, hashish, and cocaine from Turkey, Pakistan, and the Middle East have once again flooded the European market, and analysts believe that many local couriers as well as East European officials have benefited from this lucrative trade. Meanwhile, customs officials lack the necessary equipment to detect drugs and are desperately looking for Western assistance, particularly those situated along the Black Sea coast and the Danube River.

As economic performance has stagnated or deteriorated, organized crime has escalated. Violent attacks are a common means of settling scores between mafia-like business groups. Such phenomena tend to destabilize the transition process. Albania has presented the most dramatic example of how illegitimate businesses in conditions of economic crisis can trigger political instability. The collapsing "pyramid" schemes not only left masses of Albanians destitute but also undermined the country's security and political stability, as a popular revolt spread through the country.

Links between corrupt officialdom and organized crime can be traced across much of Eastern Europe. When the system of centralized controls collapsed, the well-connected communist *apparatchiks* pounced on state resources and lined their pockets with public assets. They posed as "businessmen" while stripping their countries of scarce funds and resources. A process of "*nomenklatura* privatization" has plagued the region, in which property rights and assets were obtained by well-placed individuals linked with the old communist party networks. This phenomenon and the financial scandals often associated with it can seriously undermine the public's support for liberalization and market reform and may even discredit the government and legislature. Moreover, the illicit funding of political parties has been rampant in the region due to the paucity of governmental and public funding, which has expanded opportunities for corruption and invariably given illicit and untaxed businesses substantial influence and control over political life.

Leading political figures in a number of states have embezzled state funds or established semi-legal companies using public resources without any legal restraints. The stability of the Balkan states is as dependent on effectively combating organized criminality as it is on emphatically pursuing market

reforms. Without an effective anti-syndicate campaign alongside economic progress, the rule of law, and regulated market competition, an increasingly pauperized and desperate public may become prone to social unrest, which in turn fuels political instability.

The Emergence of a Political Spectrum

Political parties are vehicles for the expression of group interests and coherent policy proposals that may form the core of government programs once the parties' candidates for office are elected.[37] Parties are the building blocks of a pluralistic democracy in that they are the chief political structures connecting national elites, local leaders, various interest groups, and the broader public. In ideal conditions, a handful of reasonably strong parties would emerge, spanning a broad political spectrum and representing the interests of various sectors of society. A stable party system, together with democratic institutions of government, free media, and a thriving civil society, can help keep extremists in check and can dampen the influence of authoritarian demagogues.

East European democracy and political pluralism are contingent upon the consolidation of stable and representative governments and a constitutional system in which ethnicity or some other narrow identity does not determine gradations of citizenship. Such conditions are necessary for managing and containing extremism and building a civic-oriented polity in which universalistic and not particularistic values predominate. A broadly based political spectrum is an essential component of this process.

Some parties, especially in the newly independent states that remained focused on the imperative of protecting statehood and maintaining territorial integrity, have organized around ethnic, regional, religious, class, or other collective identities. Other political organizations have rallied around new interests and programs in response to the ongoing social transformation. Parties are also extremely diversified internally, and some parties' left and right factions have more in common with similar wings in other parties than with each other. In many instances, party names and self-definitions are either generalized or do not accurately denote their ideological or programmatic positions and can therefore be misleading. Thus, instead of defining all political parties in Eastern Europe according to a "traditional" but simplistic left-right divide, this volume classifies parties principally according to what can be gleaned of their ideological and programmatic identity, which is often difficult to discern in a fluid and sometimes unclear political climate. It is worth remembering that a party's ideology, program, or strategy may change even when its name, leadership, and membership remain constant. There are of course many existing organizations that defy neat and accurate classification. The following major groupings are identified in this book: socialists and social democrats; liberals; Christian democrats; agrarians; greens; communists;

nationalists; neofascists; ethnic and religious parties; regionalists; and independents. In many cases, these categories may overlap, and some organizations can be included in more than one category. Nevertheless, such a division helps in identifying and classifying the various political formations present in the region.

Because of their relatively small size and modest influence, some political parties and movements that are essentially or solely monarchist, militarist, or imperialist are not examined in detail in this book. (Some larger, broader-based parties that may share those same sympathies are nonetheless included.) The book also generally excludes organizations that focus exclusively on single issues such as women's liberation, consumer advocacy, or homosexual rights, although such movements may play an important role in the development of civil societies in the future. I have chosen to concentrate on the most significant parties across the political spectrum—organizations that have gained parliamentary representation at the national, regional, or local level during the past decade, or those whose influence is discernible regardless of parliamentary representation.

Socialists and Social Democrats

During the past decade, many of the communist successor parties or leftist formations subordinate to the communists have restyled themselves as socialist or social democratic organizations and have endeavored to join the West European mainstream. In addition, a number of pre-communist leftist parties that were active before the communists seized power have been re-created in the region. Despite their espousal of programs similar to those of the post-communist socialists, the latter have remained wary of establishing any compacts or coalitions with them. Like the core members of other "historical" parties, many leftist activists belong to an older generation. Many spent years in exile in the West and inevitably lost touch with the social and structural changes in their native countries. They also control limited assets, usually benefit from a small base of public support, and have little media exposure.

The leftist parties have differed in their economic prescriptions, with some favoring greater state intervention and welfarism than others. Some socialist groups have taken aboard populist or nationalist issues and even allied themselves with more extreme parties, principally to garner public backing. Several parties have made a particular effort to mobilize support from the labor movements, which have faced enormous disruptions due to market reforms that negatively affected their working-class constituencies. Some have favored a mixed economy in which large sectors remain under state control, with more gradual structural reforms that cushion the population against unemployment and falling living standards.

However, the pro-market socialists, often with a younger leadership, find it difficult to combine a capitalist platform with a state protectionist agenda,

especially as they want to become part of the pro-business European "modern" left. Indeed, the imperatives of European integration, and the strict criteria for membership in a united Europe, have propelled the social democrats to adopt liberal reform programs and largely to discard their socialist economic prescriptions, in practice if not in theory. Nevertheless, with an inevitable increase in economic inequality in the post-communist countries, some of the social democrats can be expected to adopt more traditional socialist positions in defense of the underprivileged sectors of society and to espouse a broader welfare agenda.

Liberals

Liberalism in Eastern Europe encompasses diverse ideologies, factions, and policy prescriptions, but the main division remains that between free-marketeers and social liberals. Liberals tend to disagree on the role of the state in the economic reform process. "Minimalist liberals" favor a slender governmental role, primarily in the creation of a legal framework for private property and the sale of state assets, and not in the establishment of overarching regulatory institutions or in persistent interference with market competition. A major obstacle to free-marketeers is the backward nature of the East European economies and the need for modernization along Western lines. But this in turn requires the creation of appropriate legal and political institutions—institutions that some think are likely to obstruct market competition.

Social liberals argue for a more active state role in providing collective goods not supplied by the market, especially during the difficult transition process, even though they view the state as less efficient than markets. They believe that the state should create the institutional infrastructure for capitalism and provide credits to key industries as well as export and import subsidies. Social liberals also favor using the state to redistribute resources to enhance equal opportunity, to help disadvantaged minorities through affirmative action, and to promote social goals such as family cohesion.

Liberals are also split on social and cultural questions between traditionalists and modernists. The former support political and economic individualism but are more conservative on social, moral, and life-style questions. The latter favor individual freedom and liberation from social norms and are more libertarian in their approach. Nevertheless, liberals are generally pragmatic, and many remain neutral on social and cultural issues that are outside the realm of government.

Liberals are characteristically pro-European and attempt to apply Western standards in such arenas as human rights and marketization. Liberal parties are often dominated by urban intellectuals and the most educated strata of society and usually maintain good contacts with Western governments and institutions. They are vehemently opposed to nationalism, authoritarianism, and clericalism. They are tolerant of ethnic and religious minorities but are hesitant to grant

collective rights that may undermine individual equality and citizenship. Nationalist, populist, and communist critics have charged liberal formations with selling out the state and the country to foreigners and with being "cosmopolitan" —i.e., lacking in historical, cultural, and national consciousness.[38]

Christian Democrats

Christian democratic movements have emerged in most East European countries, often as resurrections of historic parties that had existed before communist party rule was imposed. Some have adopted traditional and nationalist postures; others have opted for relatively moderate, centrist positions similar to those of West European Christian democrats. However, the development of strong Christian democratic parties in the East has been slow and uneven for a number of reasons. After the collapse of communism, the clergy and laity of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox churches became less involved in politics. In addition, a number of former liberal defenders of the anti-communist churches began to advocate the separation of church and state and to criticize the attempts of some clerics to impose their social agendas (in family planning, education, anti-gay discrimination, or media censorship) on the political process. In the economic domain, some Christian democrats have allied themselves with liberal market reformers, and others have forged links with industrial and rural sectors and promoted a more protectionist and welfarist program.

Agrarians

Agrarian groupings in Eastern Europe can be similarly divided into "successor" and "historic" parties. The former began as communist-controlled front organizations created for the peasantry and collectivized farm workers. After the collapse of communist rule, they were transformed into democratic parties seeking to represent the interests of farmers, farm managers, and other sectors of rural society. The historic parties trace their heritage to the precommunist period and have sought to establish a distinctly rural constituency of private farmers. In general, the successor parties have proved more adept at attracting collective farm workers fearful of losing their jobs in any large-scale privatization process. The historic parties have greater appeal to private farmers and former landowners who were dispossessed by the communists when the latter seized power.

Agrarian parties have proved most successful in countries with an extensive farming sector, a tradition of organized rural politics, and government policies that have negatively affected the countryside. Agrarian parties have diverse ideological and programmatic profiles in seeking favorable governmental policies toward farmers. Some are conservative and pro-church; some are populist and protectionist; and others are statist and socialist, and seek greater governmental subsidies for the countryside. A few organizations have

become stridently nationalist in orientation and have rallied against urban, intellectual, alien, and foreign influences. They have campaigned against foreign purchases of land and protested the drive for their nations' integration into the European Union, viewing this as a threat to traditional farming and national heritage.

Greens

Various "green" parties appeared early in the transition process. In several countries, environmentalist groups were established before the fall of communism, as dissident pressure movements against the incumbent regimes. A number of green groups participated in the mass movements that helped topple single-party rule. Green parties have displayed limited durability partly because of their single-issue focus (environmentalism and conservationism) and because other political parties have embraced ecological questions in their programs. Moreover, the green platform has had limited public resonance during difficult economic times, when citizens are focused on material survival. As a result, the green movement has remained small and largely marginal throughout the region, with a slender parliamentary representation.

Communists

After losing their monopoly on political power, the communist parties splintered into three main groups: orthodox dogmatists, social democrats, and populist nationalists. Orthodox Marxist-Leninists have constituted only marginal elements in each state and have been unable to gain any serious public support even where disaffected workers have faced rising unemployment. The more effective communists have switched to socialist and social democratic positions, seeking to fill the political vacuum to the left of the new liberal democrats. Some communist leaders, such as those in the Czech Republic, have revamped their parties as "democratic communists" or "Eurocommunists" and dispensed with much of their Leninist heritage. They have supported continuing state control over the most vital economic sectors and have voiced skepticism if not outright opposition to their countries' joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Some have underscored national protectionism against foreign "takeovers" and "alien influences" and have veered into the nationalist camp.

Nationalists

Sundry political groupings have adopted nationalist causes. The main point of divergence between moderate and radical nationalists is in the emphasis they place on ethnic identity, language, culture, and religion for determining "national" membership and citizenship rights, together with their policy to-

ward minorities.[39] Moderate or democratic nationalists are more tolerant of ethnic diversity than are militants, and they are assimilationist rather than segregationist or discriminatory toward minorities loyal to the state. At one end of the spectrum, moderate nationalists merge into civic-oriented parties; at the other extreme, they assume an exclusionist ethnic-national ideology. Even a single formation may contain a moderate and a militant wing; in this case, either the party leadership veers between these two poles, or the organization fragments into distinct factions or separate structures.

Ultranationalists are inevitably authoritarians who are suspicious of pluralism and democratic procedure and favor a "strong hand" in guaranteeing "national interests," rooting out anti-national elements, and restricting the rights of minority groups. Nevertheless, they may function in a pluralistic setting, with the aim of gaining influence and power through electoral politics. Ideologically, militant nationalists operate according to a variety of often convoluted or even comical conspiracy theories revolving around nefarious foreign threats and traitorous domestic enemies. Ultranationalist ideologues conjure up appealing images of a glorious and unpolluted ethnic history that evidently needs to be re-created to maintain the continuity and integrity of the nation.

Neofascists

In addition to an invariably exclusionist agenda, neofascist groups embrace the "leadership principle," favor a strict hierarchical party structure, display intolerance toward political rivals, espouse violence as a legitimate form of political activity, and seek to establish a party-state with totalitarian ambitions to control political, public, and private life. Neofascists are radical, racist nationalists; they scapegoat ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities as traitors or agents of foreign subversion. They may also single out other groups for verbal or physical assault, including gays, foreigners, the homeless, or alternative youth movements.

Neofascist economic programs in the domestic arena are generally corporatist and statist, espousing close links between the state and large business, but they favor private ownership within "patriotic" limitations. As protectionists, neofascists are suspicious of foreign investors and international financial institutions, which they generally suspect of seeking control over strategic sectors of the national economy. Such positions are commonly couched in anti-Semitic terms, using the imagery of a global Jewish conspiracy. Like the ultranationalists and some militant religious groupings, the neofascists oppose "globalization," which they envisage as an attempt to subvert and destroy the identity of distinct nations. In essence, neofascists are revolutionary, promoting a major turnover in the elite, mobilization of the masses, and outright subjugation, expulsion, or elimination of allegedly threatening minorities. Small neofascist groups have sprung up throughout Eastern

Europe, but thus far they have had a limited impact on major political developments.

Ethnic Minority and Religious Parties

Ethnic minority– and religion-centered parties act as special interest groups that focus on issues of direct and often exclusive concern to a distinct segment of the population. As a result, they have limited prospects for interparty discourse and compromise across ethnic lines, especially with the majority group. This may be particularly evident where the government has adopted nationalist or populist positions or scapegoated minority leaders as separatists. Nevertheless, ethnic parties may enter into coalition governments with reformist forces that recognize the importance of minority rights and that seek minority representation in the administration to buttress their reform programs. There may also be instances where two or more ethnic parties representing different minority groups may cooperate in order to consolidate their efforts at gaining concessions from the government. Ethnic political formations tend to collectivize political life and invariably limit the political or ideological choices minority populations make. In an uncertain political climate, minorities tend not to vote as rightists, centrists, or leftists but for their ethnic leaders and representatives, who negotiate with the central or local authorities in the name of the ethnic collectivity.

In the post-communist states there has been a revival of community life among recognized ethnic groups as well as a reconstruction in ethnic terms, or "ethnogenesis," of cultural, religious, or regional groupings whose distinctiveness was not fully acknowledged by previous governments. In several cases, the latter process has evoked hostility from the "historic nations" that have long since achieved statehood and whose leaders have dismissed further ethnic redefinition of the state as artificial and potentially destructive of the state's unity and integrity. Nonetheless, new ethnic or regional identities continue to develop in a liberalized or fractured political climate, especially where they convey material or political rewards or enhance community self-defense against unwelcome outside interests or foreign threats.

Ethnic politics in post-communist Eastern Europe has revolved around five major tendencies. The precise form it takes in any state depends partially on historical traditions, on the policies and objectives of ethnic organizations, and on the comparative position of ethnic communities in the existing state structures. The first tendency, cultural revivalism, is noticeable among small or dispersed ethnic, religious, or regional minorities with limited experience of sovereignty or statehood, whose leaders demand the freedom and resources to rebuild their social, cultural, religious, and educational institutions, to redefine their history, to reinforce their identity, and to revive their dialect or language.

The second tendency, political autonomism, is characterized by a more

pronounced form of self-organization among minority populations that constituted majorities in previously existing states or that possess a history of organized political involvement in a multiethnic state. Calls for political autonomy rather than territorial self-government are also more likely in ethnically mixed regions in which no single group predominates and where the political system allows for the active participation of minorities in public life.

The third tendency, territorial self-determinism, is visible among reasonably large, well-organized, and territorially compact ethnic groups or subgroups that form a relative or absolute majority of the population in a particular region. Ethnic leaders may seek to reorganize the administration of the state from a unitary to a federal or confederal structure, in which specific regions gain some degree of provincial autonomy or full republican status. Territorial self-determination may also be demanded jointly by several ethnic groups in mixed-population areas with a distinct regional history and a tradition of autonomy and resistance to a centralizing state.

The fourth tendency, separatism, is characteristic among ethnically and territorially compact populations, usually with some history of statehood, that oppose their continuing inclusion in the existing federal or unitary state or that fear a loss of status in a newly centralized state and therefore campaign to create their own independent state structures. And the fifth, irredentism, is evident in separatist movements in one state that seek to join their territories and populations with structures in another, nearby state, either as autonomous regions or as integral administrative units. In some instances, such movements may be directly sponsored and assisted by the neighboring states in order to expand their own borders.

