

## Europe's Democratization Three "Clusters" Compared

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### Abstract

This essay explores the recent processes of democratization in Europe, and the role that the European Union (EU) has played in that regard. In particular, the focus is on three recent regime change "clusters" that can be seen as reinforcing the region's identity as a community of democracies, namely, the democratization of Greece, Portugal, and Spain; of the East and Central European states following the collapse of the Soviet Union; and, most recently, those associated with the Color Revolutions in Georgia and the Ukraine. It examines those three clusters in light of three broad questions: first, whether Europe can be seen as a model or even a beacon of democratization; second, what kind of "transmission mechanisms" have served to disseminate democracy throughout the region; and finally, what contrasts and similarities can be found between the three clusters of democratizations in terms of predemocratic context, institutional design, and intra-elite bargains and pacts.

**Key words:** Europe, European Union, democratization, democracy promotion, transmission mechanisms.

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Starting with Greece and Portugal in 1974, and apparently grinding to a halt (or going into reverse) in Georgia and perhaps the Ukraine in 2008, the political structure of the wider European space has been transformed by three successive "rounds" (or "waves" or "clusters") of regime change,<sup>1</sup> all of which can be

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<sup>1</sup> It may be more appropriate to say two successful rounds and a third more uncertain set of attempted democratizations. And I prefer "clusters" to "rounds": the latter conveys a sense of order and predictability, while the former seems more noncommittal. The key point is that, at least since the 1970s, almost all democratizations have occurred in groups of countries, rather than as nationally isolated processes. So we should consider common characteristics and interaction effects (also labeled "snowballing") between neighbouring regimes.

bracketed together under the broad designation of “democratizations.”<sup>2</sup>

Some view the most recent cluster (the Color Revolutions) as the fourth step in this remorseless Europe-wide advance. But these could be the cases that challenge the hubristic vision of an ever-expanding European community of democracies.

Further, discussion of the ultimate limits of this European process must also reflect on Russia, Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkan fragments of former Yugoslavia, Albania, and Belarus—and perhaps even Israel. It would need to address the sensitive issues of what, if anything, is specific to “Europe” so far as democratization is concerned (for some, Europe is a codeword for Christendom), and, how “Europe” and “democracy” should be defined.

The Europe that most concerns us in this essay is the European Union (EU), the rule-governed multinational institution offering membership to adjoining regimes that meet its tests for admission (including a democracy test). But the EU is a recent and still evolving entity (the first direct elections to the European Parliament were held only thirty years ago, when the then EEC had fewer than half the members that the EU has today). The EU can hardly be conflated with historical Europe, with a millennial history that includes heredity rule, dynastic and religious warfare, imperial conquest, slavery, and other practices that are antithetical to contemporary democratic ideas. Even today, Europe (as defined by the EU) includes democracies that do not belong to the EU (Norway and Switzerland) and important nonmembers whose democratic credentials may be contested (Russia and Turkey), unstable (Serbia and the Ukraine), or simply absent (Belarus and Bosnia).

On the one hand, we must acknowledge the extraordinary achievements involved in stabilizing a rule-governed and electorally competitive political model, underpinned by a commitment to pluralism and citizen and minority rights. The EU constitutes a remarkable break with many nondemocratic features of Europe’s past, and it offers a credible prospect of persisting and reinforcing these practices throughout the large region.

On the other hand, the still incomplete nature of these democratic characteristics cannot be airbrushed away. The EU is a strange and hybrid structure, with only the most limited and indirect claims to democratic legitimacy. European citizenship remains a hope rather than a socially-

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<sup>2</sup> From a European perspective, Huntington’s 1974 dividing line is fairly arbitrary. There was also an earlier cluster of regime change (between 1945 and the Treaty of Vienna in 1955), whereby rather standardized constitutional democracies were established or reestablished in France, Italy, West German, the Benelux, Scandinavia, and, finally, Austria. Cyprus was decolonized as a (troubled) democracy in 1960, followed by a more durably democratic Malta, in 1964. Thus, the democratic continuities of Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom were reinforced by a larger community of Western European democracies, which provided the springboard for the southern and eastern extensions (and EU enlargements) from the 1970s to the 1990s.

embedded reality, and the long-term staying power of the existing EU remains open to some doubt. Assuming that it persists, its relationship with nonmembers could deteriorate in ways that undermine its democratic aspirations (as in the former Yugoslavia).

So the EU is recent; not necessarily timeless; not the unquestionable embodiment of all possible democratic aspirations; and not the sole political model available in the continent. Those who present it as a “beacon of democracy” can invoke no more than a flickering and uncertain source of illumination. The difficulty, here, is how to strike the right balance between recognizing the comparatively impressive democratic performance of the region as compared to most other parts of the world, and insisting on the many respects in which European political practices still fall far short of the standard criteria for a satisfactory democratic outcome.

The EU may be a source of encouragement and institutional support and serve as a possible model. But there are also pitfalls associated with the idea of Europe as a beacon for democracy. First, this perspective may distract attention from the respects in which European practices still need to be improved. Second, it may foster the illusion that there is really only one variant worth considering, discouraging other regions from exploring options perhaps better suited to their circumstances. Third, it can be misappropriated to serve as a justification for the pursuit of other, less altruistic, European objectives, notably in the economic and security realms. Of course, the EU is entitled to pursue its interests in these areas as well, but the cause of democracy as a universal value suffers if the recipients of European democratic influence and conditionality believe that this conceals a hidden agenda.