These five variants of ethnic politics are not necessarily mutually exclusive or permanent; they can be envisaged as potential stages of development, particularly in instances where an ethnicity-based organization, due to internal or external pressures, escalates its demands from cultural revivalism to full-scale territorial self-determination or even secession. Of course, the programs and achievements of distinct ethnic communities depend on several interrelated factors, including the response of the government and other in-state communities to minority and majority demands as well as the role of foreign governments in sponsoring or discouraging various autonomist movements.

Regionalists

Regionalist parties may be based around single, compact ethnic groups pushing for national-administrative and territorial autonomy within a wider state, or they may be multiethnic groupings in which leaders call for political devolution and regional autonomy in a broad array of activities. Other regional movements may involve political groups in different regions seeking broad decentralization from the state or a stronger position from which to negotiate

with the central government. They may represent the interests of various subregional or cross-regional constituencies. With the loosening of central controls, administrative reorganization, and local government reform, local issues, interest groups, and even multiparty local coalitions are likely to play an increasingly important role in the political systems of several states.

Independents and Others

In several post-communist states the role of independents has proved significant in the absence of a coherent and consolidated political party structure and in the context of widespread popular suspicion about the motives and goals of political parties in general. In some cases, however, candidates and parliamentarians claiming to be independents have had close connections with a major party organization (including communists, socialists, and agrarians) but hoped to maximize their popular appeal by posing as "independents." (Likewise, some individuals have joined parties or stood on party lists for elections not because they were ideologically committed to a specific position but because they viewed the party as a useful vehicle for gaining office.) In addition, a number of "miscellaneous" parties have emerged that do not fit any neat classification. The few that are included in this volume are primarily formations that have either achieved parliamentary representation or that have had some public resonance in the region.

Coalition Politics

Another question worth considering in the political transformation of the eastern half of Europe is the role of coalition politics. Are multiparty or multimovement coalitions conducive to a political transformation, or do they obstruct and unnecessarily prolong the democratization process? To answer this important question, one must examine numerous variables before attempting any broader generalizations.

Eastern Europe has witnessed a high degree of coalition building, invariably followed by coalition collapse and various attempts at coalition reformulation. Indeed, most of the movements that brought down communism were broad popular coalitions encompassing a variety of groups and ideologies. Most parties and governments in the region today are coalitions of differing ideologies, policies, and personalities. In deciding what distinguishes each coalition, it may be useful to look at five variables: first, the breadth of the political spectrum in a working coalition; second, the degree of internal coalition cohesion; third, the objectives of specific coalitions; fourth, the external political environment in which political coalitions operate; and fifth, the impact of coalitions on domestic political developments.

Coalition movements and coalition governments may consist of a single broad front, party, or movement containing various interest groups and fac-

tions committed to a single policy platform; they may be coalitions of two or three distinct parties with some overlap in their programs and policies and with a relative balance in their influence and decisionmaking; or they may encompass a broader spectrum of political parties and interest groups, with one or two formations predominating.

Coalitions may be necessary to form a parliamentary majority and a working government. Alternatively, they may be forged principally to broaden the base of political and public support for the government, even though they may not be operationally or technically necessary. In multiethnic or multiregional states, minority or regionalist parties may be deliberately incorporated into the government in an effort to resolve ethnic disputes, regional demands, and minority grievances as well as to meet international criteria for human rights or for membership in various international institutions such as NATO or the EU. The formula for power-sharing among parties varies accordingly. Some small parties may obtain the key ministerial portfolios that most closely correspond to their policy priorities—for example, agriculture, environment, minority affairs, or culture. In other instances, parties simply obtain a proportional share of parliamentary seats in the cabinet, or control of a nominal ministry, in return for their participation in the coalition.

The effectiveness of a political coalition is measured in terms of its ability to implement a prescribed policy platform. Some coalitions are long-lasting and programmatically effective; some are durable but less effective; and some are effective only in the short term. Government cohesion and coalition longevity are products of both policy and personality. Clear rules of engagement and decisionmaking must be operational to minimize leadership conflicts and disruptive rifts. Alternatively, conflicts can be curtailed by focusing on the pursuit of policies that are less controversial. But this approach carries the risk that effectiveness will be less significant. In the "politics of the lowest common denominator," election platforms are trimmed down or abandoned to preserve unity, paralyzing a government simply in order to ensure its survival. Such a scenario can promote policy stagnation, wherein the durability of a coalition becomes a by-product of the intention to maintain power rather than a measure of policy success.

A multiparty coalition may have diverse objectives, especially in a fragile, post-communist context. In terms of the progress of democratization, some of these objectives may have a positive effect, and others may be negative. On the positive side, a coalition may be a means of preserving broad public support for normally unpopular or disruptive economic policies, such as price liberalization, cuts in state subsidization, wholesale industrial restructuring, or rapid privatization. The objectives here are to maintain sufficient political and social stability as well as policy continuity and sustainability to push such programs through, and to gain expertise by including specialized smaller formations.

On the negative side, coalition politics may be a means of upholding cer-

tain privileges of office among a circumscribed elite, or co-opting ambitious politicians into political office and thereby limiting genuine opposition. In the worst-case scenario, as was most glaringly evident in Serbia throughout the 1990s, coalitions may simply provide cover for ethnic nationalism, an anti-minority agenda, or even foreign aggression.

Governing coalitions are created by and in turn influence the domestic political environment. In the immediate post-communist settings, broad-based coalitions and united fronts of diverse groupings proved instrumental in dismantling much of the old system and avoiding political fracturing. In many cases, however, reformed elements of the ex-communist parties became power sharers or returned to office in the second series of national elections. Some communist successor parties were organizationally more successful than ex-dissident groupings, benefiting from persistent splits in the democratic coalitions and from the slow emergence of a genuine party spectrum.

Another important question is whether coalitions promote the development of political parties as incubators of specific platforms and structures, or conversely, whether long-term coalitions of extremely diverse political elements actually stifle democratization and political competition by prolonging the transition period and obstructing the development of a spectrum of parties. The failure of a broad and essentially democratic coalition, coinciding with the absence of credible democratic alternatives, may indeed create political space for the return of authoritarian post-communist or other autocratic forces. On the basis of these observations, coalition politics in Eastern Europe can be grouped into four broad categories, as described below.

Anti-communist Coalitions

These were visible in most countries before, during, and immediately after the fall of the one-party state. The overall objective of such coalitions was to oust the old-line communists and to launch a systemic political and economic transformation. In these early stages, specific political parties had still to crystallize, whether from the ex-dissident or the ex-communist structures. Democratic coalitions have also been formed in countries such as Slovakia and Croatia to defeat an essentially authoritarian regime that has superimposed itself on the skeleton of the old communist structure and thwarted political and economic reforms. Such coalitions invariably possess a limited life span because of internal fractures and a changing political environment.

Ex-communist Coalitions

In this scenario, post-communist parties, whether they are socialists, social democrats, or broader "national fronts," create governing coalitions with former front parties or with other, smaller party entities established by elements of the ex-*nomenklatura*. In many cases, these coalitions have included

radical leftist, populist, or nationalist parties. Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia during the 1990s provided valuable examples of this process. The nationalists may be discarded if the more centrist post-communists gain sufficient strength, cohesion, and popular support. In order to understand and contextualize the democratic coalitions, it is important to consider the shape and impact of various post-communist coalitions.

Multiparty Coalitions

Multiparty coalitions are formed during or after the emergence of more coherent political parties, in countries that traditionally have had several stable political parties each of which has lacked a clear parliamentary majority to form a government. Such coalitions may deliberately exclude or include some post-communist formations, depending on such factors as the role of the communists in the democratization process, their current program and degree of commitment to democracy, their ongoing alliances, and the necessity of forming a broader coalition to obtain a governing majority. Useful examples from the past decade are the liberal socialist Hungarian government and the broad coalition administration in Slovenia. Of course, the size and popularity of each coalition partner vary, determining coalition structures that range from one strong party with a cluster of smaller formations to two or three relatively equal parties.

Cross-Ethnic Coalitions

In states containing sizable national minorities, multiethnic or multiregional coalition governments may be forged principally to prevent polarization and provide minority and regional representatives with a stake in implementing important political and economic reforms. In some cases, such administrations may themselves consist of an assemblage of smaller coalitions as majority and minority parties coalesce into larger blocs. Valuable examples of this process are the Romanian and Slovakian multiethnic governments. However, as in other coalition arrangements, there may be a misfit here between commitment to stability and commitment to reform. The incorporation of minority representatives in government may smooth over real or potential ethnic and regional divisions but at the same time make it difficult to implement far-reaching economic reform programs. The government could remain primarily concerned about keeping the coalition together rather than pursuing unpopular reforms that could impose severe social hardships. Conversely, in some countries, rapid and drastic reform may actually prove easier if minority representatives have a voice in government and actively support reform programs. They can more easily convince their ethnic constituents that government programs ultimately will be beneficial.

On balance, democratic coalitions have played a valuable role at critical periods of the post-communist transition, whether in launching democratic reforms or preventing the return to power of authoritarian elements. In the long term, however, coalitions may become a weak substitute for a broader political spectrum incorporating fewer, more distinct, policy-based, and constituency-strong political parties. Such parties could still form multiparty coalitions in order to pursue a common agenda, rather than simply for the purpose of surviving in power or blocking the emergence or victory of rival political coalitions.

Objectives of a Political Guidebook

The purpose of this book is to provide both a guide and an easily accessible directory to the political systems and political parties that have emerged in Eastern Europe in the first decade of transition from one-party communist rule. It provides an overview of each country by examining major political developments during the 1990s, including the structure of the political system, the relative strength and the particular roles of the most important political formations, and the key issues that each state has faced.

The eighteen recognized countries and the two aspiring states examined in this book are divided for convenience, and without political or national prejudice, into four geographic subregions: the Baltic (Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland); the Danube (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia); the Adriatic (Kosova, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania); and the Black Sea (Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine). The name of each political party, movement, and organization is given in English and in the official state language of the country in question.

The sources used to compile this directory, apart from newspapers and news agencies, are listed in the references. However, in many cases, information or confirmation was obtained during my visits to the region, or in discussions with regional political actors or analysts. The absence of a specific reference signals either that the data were obtained from unpublished sources or that the source was previously cited. Although the guidebook is as complete as possible, due to practical considerations it cannot be exhaustive. A number of political parties, movements, organizations, and other formations have not been included or are only briefly mentioned because data were sketchy, incomplete, contradictory, questionable, or not readily available at the time of research. Furthermore, in a highly fluid political climate, new associations and parties continue to form, and existing organizations frequently fracture, merge, or disappear. I apologize for any resultant omissions of individuals and organizations. Nevertheless, I believe that this volume provides the most comprehensive and documented assessment of Eastern Europe's political evolution since the fall of communism, during the first decade of a major political and structural transformation.

Notes

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4. Thoughtful theories of revolution can be found in: Krishan Kumar (Ed.), *Revolution: The Theory and Practice of a European Idea*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971; Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution*, New York: Vintage Books, 1965; Peter Calvert, *Revolution*, London: Macmillan, 1970; and Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1973.
5. With regard to the collapse of communism and the role of the opposition see Janusz Bugajski and Maxine Pollack, *East European Fault Lines: Dissent, Opposition, and Social Activism*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.
6. For distinctions between elite-generated "transformations," opposition-led "replacements," and the combined "transplacement" of authoritarian systems see Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*, Norman & London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992, p. 114.
7. See Anton Przeworski, "Democracy as a Contingent Outcome of Conflicts," in Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad (Eds.), *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 62–63.
8. For example, check John Higley, Judith Kulberg, and Jan Pakulski, "The Persistence of Postcommunist Elites," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 2, April 1996, pp. 132–147.
9. See Michael G. Roskin, "The Emerging Party Systems of Central and Eastern Europe," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No.1, March 1993, pp. 47–63; and Herbert Kitschelt, "The Formation of Party Systems in East Central Europe," *Politics and Society*, Vol. 20, No. 1, March 1992, pp. 7–50.
10. Sherman Garnett, "Europe's Post-Communist Democracies," *Strategic Survey*, 1996/1997, IISS: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 50–60.
11. An excellent discussion of perceptions and misperceptions about the Balkans is contained in Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
12. Michael Saward, "Democratic Theory and Indices of Democratization," in David Beetham (Ed.), *Defining and Measuring Democracy*, London: Sage, 1994, pp. 6–24.
13. David Beetham, "Key Principles and Indices for a Democratic Audit," in David Beetham (Ed.), *Defining and Measuring Democracy*, London: Sage, 1994, pp. 25–43.
14. Raymond Duncan Gostil, "The Comparative Survey of Freedom: Experiences and Suggestions," in Alex Inkeles (Ed.), *On Measuring Democracy: Its Consequences and Concomitants*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1991, pp. 21–46.
15. Consult Michael Ignatieff, "On Civil Society: Why Eastern Europe's Revolutions Could Succeed," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, March/April 1995, pp. 128–136. See also Ghita Ionescu, "The Painful Return to Normality," in Geraint Parry and Michael Moran (Eds.), *Democracy and Democratization*, London: Routledge, 1994.
16. For a useful study of public attitudes toward politics see Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer, "Mass Response to Transformation in Post-Communist Societies," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1994, pp. 3–25.
17. For an excellent discussion of these issues see Beverly Crawford, "Post-Communist Political Economy: A Framework for the Analysis of Reform," in Beverly Crawford (Ed.), *Markets, States, and Democracy: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Transformation*, Boulder: Westview, 1995, pp. 3–42.
18. Ghia Nadia, "How Different Are Postcommunist Transitions," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No. 4, October 1996, pp. 15–30.
19. For a valuable collection of essays on democratization in Eastern Europe in the context

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21. Consult Stephen Holmes, "Conceptions of Democracy in the Draft Constitutions of Post-Communist Countries," in Beverly Crawford (Ed.), *Markets, States, and Democracy: The Political Economy of Post-Communist Transformation*, Boulder: Westview, 1995, pp. 71–81. Holmes examines the complex problem involved in simultaneously liberalizing, legitimizing, and strengthening state institutions.

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24. Jakub Karpinski, "In the Wake of Presidential Elections, A Crisis of Authority," *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 26 January 1996, pp. 56–59.

25. See Arend Lijphart (Ed.), *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

26. Consult Matthew Soberg Shugart, "Executive-Legislative Relations in Post-Communist Europe," *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 25, 13 December 1996, pp. 6–11.

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30. Jacques Rupnik, "The Postcommunist Divide," *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1999, pp. 57–62.

31. On the dangers of authoritarian rule and the conditions in which it may thrive see Daniel Chirot, *Modern Tyrants: The Power and Prevalence of Evil in our Age*, New York: Free Press, 1994.

32. For an analysis of the varieties of authoritarian nationalism see Janusz Bugajski, "The Many Faces of Nationalism," *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 8 Nos. 3–4 (30), Fall/Winter 1995–1996, pp. 7–30. Also consult Janusz Bugajski, "The Rise of Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe: Kinds, Causes, Consequences, Countermeasures" (Symposium Report), *Uncaptive Minds*, Vol. 9, No. 3–4, Fall 1997, pp. 99–192.

33. For a brief discussion of East European nationalism see Todoritchka Gotovska-Popova, "Nationalism in Post-Communist Eastern Europe," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, June 1993, pp. 171–186. The author argues that unlike in Western Europe, in the East popular sovereignty and national independence historically did not coincide with individualism and civic values. In nationalist perceptions, personal freedom could only be attained by submitting to the collective will of the nation. Under communism this became submission to the party as the "vanguard" of the nation. The middle class, which could have promoted liberal values, had been dispossessed and eliminated.

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POLITICAL PARTIES OF EASTERN EUROPE

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Belarus

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Slavic tribes settled in the territories now known as Belarus around the seventh century AD and subsequently underwent a process of cultural and linguistic differentiation from their neighbors. Contrary to much of Russian and Soviet communist historiography, Belarus (*Belaia Rus,* or White Rus) claims a distinct national and ethnic history of several hundred years.[1] The Belarusian principalities of Polachak, Turau, and Navahradak were incorporated in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus, and Samogitia during the thirteenth century. The Duchy was a confederated state forged primarily through voluntary alliances and marriages in which the Belarusian territories maintained a significant degree of autonomy. There are no recorded instances of major battles between Belarusians and the non-Slavic Lithuanians, nor any significant ethnic oppression, but rather long periods of tolerance and cohabitation.