Perhaps the boldest statement of the critical case comes from Jack Goody, who recently posted a long-range comparative historical challenge to Europe’s democratic evangelism. His discussion of the concept of democracy is part of his broader critique of what he regards as Europe’s “theft of history” from the rest of the world. His argument is that social scientists have reconstructed the history of key institutions (such as universities) and values (such as human and democratic) from the standpoint of the victorious, isolating and celebrating the antecedents that fit with their teleology, while ignoring, and even suppressing, equivalent beliefs and practices in the rest of the world.<sup>3</sup> For him, the correct global viewpoint is to start from the conditions that have permitted or facilitated democratic innovation in any part of the world, and only subsequently to consider what may have caused the European variant to displace or supersede these non-European counterparts.

This “parity of esteem” assumption is indispensable for any serious discussion of democracy as a global project. This runs counter to the post-Cold

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<sup>3</sup> Jack Goody, *The Theft of History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 288.

War instrumentalization of democracy as a universal value, in which a set of dominant states (with North America and Western Europe at the forefront) self-classify as the unquestionable bearers of ascendant global values, while most of humanity is assigned the status of latecomers who need to be instructed about the best practices already owned by the frontrunners.

Among other distortions, this Western orthodoxy misappropriates the political and ethical achievements of the non-Western world, obscures the continuing deficiencies of democratic practices in the West, and stimulates a tendency toward democratic evangelism that conceals other, less universally admirable, sources of Western expansionism. It narrows the range of democratic possibilities open to consideration (implying that only one standardized Western template should be counted), and it deprives non-Westerners of a sense of “ownership” of their own processes of democratic construction. For Goody, therefore, the “universality” of democracy would have to be constructed on a more authentically historical, comparative, and pluralist intellectual foundation.

The rest of this essay explores the main facets of recent European experiences of democratization. There is a large variety of facets that could be selected for attention, and our stock of theoretical propositions is also quite extensive, diverse, and indeed unstable.<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of this essay, with its focus on three recent regime change “clusters” that can be regarded as reinforcing the region’s identity as a community of democracies, the following themes have been selected: section two reflects on Europe as a model or even a beacon of democratization recognition; the third section disaggregates the various “transmission mechanisms” that have served to disseminate this system; and section four compares and contrasts the three clusters on three key dimensions. The conclusion reprises the overall analysis.

## **Europe as a Model of Democratic Regionalism**

In 1974, democratic Europe was hedged in by the Soviet bloc to the East, and by the Greek, Yugoslav, and Iberian dictatorships to the southeast and southwest. Democratic Finland was constrained by its proximity to Leningrad; the Italian Communist Party seemed close to electoral victory; the Federal Republic of Germany was truncated; and a miner’s strike had Britain reduced to a three-day week. Although the European Community had successfully enlarged from seven to twelve members, it was still very focused on economic integration, and lacked political “pillars” or pretensions.

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<sup>4</sup> For example, can democracies torture for self-protection or make undesirables “stateless”? Until recently, it was assumed that such questions had been definitively resolved, but that is no longer a safe assumption.

Thirty-five years later, the twenty-seven members of the EU constitute the largest community of democratic nations in the world; the European Parliament is composed of the directly elected representatives of democratic electorates in all these diverse states; neighbors such as Albania, Croatia, and eventually even Turkey and the Ukraine are queuing up to extend the community of democracies even further; there are even tentative signs that Serbian public opinion could opt for EU-style integration. This is a larger and more solid democratic community than in the Americas (where Cuba holds out, Haiti festers, Venezuela contests, drug-traffickers defy, and the United States still administers the lawless vacuum that is Guantánamo Bay). It is by far the greatest fulfilment of European liberal aspirations in the millennial of history of the old continent.

This has induced some recent analysts to label the enlarged EU “a beacon of democracy for the world.” Europe’s democratization certainly merits careful examination. Jon Pevehouse<sup>5</sup> has theorized that instead of starting analysis at the level of individual states and then scaling up to the regional level, it would be more productive to reverse the sequence.

Slovakia illustrates his argument well. Internal political dynamics after the “velvet divorce” with the Czech Republic evidently were not particularly conducive to democratization there. But Slovakia was almost completely encircled by the new constitutional regimes produced by “round-table”-type negotiations. More decisively, the authorities in Bratislava were under intense internal and international pressure to keep up with their neighbors in the race to join the EU. In 1997, Brussels reached the conclusion that, although Slovakia had proved eager and effective in the pursuit of recommended economic reforms, it was not meeting the minimum democratic standards required by the Copenhagen criteria, which specified quite precisely what democratic conditions applicants for admission had to meet. Thus Bratislava faced the prospect of slipping behind, while its neighbors (and rivals and competitors) entered the Union ahead of it. That was seen as a serious threat to the national interests of the new state. So it can be argued that the region-wide standards and incentives provided by the EU were a decisive factor, shifting the post-communist political trajectory in Slovakia away from authoritarian populism and toward conventional EU-style democratization. This would vindicate Pevehouse’s contention that explanations of democratization should start at the regional level, rather than privileging domestic dynamics within each individual state.

This theoretical perspective undoubtedly reflects some significant lessons drawn from experience. The Slovak example may be rather stylized and

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<sup>5</sup> Jon C. Pevehouse, *Democracy from Above? Regional Organizations and Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

perhaps incomplete (some analysts still would argue that Slovakia succeeded only because internal conditions were propitious), but it is hardly unique. The potential for region-wide rules and procedures to remould intractable internal political situations is currently being tested—with emerging evidence of its effectiveness—in Cyprus. A similar pattern, at an earlier and more inconclusive stage, is apparent in contemporary Serbia. Overall, however, the EU enlargements to the south and east provide only two really strong indications of how region-wide processes might override domestic political dynamics: Cyprus and Slovakia.<sup>6</sup> Even here, the exceptional conditions need to be noted. Such leverage prevails only during the most crucial stages in the accession process. (It is far less effective in, say, Turkey, where the process of admission has been stretched out indefinitely).

We cannot be sure whether such region-wide disciplines and commitments will persist after admission to the EU (suspension or expulsion is far more problematic than delayed admission). And this logic does not apply equally to all: just as the MERCOSUR cannot suspend Brazil, the EU cannot impose democratic conditionality on Berlusconi's Italy. So the scope of such democratic region-wide effects may be highly constrained—a secondary factor rather than the crucial determinant as hypothesized by Pevehouse. In Cyprus and in Serbia, it is not proving easy for the EU to replicate its Slovak success; and even in the case of Slovakia, the regional disciplines and incentives may work only because the domestic balance of forces is so finely balanced. In hard cases (think of Bosnia or Kosovo), unpropitious internal conditions can persist and block almost any level of regional pressure for peaceful and cooperative *convivencia*, at least short of wholesale military occupation.

A further limitation of the “regional community of democracies” perspective is that there may be a range of overlapping and competing regional communities seeking to influence the domestic politics of any given state. Thus, the influence of the EU needs to be distinguished from that of NATO and the Council of Europe. The membership of each community may be different, as may the aspects of democracy that each privileges. And the democratization of some states may be driven more by the withdrawal of hitherto powerful antidemocratic vetoes (as when Gorbachev authorized the dismantling of the Soviet bloc), than by the reverse. Slovakia wished to join the EU but it also wished to join NATO, and had to come to terms with the loss of its hitherto privileged ties to the Soviet Union.

Other doubts can be raised conceiving the “model” states of the EU. Why is it that this European community of democracies has flourished to a greater

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<sup>6</sup> Even in the relatively “successful” cases, there is considerable scope for disagreement about what compliance with EU democratization standards involves. In Cyprus, for example, the Greek majority tends to stress “one man, one vote,” and the strict application of the rule of law, whereas the Turkish minority is more focused on power sharing and minority rights.

extent than analogous committees in other large regions of the world? Is it the legal and constructed foundations of European integration that have provided a firmer underpinning (such as the supranational authority of the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights)? Or is it the absence of a security threat (the NATO defensive umbrella leaves the EU free to concentrate on the cultivation of its “soft” power)? Perhaps these legal, institutional, and security foundations are so immutable that the EU can be relied upon as a guarantor of Europe-wide democracy for the indefinite future, but there are some worrying signs of over-reach and fragility.

As for the EU’s role in democratization at the global level, despite all the positive achievements one would also need to confront the “fortress Europe” issue. What kind of a “beacon” can this region be when it allows such mistreatment of refugees and migrants from other more unhappy parts of the world, and in particular when some of its minorities (Africans, Muslims, or the Roma) experience such insecurity and discrimination?

The democratization of greater Europe is still not complete by any means. The incorporation or exclusion of such major European nations as Russia, Turkey, and the Ukraine remains to be decided, and the consequences of either choice will resonate throughout the European community of democracies. The extraordinary advances that occurred between 1974 and 2009 are incomplete, and could still prove subject to far-reaching reversals.

## **Transmission Mechanisms**

Although we cannot dismiss the possibility of future setbacks and reversals, the main focus of this essay—and this volume—is on the three surprisingly successful cycles of democracy promotion undertaken by the EU since the mid-1970s. These clusters can be differentiated from each other by their timing—southern Europe in 1974-1986; east-central Europe in 1989-2005; and the Color Revolutions since 2001. But these are also geographically proximate clusters, and both the temporal and the spatial dimensions are only loosely specified.

In order to advance the analysis, one needs to detail the nature of the interactions involved, both between regimes within each cluster, and between each cluster and the larger European community of democracies. Since this is a major task, all that can be attempted in this short section is a brief survey of the main transmission mechanisms likely to be involved.

“Transmission mechanisms” encompass all the wide variety of processes through which an established community of European democracies may transmit aspects of their political practices, values, and aspirations to adjoining political regimes. So this is a very broad category with various components. One crucial distinction is between international actions (such as deliberate incentives and democracy promotion programs) and undirected “diffusion”

or “contagion” effects. As regards the first set of processes, the literature distinguishes between direct acts of imposition, and less direct forms of persuasion and inducement.

The cumulative expansion of the European democratic space since 1945 has taken place almost entirely without direct acts of imposition, and this differentiates Europe from all other large regions of the world.<sup>7</sup> So the most forceful mechanisms relevant here concern varieties of democratic conditionality. These can be subdivided into sanctions on undemocratic behavior and inducements to democratize.