From the early fourteenth century onwards, the rulers of Moscow used Orthodoxy as a pretext for purportedly "reuniting" the Christian Slavic peoples. They claimed the Belarusian lands as part of their ecclesiastical and ethnic heritage, alleging an inheritance from the lands of Kievan Rus, a Christian principality that disintegrated in the twelfth century. Muscovite leaders also claimed that the three East Slavic peoples—Belarusians, Russians, and Ukrainians—sprang from an ancient Russian root, hence effectively denying the distinctiveness of a separate Belarusian nationality.

At the end of the fourteenth century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus, and Samogitia was united through marriage with the Kingdom of Poland, a move that was politically and strategically beneficial for both sides. In 1569 the two entities forged a federation under the provisions of the Lublin Union but still leaving a significant degree of autonomy for the Grand Duchy. Nonetheless, over the next two centuries most of the Belarusian nobility and gentry were Polonized while much of the peasantry were pressured to convert to the Uniate Church, which maintained allegiance to the Vatican while preserving

its traditional Orthodox liturgy. Because nationality and religion were so closely interwoven, this process was perceived as Polish colonization and acculturation. By the late eighteenth century, the Grand Duchy had been transformed into a unitary and more centralized Polish Commonwealth.

The partitions of the Commonwealth by Russia, Prussia, and Austria at the end of the eighteenth century initiated a process of Russification on the Belarusian territories as Moscow under the rule of Catherine II assumed full control over the region. Muscovite propaganda depicted the takeover of Belarus and Ukraine as a natural "merger" with the Great Russians. The name Belarus was banned from official use, the Uniate Church was liquidated, and Russian was made the sole official language. The Tsarist government claimed Belarus as a solely Russian province. When the Tsarist Empire collapsed in 1917, a Belarusian independence movement sprang up. A Belarusian National Committee, elected by a number of political parties and organizations, sought the creation of a democratic republican administration and a much looser link with Russia.

Bolshevik forces seized power in the Belarusian capital Minsk in November 1917 and excluded the autonomy of Belarus from their program. An All-Belarusian Congress was subsequently convened by independence activists who proclaimed a Belarusian Democratic Republic in March 1918 and refused to recognize Bolshevik authority. The move was condemned by Russia's communist leaders who in January 1919 established the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Meanwhile, Polish forces occupied western Belarus and fought a series of battles with the Soviet Red Army. After the conclusion of peace talks between Moscow and Warsaw, the Treaty of Riga was signed in March 1921, which divided Belarus between the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic and independent Poland.

After a short period of "Belarusization," through the incorporation of nationally minded elites in the governing structure and the promotion of the Belarusian language and culture, the Soviet authorities launched a violent crackdown against all manifestations of Belarusian political and national autonomy. During the 1930s, hundreds of thousands of people were either sent to labor camps or more rapidly exterminated in mass executions. The rural areas were brought under strict central control through a program of forced collectivization. The country's intelligentsia was the main victim of Stalin's repression, and this policy was extended to western Belarus after the area was annexed from Poland and incorporated into the Soviet Union in September 1939. In inter-war Poland, a policy of Polonization was pursued by Warsaw from the mid-1920s onwards, and by the late 1930s many Belarusian cultural and political organizations were banned and Belarusian deputies lost their seats in the Polish parliament.

Belarus's losses during World War II (1941–1945) were staggering: an estimated 2.2 million people lost their lives as a consequence of the German invasion and occupation, the Nazi genocide, and the Soviet repression and

mass deportations. Over two hundred cities were destroyed as was most of the country's industry and agriculture. A struggle for independence led by nationalist guerrillas was crushed by Moscow during the late 1940s and Stalinist totalitarianism was reimposed on the country. Moscow's purges eliminated all top Belarusian communists whose loyalty and absolute obedience to Moscow was suspect. The post-war denationalization campaign was intended to extinguish the Belarusian language as well as any independent political, cultural, religious, and economic activities.

POST-COMMUNIST DEVELOPMENTS

A major reason for the weakness of the Belarusian national movement was an "inability to displace hegemonic Russophile myths and anchor a new Belarusian identity firmly in a rival historiography."[2] Lacking a strong national identity and a prolonged history of independent statehood, and with its intelligentsia largely eliminated and replaced by Russian officials, Belarus became one of the most docile of Soviet republics.[3] The Communist Party of Belarus (CPB) served as a puppet of Moscow and acquiesced to all of its initiatives. Russification was an important component of Stalinism and Sovietization. Belarus's communist leaders resisted the reform program of Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev in the late 1980s fearing that any resurgence of Belarusian identity would dislodge them from power.

Not until the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in neighboring Ukraine in 1986, which predominantly affected the territory of Belarus, did growing sectors of the population seriously question the logic of Soviet rule. The discovery of mass graves in the forests of Kurapaty on the outskirts of the capital Minsk, where Stalin ordered the execution of hundreds of thousands of Belarusians by Soviet internal security forces, exacerbated opposition to the republic's subservience to Moscow's *dictat*. Nonetheless, Belarus failed to develop a reformist and market-oriented wing within the ruling party, which remained susceptible to demagogic and authoritarian pressures even after the demise of the Soviet Union.

By the close of 1986, growing numbers of intellectuals, cultural workers, and students were writing documents and arranging demonstrations calling for a national rebirth. Letters calling for the restoration of the Belarusian language were dispatched to Gorbachev, but the official reaction in Minsk was to harass the signatories. Hundreds of informal groups sprang up around the country, calling for a national "renewal" *(adradennie)*. Disclosures about the Soviet mass murders at Kurapaty in 1937–1941 further galvanized national activists around the country.

In June 1989, at a meeting held in Vilnius, Lithuania to avoid state repression, the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) was established from a conglomerate of clubs, associations, and parties. Its leader was archaeologist Zyanon

Paznyak, who first discovered the graves at Kurapaty. The BPF announced itself as a movement and not a political party, initially calling for the restructuring of society, a renewal of the Belarusian nation on the principles of democracy and humanism, and greater Belarusian autonomy within the Soviet Union. Unlike in the three Baltic states, where even the local communists supported political independence by the early 1990s, the "Russified Party apparatus in Minsk was immobilized by its view of the republic as a province of Moscow."[4] Hence, attempts to create a political compromise between ex-communists and pro-independence forces ended in failure and politics remained highly polarized.

With public pressures mounting through rallies, demonstrations, and strikes, and the Soviet Union on the verge of disintegration, the regime in Minsk grudgingly conceded to the forces of national independence. In January 1990, a law was passed making Belarusian the official language of the republic and thereby replacing Russian. In March 1990, elections were held to the Belarus Supreme Council (parliament) and were open to opposition candidates. Although these were the first openly contested elections, no organized opposition to the Communist Party existed aside from the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF). The Communist Party controlled the media and limited BPF campaigning and influence. Most of the seats outside of the major cities and the Minsk region were uncontested. The BPF only won 34 seats of 365, with the remaining seats going to Communist Party members. Many of the representatives could not be identified according to party lines, although approximately 40 to 50 deputies were allied with or sympathetic to the BPF.[5]

Communist-appointed electoral committees were empowered to screen all parliamentary candidates. The Russified communist old guard won an overwhelming majority of seats due to their control of the media, state funds, industrial enterprises, and collective farms. The BPF faction in the legislature, together with agrarian and veterans' groups and some communists, established a Democratic Club in opposition to the conservative majority. It declared its main goals to be Belarusian independence and the creation of a political democracy and a market economy.

On 27 July 1990, the Supreme Council adopted a Declaration of Belarusian State Sovereignty under the authority of constitutional law. In a referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union held on 17 March 1991, 83.3% of Belarusians eligible to vote took part and of that number 82.7% chose to stay in the Union whereas 16.1% favored separation and 16.7% abstained. During the coup attempt in Moscow on 19 August 1991, Mikalai Dzemyantsei, chairman of the Belarusian Supreme Council, announced his support for the pro-Soviet hard-line coup plotters. When the coup attempt collapsed, Dzemyantsei was forced to resign from office. Stanislau Shushkevich, his first deputy and a political outsider, replaced him. Shushkevich had entered politics only after the Chernobyl disaster and although he supported Belarusian sovereignty he was unable to mobilize the country to achieve democratic statehood until the Moscow coup attempt.

On 25 August 1991, the Shushkevich government proclaimed an independent Belarus, and four days later the Communist Party of Belarus was declared illegal and all of its assets were frozen. The authorities announced the "departization" of all government organs, state enterprises, and public institutions. Most party members, including Prime Minister Vyacheslau Kebich, resigned from the party the day before its dissolution and thereby remained in power. In September 1991, the chairmanship (presidency) of the Supreme Council was opened for election. Kebich and Shushkevich faced off for the position, but after consecutive rounds of voting, neither could attain a majority. Eventually, Kebich dropped out of the race and handed the position to Shushkevich. But Kebich remained the dominant force in the Supreme Council, blocking Shushkevich's relatively moderate economic reform program.

At an extraordinary session on 17–19 September 1991, the Supreme Council changed the name of the state from the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Republic of Belarus. It also adopted as new state symbols the white-red-white flag of the 1918 Belarusian Democratic Republic and the coat-of-arms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus, and Samogitia. Due to the Supreme Council's negligent economic policy and its emphasis on closer ties with Russia, the BPF began calling for early elections in the fall of 1992. Although the movement managed to garner enough signatures for a referendum on early parliamentary elections, the Supreme Council repeatedly defeated these attempts by raising technical problems and voting against the referendum. In July 1993, after refusing to sign the Collective Security Pact of the Moscow-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shushkevich was faced with a no-confidence vote by the communist old guard in parliament. Although this attempt failed, it laid the ground for greater political and social upheaval.

In November 1993, Alyaksandr Lukashenka, head of the Supreme Soviet's anti-corruption committee, began to attack the credibility of both Shushkevich and Kebich, accusing them of abusing state funds for their personal use. Neither of the charges was proven but the reputation of both politicians suffered as a result. In January 1994, Lukashenka raised the charges again, this time forcing no-confidence votes against both Shushkevich and Kebich. Shushkevich failed to survive but Kebich remained in his post. Myacheslau Hryb, a member of the old communist *nomenklatura* and effectively a puppet of Kebich, replaced Shushkevich as chairman of the Supreme Council.

On 30 March 1994, the new Belarusian constitution was passed, creating the Office of President and declaring Belarus a presidential republic and delineating executive powers. The new constitution also created a smaller, 260-member unicameral parliament but it failed to create a full-time legislature. The BPF opposed the creation of an executive branch, fearing that such a powerful office had the potential for dictatorial tendencies so early in Belarus's democratization efforts. Elections for the post were held in June and July 1994 with Lukashenka winning the ballot by an overwhelming majority of over 80% of the vote in the second round. Kebich was favored at the begin-

ning of the campaign with Lukashenka running as an outsider. Kebich's heavy-handed control of the media led to a decrease in public favor and tended to support Lukashenka's accusations of official corruption.

Lukashenka and Kebich ran on similar economic and foreign policy platforms but the issues of corruption and trust dominated their contest. Shushkevich's campaign emphasized the importance of Belarusian independence together with a slow pace of economic reforms. In the first round of the ballot, BPF leader Paznyak adopted a platform emphasizing Belarusian nationalism and dedication to far-reaching economic reforms. Paznyak and Shushkevich competed with one another by appealing to similar constituencies, whereas the high-profile struggle between Kebich (representing the status quo) and Lukashenka (emphasizing a dynamic anti-corruption crusade) dominated the second election campaign. On 21 July 1994, after he was elected, Lukashenka appointed Mikhail Chihir as the new prime minister.

During the presidential campaign, Lukashenka had supported a command economy and closer ties to Russia. Over time, he began to implement those policies and increase his hold over the country. In July 1994, he signed an agreement on economic and monetary union with Russia to complement the signing of the Commonwealth of Independent Sates (CIS) Defensive Security Pact, which had passed earlier in December 1993. On 25 February 1995, Lukashenka signed a comprehensive friendship treaty with Russia for joint defense, monetary, and economic policies and thereby pushed the previous agreements even further. On 14 May 1995, a referendum was passed by the electorate declaring Belarusian and Russian as the two official state languages, replacing the Belarusian flag with the Soviet era emblem, calling for full integration with Russia, and giving the president the right to dissolve parliament.

Also in May 1995, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forced Lukashenka to restart the stalled privatization plan or risk losing financial loans. He eventually complied, but these reform efforts became linked to Russian reform policies that further complicated the process. In July 1995, Lukashenka halted the transfer of nuclear weapons to Russia as stipulated under the renegotiated Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and ended Belarusian compliance with the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty. In response to growing international criticism, Lukashenka claimed that the eventual union of Belarus and Russia would ensure that the arms treaties were obsolete.

Lukashenka's policies emasculated the Supreme Council and created a virtual one-man dictatorship over the country. The President became both head of state and chief executive. Belarusian nationalism was systematically stifled and efforts to create a union with Russia were stepped up dramatically. Seven main opposition parties, initiators of the "round table," appealed to the national parliament to announce the impeachment of the President for his violation of the country's laws and constitution. However, Lukashenka largely controlled the parliamentary elections in May 1995 by dominating the media and limiting the amount of money candidates could spend on their campaigns.

The elections took several months to complete because of a consistently low voter turnout for numerous parliamentary seats. In the meantime, Lukashenka refused to recognize the legitimacy of the legislature and largely ruled by issuing presidential decrees.[6] He threatened to impose direct presidential rule if the elections failed to produce the required quorum for a working parliament. By December 1995, a sufficient number of seats were filled for parliament to make the general elections valid.

The new Supreme Council was composed mainly of Communists (42 seats), their Agrarian Party allies (33 seats), a forty-deputy bloc of Lukashenka loyalists (styling itself as "Accord"), and a 96-seat majority of purportedly unaffiliated or "independent" candidates. Opposition and democratic groups remained small and weak with the BPF proving unable to gain a single seat in the legislature.[7] The urban-based democratic parties were effectively routed, with estimates that the centrists had obtained fewer than thirty parliamentary seats. International election monitors declared that the parliamentary elections were "neither free nor fair" because of numerous irregularities. The struggle between President and parliament continued throughout the second half of the decade with Lukashenka constantly gaining ascendancy over government decision-making. For example, Lukashenka gained the power to appoint and dismiss local government officials.

Oppositionist politics was marked by dispute, fractiousness, and governmental obstruction. The Civic Accord Bloc (CAB) was an attempt to unite moderate democrats and economic reformers. Initially, it elicited a great deal of attention because it added a moderate element to the polarized political landscape. Joint documents were signed between the member parties and constituencies were divided up. The United Civic Party (UCP), however, was delayed in gaining registration and could not nominate candidates. Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Party of National Accord (SDPNA) suffered internal differences over a lack of a clear ideology and organizational structure. Party leaders could not control the situation and party members began to violate agreements with the United Democratic Party (UDP) over constituency distribution. These factors eventually led to the dissolution of the CAB.

On 27 September 1996, the Civic Action Caucus (CAC) was formed as a centrist movement dedicated to breaking the deadlock between the BPF and the communists in the Supreme Council. This caucus included the United Democratic Party, the Peasants Party, the Green World Party, and the United Civic Party, but it exerted little or no influence on Lukashenka's policies.

Lukashenka sought to pass a new version of the constitution by increasing his own powers and further limiting the Supreme Council and the constitutional court. This would have left him as the *de facto* sole authority in the country. The President wanted to submit his version of the constitution directly to the people through a national referendum. Sixty deputies of the parliament supported him while 135 were opposed. The Speaker of the Supreme Council, Syamyon Sharetsky, proposed an alternative constitution whereby

the office of President would be dissolved. The two sides eventually agreed to hold a national referendum on 24 November 1996 with a total of seven questions. Two of the questions dealt with the alternative versions of the constitution. Lukashenka offered three other questions on the free sale and purchase of land, the continuation of the death penalty, and changing Belarusian Independence Day to the date Soviet forces liberated Belarus from the Nazis. The parliament offered two questions on banning special funding not included in the budget and on direct elections for local officials.

The constitutional court ruled that neither version of the constitution would be legally binding if approved by the public. Instead, the parliament would need to decide how to enforce the proposed constitution. Lukashenka opposed the ruling and demanded that the referendum result be legally binding. He dismissed Viktor Hanchar, chairman of the Electoral Commission, thus overstepping his constitutional powers. In response, Prime Minister Chihir and several cabinet members resigned while Lukashenka issued a decree making the results of the upcoming referendum legally binding. The new Prime Minister, Syarhei Linh, proved loyal to Lukashenka, who was seeking to curtail legislative powers and vastly expand those of the presidency.