Belarus and Serbia (along with Slovakia) exemplify the first variant. Broadly, resorting to sanctions is rarer in Europe than elsewhere, and the record of success is decidedly mixed. Post-war Europe, and the EU in particular, is best known for positive incentives, and much the most effective of these has been the prospect of EU accession. The democratizing effects of the accession process have been extensively analyzed. Many would now argue that this was more of a “convergence process” than a “transmission mechanism”; and there is considerable evidence of an uneven and formalistic application of the criteria. Moreover, it is often plausible to argue (as we shall see below) that much of the real driving force behind the successful outcomes can be attributed to economic integration and societal diffusion effects, rather than to political conditionality.

Here, we need to consider whether the same accession dynamics prevailed across the three clusters studied in this volume. Although the core consideration (the broad national interest in locking in the benefits of full EU membership) remains the same in all cases, there are also substantial differences.

During the southern enlargement, the EU was still feeling its way on democracy conditions, and the aspiring member states also needed reassurance on how this would work. By contrast, the eastern enlargement involved much more explicit and confident deployment of EU political leverage, and a more coherent and sustained drive to comply on the part of most of the candidates for accession. As regards the Color Revolutions cluster, these states have not yet been offered an EU membership perspective. Instead, some of them are covered by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and by the commission’s new European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. It is early days to assess the extent to which these incentive programs can substitute for (or pave the way toward) the strong and durable inducements of accession, but the first signs are that this is a much weaker and more uncertain mechanism.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The European exceptions to this rule are very recent, and concern the successor states of the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, although it may be questioned whether either Bosnia or Kosovo actually counts as an example of democratization. Contrast Grenada, Panama, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Timor, and so on, outside greater Europe.

<sup>8</sup> According to one recent assessment, after the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, “unlike the 1900s, democracy became central to the EU’s Ukraine agenda.” However, “ENP action plans are

Clearly, the EU transmission mechanisms involved in these three clusters were far from homogenous in design, intention, or impact. And the comparison also underscores that the EU never has been a unitary actor: it always has fronted for a diverse range of national interests. France and Germany were the key players in the first cluster; in the second, Germany (and to a lesser extent Austria) came to the fore—most spectacularly in the case of the GDR, but also with regard to the former Hapsburg states. Sweden took a lead in the Baltic, particularly in Estonia. In the case of the Ukraine, it is Poland and the Baltic states that have been in the vanguard. Moreover, whereas NATO was on the back foot in the southern enlargement, it came forward as a major EU partner and competitor after the end of the Cold War.

### *Cycles, Layers, and Anchoring*

The most recent scholarship on Europe's role in democracy promotion moves beyond the accession process (now seen as a "special case") to examine channels and instruments of influence more broadly. Magen and Morlino have coined the neologism EUCLIDA (European Union Cycles and Layers of Democratic Anchoring) as a framework for this comparative enterprise.

Magen and Morlino's point about "cycles" is that we can identify relatively precise and rather short periods of time when EU incentives are likely to produce their strongest effects. At other times, both the European will to focus on democracy promotion and the target regime's disposition to cooperate are likely to give way to other priorities. Regarding "layers," they propose three related but analytically distinct levels: rule adoption, implementation, and internalization. This connects with their focus on democratic "anchoring"—conceived as a chain of interactions that takes time, and requires persistent and stable external support.

The authors conclude from their empirical analysis of various "hybrid" regimes on the fringes of the EU that, while it is relatively easy for Brussels to induce rule adoption (particularly with regard to the rule of law), there is a much slower and particular record of rule implementation, and a still more uncertain link to the final stage of internalization. However, until democratic practices become locally internalized or routinized, it is not possible to affirm that democracy has been "anchored."<sup>9</sup>

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not legally binding and are somewhat vague." Even so, the post-Orange Revolution Ukrainian government took the EU's action plan (and its "scoreboards") seriously, and was encouraged by new EU incentives—a free trade area, support for WTO accession and people-to-people links, and more financial help. However, "cynicism is invited by the observation that the EU only began to adopt tough democracy-related conditions towards the Ukraine after the issue of accession became pertinent." Richard Youngs, ed., *Is the EU Supporting Democracy in Its Neighbourhood?* (Madrid: FRIDE, 2008), 6, 81, and 87.

<sup>9</sup> Amichai Magen and Leonardo Morlino, eds., *International Actors, Democratization and the Rule of Law: Anchoring Democracy?* (London: Routledge, 2009), 28-43, and 254-257.

Magen and Morlino acknowledge the literature on contagion, demonstration effects, diffusion, and emulation, but set aside such considerations on the grounds that they fail to pin down causality and lack specificity. This seems a reasonable criticism, and it enables them to construct an operational analytical framework. Nevertheless, from the perspective of this essay, (with its focus on broad democratization, rather than the narrower and more one-sided transmission of rule of law practices), one should consider the possibility that variations in democratic anchoring can result from indirect, unintentional, economic, or societal dynamics.