The political crisis continued through late November 1996, when the Supreme Council Speaker Syamyon Sharetsky called for Lukashenka's impeachment. Impeachment proceedings were to begin, when Russian mediators stepped in and brokered a compromise between the executive and legislative branches. Both sides agreed to hold the joint referendum and have the questions on the constitution stand as non-binding suggestions to be enforced by a 100-member committee equally represented by the two sides. The compromise collapsed the day after it was reached, due to parliament's failure to approve it. Lukashenka then returned to his previous stance to make the referendum legally binding, and impeachment proceedings were delayed until after the referendum.[8]

Lukashenka's version of the constitution was supported by 70.5% of the voters, and all of his other proposals passed.[9] Only 7.9% of voters supported the parliament's version and neither of their other two propositions passed. In the last four hours of voting, turnout reportedly jumped from 59% to 84% of the 7.5 million eligible voters. These numbers were widely seen as inflated and the entire referendum was perceived as unfair. Lukashenka gave himself sweeping powers, as the controversial referendum allowed him to change the constitution and extend his presidency by two years, until 2001.

The 260-seat Supreme Council was abolished and a bicameral legislature was established consisting of a 110-seat Chamber of Representatives (the lower house) and a 64-seat Council of the Republic (upper house). Parliament became an ineffective and largely paralyzed body that was not even empowered to draw up a budget. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet of Ministers were appointed by the President as were the governors of Belarus's six regions *(oblasts)*. At the same time, Lukashenka was able to maintain his

popularity and public mandate by blaming the parliament and government for corruption, incompetence, and economic decline, thereby deflecting attention and responsibility away from his office.

Regardless of domestic and international protests, Lukashenka began to implement the new constitution. The draft signed into law by the president on 28 November 1996 called for the dissolution of the Supreme Council and the creation of a 110-member House of Representatives. The parliament was dissolved and a new legislature was quickly chosen from former Supreme Council deputies who supported Lukashenka; they first convened on 28 November 1996. Through the referendum and its quick enforcement, Lukashenka further solidified his drive for one-man rule, styled as a "vertical presidency," and extended his term in office from five to seven years.

Meanwhile, the ousted parliament continued to meet and refused to recognize the authority of the new legislature. In addition, five of the eleven constitutional court justices resigned and were replaced by Lukashenka's personal appointees. Through these developments, the prospects for democracy in Belarus suffered a severe blow and Lukashenka began to govern by decree without regard for constitutional norms. The results of the referendum also accelerated the reintegration of Belarus into the Russian orbit and led to increasing friction with and isolation from the West.

During the following three years, between 1996 and 1999, the Belarusian political scene was dominated by the constitutional dispute between the opposition and the government over the legitimacy of the constitution. As an expression of protest, the BPF opposition did not recognize the constitution and held its meetings virtually illegally in private apartments. Western governments regarded the new parliament as illegitimate and called for new presidential elections, despite Lukashenka's efforts to gain legitimacy for his extension of the presidency. The U.S. State Department's annual human rights reports concluded that the rights of Belarus's citizens were sharply limited and nearly all the power was concentrated in Lukashenka's hands. The President had successfully suppressed the opposition movement and the media by harassing them and putting restrictions on freedom of association, movement, and religion.

The political opposition hoped that by organizing alternative presidential elections they would attract international attention and thus force the Belarusian authorities to hold fully democratic general elections. However, the regime warned that this attempt would be looked upon as a plot to seize power. To forestall such an eventuality, Lukashenka detained a number of opposition election organizers, jailed one of the two major presidential candidates, while the second had to announce his candidacy from exile.[10] Despite official harassment the opposition managed to organize nationwide presidential elections between 6 and 16 May 1999. Opposition leaders claimed that Lukashenka's term would have ended if he had not unconstitutionally extended it until 2001 through the illegal 1996 referendum. According to the

1994 constitution his term in office expired in July 1999. Lukashenka took repressive measures against the organizers of the parallel election and moved to suppress their efforts.

Viktor Hanchar, the head of the Central Electoral Commission, announced that the elections were invalid. He called for a second round of voting to take place within three months. Hanchar claimed that the reasons for their invalidity included various irregularities during the vote, the hostility of the authorities, the absence of conditions for free election campaigning, and violations of the electoral law by Paznyak, one of the presidential candidates. Analysts agreed that an election designed to help promote the democratic opposition actually significantly damaged it. This gave Lukashenka an additional pretext not to enter into a dialogue with a fractured opposition.[11]

As Belarus was a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), this international body tried to mediate the dispute between the government and opposition. It stressed the OSCE membership obligations in which member countries were obliged to respect democratic principles. During its eighth session, which took place in Russia in July 1999, the assembly called on all political forces in Belarus to cooperate and to seek a way out of the crisis while respecting Belarus's commitments to the OSCE. The assembly also requested all of the OCSE governments to support the development of the democratic electoral process and to render any necessary assistance.

Another dimension of this conflict was the strategic game that Lukashenka played with Russia. During the disintegration of the USSR, Moscow made certain that the Belarusian government signed a bilateral agreement creating a "common economic, political, and social space" between the two countries and recognizing Russian control over the 30,000 Belarus-based strategic troops and technical facilities. This gave Moscow the opportunity it wanted to subvert the new country's independence. Cognizant of Russian objectives, Lukashenka sought to gain additional power and prestige by uniting the two countries into one unitary state. He probably calculated that he would take the position of a vice-president in the new union while the actual presidency would be a rotating position. The first step both countries took in the process was the establishment of a Union of Russia and Belarus on 2 April 1997.

Lukashenka also planned to strengthen trade links with Russia and to use Russia's Kaliningrad region on the Baltic Sea for shipping Belarusian goods. Russian interests focused on the possibility of prolonging Yeltsin's presidency. Some analysts suggested that the Russian-Belarusian Union might have served Yeltsin much like the creation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) helped the Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević to remain as head of the united state of Serbia and Montenegro. According to the Russian constitution, Yeltsin was barred from running again for the presidential post.

Nevertheless, Moscow moved slowly in the actual unification process fearing that Belarus would simply become an expensive Russian dependency.

Only a handful of agreements were signed and all of them were largely declarative and symbolic. On several occasions, Lukashenka displayed his impatience with this slow progress and threatened that he would turn to the West. He also warned Russia that he would stop key Russian gas transits across Belarus to Europe. There were clearly numerous obstacles to the grand design of Slavic unification as envisaged by the Belarusian President.

The economic and fiscal problems of both Russia and Belarus were enormous. But while Russia was subsidized by generous amounts of money from various international organizations, Belarus remained basically self-isolated. Minsk calculated that reintegration with Russia would prove a valuable substitute for Western-supported economic reforms. However, because of Moscow's own dire predicament, Russia was able to "reward" Belarus mostly by forgiving Minsk's substantial gas debt.[12] On 25 December 1998, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka finally signed a "historic" agreement toward the total merger of the two countries. The Presidents said they would move steadily to introduce a single currency and harmonize taxes.

In discussions with the OSCE, Lukashenka asserted that any change in Belarus's foreign policy was conditional on international acceptance of the new constitution adopted in 1996 as the basis of the state system. However, his strong desire for recognition may also have been the result of the insecurity of his own position. According to the old constitution, Lukashenka should have vacated his post on 20 July 1999.

Belarus remained in poor economic condition, diplomatically and economically isolated and with a bankrupt currency. Lukashenka's Soviet-style economy had clearly failed but his rule persisted. Even though the union with Belarus was generally popular in Russia, political leaders in Moscow held different perceptions of the unitary state than Minsk. While Lukashenka expected some rapid economic benefits, Russia looked at the Union more as a long-term project. In fact, Russia largely gained what it wanted through the existing Union, by reintegrating its air defenses, intelligence operations, and arms production. The election of President Vladimir Putin in March 2000 created new complications for Lukashenka in that the Belarusian President faced a younger Kremlin leadership that could simply seek to incorporate Belarus as a republic within the Russian Federation and thereby curtail Lukashenka's ambitions to head the Russian-Belarusian Union.

Since his election as President, Lukashenka has systematically imposed a "presidential dictatorship" and a personalized authoritarianism over Belarus. Paradoxically, unlike in Serbia, Croatia, and elsewhere, this was accomplished not through the manipulation of ethno-nationalist sentiments but through the traditions of Soviet totalitarianism and Belarusian subservience to Moscow. Integration with Russia was part of a broader objective to reconstitute a pan-Slavic state in which Belarus could play a galvanizing role. Lukashenka used populism and "socialist nostalgia" to gain public support and he "exploited

the weak foundations of representative government, democratic processes, and legal norms into a general indictment of the parliamentary system."[13]

In addition, the country's democrats possessed little experience, resources, and public support outside the capital and a handful of other major cities. However, the absence of any sizeable ethnic minorities in Belarus, or calls for ethnic or territorial autonomy, prevented the fomenting of ultra-nationalism and inter-ethnic disputes by the government. Out of approximately 10.2 million citizens, 78% were Belarusians, 13% Russians, 4% Poles, 3% Ukrainians, and 1% Jews. Minsk did not in general employ xenophobia or nationalism to find scapegoats based on ethnicity. In essence, the Lukashenka regime could be defined as essentially "anti-nationalist," "pan-Slavic," and "Soviet restorationist" in its orientation and this provided a foundation for its statist-populist authoritarianism.

Lukashenka relied principally on the country's internal security organs to uphold his power and to deter or terrorize his opponents. The number of security force personnel rose to about 180,000 troops or double the size of Belarus's armed forces. Lukashenka also increased the number of administrative posts through the establishment of executive "vertical structures" from the center to local level, and centrally controlled the economy and financial system. This effectively overrode any alternative sources of authority. The Lukashenka regime engaged in systematic repression against any manifestations of political dissent and opposition. For example, it outlawed independent labor unions and abolished parliamentarians' immunity from prosecution among.

As a result of incessant official pressures, in August 1996 Zyanon Paznyak, the Chairman of the Belarusian Popular Front, and Sergei Naumchik, representative of the Belarusian Helsinki Human Rights Committee, obtained political asylum in the United States. The European Union charged that the human rights situation in Belarus was "inadmissible." The organization criticized Belarus for its failure to uphold freedom of the press and the right of citizens to demonstrate freely. The Strasbourg-based European Parliament complained that President Lukashenka had adopted an increasingly "dictatorial style of government," which raised serious questions about future EU relations with Belarus. In particular, the European Parliament accused Lukashenka of total disregard for the democratically elected legislature and of repressing any opposition to his regime.

In May 1997, Nikolai Statkevich, the leader of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, was sentenced to jail for violating a presidential ban on organizing unsanctioned rallies. Statkevich was arrested the previous day after he persuaded about 5,000 participants in a trade union rally to join an opposition march against Lukashenka.

In November 1997, Belarusian authorities closed the nation's main opposition newspaper *Svaboda* (Freedom), marking one of the harshest crackdowns by the regime on the political opposition. Indeed, the Belarusian government consistently restricted the development of independent media. It main-

tained a tight monopoly over printing and broadcasting facilities and over media distribution outlets. Most television stations were state owned and controlled and private media were terminated when they fell afoul of the authorities. The U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists reported that the leaders of Belarus were among the world's top ten "enemies of the press." According to the report, President Lukashenka "bullies the press with Soviet-era tactics, tightening his stranglehold by shutting down independent media and publicly denouncing journalists."[14] Indeed, under Lukashenka the Belarusian media had far less freedom than they did during Gorbachev's *glasnost.*

In January 1998, thirty-four well-known Belarusian intellectuals signed the Belarusian Declaration of Freedom, a document created within the framework of Charter 97, a popular opposition political movement initiated in November 1997 with the goal of combating the dictatorship by peaceful means. In April 1998, the Belarusian authorities officially liquidated six political parties. Opposition politicians, journalists, and writers established a Belarusian Association of Prisoners of Conscience of the Lukashenka Regime. The association united people who had been imprisoned for political activities. It included poet Slavamir Adamovich, journalist Pavel Sheremet, and the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) Deputy Chairman Yury Khadyka. The organization adopted a statement demanding that trials of current political prisoners be fully open.

In September 1998, a new pro-communist Popular Patriotic Union (PPU) announced that it would support President Lukashenka in the next presidential elections. Under the new Belarusian law, anyone found guilty of any offense, including even those of an administrative nature, was barred from running in local and national elections. This provision primarily affected the opposition since many opposition activists were fined or detained for taking part in protest actions. Lukashenka warned legislators that if such a provision were not included in the election law he would simply introduce it by decree.

Leading members of the Belarusian opposition responded that the new local election law was undemocratic. Barys Hyunter of the Belarusian Popular Front stressed that his organization would not participate in elections organized under the law passed by the "illegitimate Chamber of Representatives." Alyaksandr Dabravolsky of the United Civic Party (UCP) stated that the authorities were afraid of democratic elections and had done everything to ensure that opposition organizations did not participate in them.

In January 1999, Syamyon Sharetsky, speaker of the 1994 parliament, confirmed his intention to convene that body, despite a warning by the prosecutor's office. The officially disbanded 1994 parliamentary body scheduled presidential elections for 16 May 1999. The 43 deputies attending the session also approved a 19-member Central Electoral Commission headed by Viktor Hanchar, who chaired that body before the 1996 referendum. The authorities warned the opposition that their actions would be considered unconstitutional.

Despite the incessant pressure and harassment, Belarusian democrats con-

tinued to organize and mobilize in an oppressive political climate. On 12 January 1999, several Belarusian opposition parties elected their representatives to a Congress of Democratic Forces of Belarus (CDFB). The Belarusian Popular Front, the country's largest opposition organization, announced that it would send 100 of its activists to the congress. The Belarusian Popular Front, the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, and the United Civic Party decided to consolidate their efforts to hold presidential elections on 16 May 1999. In addition, representatives of more than 100 non-governmental organizations in the Vitebsk region proposed launching a nationwide social and political movement, called "For Belarus," with the aim of defending Belarusian sovereignty and "deposing the country's bankrupt leadership in a nonviolent way."

On 22 February 1999, the Belarusian opposition formed a Consultative and Coordination Council of Democratic Forces (CCCDF) to unify all democratic opposition organizations. This was a broad group of anti-Lukashenka parties including social democrats, liberals, nationalists, agrarians, and communists. On 15 March 1999 about 3,000 anti-government protesters marched in Minsk marking the fifth anniversary of the post-Soviet constitution and urging President Lukashenka not to exceed his term. In March 1999, OSCE proposed negotiations between Lukashenka and four opposition leaders: Syamyon Sharetsky, Chairman of the 1994 parliament, Viktor Hanchar, chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, and Zyanon Paznyak and Mikhail Chihir, candidates in the presidential elections.

In April 1999, Western governments criticized local elections in Belarus as an undemocratic attempt by its leaders to consolidate power. On 16 May 1999, several hundred voters were arrested on the presidential election day unrecognized by Lukashenka. The election turnout was reported at 53%, but there was no winner in the elections although some unofficial data showed that Zyanon Paznyak came first. In July 1999, Lukashenka declared that he planned to rule until November 2001, despite the fact that his presidential term had legitimately expired. That same month, Syamyon Sharetsky, speaker of the 1994 parliament, sought refuge in the OSCE office and later fled Belarus for Lithuania for fear of persecution.

On 19 September 1999, the 1994 "opposition parliament" appointed delegates to represent the opposition at the OSCE-mediated talks with the government. The delegates included Stanislau Bohdankevich and Anatoly Lyabedzka of the United Civic Party, Yury Belenky and Vintsuk Vyachorka of the Belarusian Popular Front, Sergei Kalyakin and Yelena Skrygan of the Belarusian Party of Communists, Nikolai Statkevich and Myacheslau Hryb of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party, Alyaksandr Bukhvostau and Leonid Lemesonok of the Belarusian Party of Labor, Stanislau Shushkevich and Aleh Trusau of the Belarusian Social Democratic *Hramada*, and Valentina Polevikova of the Women's Party *Nadzeya* (Hope).

During a march for freedom in Minsk on 17 October 1999, with over 20,000 participants, hundreds were arrested and injured after a police assault. The

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) declared that the state of human rights and democratic institutions in Belarus was worsening by the day. The Council of Europe urged the Lukashenka regime to cease the policy of mass harassment of the opposition, to release all political dissidents, and disclose details about recent abductions. Meanwhile, Belarusian opposition parties pledged to boycott the scheduled October 2000 elections for the "illegitimate parliament" that Lukashenka's supporters were organizing.

The parliamentary elections on 15 October 2000 were comfortably won by parties and "independents" supporting President Lukashenka. The Belarusian opposition and international organizations declared the ballot to be seriously flawed because of Lukashenka's tight media controls, harassment of opposition candidates, and close governmental supervision over the election process. Dozens of democratic candidates were disqualified from the elections and the vote counting was suspected to have been rigged by officials. By the close of 2000, the major opposition activists planned to field a joint candidate and participate in the presidential ballot scheduled for September 2001 in the hope of finally unseating Lukashenka. Belarusian democrats had evidently taken heart from the dramatic developments in Serbia in October 2000, when Milošević was ousted from power despite attempts to defraud the electorate.

POLITICAL PARTIES

Socialists and Social Democrats

Belarusian Patriotic Movement (BPM)
Belaruski Patryatychny Rukh (BPR)

The constituent assembly of the BPM was held on 8 October 1994 with the participation of some 300 delegates. Alyaksandr Lukashenka and his supporters created the movement after he won the presidential elections in June–July 1994. The party's first chairman was Anatoly Barankevich. Lukashenka ran on a platform of anti-corruption, economic reform, and close economic and military ties to Russia. The Movement sought to attract those undeclared members of the Supreme Council who were disenchanted with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Its core consisted primarily of retired military officers. In the May 1995 general elections, the BPM ran in a bloc named the National Movement of Belarus together with the Liberal Democratic Party and the Slavic Assembly. The BPM won one seat after the second round of the elections in June 1995.

Barankevich characterized the party as a "voluntary sociopolitical organization" with a course set toward a "socially just society." According to him, the party stood for a "renovated union of fraternal republics—made up voluntarily and based on respect for nations and all national distinctive features."

The BPM stood against Belarus's participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace program, and against full membership in NATO. In August 1996, the BPM picketed the U.S. embassy in Minsk with such slogans as "No to the CIA Provocation" and "Hands off the Belarusian People and their President." The action was authorized by the Minsk City Council.[15] A similar event was staged in April 1998, together with other leftist forces, and under similar slogans. According to Barankevich, the protest was provoked as a result of direct American interference in Belarusian affairs.[16]

The BPM signed the August roundtable agreement formulated by various political actors. It strongly supported the constitutional referendum and attacked the opposition forces as "anti-national." In a radio address in the wake of the referendum, Barankevich stated that the results were "the most convincing epilogue to the political spectacle which the opposition was unable to play out to the end." He accused the opposition of "ceaseless provocations," attacked the West for subversion, and characterized Stanislau Shushkevich as a "first-rate Russophobe."[17] In another address, Barankevich urged the expulsion of OSCE representatives from Belarus.

Belarusian Social Democratic Union (BSDU)
Belaruskaya Satsiyal Demakratychnaya Hramada (BSDH)

The party held its founding congress on 2–3 March 1991 and was registered in May of the same year. Parliamentarian Aleh Trusau became the BSDU chairman after the death of its first leader Mikhas Tkachou in October 1992. Its deputy chairmen were Mikalai Kryzhanouski and Ihar Charniauski. The party represented a revival of the Revolutionary Hramada Party (founded in 1902), which sought an independent Belarus but was outlawed after the formation of the Soviet republic in 1919.

The BSDU supported the creation of a humanitarian society with a "multi-structured economy," and stressed the freedom of the individual, social justice, solidarity, and the political independence of Belarus. It favored a strong state presence in a market economy. The party considered itself a part of the global social democratic movement and claimed a constituency of workers, peasants, students, military personnel, and rural and urban intelligentsia. By the spring of 1995, it was reported to have 1,500 members and 83 local organizations. It held 12 seats in the pre-1995 Supreme Council and was closely allied with the Belarusian Popular Front. The BSDU put forward 62 candidates for the May 1995 parliamentary elections; eight went into the second round, but only two were elected.

The Union also established a military section in March 1991, which became the organizational core of the pro-independence Belarusian Association of Servicemen (BAS). In June 1996, as a result of an internal split, the BSDU joined the Party of People's Concord (PPC) and formed

the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (BSDP). The Ministry of Justice officially disbanded the BSDU and gave registration to the newly formed BSDP.[18] A faction of BSDU members, including the chairman Aleh Trusau, opposed the creation of the BSDP and recreated the BSDU in September 1997. The party was to retain its old symbols and function as it did before the merger with the PPC and sought to restore its legal rights. At the founding congress in February 1998, Stanislau Shushkevich was elected chairman of the restored party and Aleh Trusau and Anatol Astapenka became his deputies. According to Shushkevich, the party's main aim was the restoration of the 1994 constitution.[19] The subsequent BSDU chairman was Nikolai Statkevich.

Belarusian Social Democratic Party (BSDP)
Belaruskaya Satsiyal Demakratychnaya Partiya (BSDP)

In early 1996, the Belarusian Social Democratic Union (BSDU) united with the Party of People's Concord (PPC) to form the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (BSDP), with Nikolai Statkevich as leader. However, out of 2,000 registered BSDU members, only 300 joined the new party. In early 1997, the BSDP was active in organizing popular rallies. In June 1997, its leadership claimed 108 branches in over 90 localities throughout the country. The party cooperated closely with Social Democrats in Denmark and the Netherlands and prepared to join the Socialist International.[20] The party issued numerous warnings about the country's future and the creeping authoritarianism of the Lukashenka regime.

In the summer of 1997, around 600 BSDP members decided to re-establish the BSDU (*Hramada*) and created a committee for that purpose which included Aleh Trusau, the original leader of the BSDU, and Stanislau Shushkevich, former speaker of the parliament. Trusau, Shushkevich and their supporters established a committee in April 1998 for the revival of *Hramada.* Statkevich considered the committee as representing a "force making another attempt to split the Social Democrats."[21] The party was ordered to leave its office for allegedly failing to pay its rent; its representatives claimed the purpose of this measure was to stifle the opposition.

As the 13th Supreme Council resumed its work, the BSDP held its third national convention in August 1998. According to Myacheslau Hryb, BSDP members and non-party people planned to create a Social Democratic faction that would hold monthly meetings at the BSDP office. Hryb was also elected as its chairman. The BSDP intended to concentrate on economic and human rights issues in Belarus. In January 1999, the BSDP, with Statkevich as its leader, organized a demonstration in support of a sovereign Belarus. The leitmotiv of the demonstration was a protest against further integration with Russia. Stanislau Shushkevich became the BSDP chairman.

Belarusian Party of Labor (BPL)
Belaruskaya Partiya Pratsy (BPP)

Alyaksandr Bukhvostau became the leader of the Belarusian Party of Labor (BPL), which in the spring of 1995 claimed to have 560 members who were mostly labor union activists.[22] The party's stated aim was to construct a democratic society, to create a judicial state on the principles of individual freedoms, and to achieve "well-being, morality, social justice and concord." In June 1995, the BPL denounced the economic situation in the country and warned of spontaneous mass protests. At the third special party congress, the delegates defined the referendum of November 1996 as a *coup d'état.* They voiced support for the 1994 constitution and for the 13th Supreme Council, and the party favored early parliamentary and presidential elections. The BPL also advocated abolishing the presidency altogether. The congress elected the leader of the Radio electronic labor union Henadz Fyadynich as deputy chairman of the party and decided to establish a newspaper called *Workers' Solidarity.*[23] The BPL condemned the presidential decree "On Urgent Measures for Strengthening Labor and Executive Discipline" as authoritarian and unnecessary.

In March 1998, the party issued a statement condemning the political repression orchestrated by Lukashenka. Party leaders believed that the roots of Belarus' unfavorable situation stemmed from the November 1996 referendum that created a dictatorial regime. The party claimed that the only way out of the situation was to re-establish the provisions of the 1994 constitution, as well as the principle of a separation of powers, as in regular Western democracies.[24]

Socialist Party of Belarus (SPB)
Satsiyalistychnaya Partiya Belarusi (SPB)

The Socialist Party of Belarus (SPB) was founded after the 1994 presidential elections for those favoring the restoration of Soviet era policies. It was registered in September 1994 and won one seat in the May 1995 parliamentary elections. It called for the political union of all members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The party was a strong supporter of the Kebich government and basically represented the interests of the higher *nomenklatura* class. Vyacheslau Kuznyatsou became the head of the party's political committee, the supreme body of the party. Membership of the SPB in 1996 was reported to be about 650 people. Kuznyatsou claimed that the party had among its members collective farmers, teachers, entrepreneurs, and business executives.[25] The SPB declared as its objective "the creation of a socialist-oriented society, the construction of a legal social democratic state, and the creation of conditions for a fitting and happy life for the entire population of Belarus."

At least two other social democratic formations were active during the 1990s, although both were small and uninfluential: the Social Democratic

Party of Belarus (SDPB) *(Satsiyal-Demakratychnaya Partiya Belarusi, SDPB)*, formed in March 1991 and chaired by Mikhas Tkachou; and the Republican Party, Labor and Justice (RPLJ), formed in June 1993 and chaired by Anatol Netsilkin.

Liberals

Party of National Accord (PNA)
Partiya Narodnay Zhody (PNZ)

The Party of National Accord (PNA) was inaugurated in April 1992 and registered in June of the same year with Henadz Karpenka as chairman. After June 1995, the party's chairman was Leonid Syachka. PNA membership in early 1995 was reported at 2,117 people with 52 local organizations. The PNA managed to gain eight seats in parliament after several rounds of elections between May and December 1995. The PNA refused to identify with either the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) or with the Belarusian Patriotic Movement (BPM) but associated with similar democratic parties. It stood for market economic reforms, the construction of a "civilized judicial state," and improvements in living conditions. Primarily a party of technocrats, the PNA was courted by both governmental and oppositionist parties. It supported the acceleration of economic reforms and pressed for early general elections, backing the BPF's effort to hold a referendum on the elections. The PNA's constituency united the regional *nomenklatura* with the popular intelligentsia. It possessed a largely social democratic philosophy, but regarded itself as centrist and liberal and sought to achieve national accord and broad public support.

United Democratic Party of Belarus (UDPB)
Abyadnanaya Demakratichnaya Partiya Belarusi (ADPB)

The United Democratic Party of Belarus (UDPB) was formed on 4 November 1990 and was officially recognized in March 1991 as the earliest registered independent political party. Its leaders included Alyaksandr Dabravolsky, the chairman, Mikhail Plisko, and Stanislau Husak. By the end of 1995, UDPB membership reportedly stood at around 1,500 with 83 local party organizations. The UDPB was the first political party outside the Belarusian Communist Party. It formed when three pro-democratic reform parties merged: Communists for Perestroika (formed in March 1989), the Democratic Party of Belarus (formed in October 1989), and the Republican Party (formed in May 1990). The party's main support came from the technical and scientific intelligentsia, as well some working-class and peasant backers. The UDPB was more committed to democratic reform than nationalism, claiming that the revival of the Belarusian language was not a paramount concern.

The UDPB supported Stanislau Shushkevich during the June–July 1994 presidential elections. It was originally allied with the BPF but joined the Civic Accord Bloc due to its more centrist views prior to the May–December 1995 Supreme Council elections. The UDPB was ideologically liberal and it supported the priority of human rights and the interests of the individual over that of the state. It strongly favored a market economy and a limited role for the government. It nominated 82 candidates in the May–December 1995 elections and in October 1995 it became one of the co-founders of the United Civic Party (UCP). It took nine seats in the legislature created at the end of 1995. The party established its own institute in Minsk for the study of socio-economic trends.

United Civic Party (UCP)
Abyadnanaya Grazhdanskaya Partiya (AGP)

The United Civic Party (UCP) was a center-right group formed in October 1995 on the basis of a merger between the United Democratic Party and the Civic Party. The former chairman of the National Bank of Belarus, Stanislau Bahdankevich, ousted from this position by President Lukashenka, became the party's leader. Bahdankevich remained a fierce critic of the government's economic policies. The UCP was described as one of liberal-conservative orientation. Its main goals were outlined as the preservation of Belarusian sovereignty, the introduction of private ownership and a free market for land, and the privatization of state property. Within the party, two groups could be identified—those supporting radical actions and those believing in more gradual change.[26]

In January 1997, the UCP tabled an initiative for the opposition parties to establish a shadow cabinet named the Public Coalition Government of Democratic Forces–National Economic Council (NEC). According to Henadz Karpenka, one of the most popular and influential UCP leaders, the NEC would be tasked with an analysis of the political and economic situation within Belarus in order make prognoses and train politicians.[27] On 22 March 1997, the UCP held its third congress at which Bahdankevich was re-elected the party's chairman. Anatoly Lyabedzka was elected deputy chairman; Vasil Szhlydzikau and Alyaksandr Dabravolsky were re-elected deputy chairmen for another term. Bahdankevich called for a single leader for the entire democratic movement in Belarus and proposed Henadz Karpenka as the candidate.

The UCP's aims as declared at its third congress were the re-establishment of constitutional law, the preservation of Belarusian sovereignty, closer cooperation with all democratic forces, the implementation of market reforms, and the formulation of an action program in case Lukashenka was overthrown. Chairman Bahdankevich stressed the strengthening of the party's organization and membership composition. The party claimed 92 district and town organizations as of March 1997. UCP members included several well-known scientists, political analysts, journalists, and diplomats. It also maintained

close links with the Union of Belarusian Entrepreneurs, headed by parliamentary deputy Viktor Karyakin, a lobbying group active in seeking to improve economic and business opportunities in the country.

The UCP remained vehemently opposed to President Lukashenka's authoritarian style and destructive policies. It was active in organizing rallies and protested against any negotiations with Lukashenka. The party did not recognize the results of the constitutional referendum of November 1996, which it viewed as a disguised *coup d'état*. It stated that it would not participate in any elections on Lukashenka's terms. The UCP protested against the consultations between the sacked 13th Supreme Council and the Belarusian government under European mediation, charging that Lukashenka's constitution was not recognized by the "entire civilized world."[28] In 1999, the UCP staged a campaign for new presidential elections that were outlawed and suppressed by the authorities.

Belarusian Republican Party (BRP)
Belaruskaya Respublikanskaya Partiya (BRP)

The Belarusian Republican Party (BRP) was created in March 1994. The party co-chairmen included Valery Artyshevsky and Vladzimir Ramanau. The party's reported membership in early 1995 was 350 with 30 local organizations. The BRP stood for the creation of a sovereign democratic state with clear divisions of power and it emphasized the well-being of Belarusians and the development of national culture. A separate Republican Party (RP) *(Respublikanskaya Partiya, RP)* was reportedly formed in March 1994, with Viktor Talmachou as chairman. The party supported far-reaching economic reforms, placing aside nationalism and Belarus' relations with Russia. It aimed for the regeneration of a strong democratic Belarus and the strict observance of human rights. In 1995, it was reported to have 2,500 members and 60 local organizations. Vladimir Belazov became the party's leader. Another essentially liberal and pro-market formation was the Belarusian National Party (BNP) *(Belaruskaya Narodnaya Partiya, BNP)* established in November 1994 with Viktor Tsyareshchanka as chairman. It supported the construction of a unitary democratic state along socio-judicial principles, the implementation of far-reaching market reforms, guaranteed rights and freedoms, and a measure of social security for all citizens. Anatoly Astapenko became the subsequent BNP chairman in the late 1990s.

Christian Democrats

Belarusian Popular Front (BPF)
Belaruski Narodni Front (BNF)

The Belarusian Popular Front's (BPF) organizational committee was created in October 1988 by such prominent Belarusian intellectuals as Zyanon

Paznyak, Vasil Bykau, and Mikhas Dubyanetsky. The first congress, at which the governing organization (the *Soim*) was formed, took place in Vilnius, Lithuania, in June 1989. The BPF was registered as a party in May 1993. According to its leadership, the party possessed 4,000 registered members in June 1997.[29] Its leaders included Zyanon Paznyak (chairman), Sergei Naumchik, Lyavon Barshchevsky (acting chairman), Valentin Golubev, Yury Khadyka (co-deputy chairman), Vladzimir Zablotsky (co-deputy chairman), and Vintsuk Viachorka (secretary). The BPF was created as a movement and not a political party and was open to all individuals and groups who espoused Belarusian democracy and independence, including political parties and labor unions.

The BPF was declared a party only in 1993 when a pending law would have prevented non-registered parties from participating in national elections. Thus, the BPF lost its position as a "force above politics" and was pressured to enter the existing political arena and to deal with other parties on an equal basis. The BPF originally supported some form of sovereignty for Belarus within the Soviet Union but increasingly espoused full national independence.

Following the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe in 1989, opposition candidates from the BPF were allowed to run for the Belarusian Supreme Council or parliament. Nevertheless, the ruling party undercut the potential popularity of the BPF by denying the Front access to the media and pressurizing many of its founders to leave the movement for fear of losing their jobs or other "privileges." Moreover, because of the poorly formed Belarusian identity and the continuing grip of the communist *nomenklatura*, the Popular Front could marshal only limited public support and faced a great deal of public indifference in building a broad-based national organization.

The BPF won only 37 seats out of a total of 360 in the 1990 parliamentary elections. Although a minority group, it used the parliament as a means of addressing the nation.[30] It supported the downfall of the Communist Party and the declaration of Belarusian independence. It criticized the slow pace of economic reforms in the following years, twice gathering signatures for a referendum to hold early parliamentary elections. The leftist majority in the Supreme Council blocked both efforts. In sum, the BPF was a Christian democratic and quasi-nationalist grouping supporting strong market reforms and affiliated with the Christian Democrat International. It fielded 147 candidates in the May–December 1995 parliamentary elections, but won no seats. Zyanon Paznyak and Sergei Naumchik both left the country and attempted to bolster Western opposition to Lukashenka. In their absence, Lyavon Barshchevsky became the BPF's acting chairman and leader.