The Franco dictatorship may gradually have lost its capacity to block societal demands for a more open and tolerant political system, as labor migration, tourism, the penetration of critical messages from external democratic media, and even the doctrinal shifts within the Catholic Church, all undermined its credibility. This would be a European diffusion effect that preceded international action to democratize Spain. Similarly for East Germany, it may be that exposure to West German media and societal freedoms created the conditions for a reunification that had long been proposed on paper but could not be brought about by direct political action from the West.

The Magen and Morlino framework focuses on anchoring rather than on the triggers precipitating regime change. It directs attention to socialization and the construction of democratic norms, but concentrates on how this may be reinforced by public policies directed from without. The diffusion perspective can help to explain why such external influences are more successful in some contexts (favorable nationalist, religious, or other societal settings) than in others. For example, Russian, Serb, and Turkish nationalisms could all be barriers to democratic diffusion and contagion that operate more powerfully in some parts of the European periphery than elsewhere.

This taxonomy needs testing. Historians are now revisiting the southern European democratizations with the benefit of archival support,<sup>10</sup> and the divergent trajectories of Europe's post-communist regimes are also better studied twenty years after the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. Clearly, emulation and diffusion effects (another broad umbrella category) were relevant in most of these cases, and operated differently in the southern and eastern clusters. For example, trade unions and socialist parties in democratic Europe exerted a supportive influence on the emerging social democratic parties of the South, whereas European corporate interests were uneasy. By contrast, in the post-communist democratizations, Western conservative parties and private business interests possessed more influence, whereas the European labor movement was more or less eclipsed.

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<sup>10</sup> An example is the Instituto de Estudios de la Democracia, directed by Charles Powell, at the Universidad San Pablo in Madrid.

It is too soon to write the history of the diffusion processes that helped shape the Color Revolutions, but it is already apparent that they were significant, and that they were significantly different from the previous European clusters. Diffusionists have argued that there was a specific model of regime change (involving opposition unity and strong mobilization against electoral fraud, among other factors) that traveled from one Color Revolution to the next. Others have scaled back such claims,<sup>11</sup> but admit that certain techniques of mobilization were transmitted from Serbia to Georgia and then to the Ukraine, and that a specific network of *activists* (not opposition leaders) carried these lessons with them as they traveled. Moscow has noted these linkages, too, but attributes them to a coordinated plan by the West rather than improvisation and emulation. And other essays in this volume provide evidence of how variations in civil society and varying levels of corruption help to determine the differential receptivity of citizens in each country to activist appeals of this kind.

The last example directs attention to a broader issue which takes us beyond a review of transmission mechanisms. What, exactly, is being transmitted, and is it the same in all three clusters? Or, put differently, to what extent is democratic Europe converging on a single political model?

## **What Type(s) of Democratization in the Three Clusters?**

### ***The Pre-Democratic Context(s)***

In all three cases, the fact that there was a transition to democracy clearly indicates the existence of a significant prior nondemocratic power structure in a large area of contemporary Europe. In fact, the authoritarian regimes of Spain, Poland, the Ukraine, and others always were connected to Europe-wide networks and complicities, whose reach extended beyond the single territories under their control. But the nature of these antidemocratic European alliances varied from one round to the next. And just as there were plural forms of authoritarian politics in contemporary Europe, so the networks and alliances engaged in pushing forward each of these democratic transitions were also both Europe-wide and divergent in their ideological preferences.

In short, there was no single homogenous European project unified around global democratic values, and pitted against a single anti-European alternative. Instead, there were overlapping competitive democratic agendas, directed against a range of well-entrenched and historically rooted European authoritarian political projects.

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<sup>11</sup> Lucan Way has stressed more “structural” factors, and has questioned whether diffusion was decisive in these cases. Lucan Way, “The Real Causes of the Colour Revolutions,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no.3 (July 2008): 55-69.

### The First Cluster

The first cluster affected reactionary Christian nationalisms in the south. Spain and Portugal were both governed by repressive regimes bolstered by the Catholic Church, which had emerged in response to challenges from anticlerical and worker-oriented movements. The clash between conservatives and radicals was deeply rooted in the history of both countries, and both sides had their counterparts and allies in the rest of Europe. Greece was broadly similar (it was admitted to NATO following a rightist victory over an indigenous communist rebellion).

The democratization of these three countries eliminated the last European regimes with profascist histories and inclinations. This round was therefore a boost for the center-left movements in the rest of Europe that had refused to accept the permanence of reactionary militarism in an enlarged EU. It was a setback for the radical left (since communist parties emerged with limited electoral support, and were outmaneuvered by their better-connected social democratic rivals) and for the conservative interests in democratic Europe that had sheltered or covertly encouraged the rightist dictators.

### The Second Cluster

The second cluster also reenacted another long-established and deeply rooted European-wide political drama, but this time the linkages were different. The communist regimes of east-central Europe were certainly imposed by the force of the Russian arms, but they also built on Marxist and revolutionary foundations that were indigenous to these societies. International communism was a worldwide and Moscow-directed movement, but it was also an expression of doctrines and utopian projects rooted in the history of most European democracies, and radicals across Europe obviously saw themselves as being somewhat associated with the “people’s democracies” of the East. Beyond that, the democratic left in Europe included various shades of fellow-traveling acquiescence to the division of Europe, and a range of more establishment and opportunist interest groups also associated themselves with what was reasonably assumed to be a permanent status quo in Europe.