The Front opposed the presidential constitution of March 1994, believing a strong presidency so early in the country's independence would plant the seeds of authoritarianism and prevent the flowering of genuine democracy. It preferred a stronger parliamentary system answerable to the people. It also opposed the monetary union with Russia of April 1994 and the CIS (Com-

monwealth of Independent States) security pact. The BPF presidential candidate, Paznyak, won 13.9% of votes in the first round of Belarus's last relatively democratic presidential elections in June–July 1994. Largely because of its persistent resistance to closer ties with Russia, the Front failed to win a larger share of Supreme Council seats in the May–December 1995 elections.

The BPF was one of the staunchest critics of Lukashenka's constitution and the controversial referendum of November 1996. It never recognized the constitution and considered Lukashenka's actions and his regime illegal. At a session in September 1994, the BPF stressed the need to unify the country's pro-independence democratic forces and explained the victory of Lukashenka in the presidential elections as a result of the economic crisis, a lack of social consciousness, Lukashenka's populism, and the short duration of the election campaign. Paznyak emphasized the need for Belarus to orient its policy and economy towards the survival of the nation. According to the party's program, foreign policy should be directed towards Europe and Germany in particular.[31]

The fourth congress of the BPF took place on 9 April 1995. It decided to enter the upcoming parliamentary elections with the same slogans as it had in 1990, "Let's Vote for Belarus's Independence, Well-being, Peace, and Consolidation on the Basis of Statehood and Independence."[32] After the BPF's failure to win seats in the parliamentary ballot, several BPF officials resigned from their posts. Deputy chairman Yury Khadyka claimed the BPF's alienation from the consciousness of the masses as well as the isolation of the Front's parliamentary opposition from the BPF were the primary causes of the BPF's failure during the elections.

The BPF remained active in organizing meetings and rallies in protest against the regime. In August 1996, the Front took part in the roundtable negotiations among political parties concerning the referendum on the new constitution proposed by Lukashenka. The BPF representative, Yury Khadyka, together with UCP's Bahdankevich, suggested initiating impeachment procedures against Lukashenka.[33] In early 1997, the BPF leadership called for Lukashenka to be medically examined by an international commission after reports by some of his entourage that he had been making important decisions without consulting anyone. The BPF was also actively engaged in the Independent Labor Unions of Belarus, an organization that faced substantial state repression throughout the 1990s.

At the Front's fifth congress on 21 June 1997 in Minsk, Paznyak, who had been in exile in the U.S. for two years, received the votes of 98% of the delegates as chairman of the party.[34] In his address to the congress, Paznyak stressed the need for the BPF to become a Belarusian national liberation movement and that the movement itself should be a wider phenomenon than the BPF through the coordination of additional forces and activities. Khadyka, a deputy chairman and a potential alternative leader to Paznyak, criticized the latter for his attacks on the other opposition parties and movements, which

were often insulting and rude. Khadyka feared that such criticism could lead to a split within the democratic opposition movement.[35]

In August 1997, the BPF organization in the city of Vitsebsk issued a joint manifesto with the local organizations of the Christian Democratic Party, the United Civic Party, and the Belarusian Social Democratic Party. The manifesto called for a new movement, "Belarus," that would strive to make the country a "democratic, independent, and equal member of the family of European countries."[36] In January 1998, the names of opposition leaders, including Paznyak, were mentioned in connection with the alleged plot against the government that critics believed had been fabricated by Lukashenka.

The BPF agreed with the United Civic Party (UCP) on a plan for joint action. The two parties also considered the possibility of holding parliamentary and presidential elections in 1999 in accordance with the 1994 constitution.[37] The BPF called for a boycott of any elections called by Lukashenka and vowed to abstain from parliamentary elections scheduled for the fall of 1998, claiming it would not participate in any "election performance" while the anti-democratic regime was preserved. On 1 November 1999, Vintsuk Vyachorka replaced Zyanon Paznyak as the new BPF leader.

Belarusian Christian Democratic Association (BCDA)
Belaruskaya Khrystsiyanska Demakratychnaya Zluchnasts (BKDZ)

The Belarusian Christian Democratic Association (BCDA) was formed in June 1991 as a continuation of the former Belarusian Christian Democratic Party in West Belarus, disbanded by the pre-war Polish authorities in the 1930s. The leadership of the party in 1991 included Pyatro Silka (chairman) and Mikhail Areskau. It viewed itself as a religious and nationalist party seeking a moral, spiritual, and national rebirth through the Church and aimed to unite representatives of all Christian denominations. Its leadership included Silka, I. Bohdanovich, M. Areskau, E. Sabila, and E. Yanushevich. In June 1992, the BCDA joined in a coalition with the Belarusian Peasant Party and the National Democratic Party. It held a congress of landless peasants and was opposed to the registration of the Party of Communists of Belarus. In August 1997, jointly with other democratic parties, including the UCP and BPF, the BCDA formed the Belarus democratic movement. Other Christian-oriented parties during the 1990s included the Christian Democratic Party (CDP), led by Nikolai Krukovsky, and the Christian Democratic Choice (CDC), led by Valery Soroka.

Agrarians

Belarusian Peasant Party (BPP)
Belaruskaya Syalyanskaya Partiya (BSP)

The Belarusian Peasant Party (BPP) was formed on 23 February 1991 as a successor to the pre-Soviet agrarian movement that supported peasant owner-

ship of land. It was registered in April the same year. The central party council chairman was Yehen Luhin; the deputy chairmen were Mikhail Antanienka, Ivan Nikitchanka, and Alyaksandr Dubko, who also ran for president. The party became one of the largest in Belarus, with over 15,600 members and 94 local organizations by the mid-1990s.

The BPP allied itself with the BPF for democratic and economic reform, but presented its own presidential candidate in the 1994 elections, who won only 6% of first-round votes. The party's members held deputy positions in local councils and several seats in the Supreme Council before the 1995 parliamentary elections. But after the May–December 1995 ballot it only took one legislative seat. The party maintained ties with the Christian Democratic Union in its support for a moral, spiritual, national, political, and economic rebirth of Belarus. It sought a reorganization of the collective and state farms through comprehensive privatization.

Among the BPP's goals were defense of the political and economic interests of the peasantry, and a "self-conscious" Belarusian nation with the preservation of its language and culture. In September 1995, the BPP broke away from the BPF due to its extreme opposition to the communist faction in the movement and joined other centrist parties in the Civic Action Caucus. The party denounced the regime in Belarus as dictatorial. It participated in the National Economic Council–Public Coalition Government shadow cabinet organized by the UCP. The BPP was instrumental in the creation of the Belarusian Peasant Union (BPU) *(Belarusky Syalyansky Sayuz, BSS)*, founded in November 1989 and registered in August 1991. By the mid-1990s, its membership stood at several hundred, mostly peasants, with branches in a majority of Belarusian counties. Led by BPU president Kastus Yarmolenka, several BPU members served as deputies in local governments. The Union's chief goal was the expansion of private farming, an unrestricted market economy, and full national independence for Belarus.

Agrarian Union of Belarus (AUB)
Agrarny Sayuz Belarusi (ASB)

The Agrarian Union of Belarus (AUB) was formed in June 1992. Its leader, Syamyon Sharetsky, was the speaker of the 13th Supreme Council. Other leaders included Myacheslau Hiruts and Alyaksandr Dubko. It claimed over 8,000 members as of early 1995. The AUB advocated a conservative and gradual economic reform policy and a state-regulated market economy, including the development of various kinds of ownership and an interaction between economic competition and state regulation. It essentially represented the interests of collective and state farm officials and other leading representatives of the agrarian sector. It was formed in opposition to the restoration of peasant land ownership advocated by the market-oriented BPP.

The AUB was regarded as Lukashenka's strongest supporter in the Supreme Council. It nominated 120 candidates in the May–December 1995 parliamentary elections and won the majority of seats in the first round. It finished in second place during the December 1995 round of balloting by garnering a total of 33 seats. In its program, the party sought a reform of the social system on the principles of democratic socialism. It was considered a close ally of the Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB) in rural areas, being better able to attract agrarian voters due to its access to funds and transportation.[38]

After the constitutional referendum in November 1996, Sharetsky became one of the outspoken opponents of President Lukashenka, criticizing him in particular on the question of Belarusian sovereignty, which the Agrarians supported. At a session of the executive committee in March 1998, its members voiced their disagreement with Sharetsky's position and deprived him of the right to represent the party. Sharetsky characterized the processes within the party as an attempt to "fit the party under the president" and claimed that he could not be deprived of any rights within the party since he left it upon becoming the Supreme Council speaker.[39] Alyaksandr Pavol became acting chairman of the party.

Greens

Green Party of Belarus (GPB)
Belaruskaya Partiya Zyalyonykh (BPZ)

The Green Party of Belarus (GPB) was founded in December 1992 and registered in February 1993. The GPB leader was Mikalay Kartash and it was reported that the party had 540 members by mid-1995 and obtained one Supreme Council seat in the May–December 1995 elections. The GPB arose out of outrage and concern over the Chernobyl nuclear accident and thus aimed to provide citizens with a healthy living environment. The party possessed its strongest support in the Gomel region and other areas most affected by the Chernobyl disaster. The party was against the construction of any new nuclear plants in Belarus, advocating instead the use of other resources such as biogas. It also threatened a mass campaign for a referendum on this issue.[40] The GPB also helped to establish a Belarusian Ecological Union in 1989 with Boris Savitsky as chairman.

Belarusian Ecological Union (BEU)
Belarusky Ekalagichny Sayuz (BES)

The Belarusian Ecological Union (BEU) was established in the spring of 1989 and registered in July of the same year. It claimed a membership of several thousand activists among all strata of the population with chapters in various

cities and towns. Its first president was Boris Savitsky, a member of the presidium of the Belarusian Supreme Council. Its vice presidents included Radzim Haretsy, Y. Pyatrayeu, and L. Tarasienka. More than twenty members of the Union were legislators at various administrative levels, including five in the Supreme Council after the May 1995 and October 2000 parliamentary elections. The BEU's chief plank was defense of the environment in cooperation with other parties and movements, including Green parties throughout Europe.

Belarusian Ecological Party (BEP)
Belaruskaya Ekalagichnaya Partiya (BEP)

The Belarusian Ecological Party (BEP) was founded in December 1993 and registered in April 1994. The chairman of the Central Council was Aleksey Mikulich. The party counted 600 members and 11 local organizations in early 1995 and it took one seat in the parliament formed at the end of 1995. The party's major goals were the defense of civil rights and freedoms and the organization of active public participation in the conservationist movement. Liudmila Yelizarova became the BEP leader in 1994.

Another ecological formation, the Green World Party (GWP) *(Partiya Zelyonyy Mir, PZM)*, was founded in April 1994. It was led by Aleh Hramyka, and claimed to be the largest environmentalist party, with around 1,000 members and 15 local organizations by early 1995. The party's objectives included the creation of a healthy living environment and a "maximum opportunity for individual development."

Communists

Popular Movement of Belarus (PMB)
Narodny Ruh Belarusi (NRB)

The Popular Movement of Belarus (PMB) was formed in 1992 as an alliance of pro-government groupings. Chief among them were the three communist parties listed below. It embraced the hard-line left and the pro-Slavic "right" in an effort to challenge the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF). It advocated closer ties with Russia and an avoidance of Western influence, especially capital and market reform. The PMB held most of the seats in the Supreme Council after the 1990 elections. It backed Kebich against Shushkevich in the 1994 presidential elections, blocked most economic reforms, and opposed the holding of any referenda for early parliamentary elections. PMB leaders throughout the 1990s claimed to have a constituency of some 500,000 people, consisting largely of the *nomenklatura*, pensioners, active and retired military personnel, the administrative apparatus, and the most russified Belarusian citizens. Its chairman was Syarhey Haydukevich and its presidential candidate was Vyacheslau Kebich.

Communist Party of Belarus (CPB)
Kamunistychnaya Partiya Belarusi (KPB)

The Communist Party of Belarus (CPB) was revived and re-legalized in February 1993. Its leaders included Viktor Chykin, Anatol Malafeyeu, first secretary of the party, and Anatol Laskevich. The CPB originated as a regional committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (formed in 1904). It was established as the ruling party of the Belarusian Soviet republic in 1920. It underwent many purges during the 1930s as a result of Stalin's machinations and thereafter became totally subservient to Moscow's control from the 1940s until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Communist leaders in Minsk backed the August 1991 hard-line coup against Soviet Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev, leading to their demise when the coup was unsuccessful. Many party leaders were ousted, rank-and-file members abandoned the organization by the thousands, and the party itself was outlawed and had its property confiscated on 25 August 1991. In order to preserve their positions, many communist leaders left the party and supported the BPF initiative to declare Belarus independent of the USSR.

On 3 February 1993, the Supreme Council lifted the ban on the party but CPB property remained state-owned. Eighty percent of the Supreme Council elected in 1990 was composed of former party members. However, few of these members chose to rejoin the party. The party's new leaders backed the ouster of Shushkevich during Lukashenka's takeover. The CPB and the Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB) were considered part of a united communist party, but members of the two internal factions (old guardists grouped around former First Secretary Malafeyeu, and new activists) were in conflict over the issue of party leadership and political allegiance. Members of both factions were originally members of the Soviet-era Communist Party before it was banned.

The CPB was re-formed by some former members who disagreed with the PCB leadership on several issues. A split occurred, with the CPB headed by Chykin and Yefrem Sokolov establishing itself as a separate party. Unlike the PCB, the CPB was pro-Lukashenka and frequently expressed its support for him. It participated in a union of the communist parties of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Chykin voiced support for the restoration of the Soviet Union even if it only consisted of two states. Sokolov became the party's subsequent leader. Several other pro-unification groups joined the party, including the Movement for Social Progress and Justice (MSPJ), a grouping formed in October 1993, led by the self-styled Bolshevik Chykin, professing a Stalinist and Russia-oriented agenda. It staged a number of anti-NATO rallies and was believed to benefit from governmental financial support. An associate party of the MSPJ, the Republican Party for Labor and Justice (RPLJ), gained one seat in the May–December 1995 national elections. Chykin claimed in October 1997 that the party had up to 7,000 members and had restored its *oblast*-level and most of its *rayon*-level cells.[41]

Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB)
Partiya Kamunistau Belarusi (PKB)

The Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB) was formed on 7 December 1991 to replace the banned Communist Party of Belarus (CPB). After the banning of the Communist Party during 1991, Belarusian communists regrouped and formed the PCB. However, they lost all of the assets of the former CPB as party funds were confiscated by the state or stolen by former members for their own use. The party re-emerged on the public scene during the summer of 1992 and espoused the traditional Leninist slogans: to unite all workers, to liberate workers from all forms of exploitation, and to build a classless society based on social justice.

Most of the party's supporters resided in rural areas. In February 1993, the country's Supreme Council formally lifted the suspension on communist party activities but its organizers failed to reclaim their property from the state. The party supported a state-controlled economy, as well as close economic and political ties with Russia, and wanted a restoration of the Soviet Union or the formation of a "Slavic Union." It demanded that both Belarusian and Russian be the country's official languages. The PCB's chairmen were Vasil Navikau, who ran in the first round of the presidential elections in 1994, and Sergey Kalyakin, who led the communist bloc in the Supreme Council. In the May–December 1995 parliamentary elections, the communists gained 42 seats, thus becoming the largest party in the legislature. By 1997, the party claimed about 15,000 members.

The PCB did not view any threat to Belarusian sovereignty from the unification treaty with Russia, but believed it should include a provision enabling each side to veto the decisions of supranational institutions. The leader of the PCB parliamentary group, Sergey Kalyakin, was against a joint legislature, but spoke favorably about a joint command of the armed forces. He also emphasized that by integration he did not mean Belarus' incorporation into the Russian Federation or the re-creation of the USSR.[42] However, the Communist faction in parliament proposed, in March 1996, to declare the dissolution of the USSR as a criminal act. They also voiced support for Lukashenka's steps towards integration with Russia.

In August 1996, Kalyakin joined the opposition against President Lukashenka by signing the appeal of seven leading parties criticizing his policies. This led to protests within the ranks of the PCB, as the supporters of Lukashenka denounced the document, which was also initialed by the BPF. The PCB was opposed to President Lukashenka's constitution proposed in 1996, and at a session in October of that year issued a statement claiming that Belarus was "on the brink of ruin." It characterized the proposed constitution as "pro-bourgeois and anti-democratic."[43] The fourth congress of the PCB, which took place in January 1997, condemned the November 1996 constitutional referendum as a state coup, and decided to enter into opposition against the government.