Consequently, the democratization of Eastern Europe also had continent-wide repercussions. Western communist parties lost much of their *raison d’être*, and those associated with the people’s democracies were forced to cover their tracks. In contrast, for the second cluster, a range of business, financial, and military interests could now spearhead democratic Europe’s advance to the east. This is an extremely simplified sketch of much more complex developments, but it should suffice to demonstrate the insufficiency of any analysis that reduces the two clusters to a single undifferentiated expansion of timeless core European (or global) democratic values.

### The Third Cluster

The same train of thought can be extended to the most recent Color Revolutions.

The deep historical roots of Georgian and Russian, or Ukrainian and Russian rivalries and conflicts hardly require elaboration.<sup>12</sup> The antidemocratic alternative is no longer Soviet communist imperialism. Instead, it has transmuted back to Russian great power nationalism (another longstanding European political tradition).

### *Institutional Design*

#### The First Cluster

All the pre-1974 European democracies were parliamentary (except the semi-presidential system adopted in Gaullist France after 1958), as was Spain in the first round of 1970s southern democratizations (inevitably, since the regime is a monarchy). Portugal is harder to characterize, since the regime underwent several modifications, but we can settle for the designation semi-presidential, somewhat like Fifth Republic France. In Greece, the president is elected by the unicameral legislature, so we can regard it as a parliamentary regime. In all three cases, prior constitutional and political traditions and practices were used as benchmarks for institutional design. The authors of these new democratic institutional arrangements were domestic elites, negotiating among themselves in conditions of uncertainty about the underlying distribution of electoral and party preferences. External advice and international models played a secondary role, which may help to explain both the stability and local credibility or legitimacy of these institutional arrangements.

#### The Second Cluster

The post-communist democracies established at the end of the 1980s were not so free from external guidance. In particular, as they redesigned their institutions to comply with the Copenhagen Criteria, legislatures often paid more attention to gaining external approval than national traditions and expectations. Nevertheless, here too, parliamentarianism figured prominently, notably in the Czech Republic and Hungary. Poland generated a semi-presidential outcome, as did Romania.

The crucial institutional characteristics of this cluster concerns the “triple transition” (from East to West and from state to market), rather than the precise details of the domestic political structure. In some cases, there was a single overhaul of the institutional structure, followed by generalized compliance with the new rules of the game; but in others, there were episodic and unstable

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<sup>12</sup> John Willmans’s spoof of an alternative universe after the Large Hadron Collider went into action on September 10 contains a serious insight: “Despite the differences, most things have worked out the same. Russia—led by President Kerensky, grandson of the country’s first democratically elected leader—recently invaded Georgia (led by some fellow called Stalin whose grandfather led the Bolsheviks in their unsuccessful putsch.” *Financial Times*, September 10, 2008, 14.

adjustments, with extensive noncompliance (some were more like Spain in this regard, others more like the early stages of the Portuguese transition).

In further contrast to southern Europe, where the external boundaries of each national regime remained unchanged, in eastern Europe, frontiers were sometimes raised or shifted (between Czechs and Slovaks, between Romania and Moldova, and—of course—within the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, and the former USSR).

### The Third Cluster

The “Color Revolutions” of Georgia and the Ukraine take this institutional and frontier instability a stage further. Georgia has a strongly presidential regime (although not a stable one), and 20 percent of its formal territory is outside its real control. The aspiration to join the EU and NATO could be seen as a desperate bid to “lock in” a triple transition, where the necessary geopolitical, economic, and social supports are lacking. The case of the Ukraine is more complex (given its size, strategic location, and internal differentiation), but still more like Georgia than like any of the EU 27. Is the Ukraine a semi-presidential system? If so, will it still be one at the year’s end?

Whatever the merits of the incentive structure approach to institutional design in Eastern Europe, in these most recent cases, the institutions are too insecure and changeable to generate strong incentives. Political strategies are therefore elaborated according to more informal considerations and more unstructured strategic interactions.

### ***Inter-Elite Bargains and Pacts***

#### The First Cluster: The Case of Spain in Comparative Perspective

The death of Franco was a long-foreseen event which opened the way for soft-liners within the ruling coalition to seek common ground with the moderate opposition. With the Moncloa Pact, political factions in Spain negotiated a democratic constitution, the legalization of the Communist Party, and the subordination to legal civilian authority of the military and the security forces, and opted for *olvido* regarding the legacies of the civil war and dictatorship. This domestically crafted inter-elite bargain enjoyed broad popular support and has provided the framework for stable democratization ever since.

The theoretical literature has tended to abstract from and generalize the Spanish case, treating it as the model pathway for peaceful democratic transition. But theorists of democratization ought to attend to the atypical nature of the Spanish case, to the restrictive conditions under which it proved successful, and the hidden costs and neglected undercurrents at work.

First, neither Greece nor Portugal democratized in accordance with this model of elite pact-making. Two out of three of the “southern round” of democratizations occurred through rupture, and the Franco establishment might not have acquiesced so passively but for the vivid demonstrations in

these preceding transitions of the dangers of intransigence.