Nationalists

Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus (LDPB)
Liberalna Demakratychnaya Partiya Belarusi (LDPB)

The Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus (LDPB) was organized in February 1994 as a rightist pan-Slavic movement advocating close links with Russia and the recreation of Russia's imperial territory. The chairman of the party was Sergey Haydukevich and its membership in 1995 stood at around 500. The party was associated with Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party in Russia and it initially viewed both the CIS and the USSR as legal structures and strongly opposed the independence of Belarus. It successfully petitioned President Lukashenka to withdraw school history books written after independence on the grounds that they contained "nationalist excesses." At the same time, the party claimed to support individual freedoms, democratic government, and liberal social policies. The LDPB was also strongly opposed to NATO expansion.

The party was supportive of President Lukashenka and expressed a readiness to cooperate with him.[44] It also initiated several pro-government and pro-Lukashenka rallies. However, in early 1997 the LDPB stated that the new bicameral legislature installed as a consequence of the constitutional referendum was illegitimate and should have been considered an interim measure. The party also called for the dissolution of the National Assembly and expressed deep concern with the political situation in the country. It even claimed that integration with Russia might be illegitimate if it were conducted without the participation of a legally elected parliament.

In December 1997, the party decided to close its newspaper *Pravda Haydukevicha* (Haydukevich's Truth) and open a new one, *Liberalnaya Hazeta* (Liberal Gazette).[45] The LDPB developed ties with Iraq and sent delegations there on several occasions. In July 1998, the Vitebsk regional organization of the LDPB, together with the Communist Party of Belarus, the Belarusian Patriotic Party, and the Slavic Assembly White Russia formed a pro-presidential bloc of parties to "insure stability in the nation's leadership and its course toward integration within the framework of the CIS."[46] During the 1990s, the CIS was increasingly viewed by pro-Russian nationalists as a useful tool for restitching together Moscow's imperial territories, but not under a communist system of rule.

Slavic Assembly White Russia (SAWR)
Slavyansky Sabor Belaia Rus (SSBR)

The Slavic Assembly White Russia (SAWR) was formed in June 1992 as a non-communist party dedicated to pan-Slavism and the union of Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia. It aimed to defend Slavic interests on the basis of their

political and territorial unification and it emphasized the traditional values of Slavic civilization while voicing virulent anti-Western sentiments. The party's chairman was Mikalay Syarheyeu. In early 1995, SAWR membership was reported at 1,000, with around 20 local organizations. The party was one of the most outspoken supporters of the constitutional referendum and the unification treaty with Russia. As a result, Belarusian oppositionists dubbed it Russia's "fifth column" in the country.

National Democratic Party of Belarus (NDPB)
Natsyianalnaya Demakratychnaya Partiya Belarusi (NDPB)

The National Democratic Party of Belarus (NDPB) was founded on 24 June 1990 and registered in June 1991. It defined itself as a right-wing party supporting political and pro-market economic reforms and was open to Belarusian-speakers committed to cultural independence and the cultivation of a "national renaissance." The party's first co-presidents included Viktor Naumenko, Anatol Astapenka, and M. Yermalovich. The party counted around 500 members and 15 local organizations during the mid-to-late 1990s.

Belarusian Nationalist Party (BNP)
Belaruskaya Natsianalistychnaya Partiya (BNP)

While strongly pro-Russian groups constituted one stream in the country's nationalist politics, vehemently pro-Belarusian organizations were also active. They included the Belarusian National Party (BNP), which was formed in September 1994 with Supreme Council member Anatol Astapenka as its chairman. The party's stated goals were "national rebirth, the achievement of complete independence for Belarus, and the creation of a judicial democratic state."

Belarusian nationalists, including the Christian democratic–oriented Belarusian Popular Front (BPF), have been subject to government harassment and intimidation as well as frequent attacks in the state-controlled media.

Ethnic Minority and Religious Parties

Polish Democratic Union (PDU)
Polskaye Demakratychnaye Zhurtavanne (PDZ)

Several of the country's major ethnic minorities created their own cultural and political groupings during the 1990s. One of the most significant was the Polish Democratic Union (PDU), led by Viktor Tarasevich, which campaigned for the interests of the Polish minority while supporting Belarusian "national rebirth." The PDU stood in opposition to President Lukashenka and his policy of unification with Russia and it

cooperated closely with the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) on behalf of Belarusian independence.

Other ethnic minority organizations were established among the country's sizeable Ukrainian population.

Regionalists

All-Belarusian Party for Unity and Accord (ABPUA)
Belaruskaya Partiya Usebelaruskaga Adzinstva i Zhody (BPUAZ)

This inter-regional party did not represent the specific political or ethnic interests of any distinct Belarusian region but rather the interests of the regional *nomenklatura* and commercial structures in relation to the central government in Minsk. It focused on the problem of economic and political development of several of the country's regions. The ABPUA was formed in June 1994 and its leader was Dimitry Bukalau. It nominated 23 candidates during the May–December 1995 general elections and claimed to be the strongest party in the Mogilev region. It obtained two seats in the national parliament.

Independents and Others

Belarusian Women's Party "Hope" (BWP)
Belaruskaya Partiya Zhanchyn "Nadzeya" (BPZ)

The Belarusian Women's Party "Hope" (BWP) was founded on 28 April 1994. Its first president was Valentina Polevikova, who also chaired the executive committee of the Labor Union Federation of Belarus and headed its informational-analytical center. The priorities of the Women's Party revolved around the protection of the family, motherhood, and childhood. It declared itself a party of "civil progress and democratic reforms, social justice and global human values, and of economic and political freedom."[47]

BWP membership included representatives and leaders of local labor unions and various other women's movements. The party claimed a membership of around 5,500 people, and had 39 offices throughout the country, as well as four regional branches. The main goal of the party was to engage female activists in the country's sociopolitical and economic life. Because of its independent stance, the party found itself in opposition to the Belarusian President and government. It participated in the "roundtable" initiative of major political forces against Lukashenka's policies in 1996. The party also maintained close contacts with women's organizations throughout the world. In an opinion poll in May 1997, the BWP ranked highest among all political parties, receiving an 8% rating, although it had not captured any parliamentary seats in the May–December 1995 ballot.[48]

Beer Lovers' Party (BLP)
Partiya Amatarau Piva (PAP)

The Beer Lovers' Party (BLP) was formed in August 1993 and led by Vadim Chernyshov. In order to attract attention, the party had campaigned for the high quality of beer, but its principal goal appeared to be the strengthening of Belarusian sovereignty and neutrality. It promoted liberal economic policies and reforms and campaigned for the inviolability of individual and private property. The BLP claimed a membership of around 600 people.

Several other small, single-issue or ideologically neutral parties emerged during the 1990s, including the Belarusian Humanitarian Party (BHP) *(Belaruskaya Humanitarnaya Partiya, BHP)*. The BHP grew out of the League of Human Rights organization in February 1994. Its chairman was Yawhen Novikaw and it claimed to unite the major intellectual forces in society. The party's stated goals were the "humanization" of society and the protection of human rights. It was reported to have around 2,000 members in early 1995. The Belarusian Social and Sports Party (BSSP) was created in November 1994 and chaired by Uladzimir Alyaksandrovich. Its goals were the creation of a democratic, economically strong, and humane state. It aimed at the "perfection of social norms" and improvements in physical education, as well as the country's dilapidated health care system. The BSSP managed to take one parliamentary seat, following the prolonged 1995 elections, and one seat in the October 2000 ballot.

POLITICAL DATA

Name of State: Republic of Belarus *(Respublika Bylarus')*
Form of Government: Republican, with directly elected president and parliament
Structure of Legislature: National Assembly *(Natsionalnoye sobranie)*
Size of Territory: 80,200 square miles
Size of Population: 10,366,719 (July 2000 estimate)

Composition of Population: (1989)

Ethnic Group	*Number*	*% of Population*
Belarusians	7,904,600	77.9
Russians	1,342,100	13.2
Poles	417,700	4.1
Ukrainians	291,000	2.9
Jews	112,000	1.1
Others	84,400	0.8
Total	1,015,800	100.0

Source: See the United Nations Human Rights Website, www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/.

ELECTION RESULTS

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*Presidential Election, 9 September 2001**

Turnout: 83.86%

Candidate	*Votes*	*% of Vote*
Alyaksandr Lukashenka	4,666,680	75.65
Uladzimir Hancharyk	965,261	15.65
Syarhey Haydukevich	153,199	2.48
Invalid	138,706	2.20
Total	5,923,846	95.98

Source: British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC Monitoring Kiev Unit, 14 September 2001.

*The election results were contested as fraudulent by the Belarusian opposition, as well as by monitors from various international organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

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*Presidential Election, 23 June and 10 July 1994**

First Round, 23 June 1994
Turnout: 80%

Candidate	*Votes*	*% of Vote*
Alyaksandr Lukashenka	n/a	44.82
Vyacheslau Kebich	n/a	17.33
Zyanon Paznyak	n/a	12.82
Stanislau Shushkevich	n/a	9.91
Alyaksandr Dubko	n/a	5.98
Vasil Navikau	n/a	4.29
Total	n/a	95.15

Second Round, 10 July 1994
Turnout: 70%

Candidate	*Votes*	*% of Vote*
Alyaksandr Lukashenka	n/a	80.1
Vyacheslau Kebich	n/a	19.9
Total	n/a	100.0

Source: http://www.agora.stm.it/elections/election/belarus.htm.

*Unfortunately, data on elections are incomplete despite numerous attempts to elicit information from the Belarusian administration and other official sources. One must conclude either that accurate data gathering, recording, and publication is difficult in

Parliamentary Elections, 15 and 29 October 2000

Turnout:*

Party/Coalition	*Votes*	*% of Vote*	*Seats*
Unaffiliated	—	—	81
Communist Party of Belarus	—	—	6
Agrarian Union of Belarus	—	—	5
Republican Party for Labor and Justice	—	—	2
Liberal Democratic Party	—	—	1
Social-Democratic Party of National Accord	—	—	1
Social and Sports Party	—	—	1
Total	—	—	97

Source: Elections in Belarus, http://www.agora.stm.it/elections/election/belarus.htm.

*The Central Election Bureau of Belarus reported the election turnout at 60.6 percent, however, opposition leaders stated that turnout was at 45 percent. (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 16 October 2000)

Parliamentary Elections, 14 and 28 May 1995, and 10 December 1995

First Round: 64.7%
Second Round: 56.6%

Party/Coalition	*First Round**	*Second Round*	*Percentage*	*Total*
Unaffiliated	9	44	44.0	53
Agrarian Party	5	25	25.0	30
Communist Party	3	24	23.0	27
Party of National Accord	1	2	2.0	3
Social Democratic Union	—	1	1.0	1
Green Party	—	1	1.0	1
Belarusian Party of Labor and Justice	—	1	1.0	1
Belarusian Peasant Party	—	1	1.0	1
Socialist Party of Belarus	—	1	1.0	1
Belarusian Patriotic Movement	—	1	1.0	1
Belarusian Popular Front	—	—	—	—
Total	18	101	100.0	119

Sources: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Report on Parliamentary Elections in Belarus: 14 and 28 May 1995, p. 7; and Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 11 December 1995.

*As complete results for this election were not available, only the number of seats won in each round, together with the percentage of seats won and the total number of seats are provided. A minimum of 174 out of 260 candidates are needed for a legal quorum as stipulated by Belarusian law. Due to the inability to fulfill this requirement, a third round of voting occurred on 10 December 1995. This data reflects preliminary results only, with an additional twenty seats subsequently filled in run-off elections for which data is simply not available.

Final Round, 10 December 1995

Turnout: 52.4%

Party/Coalition	*Votes*	*% of Vote*	*Seats*
Unaffiliated Candidates	n/a	n/a	95
Communist Party	n/a	n/a	42
Belarusian Popular Front	n/a	n/a	—
Agrarian Union of Belarus	n/a	n/a	33
United Democratic Party	n/a	n/a	9
Party of National Accord	n/a	n/a	8
Social Democratic Union	n/a	n/a	2
All-Belarusian Party	n/a	n/a	2
Belarusian Patriotic Movement	n/a	n/a	1
Green Party	n/a	n/a	1
Belarusian Party of Labor and Justice	n/a	n/a	1
Belarusian Peasant Party	n/a	n/a	1
Belarusian National Party	n/a	n/a	1
Social and Sports Party	n/a	n/a	1
Belarusian Ecological Party	n/a	n/a	1
Total	n/a	n/a	198 of 260

Source: Fifty-nine additional seats were filled in the 10 December 1995 round, bringing the total number of parlimentary mandates to 198, and thus meeting the two-thirds quorum needed for parliament to be activated. However, as no official results could be obtained for the 1995 election, personal information obtained from organizations in neighboring countries was used to compile the final round of data.

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7. See Linda Edgeworth, Richard Messick, and Jan Zaprudnik, "IFES Pre-Election Technical Assessment," Washington, D.C., December 1993; and Bogdan Szajkowski, *Political Parties of Eastern Europe, Russia and the Successor States*, Essex, U.K.: Longman Information and Reference, 1994. Also consult the British Helsinki Human Rights Group report on the "Belarusian Parliamentary Elections and Referendum, 14 and 28 May 1995," Oxford, England.

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Estonia

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Historians assert that the ancestors of the modern-day Estonians, a Finno-Ugric speaking people, settled along the shores of the Baltic Sea around 3500 BC. By approximately 1000 AD, the Estonian areas on the northeastern shores of the Baltic had evolved into an important transit route for the Viking penetrations to Russia and Byzantium. A major trading center was built on the site of the future Estonian capital of Tallinn. At that time, Estonian social-political units were organized into eight major and several minor federations for the defense of villages and for raiding non-Estonian neighbors.[1] However, there was no countrywide leadership or unified political structure in the Estonian territories.

Christianity was introduced slowly into Estonia during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries primarily by German, Danish, and Swedish invaders. Conquest by German knights was justified as Christianization after the Pope had declared the Baltic region the "Land of Mary." The German "Order of the Knights of Christ" or the "Swordbrothers" subdued the Latvian territories south of Estonia in the early thirteenth century and subsequently moved into southern Estonia. Meanwhile, the Danes invaded the territory from the north and founded the present-day capital of Tallinn. Estonia was effectively partitioned between German and Danish rulers partly as a result of the invaders' demographic strength and technological superiority. The entire country fell under German control in 1346 after the Danish king was forced to sell his Estonian possessions.

For the next two hundred years, German settlers remained a small upper class of some 5% of the population, but they controlled the region's political structures, feudal estates, and religious orders. During the early part of the sixteenth century, Lutheranism spread to Estonia from Germany and soon became the predominant religion. As German rule collapsed in the mid-1500s, Estonia was subject to various invasions and incursions by Swedish, Russian,

Danish, and Polish troops. By the end of the century, Sweden controlled the northern portion of the country, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth dominated the south, and Denmark captured the island of Saaremaa. By 1645 Sweden had gained control over the entire Estonian territory.

Swedish rule continued until the beginning of the eighteenth century and was considered to be the most enlightened foreign occupation in Estonian history. A university was founded in the city of Tartu and serfdom was legally abolished. The Great Northern War (1700–1721) ended Swedish rule in the Baltic region as the Russians under Peter the Great gradually conquered Estonia, or what was then known as the provinces of Estland and northern Livland. Tsarist Russian rule in Estonia lasted for about two hundred years, and in the initial period Estonia was left with considerable local autonomy.

For the most part, Moscow supported the Baltic German aristocracy, who controlled the predominant share of the country's land and economic resources and many of whom became officials, generals, and ministers for the Muscovite occupation. With the final emancipation of the Estonian peasantry from feudal serfdom in the early 1880s, agriculture became increasingly commercial. As the Russians sought to create a unitary, monolingual, and monoreligious state, Baltic autonomy came under increasing attrition.

Estonia's struggle for autonomy and independence markedly increased during the 1800s as the Russification process intensified. Cultural, educational, and literary groups sprang up to challenge Muscovite hegemony and to promote the use of the Estonian language. The national movements sought to achieve equality for the Estonian language and culture within the Russian domain. In the 1870s, a new orthography patterned on the Finnish was widely accepted and the northern Estonian dialect was enshrined as the national language. The first Estonian daily newspaper was founded in 1891. Meanwhile, Russification of the Baltic provinces intensified from the 1880s onwards to forestall any prospects for Germanization, and the Baltic Germans lost much of their power and influence.

Following the Russian revolution of 1905, there was an upsurge of Estonian national activity; political parties were organized and various cultural societies sprang up. An All-Estonian Congress was established to demand autonomy for Estonia within the Russian Empire, and a more radical Congress of People's Representatives called for the overthrow of the tsarist regime. But Moscow thwarted efforts to transform the autocratic tsarist system into a constitutional monarchy, and it outlawed movements for Estonian autonomy.

During World War I, about 100,000 Estonians were mobilized in the Russian army, but the tsarist military soon collapsed, thus placing Estonian independence firmly on the agenda. Moscow's offer of autonomy in 1917 to Tallinn was simply too little and too late. A representative assembly, the *Maapäev*, was elected in Estonia and preparations were made for holding general elections. Before it was disbanded by invading Bolshevik forces, on 28 Novem-

ber 1917 the *Maapäev* declared itself the supreme authority in the country, whereby it alone possessed the authority to decide on Estonia's status.