Second, there were fortuitous conditions in the Spanish transition that can be celebrated with hindsight but that were far from assured in advance. The monarchy was a powerful “bridging institution,” with authority over the outgoing regime’s hardliners and credibility within the democratic opposition. It played a pivotal pact-guaranteeing role, and proved crucial in 1981 when the authority of the king thwarted the seizure of the Spanish *Cortes*, and thus completed the transition. The democratic opposition in Spain was also more inclined to pact-making and to accept *olvido* for various reasons, probably including the exceptional extent and ferocity of Franco’s civil war and post-civil war repression. Further, while Greece and Portugal were both in NATO so that the democratic opposition was radicalized by the fear of Western intervention to shore up NATO security assets, European democrats never had allowed Spain into NATO because of their memories of Franco’s fascist flirtations during the Second World War. Thus, moderate Spanish democrats had more confidence in the support they could obtain from the EU; indeed, support for the Socialist International was crucial to boost the PSOE and marginalize the Popular Socialist Party that was inclined toward a popular front.

Even though the “exemplary” pacted transition in Spain was more atypical and contingent than has been admitted in democratization theory, there is a broader theoretical lesson that can be extracted from the Spanish case. In the abstract, elite pacts seem to offer “win-win” opportunities to all the “enlightened” political actors who understand the non-zero sum benefits of democratic transition. But elite pacts necessarily generate winners and losers, and even if the collective benefits of a democratic agreement far exceed the costs, the distribution of benefits may be highly skewed. In Spain, some key power contenders and claimants were marginalized to the benefit of rival interests: ETA was critical in blocking the post-Franco strategy of *continuismo*, but Spanish democracy precluded the possibility of a “velvet divorce” between Spain’s component nationalities; and key losers from the civil war (notably the PCE and the Republican armed forces) lost out as a result of the *olvido* formula.

The democratic settlement in Spain was no doubt a remarkable success, and an inspiration to others, but theorists of democratization should not thereby be blinded to the costs it involved, nor should they underestimate the consequential negative legacies of this new system of political domination. These reflections on the southern European cluster of regime changes provided a comparative lens for inspecting the subsequent post-communist transitions, including their diverse and contingent features and their ongoing costs.

### The Second Cluster

There is a rich literature on the “round table” negotiations and subsequent transition pacts in Hungary and Poland, which matches the elite-bargaining framework remarkably well and also demonstrates the applicability of insights

from the institutional design literature. But, once again, “transition by rupture” was as prevalent as pacted regime change. There were various types of rupture: decolonization in the Baltic republics; reunification in Germany; and coup in Romania. Even in Hungary and Poland there was a great deal of contingency and surprise (the unexpected dismantling of the Berlin Wall radically altered the balance of power between negotiating parties). And even in Romania, there was inter-elite negotiation and institutional compromise—albeit very lopsided—as well as confrontation and the physical elimination of former autocrats.

However, whereas the initial theory of elite bargaining emphasized the domestic nature of the process and “the rules of the political game” as the privileged focus of attention in the post-communist transitions, all elite actors were constantly monitoring the potential risks and rewards from outside. They had to gauge the dangers of provoking a Soviet backlash (Russian military forces still could intervene with overwhelming strength), and the scope for various potential sources of Western aid and support. They also had to monitor each other. No one negotiating at a round table in Budapest was going to disregard the course of parallel discussions in Warsaw or Prague.

This also meant that the questions of mutual guarantees became more complicated—if the police files were thrown open, whose reputations would remain unscathed when forty years of communism were being repudiated? As noted above, even the most generous and inclusive democratization processes shatter the security of some previously powerful groups and marginalize others. In post-communist east-central Europe, the losers could be very large social blocs (think of the Russian speakers in the Baltic Republics). The scope for zero-sum conflict rather than positive sum cooperation was also increased (pensioners and unionized workers could lose heavily from marketization, for instance; or the educational system might pass from radically secular into overtly clerical hands).

This resembles the switchback upheavals that occurred in Portugal for a decade after 1974 more than the apparently smooth and consensual “one shot” Spanish transition. Indeed, if we reflect on the continuing turbulence of Polish politics under the Kaczynski twins twenty years after the round-table negotiations, we find much evidence of unresolved tensions and potential for reversals. The idea that democracy has been “consolidated”—with politics clearly segregated from other spheres of social life, and competitive elections enshrined as the “only game in town”—might be approximately tenable in the three southern European cases, but it stretches credibility in many of the post-communist democracies of the 1990s.

### The Third Cluster

We lack the historical perspective on the recent Color Revolutions to determine their outcomes. But, on the basis of the evidence so far, it seems clear that the elements of elite pacting and strategic negotiations over constitutional questions are more partial and fragile than in the earlier cluster.

These were “revolutions,” not negotiated compromises; they bought the entire distribution of economic and political power into question; they did not give rise to agreements over the procedures by which substantive disagreements would be processed; they have not generated mutual guarantees or even tacit understandings about how past abuses are to be processed; there are many losers who remain unreconciled to their disempowerment; and the international issues of boundary determination and alliance alignments remain open to contestation.

## **Conclusion**

I have highlighted various comparisons (and contrasts) among the three clusters (or rounds) of democratization in Europe since the 1970s. Despite their varied causes and outcomes, the cumulative effect of these three big extensions of the scope of Europe’s community of democracies has been to turn this into the most consistently democratic of the large regions of the world (at least as regards the twenty-seven members of the European Union).