When the German army overran Estonia near the close of World War I, a three-person National Salvation Committee empowered by the *Maapäev* proclaimed Estonia an independent state on 24 February 1918. Following Germany's collapse in November 1918, an independent provisional government was established in Tallinn. Meanwhile, Lenin's Bolsheviks captured the city of Narva and declared the creation of an Estonian Workers' Commune. A war for independence ensued between Estonian and Russian Bolshevik forces, with the Estonians emerging victorious by the close of 1919. In February 1920, the Tartu Peace Treaty was signed between Estonia and Soviet Russia, which signified *de jure* recognition by Moscow of the country's independence. But the border question was not fully resolved. Although Estonia received additional territories in the Narva and Setu areas, these territories were later contested and annexed by Russia after the 1940 occupation.

Similarly to its two neighboring Baltic states, Estonia briefly enjoyed independence between 1920 and 1940. The period of independence was characterized by a period of intense state-building and economic development.[2] Estonia, like its neighbors, emerged as a small but economically successful agrarian country with an emphasis on self-education, cultural pluralism, and cooperative agriculture. A land reform program in 1919 ended German landlord domination and created a large class of small independent farmers.

From 1920 to 1934, the country remained a parliamentary democracy with an ultra-democratic structure in which governments were replaced on average every eight months. Estonia had 17 cabinets during its first fourteen years of independence, amid growing fears of political instability. A strong presidential constitution was introduced in October 1933, after the caretaker Prime Minister Konstantin Päts led a "palace coup" with overwhelming public support and was subsequently elected unopposed as Estonia's President. Between 1934 and 1940, Estonia had a conservative authoritarian regime, partly as a reaction to threats from the extreme right and partly in response to widespread disenchantment with an often unwieldy parliamentarism and frequent turnover of governments. The new President, with the support of business, agrarian, and military elites, declared a state of martial law, prohibited all political parties, deactivated the parliament, and postponed any subsequent general elections. At the same time, he cracked down on nascent fascist groupings, largely maintained a free market, and gradually began to reintroduce some democratic elements.

With the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, Estonia was pressured by Moscow to sign a defense pact with the Soviet Union. At that time, the Estonian government was unaware of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, concluded in August 1939, which delineated future spheres of control in Eastern Europe between Russia and Germany. After accusing Tallinn of violating the defense treaty, Russian forces occupied Estonia in June 1940

without any significant resistance and installed a puppet government and a pliant parliament. On 6 August 1940, Estonia was formally annexed by the Soviet Union. A rapid process of Sovietization was initiated that sought to eliminate all vestiges of independence and democracy. Approximately 10,000 Estonians were arrested and deported to slave labor camps in the Soviet *gulag*. About 33,000 people were conscripted into the Red Army. Total Estonian losses during the wartime occupation amounted to 60,000, or 6% of the population.

In July 1941 German forces occupied Estonia and thwarted any hopes for independence. About 5,000 Estonian citizens, including the country's Jews, were rapidly murdered or sent to death camps. Thousands more Estonians perished in the German army, into which about 70,000 had been conscripted. In September and October 1944 Soviet forces reoccupied Estonia after German resistance crumbled. The provisional independent Estonian government had been in partial control of Tallinn when Russian troops entered the city, arrested its members, and installed their own, communist administration. About 60,000 people fled the country, while a further 30,000 Estonians were deported to Soviet labor camps. Estonia lost about 5% of its territory as Russia directly annexed the right bank of the Narva River and most of the southeastern Petseri (Pechery in Russian) district. In sum, the country lost 30% of its pre-1939 population by the end of the war.

The early post-war years were marked by intensive Sovietization, Russification, and colonization of the Estonian Soviet Republic. Communist loyalists imported from Russia were implanted in the government, because local communists were distrusted by Moscow. A guerrilla resistance movement, the "forest brethren," with about 15,000 active participants and thousands more sympathizers, was brutally crushed through forced collectivization in the countryside and the deportation of thousands of Estonian farmers to Russia. High-speed industrialization brought in thousands of Russian colonists with the aim of dramatically reducing the ethnic Estonian proportion of the population. The share of Estonians dropped from 94% in early 1945 to about 72% by 1953, and to 64.7% by 1989. The decline was compounded by a low birth rate among ethnic Estonians.

Political purges and intense repression of Estonian culture and education was designed to thoroughly russify the population and to eliminate any autonomous spheres of public life. Leading positions in the country were occupied by Russified and Sovietized Estonians, who were imported into the country, and periodic purges of the Communist Party were conducted to root out any dissenters and to maintain a state of constant political terror. After Stalin's death in 1953, a partial thaw was visible throughout the USSR and several local Estonian communists replaced the Russian implants in the republican administration. However, there was no extensive liberalization, and under Leonid Brezhnev's regime, between 1968 and 1980, the country sank into bureaucratic stupor and economic stagnation. However, a number of dissident

organizations remained active in clandestine conditions. They included the Estonian Democratic Movement, the Estonian Patriots, and the Estonian National Front. But their influence remained limited under highly repressive conditions.

Estonia's drive for statehood and democratic rule began in the late 1980s with the birth and growth of various independent ecological, cultural, informational, student, and political groupings. These were either protest movements against specific aspects of Soviet policy, such as environmental devastation and censorship, or elements of national rebirth in which Estonian history, culture, and language were rediscovered. For example, in 1987 an ecological movement was formed to protest highly polluting phosphate mining, and a group was formed calling for the commemoration and condemnation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. By early 1988, public protests and rallies had become more commonplace and less likely to be violently dispersed by the police. Demands rapidly began to escalate from mere autonomy within the Soviet Union to full-scale national independence.

During 1988, the press and cultural organizations increasingly disengaged themselves from Soviet censorship, and even the Estonian Communist Party (ECP) began to call for republican sovereignty in the economic and administrative arenas. For instance, on 23 June 1988 the Estonian Supreme Soviet (parliament) legalized the Estonian national flag, and on 9 September 1988 the ECP supported demands for making Estonian the republic's official language. The reformist Vaino Väljas was appointed as the new ECP leader, and pressures began to build for a new relationship with Moscow to test the bounds of the reforms being pursued by Soviet Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev. Despite its initial popularity, the ECP was overtaken by events and quickly lost control over the political process.

Outside of the local Communist Party, a Popular Front of Estonia (PFE) *(Eesti Rahvarinne, ER)* was established, which by June 1988 claimed 40,000 members. The PFE was an umbrella organization that included human rights groups, religious organizations, environmental movements, heritage groupings, nascent political parties, and even some fractions of the Communist Party. It involved various intellectual and cultural figures as well as young politicians who would later rise to prominence in an independent Estonia. As the communist organizations crumbled, the PFE lodged increasingly far-reaching demands and staged a number of large-scale public rallies, including the Song of Estonia demonstration on 11 September 1988, which brought out over 250,000 people from all over the country—about 20% of the Estonian population.

On 16 November 1988, the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Republic adopted a "Declaration on the Sovereignty of the Estonian SSR," its first major step toward independence. Moscow declared this move unconstitutional but was not prepared to use force to overturn the Estonian government. By the time the Kremlin formally accepted economic autonomy for the Baltic

states, in January 1989, public opinion was rapidly shifting toward independence. The autonomy offered by Gorbachev in early 1991, couched in a new Union Treaty, was considered to be a fake and a desperate attempt to keep the USSR together.

During 1989 political changes began to accelerate. Pro-independence organizations led by the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP), the National Heritage Society (NHS), the Estonian Conservative People's Party (ECPP), and the Estonian Christian Democratic Party (ECDP), established local citizens committees and the Estonian Congress as a parallel national parliament untainted by any compromises with communism. The Congress emerged partly in opposition to the PFE, as its initiators feared that the Front would make too many concessions to Moscow and the communist authorities in Tallinn. Elections were held to the Congress on 24 February 1990, with over 90% of the population participating, and an Estonian Committee was subsequently established. The Congress was not only important for placing the statehood issue firmly on the agenda and mobilizing Estonian citizens, but it also permitted Estonian citizens living abroad to participate directly in the country's internal political developments.

Faced with this radical challenge of an alternative national parliament, the PFE, which included liberals, social democrats, agrarians, and independents, declared a new program in support of national independence. In order not to be marginalized, some centrist and reform communist leaders formed the Free Estonia (FE) *(Vaba Eesti)* group in January 1990. The FE was led by Prime Minister Indrek Toome, and it supported Estonian statehood. In fact, the Communist Party began to split on the issue of independence, with the larger faction backing statehood and a minority grouping maintaining a pro-Moscow stance. Elections to the Estonian Supreme Soviet were held on 18 March 1990, and in a display of broadening pluralism, 31 parties competed in the ballot. On 25 March 1990, the Supreme Council (parliament) convened and proclaimed the state authority of the USSR in Estonia unlawful. As political developments accelerated, the ruling communists were rapidly outflanked by a number of independent groupings, including environmentalists, the PFE, and an informal citizens' committee movement.[3]

POST-COMMUNIST DEVELOPMENTS

The collapse of communist rule in Estonia can be traced to 8 May 1990 when the Estonian Supreme Council restored the name "Republic of Estonia" and the country's state symbols while eliminating those of the USSR. At the same time, parliament installed Edgar Savisaar, the Popular Front of Estonia (PFE) leader, as Prime Minister, while Arnold Rüütel, a leading ex-communist, was re-elected as Chairman of the Supreme Council and transformed himself into a proponent of Estonian independence. Moscow denounced Tallinn's deci-

sion on independence and tried but failed to fabricate a coup by Russian colonists and security officers. As a result, the Estonian government established a Home Guard of volunteers, which became the embryo of the future Estonian army. After this point, Moscow rapidly lost control of events, as Tallinn vetoed Soviet laws that violated the rights of the republic.

On 3 March 1991, Estonia held an independence referendum despite the protests of the Kremlin and opposition from local Soviet representatives and Russian minority leaders; 77.8% of the population voted positively and only 17.7% negatively. The latter were primarily Russians who had settled in Estonia during the period of Soviet occupation. For the next few months, Estonia had to resist threats of economic sanctions and military provocations from Russia. Tallinn also boycotted Gorbachev's all-Union referendum on the future of the USSR. In the midst of the failed hard-line coup in Moscow, on 20 August 1991, the Estonian Supreme Council adopted a "Resolution on the National Independence of Estonia." The declaration stressed the continuity of the independence declared in 1918. Within a week, about forty states had recognized Estonia's independence; and within the next two years, the country was admitted to the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe.

At the end of August 1991, the Soviet Communist Party was declared illegal. The pro-independence Estonian Communist Party continued to operate even while it continued to disintegrate. Meanwhile, a national Constituent Assembly was formed, with thirty members elected by the Supreme Council and thirty by the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP)–sponsored Estonian Congress. Centrists occupied about twenty seats, twenty were taken by national radicals, and thirteen by moderates and reform communists. Seven representatives of the Russian minority were also included in the Assembly.

The Assembly was empowered to draft a new Estonian constitution and began its deliberations in September 1991. The constitution allowed for the first presidential elections to be direct, but subsequent ballots were limited to parliament, in which a two-thirds majority votes for a presidency for a five-year term. It also created a balance between executive and legislative powers, although the parliament *(Riigikogu)* upheld its overall political supremacy and was empowered to appoint the Prime Minister and other leading state officials, to declare states of emergency, and to make international treaties. The unicameral *Riigikogu* was to consist of 101 members elected for a four-year term. On 28 June 1992, 66.3% of eligible Estonian voters went to the polls and 91.2% approved the new constitution.

Estonia's political spectrum began to crystallize after the achievement of independence. Both the PFE and the Estonian Congress were essentially pluralistic formations that subsequently split into a diversity of political parties. Various centrist and moderate parties emerged from the PFE, while the more radical nationalist forces sought to consolidate and create a viable electoral bloc in opposition to the centrists and ex-communists tied to Prime Minister

Savisaar. Between the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1992, the premier lost the support of most ethnic Estonians in parliament. In January 1992, Savisaar resigned despite surviving a confidence vote in parliament and new elections were scheduled.

The general elections on 20 September 1992 and the creation of a new parliament *(Riigikogu)* marked the end of both the Supreme Council inherited from the Soviet period and of the Estonian Congress established during the drive for independence. Seventeen parties or electoral alliances contested the ballot, 67.8% of voters participated, and nine parties succeeded in gaining parliamentary seats. The Estonian Communist Party failed to win a single seat in the 101-seat legislature. In the September 1992 presidential elections, the writer and former Foreign Minister Lennart Meri was elected head of state. Throughout his tenure, Meri played a very active and constructive role in the political reform process. Between September 1992 and March 1995, Estonia was governed by a right-of-center coalition that supported two different Prime Ministers.

President Meri nominated Mart Laar, the head of the "Fatherland" or "Pro Patria" *(Isamaa)* electoral alliance with 28.7% of parliamentary seats, as Prime Minister. On 21 October 1992, Laar formed a three-party, right-of-center coalition government, consisting of the Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP), the Rural Center Party (RCP), and the Estonian Social Democratic Party (ESDP). The Laar cabinet remained in office until 28 September 1994, but resigned after a vote of no confidence in parliament following a controversial arms deal with Israel and disclosures about secret sales of surplus Russian rubles to Chechnya.

On 4 November 1994, Andres Tarand of the Moderates formed a new government consisting of the same parties as in the previous coalition. New parliamentary elections were held on 5 March 1995, and fourteen parties gained seats, with a total of 90 deputies.[4] The ruling coalition had lost over half their vote and two-thirds of their parliamentary seats. Estonia maintained a mixed electoral system, which tended to favor proportional representation. The leader of the largest party in the victorious electoral coalition, Tiit Vähi of the Estonian Coalition Party, was selected as Prime Minister. The Coalition Party, with 41 deputies, possessed by far the largest number of parliamentary seats.

Vähi formed a three-party, center-left coalition with the Rural People's Party (RPP) and the Estonian Center Party, which held 16 seats. The three coalition partners combined 46.8% of the vote, and the government was sworn in on 17 April 1995. Although left of center, the coalition pursued a market reform program while benefiting from the backlash against inevitable hardships stemming from the initial dismantling of the state-controlled economic system. But the new administration only lasted six months, falling on 11 October 1995 following a wire-tapping scandal involving Edgar Savisaar, the interior minister and leader of the Center Party. Vähi formed a new govern-

ment, this time with the Estonian Reform Party (ERP), which held19 seats in parliament. The new government took office on 6 November 1995.

Despite this frequent turnover of governments, fragile inter-party coalitions, the weak popular base of all political parties, and a fragmented parliament during the first few years of independence, the political process worked smoothly and constitutionally. In addition, the May 1994 law on political parties was intended to limit their number by requiring a minimum membership of 1,000 citizens for registration and the right to run in national elections. Moreover, any registered party unable to obtain parliamentary representation in two consecutive elections would be disbanded. As a result of these rulings, political mergers became more frequent, such as the unification of Pro Patria with the ENIP to form the Pro Patria Union (PPU) in December 1995. As in other post-communist states, parties were established by political elites rather than being created by mass mobilization with broad, countrywide networks.[5]

In August–September 1996 Lennart Meri was re-elected as the country's President in an indirect election in a specially formed Electoral College, after parliament was unable to vote a sufficient two-thirds majority for any candidate. According to the Estonian constitution, the President was elected by the *Riigikogu* and he could not maintain a party affiliation. President Meri was formerly with the Pro Patria organization. Meri's nearest challenger was Arnold Rüütel, the deputy speaker of the parliament. Also in late 1996, the governing coalition collapsed. It had consisted of a shaky coalition between the Coalition Party and the Rural Union led by Prime Minister Tiit Vähi and the Reform Party led by Foreign Minister Siim Kallas.[6] The disintegration of the government was precipitated by the signing of a cooperation agreement between Vähi and the oppositionist Center Party, about which the Reform Party had not been informed.

From the summer of 1996 into mid-November the same year, the governing coalition of the Coalition Party, the Rural Union, and the Estonian Reform Party was threatening to break apart. The senior Coalition Party repeatedly sought to circumvent the Reform Party by aligning itself with its former coalition partner, the Estonian Center Party. Prime Minister Vähi denied that serious problems existed in the coalition government and was proved correct for over three months, as the government remained intact. On 20 November 1996, however, six ministers from the Reform Party resigned from—the entire contingent of that party in the cabinet. These ministers based their resignations on a cooperation deal that the Prime Minister (a leading member of the Coalition Party) had signed with the Center Party and on allegations that the Reform Party proposed closer relations with Russia, at the expense of Estonian ties with the West.

By law the government did not have to be dissolved if a coalition collapsed, and neither were early elections necessary for the creation of a new minority government. During the 1996 crisis, opposition parties called for early elections, citing persistent problems within the governing coalition and