But I underlined the partial and incomplete nature of this achievement as well. Far from incarnating an absolute and permanent truth about the nature of European civilization, it represents one promising (but still vulnerable) instance of a broader, more diverse (and still far from secure) global trend. The most precarious and reversible of the three sets of regime change is undoubtedly the most recent. Indeed, there are still grounds for doubt whether the Color Revolutions constitute a democratic advance of any lasting significance. The staying power of the EU will be tested by the fragilities of these regimes. But they are worth close comparative analysis, not only in their own right, but also for the questions they raise about the wider claims of Europe as a beacon for democracy.

What is required to identify a cluster of democratization processes? The southern European grouping can be clearly delineated. There were three (and only) three regime transitions between 1974 and 1976. All three authoritarian regimes shared important common features as antiliberal reactions to earlier episodes of disorderly political opening. All were probusiness, ideologically anticommunist, Cold War aligned, and internally repressive. All three democratizations produced surprisingly similar political outcomes—stable pluralist regimes committed to both NATO and the EU and aligned with the European social market economy. This cluster was over-determined. There was even a significant degree of interaction among the three transitions (mainly between Spain and Portugal, but also some limited identification with analogous processes in Greece).

The east-central European grouping also shared a common starting date (the dismantling of the Berlin Wall in November 1989). Again, the predemocratic regimes had many characteristics in common, and after a decade or so, the outcomes were surprisingly similar (not least because of EU and NATO

membership). Here, too, there was considerable interaction among the various transitional authorities (through the Visegrad Four and related groupings). The precise membership of this cluster was more open to question in the first instance (Romania but not Moldova; Slovenia but perhaps not Croatia and probably not Albania, and so on). In nearly all respects, however, this cluster was also over-determined.

The same cannot be said about the Color Revolutions. How many of them do we count? If we include Serbia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, the Ukraine, and Lebanon, the starting points are more widely spread, the preexisting regimes are more diverse, and the eventual outcomes are unlikely to be so uniform. Obviously, not all of these will end up either in the EU or in NATO. It is unclear how many will preserve their basic characteristics as democracies. The interactions among them are not strong. Perhaps we could rescue this cluster by narrowing its membership to Serbia, Georgia, and the Ukraine. These three Color Revolutions could turn out to be no more than a fleeting mirage, generated by the temporary ascendancy of neoconservatism.

The Color Revolutions were popular upheavals in which pro-Russian elites and associated interests in each of these countries were partially displaced by rival factions that were better connected to dominant interests in the West (in Europe and North America). Entry into the EU and NATO membership constituted the crucial bones of contention, with commitment to democratic values and procedures a less clear-cut axis of division. The pro-Russian factions were not implacably opposed to all variants of democracy but viewed this in an instrumental manner. The anti-Russian factions called for greater commitment to democratic values, and perhaps would have lived by them if EU and NATO membership required it. But in the interim, they, too, seem likely to adopt an instrumental posture.

The consequences of defeat for either side are too serious to allow for excesses of democratic purism, especially when the two outside backers are polarized. This contrasts clearly with the first two clusters, where only a unified set of Western incentives to democratize needed to be considered. At the same time, we can see that all contenders in the Color Revolution conflict are European players acting according to traditional scripts. There were some interests in Europe and North America that stood to gain if the Color Revolution flourished. They are now fulminating against the other, equally rooted, Western interests that are aligned with GAZPROM and other Russian national institutions.

The unresolved outcome of these Color Revolutions reminds us of the risks associated with deriving “universal values” from the discourses of those states that have most recently emerged ascendant in the eternal game of European power politics. Those of us who like to see democratization as a global process derived from universal values should treat this round with circumspection. It may not show Europe in a particularly favorable light, and it may caution us against too much evangelism, too narrow and self-righteous a characterization

how democracy comes about, and assurances of what it contains, and of who are its saviors.

A similar pattern of progress, mixed with some uncertainty about its depth and durability, can be observed for the EU and the European community of democratic states as a whole. Certainly, the last half century has been extremely positive as compared to any earlier period in the recorded history of the continent, and it has considerably outperformed initial expectations. This upward momentum has been sustained at least until very recently. The clear potential exists for a further widening and deepening of the European democratic experience over the next generation.

At the same time, however, European citizenship has failed to develop as a source of democratic identification; EU institutions are renowned for their “democratic deficit,” and the Lisbon Treaty has yet to be ratified; some member states—both new, such as Bulgaria, and Romania, and old such as Italy—are displaying signs of institutional blockage or decay; and a backlash against the dominant European model of democracy has been gaining ground in the Balkans. Turkey and the Russian sphere of influence, and trouble spots such as Cyprus and Kosovo, retain the potential to destabilize democratic outcomes. The global economic crisis that began in 2008 may well accentuate all these strains. In sum, then, even though transmission mechanisms have worked better in the EU twenty-seven than in any other large region, Europe remains an imperfect beacon of democracy.

In fact, Europe needs to learn from the rest of the world about alternative patterns of democratization. The three clusters reviewed here demonstrate that success is as much about adaptive variation as it is about the transmission of proven verities. Convergence trumps imposition; and if the key driver of most democratization processes is emulation, then the surest way for Europe to promote democracy outside its limits is by perfecting its own practices of responsive self-government.

